

AAA "top picks for road trips" for all types of drivers who love the open road

AAA calculates that nine out of ten US travelers over Memorial Day Weekend took a road trip, rather than traveling by plane, train or another form of transportation. "Today's American road trips come in many different forms: family vacations, mancations, girlfriend getaways, romantic excursions and more," said John Nielsen, AAA National Director of Auto Repair, Buying Services and Consumer Information. "And the ideal vehicle for a road trip can come in as many different forms, depending on where you want the road to take you and who will be joining you for the ride." AAA Auto Buying experts have developed a list of top picks for road trips—taking into consideration interior comfort, cargo size, passenger room and comfort, fuel economy, safety, performance and handling, and other factors—in six categories at every price point. (We won't quibble with AAA's choices, but would of course make some different ones here and there.) Additional vehicle information and pricing can be found at AAA.com/AutoMaker and AAA.com/AutoBuying.

Small Cars

CHEVROLET CRUZE ECO

From the Cavalier to the Cobalt to the Cruze, each generation of compact Chevrolet vehicle has been an improvement from the previous, and the Cruze is no exception. AAA Auto Buying experts tested the "Eco" version with a six-speed manual transmission, which is the non-hybrid gasoline fuel economy leader in its size category. It also received a five-star overall rating in the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) more stringent new crash test program. AAA found the Cruze Eco to be a good value with impressive fuel economy, making it a smart pick for road trip lovers on a budget. For those looking to take more than two on their road trip, the Cruze lacks rear cup holders and a center armrest, and the rear seat may be cramped for tall passengers. The TrueCar national average selling price of the Chevrolet Cruze "Eco" is \$18,837, 1.8 percent (or \$338) less than the MSRP.

FORD FOCUS

A definite improvement over the previous version, the new 2012 Ford Focus drives very nicely with above average ride and handling. Fuel economy and engine performance also are very good and highway cruising is impressively quiet for the small car field, making it a top pick for road trips. As with other cars in the category, it's ideal for two travelers, as the backseat can be a bit cramped. The TrueCar national average selling price of the 2012 Ford Focus is \$16,896, 2.3 percent (or \$399) less than the MSRP.

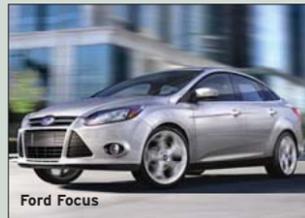
KIA SOUL

For those looking to express themselves a bit more while on the road, AAA Auto Buying experts like the funky looks of the Kia Soul and its practicality, as well. Reviewers found little to fault with the Soul, which offers a 10-year/100,000

mile warranty, 30-mpg fuel economy and is a Top Safety Pick from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS). The Soul also received a five-star crash test rating from NHTSA. The TrueCar



Chevrolet Cruze



Ford Focus



Kia Soul

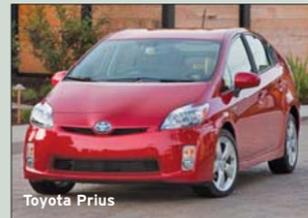
(or \$1,824) less than the MSRP.

TOYOTA PRIUS

The Toyota Prius is a road trip top pick because it's roomy, comfortable and eco-



Ford Fusion



Toyota Prius



Hyundai Sonata

national average selling price of the Kia Soul is \$16,759, 2.5 percent (or \$431) less than the MSRP.

Medium Cars

FORD FUSION

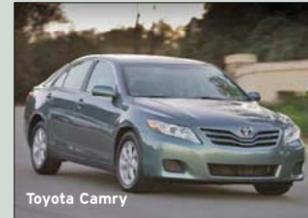
The Ford Fusion is a well-rounded vehicle. Its engine performance, ride and handling are all very good, and the hybrid version can produce exceptional fuel economy. As an added bonus, all-wheel drive is an option, which should make the car more appealing for those who enjoy wintertime road trips in certain parts of the country. The downside found by AAA Auto Buying experts is that the four-cylinder engine could be more refined. The TrueCar national average selling price of the Ford Fusion is \$18,821, currently selling for 8.8 percent

nomical. The hatchback design makes for exceptional flexibility, as well. The hybrid drivetrain sips fuel, and with careful driving, it can push fuel economy well past 50 mpg. However, for those who love engaging and sporty vehicles for their road trips, the Prius may not be the right choice. It's a secure and predictable ride, but not engaging to drive. The TrueCar national average selling price for the Toyota Prius is \$24,876, which is 2.5 percent (or \$596) above the MSRP. Increased demand due to higher gas prices and lowered supply of the Prius make it the only vehicle on AAA's list currently to be selling for more than its MSRP, according to TrueCar pricing information.

HYUNDAI SONATA

AAA Auto Buying experts found the

Hyundai Sonata to be an excellent performer from any perspective. The ride is comfortable and controlled, the handling is highly predictable and the four-cylinder engine delivers both good perform-



Toyota Camry



Dodge Charger



Infiniti G37

ance and good fuel economy. For those planning a road trip with taller passengers in the back seat, the swooping roof cuts into rear seat headroom as well as rear visibility. The TrueCar national average selling price for the Hyundai Sonata is \$20,572, 2.7 percent (or \$573) less than the MSRP.

Large Cars

TOYOTA CAMRY / AVALON

These cars share a platform and a V6 engine. The Camry also offers four-cylinder power, which should be sufficient for most drivers. The cabins are roomy, with the Avalon offering exceptional rear seat comfort, good for those taking multiple passengers on a road trip. Fuel economy with the V6 when on the open road is surprisingly good.

