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Close your eyes and imagine the powdery snow of the Swiss Alps beneath your skis while the scent of pine trees tickles your nose. Imagine medieval castles on hillsides blanketed in grape vineyards along the Rhine Gorge. Envision yourself at the top of the Eiffel Tower or the Leaning Tower of Pisa. A comforting breeze adds to the ambiance as you stand under a blue sky dotted with puffy, white clouds or twinkling stars that illuminate the clear nighttime heavens. Look out

*continued on pg 21*



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The Department of Homeland Security extended the REAL ID deadline to May 7, 2025. The REAL ID Act established minimum security standards for state-issued driver's licenses and identification cards and prohibits Federal agencies from accepting for official purposes licenses and identification cards from states that do not meet these standards. Beginning May 7, 2025, every state and territory resident will need to present a REAL ID compliant license/ID, or another acceptable form of ID for boarding commercial aircraft, accessing Federal facilities and entering nuclear plants. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) considers a current passport or military ID acceptable identification for boarding an aircraft. For more information on Pennsylvania's REAL ID compliant license, visit [dmv.pa.gov/REALID/Pages/default.aspx](http://dmv.pa.gov/REALID/Pages/default.aspx).

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**Turn to page 9 for more information.**









# Don't assume other driver will stop after crash

## What motorists should do if they're victims of a hit-and-run

By Robin Jones

**Y**ou're driving on a busy highway when you notice a speeding car coming up quickly behind you. It's zigzagging between lanes, narrowly missing other cars. Before you can react, it catches up with you – and clips your car's rear end.

Momentarily stunned, you ask if your passengers are OK, and you start to pull to the side of the road. Then, you get a second shock: The perpetrator is racing away, clearly with no intention of stopping to exchange insurance information.

That's when you realize you're the victim of a hit-and-run driver. At this point, you know the normal post-crash procedures don't necessarily apply. But how can you make sure your insurance claim goes smoothly? Keep the following tips in mind:

**DO** pull over to a safe place and write down as much information about the other driver and the collision as you can remember. Some or all of the other driver's license plate would be great. But even the other car's make, model and color can help, along with the direction it was headed and any damage the car might have sustained.

**DO** take pictures of your car and



**CAN'T STAY** – A driver reacts after seeing the damage done to her vehicle after a hit-and-run accident. Image: pathdoc. Adobe Stock.

the area in which the crash occurred if it is safe to do so. Time-stamped photos of the road and weather conditions, as well as traffic flow, can assist with your claim.

**DO** ask any witnesses to describe what they saw, and write down their testimony, names and contact information, so that your claims adjuster

can contact them, if necessary.

**DO** call the police. If the damage is minor or no one is injured, the police might not come to the crash scene. However, your auto insurance policy might require you to notify the police of any hit-and-run accident. If that's the case, be sure to file a police report, whether at the scene,

by phone or at the police station.

**DO** report the collision accurately when you call your insurer. Intentionally misrepresenting facts about an accident could lead to a suspicion of fraud. Insurance companies are able to easily recognize whether a vehicle came into contact with another vehicle and whether it was in motion when it sustained damage.

In many cases, either the victim, a witness or a surveillance camera can supply enough information for the police to find the fleeing driver. If a hit-and-run driver is caught, he or she could face these serious penalties: fines up to \$10,000 and prison time, depending on the severity of the damage or injuries caused by the crash. Plus, the DMV could put points on the driver's license; the driver's insurer, if he or she has one, could cancel coverage; and anyone injured in the accident could sue.

**DON'T** play detective and chase the other car. You might be tempted to try to get the license-plate number for your claim, but that could result in unsafe driving and worsen the situation. Remember: As long as you have the appropriate coverage, your insurance company should assist in repairing your car.

# Annual new vehicles costs rise above \$12K

## Record prices, 90% increase in finance rates drive numbers

**T**he yearly cost to drive a motor vehicle continues to rise.

AAA's Your Driving Costs – a data source for expenses associated with owning and operating a new vehicle – finds that the average cost of owning and operating a new vehicle in 2023 increased significantly. The annual expense of \$12,182 – or \$1,015 monthly – is a sharp increase from 2022, when the average cost topped at \$10,728 – \$894 monthly.