While both have solid handling, neither car is engaging to drive for travelers seeking a little extra from their driving experience. The TrueCar national average selling price for the Toyota Camry is \$20,668, 6.1 percent (or \$1,337) less than the MSRP.

CHRYSLER 300 / DODGE CHARGER

Much improved for 2011, the Chrysler 300 and Dodge Charger (built on the same platform) offer a surprising amount of room, a comfortable and well-controlled ride and good handling. Interior treatments are noticeably upgraded, as well. The new 3.6-liter V6 engine provides adequate power and reasonable fuel economy. However, AAA Auto Buying experts report rear visibility is still an issue, though forward visibility for overhead traffic lights has been improved from previous model years. The TrueCar national average selling price for the Dodge Charger is \$24,803, 5.4 percent (or \$1,417) less than the MSRP.

INFINITI G37

AAA Auto Buying Experts agree the Infiniti G37 is one of the most engaging driving experiences, with sharp handling and a powerful 328-horsepower V6. It also comes loaded with standard features and excellent safety ratings. For road trippers, the interior is a bit snug and the ride might be too firm for some, depending on their personal preference and road surface conditions. The TrueCar national average selling price of the Infiniti G37 is \$33,894, which is 7.6 percent (or \$2,801) less than the MSRP.

Minivans

HONDA ODYSSEY

The Honda Odyssey is big, but the driver does not have to put up with an unwieldy vehicle, as its handling is surprisingly good. As for space, this minivan can carry a large family with ease. Optional split-screen entertainment also can keep rear seat passengers entertained during long trips. The TrueCar national average selling price for the Honda Odyssey is \$30,777, three percent (or \$953) less than MSRP.

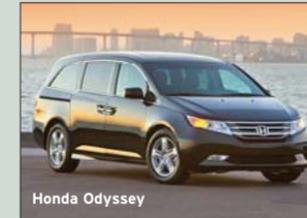
TOYOTA SIENNA

Big, comfortable and inviting, the Toyota Sienna has many features to put it on the "top picks for road trips" list. The ride is comfortable and quiet, while the V6 engine performs impressively. AAA

Auto Buying experts reported that the Sienna's handling is not the best in the class and the interior is not as polished as some road trip fans may prefer. The TrueCar national average selling price for the Toyota Sienna is \$24,209, 6.4 percent (or \$1,661) less than MSRP.

CHRYSLER TOWN & COUNTRY / DODGE GRAND CARAVAN

Much improved with a mid-cycle freshening, these vans come with a standard array of useful safety features including a backup camera plus cross traffic and blind spot alerts. The Stow 'n Go seats are unparalleled for convenience, and the ride and handling are quite good in the new model. The vans can be a great



Honda Odyssey



Toyota Sienna



Chrysler Town & Country

SUVs

DODGE DURANGO

The new platform for the Dodge Durango, which it shares with the Jeep Grand Cherokee, is very good. Its ride and handling are well above average, and the new 3.6-liter V6 is more than capable of delivering power when needed. Rear seat room is up to the challenge of handling six-foot passengers. The main drawback to the Durango is its below-class-average fuel economy. The TrueCar national

SUVs

DODGE DURANGO

average selling price for the Dodge Durango is \$27,347, nine percent (or \$2,698) less than MSRP.

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SUBARU FORESTER

Easy to drive, comfortable and budget-friendly (at least in its basic though still well-equipped trim levels), the Forester is ideal for longer trips. Its ride and handling are good, and the base engine performance is more than sufficient for family use. The only downside is that its fuel economy is average for the vehicle category. The TrueCar national average selling price for the Subaru Forester is \$21,513, 5.3 percent (or \$1,207) less than MSRP.



Dodge Durango



Subaru Forester



Toyota RAV4

TOYOTA RAV4

Good ride, good handling and good room make the Toyota RAV4 an excellent extended drive vehicle. The V6 is much more powerful than the four-cylinder motor, yet fuel economy seems not to suffer much with the upgrade. One downside noted by AAA Auto Buying experts is the location of the rear door hinge at the side, rather than the top, which can complicate access to the cargo area. The TrueCar national average selling price for the Toyota RAV4 is \$22,150, 4.9 percent (or \$1,135) less than MSRP.

Fun Cars

PORSCHE BOXSTER / CAYMAN

There are few cars that offer a better blend of handling and engine performance. The Porsche Boxster and Cayman

are not the fastest, but they are quick enough to be thoroughly entertaining on a road trip—especially those that might include some winding roads. As with most of the "fun" picks, there is only room for two, and the Porsches' split trunks limit packing options [or increase them—Ed]. The TrueCar national average selling price for the Porsche Boxster is \$47,022, 4.1 percent (or \$2,028) less than MSRP.

CHEVROLET CORVETTE

Great handling and power are the high-lights of the Chevrolet Corvette that can make it a fun car for a road trip. As with other sports cars, travelers will need to pack light and leave the kids at



Porsche Boxster



Chevrolet Corvette



Volkswagen GTI

home for road trips in this American classic. The TrueCar national average selling price for the Chevrolet Corvette is \$45,156, 9.7 percent (or \$4,839) less than the MSRP.

VOLKSWAGEN GTI

The Volkswagen GTI may be the best overall compromise in the "fun-to-drive" category. It is roomy enough to be practical, while the ride is surprisingly supple considering its handling. The interior is nicely designed and put together. While a good compromise of room and fun, the back seat is still a tight fit for adults if taking a longer road trip. The TrueCar national average selling price for the Volkswagen GTI is \$26,187, 5.3 percent (or \$1,478) less than MSRP. ■