"It's important for car buyers to clearly understand the costs associated with owning a new vehicle," said Greg Brannon, AAA's director of automotive research. "Due to global supply-chain issues and constrained inventory of new vehicles, car prices rose dramatically in 2022. And while the situation continues to improve, the spillover effects are keeping prices high."

The overall average manufacturer's suggested retail price (MSRP) of new vehicles in 2023 increased to \$34,976 – an annual increase of \$1,575 from the previous year. It's important to note that MSRP does not always correspond to a consumer's actual purchase price and might vary depending on demand. A higher sticker price directly impacted finance costs, with vehicles boasting an average annual finance of \$1,253 – a 90% increase from the previous year.



**MONEYPIT** – The cost to own a new car in 2023 rose to above \$12,000.

Image: pavel\_shishkin. Adobe Stock.

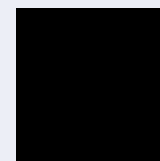
The change in the annual cost of owning a new vehicle also is likely driven by:

- Depreciation, which is the difference between the car's value upon purchase and the value of the car when sold. According to 2023's YDC projections, new vehicles are expected to depreciate by an average of \$4,538 per year over five years of ownership – up 22% from 2022.
- The jump in **new vehicle** prices compared to used-vehicle values that have experienced a decline in the past year.

- Automakers have focused on producing more oversized, luxurious and expensive vehicles loaded with extra features that increase prices even more.

Compared to 2022, fuel ranked among one of the higher **annual cost** categories. The average cost per miles in 2023 decreased roughly 2 cents per mile. Meanwhile, the cost of charging EVs increased by nearly 2 cents per kWh from 2022. It went from 13.9 cents per kWh to 15.8 cents. The increase is likely accounted for by higher-than-expected inflation, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Your Driving Costs Online Calculator



Or visit [AAA.com/AutoRepair/DrivingCosts](https://www.aaa.com/AutoRepair/DrivingCosts)

Given their size, fuel economy and prices, it should come as no surprise that half-ton pickups have the highest average driving costs among all vehicle categories covered in the YDC study. Pickup trucks excel at hauling and towing, although many buyers don't use them for these purposes. Potential buyers should be aware that the unique capabilities of pickups come at a high cost of more than \$1 per mile.

The pickup market has slowed over the past 12 months, with gas prices trending higher and financial costs climbing.

"The once popular pickup truck is now seeing a slight decline in demand as these vehicles have become increasingly expensive, rivaling the price of many luxury cars," said Brannon. "As interest rates continue to climb, this adds a layer of expense per month that consumers should consider when shopping for their next vehicle."



SERENITY NOW – AmaWaterways ship *AmaSerena* exceeds expectations in all categories. Image: AmaWaterways.

# AmaWaterways ship sits at top of class

## *AmaSerena* exceeds high standards on storied Rhine River

It's easy to equate massive ocean-liner ships with cruising. The Pacific, Atlantic and Caribbean quickly come to mind. Vessels are the size of cities and carry the population to match.

Cruising, however, represents an evolving market that is growing on smaller waterways. The interest in river cruising has increased significantly the past two decades. And it's not difficult to learn why.

Ships sail on many of the world's most historic rivers. They glide peacefully on the Rhine, Danube, Seine and Moselle, to name a few. They visit myriad countries that have more stories to tell than Shakespeare. Learn about medieval times. Experience new cultures and witness indelible sights that will burnish your mind, strengthen your soul and meet any expectation.

AmaWaterways, meanwhile, plays a leading role in river cruising's climb in popularity. Its 26 ships sail throughout Europe and parts of Africa and Asia.

It's vessels have few peers and share wonderful characteristics.

They're luxurious but not gaudy. Cozy but not crowded. Peaceful but not quiet. And relaxing but never boring.

*AmaSerena* sits among its finest ships. Its stylish design quickly grabs your attention. Doors slide open upon arrival. The marble floor and gold hand railings sparkle. A glass-encased elevator adds to the ambiance. It's an intimate setting that personifies AmaWaterway's commitment to providing the best amenities.

Built in 2015, the 443-foot-long vessel offers 81 staterooms that can accommodate 162 passengers. Spacious rooms provide comfortable living quarters. A balcony enhances the openness. Pour a glass of wine, have a seat and absorb the changing landscapes of the Rhine River while sailing from Switzerland to the Netherlands.

*AmaSerena* has multiple places in which to dine. Enjoy breakfast, lunch and dinner while seated in its elegant dining room. Tables and booths uniquely populate an expansive hall that keeps guests from feeling crowded. Windows offer spectacular views of the water.



Image: AmaWaterways.

Delectable aromas waft from a kitchen comprised of fine-dining chefs.

Reserve a seat to experience the Chef's Table feast in a dining area located on the third floor. The room's sprawling windows offer spectacular views. Sit, mingle with fellow cruisers and enjoy a seven-course meal paired with a variety of wines.

Guests also can enjoy bistro meals in the lounge – the ship's main gathering place. It's a hotspot – the cool place to be. Comfy sofas, tables and a bar envelop an area designed specifically to be the ship's entertainment hub.

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The river never has seemed more enticing to cruisers. More are learning that traveling small doesn't mean settling for less.

It exceeds expectations.

Happy hour begins by early evening before dinner. This sacred time of day is highlighted by wine and a drink of the day. Libations flow and conversations spark. Comforting music strums from the hands of a piano player.



Image: AmaWaterways.

### Champion Ship

#### Facts about *AmaSerena*:

|                          |          |
|--------------------------|----------|
| Year built.....          | 2015     |
| Length.....              | 443 feet |
| Width.....               | 38 feet  |
| Staterooms .....         | 81       |
| Passenger capacity ..... | 162      |

Source: AmaWaterways

*AmaSerena* has a small library that serves as a sitting place. A workout facility allows guests to exercise, yoga classes are taught in the lounge each morning and spa services also are available.

A pool on the sundeck boasts a swim-up bar. Walk or jog on the outdoor track. Play chess on an oversized board topped by large pieces. Or have a seat and appreciate unrivaled scenery.

It's a remarkable lineup built on the shoulders of a remarkable staff. The ship's amiable captain converses with guests. His crew works diligently to keep the ship moving and docking safely and on schedule. The cruise and hotel managers are gems. Peerless greeters, chefs, servers, bartenders and housekeepers work congruently to guarantee guests have memorable trips for all the right reasons.

The river never has seemed more enticing to cruisers. More are learning that traveling small doesn't mean settling for less.

make text even with column next to it

# Destin leading destination on panhandle

## Northwest Florida beach town chock full of entertainment

**I**t's not easy to get a grip on Florida's panhandle when planning a trip to the Sunshine State.

It often is overlooked – not by any fault of its own. Florida is synonymous with Walt Disney World™, Space Coast, the keys and a myriad of beaches located on its east and west coasts.

Let's face it, Florida is a vacationer's utopia, making it easy to understand how some locations might not get the love they deserve.

But the panhandle shouldn't be ignored. It's comprised of a number of beach towns, including Pensacola, Navarre and Panama City – all destinations worth a visit. But Destin might be the crowning jewel of Florida's little area that could.

Destin is located on the southwest part of the panhandle on Florida's Emerald Coast, a name that originates from its beautiful, clear green water. The beaches are softer than a country club's fairways, and the atmosphere will have you wondering why it took so long to find this wonderful beach town.

Crab Island is Destin's hallmark attraction. It's only accessible by boat and encompasses approximately four acres. There are plenty of activities, but visitors are recommended to relax, and enjoy the atmosphere and natural beauty.

Enjoy tasty treats from mobile-



**PANHANDLE PLAYGROUND** – Steps lead down to a pristine beach in Destin.

*Image: digidreamgrafix. Adobe Stock.*

food boats and floating restaurants. Snorkel, paddleboard, kayak or just sit back and watch the dolphins and other marine life dancing through the Gulf of Mexico.

Destin Commons is a shopping district. More than 90 businesses line the quaint brick roads, giving it a town-like ambiance. It has 500,000-square feet of retail stores, bars and restaurants. It provides a

southern charm for a sun-bathing beach bum.

HarborWalk Village is a bustling hub of entertainment. Guests can take a cruise to dolphin watch, ride in a glass-bottomed boat, take a sunset cruise or board a pirate ship. Enjoy the freshest seafood on the panhandle **after** day of wave-running, kayaking or snorkeling. Rise above the heavens while parasailing, ziplining

and rock climbing. Book a helicopter ride to view Destin from new heights. It's enough to boost your adrenaline, while creating unforgettable experiences.

Soft, sugar-white sand awaits at nearby Henderson State Park, a one-mile beach that offers a stark contrast to the emerald-green water and brilliantly colored **sunsets**. Dunes stretch as high as 30 feet in height.

Among nature parks in Destin, it's the last stretch of coastal-dune terrain and a prime spot for ecotourism. Sand pines, scrub oak and sea oats are scattered along the landscape. Wildlife includes rabbits and gopher tortoise on land; herons and sandpipers near shore; and dolphins and sea turtles in the gulf. Migrating monarch butterflies arrive during the fall. Hikers can follow a trail that peaks on a dune.

And don't forget about fishing. Destin is called the "World's Luckiest Fishing Village." Destin Fishing Fleet has more than 250 boats waiting to be chartered. It's one of the largest fleets in the U.S. Reserve a private-group charter or join a shared excursion. The experiences are customizable, choosing from four-hour trips to overnight adventures.

So get a grip on Florida's panhandle. It's destined to satisfy your wanderlust and leave you wondering what took you so long to discover it.





















## Tips From a AAA Travel Advisor: Autumn Long

# Costa Rica stands out among destinations

## Resorts, beaches, sights make Caribbean location a winner



**AAA Travel Advisor:**  
**Autumn Long**

**A**fter working for US Airways, TSA and Southwest, I was looking for a career change after the pandemic. Travel is my passion, so I accepted a position as a AAA Travel Advisor. What is my favorite destination? The three I's: Ireland, Ireland, Ireland.

But the most popular vacations I book daily are trips to warm destinations like Mexico, the Caribbean and Costa Rica! This September, I was happy to return to Costa Rica with a coach full of travel professionals to do hotel site inspections. Seeing so many properties first-hand provided invaluable insights when recommending properties to our members.

We flew into Liberia airport and stayed at the Secrets Papagayo Resort – a stunning all-inclusive property with lush gardens on the gulf. The resort is large and hilly with a black-sand beach. It's a great getaway for clients who want an adults-only resort. It's a large spread-out property, not suitable if you have mobility issues. We also toured the nearby



**BEACH BUM** – Palm trees, nicely manicured landscaping and a pristine beach hug the blue waters of the Caribbean Sea in Costa Rica. *Image: Autumn Long. AAA*

Planet Hollywood, which is an all-ages getaway with a party atmosphere.

Farther north, we toured Dreams Las Mareas in popular Guanacaste near the tropical rainforest. Dreams caters to couples and families. Rooms are decorated with natural-wood tones to complement the natural landscape. It was easy to get around and the property had a white-sand beach. My favorite resort experience was watching the loveable monkeys swinging high in the Guanacaste trees. Nearby

activities included whitewater rafting and hiking in the rainforest.

Also in Guanacaste is the Westin Reserve Conchal, a golf and tennis resort with a lagoon-style pool. It's a quieter resort and it provides golf carts. The only downside to me was the vendors on the beach, but the shoppers liked it! Next door is the upscale W Hotel Reserva Conchal, with its unique rooms, including the stunning Sunset Treehouse Room, with views of the mangrove forest

from your private balcony!

What was my favorite and most unexpected experience? Tamarindo. We toured the Tamarindo Diria – one of the most iconic beach resorts. This charming resort is on Costa Rica's most famous beach, so you can enjoy 1.8 miles of white sand just a few steps from your room.

My choice for romance, celebrations and honeymoons is the Casa Chameleon at Las Catalinas. The rooms are spacious with plunge pools and the food is out of this world. They also have a wine cellar.

We toured the Mistico Hanging Bridges and did a Jungle cruise, but my sightseeing highlight was seeing Arenal Volcano and the Hot Springs. Arenal Springs Resort and Spa is an active resort with an animal sanctuary, rock-climbing wall, and river for rafting and tubing, along with the hot springs. My overall favorite hot-spring experience was at the Tabacon Thermal Resort and Spa. The hotel was separate from the spring down the road. The property was huge with dozens of pools.

My tips for your trip are to bring B.D.P – Bug Spray, Dramamine and Patience. The road infrastructure is winding and some are gravel and rough. It takes longer than expected to get where you are going. And do a guided tour, so your guide can navigate the roads and point out the animals along the way!

# Scotland's islands more than window dressing

## Natural beauty, history comes to life on country's army of isles

**I**t could be called the "Land of 1,000 Islands" and it wouldn't be a stretch. That's Scotland, the United Kingdom country that has more than 790 offshore islands – nearly 100 inhabited.

Island hopping isn't a cliché in Scotland; it's a sport. But these aren't your typical isles. They're home to rocky, weather-beaten coasts, white beaches, rugged mountains, heather-clad moorland and tranquil inland lochs.

Most of these islands share unique personalities. They have stories to tell anyone who's willing to stop by and listen.

Whisky is synonymous with the Isle of Islay. Coveted by connoisseurs for its peaty, smoky flavor, it's a rare treat. The island houses nine distilleries, including Lagavulin and Ardbeg, which translates from the Gaelic term for a "dark and mysterious place."

The Laphroaig distillery offers "Water to Whisky Experience," a 4.5-hour tour that includes visiting the water source and tasting from a selection of casks. The Gaelic term for whisky is "Uisge Beatha" or "water of life."

The Isle of Lewis is home to Lews Castle that presides over Stornoway.



**OLD COUNTRY** – Skara Brae is a 5,000-year-old village on the Scottish island of Orkney. *Image: Vincentco64. Adobe Stock.*

It's the largest island in the Outer Hebrides. The Standing Stones of Calanais date 5,000 years and centerpiece the ritual landscape. Winds rage around this northern headland, making it the windiest spot in the U.K.

Majestic cliffs and sea stacks populate Orkney's coastline, including the striking Old Man of Hoy. Skara Brae is a 5,000-year-old village and

the best-preserved Neolithic site in Western Europe. Skara Brae thrived as a community well before the building of Stonehenge or the Egyptian pyramids. Stone walls, passageways and stone furnishings – including beds and dressers – remain intact.

Skara Brae is part of the Heart of Orkney World Heritage Site. It's joined by Maeshowe, a chambered tomb,

the Stones of Stenness and the Ring of Brodgar. Guests can explore the Viking Cathedral that dominates the skyline of Kirkwall, Orkney's ancient capital.

Scotland meets Scandinavia and the North Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean in Shetland. Partially submerged ancient hills formed archipelago's series of islands. Thousands of sea caves, open sandy bays and sheltered sea lochs are onsite. Words from the Old Norse language are preserved not only in placenames but also in Shetland dialect that is used daily. Shetland ponies can be seen throughout the islands – grazing by roadside or on the heathery hills.

Cuillin – the isle of Skye – is famous for its breathtaking scenery. Dramatic sea cliffs and towering slopes define its personality. Named "Cloud Island" in Old Norse, it's the largest of the Inner Hebrides and the most popular island with visitors. Mealt waterfall cascades 180 feet, highlighting gorgeous scenery. Neist Point Lighthouse stands watch over the island's western tip near Glendale.

Scotland might better be named "Scotlands". It's a country blessed with history and an island waiting to tell a story.

# Unique roads rumble to different tunes

## Singing highways come to life in California, New Mexico

**M**usic plays an integral role in our driving experiences – especially on road trips. Tunes spice up the route. Dialing to your favorite radio station or synching your smartphone has you jamming to your favorite singers and bands.

It's an ideal way to pass the time, but have you ever thought of the road providing the melodies? Only a few highways in the world offer this unique opportunity and two of them are in the U.S.

Singing highways make literal symphonies from streets. It seems impossible, but careful planning and mathematics make this possible. It's not magic; it's science.

Music is the result of vibrations. The speed of those vibrations dictates how sound waves are interpreted through the human ear. Certain speeds correlate specific notes on the scale. For example, 330 vibrations per second translates into an E note.

It sounds simple, but to reproduce them on the treads of tires involves more work. The rubber wheels are triggered by rumble strips – bumps that warn sleepy drivers to remain alert – and spacing them in a particular way produces the proper vibrational pattern to register a specific pitch.

Other automotive factors come



**TUNED IN** – Legendary Route 66 in New Mexico is one of two roads in the U.S. that includes a singing highway. Image: trekandphoto. Adobe Stock.

into play to make the roads sing. Tire size makes a difference in sound quality and – just as music – timing and speed play leading roles in success.

Ingenuity comes to life. Engineers choose a speed at which they assume a vehicle will pass over the strips. A vehicle traveling 45 mph will require

330 strips per second to hear an E note – or one rumble strip every 2.4 inches.

The effort is dizzying but the payoff is priceless. It brings a new sense to sightseeing.

The U.S.'s dueling highways can be found in California and New Mexico.

Rather than competing pianos, it's more like repeating rumble strips.

Lancaster, California's Avenue G is a nondescript trip of road about 90 minutes northwest of Los Angeles. It's the first of its kind in the U.S.

The highway sings the "William Tell Overture." Honda tuned it up in 2008 as part of a marketing campaign.

Travelers are warned of the oncoming song about a mile from the strips, which are located between the town's 30th and 40th Street West. Motorists should take the left-hand lane and maintain a speed 55 mph for the best results.

Meanwhile, New Mexico's Route 66 has its own roadway opus along a 490-yard section located between markers 4 and 5, between Albuquerque and Tijeras.

Completed in 2014, it's more tuned than California's road, playing the ending of "America the Beautiful" for drivers who find themselves motoring along the rumble strips.

Drivers are warned of the queued-up tune from about a mile away and speed plays a key role in hearing the correct notes. The song plays perfectly at 45 mph.

Perhaps the next singing road to be constructed could be named "Tom Cochrane Road".

"Life is a Highway" certainly would be a fitting tune.

# AAA analysis underscores car seat safety

## Data reveal nearly half of kids injured not properly secured

**N**ew analysis from AAA examined five years of crash data from the U.S. Department of Transportation and points to a lack of proper child-restraint use among children injured or killed in car crashes.

The results of this analysis, released by AAA and car seat leader Chicco USA, uncovered that nearly half (48%) of children ages 10 and younger who were injured and half (51%) who were killed in car crashes were using a vehicle seat belt prematurely or no restraint instead of a car seat.

Families spend a significant amount of time on the road and, from 2017-21, more than 3.9 million children ages 10 and younger were involved in crashes while riding in a vehicle, 527,000 were injured and 2,789 were killed.

"AAA's in-depth analysis of crash data has brought to light safety issues that concern us, and we're in a position to help by sharing our expert resources about car seat safety use factors such as proper seat installation, type of seat and mode of use at each stage of child growth," said William Hasse, vice president of marketing, Chicco USA.

Infant seats, boosters and seatbelts will effectively protect young passengers when used properly. The U.S. Department of Transportation found



**STRAP IN** – Children dying or injured during car crashes often were not properly secured in the vehicle. Image: Sergey. Adobe Stock.

that child restraints reduce fatalities by 71% for infants younger than 1 and by 54% of children 1 to 4 years old in passenger cars.

According to AAA's analysis, the most recent data from the DoT reflects a need for parents to ensure they are using the correct child-restraint system for each phase of growth. Chicco

Child Passenger Safety Technician Josh Dilts offers the following advice for families:

**Don't skip the booster phase** – The data decreased by more than half in car seat use from age 7 to age 8, an age that saw significant injuries reported. Many parents must not know that seat-belt fit is more about the child's height

than age (many state laws focus on age only). Based on their size, children upwards of 10 years old may benefit from using a booster seat. Most booster seats accommodate children as tall as 57 inches.

**Children should always use a restraint when riding in vehicles** – Shifting from a car seat to a vehicle seatbelt too early isn't the only issue. Nearly four in 10 children, ages 7-10, killed in a car crash, were completely unrestrained and, of the youngest children (ages newborn-3), nearly one in four who were killed were unrestrained. Chicco's Dilts notes that the use of restraints, which is defined by this dataset as not using a car seat, booster seat, seat belt or strapped into the vehicle in any manner, is alarming.

"Parents should be diligent in ensuring their child is properly restrained in the car before it is in motion, especially if the child is not old enough to secure themselves," said Dilts.

**Use available resources** – Chicco offers the most recent car seat guidelines, installation tutorials and caregiver FAQs on ChiccoUSA.com. Local fire departments often have a child passenger safety technician on hand who can check if your car seat is correctly installed. For more resources, visit AAA.com.

## Travel Showcase

continued from page 1

and witness France or Italy saying hello and welcoming you.

No destination is out of reach at the Pittsburgh Travel Showcase™! Engulf yourself in one of the Destination Theaters and absorb the experience. Experts don't only tell you about the destinations, they tap into their own travel experience and give you an insider's look at your next cruise, all-inclusive resort, train excursion, safari, group tour or a host of other options that you're waiting to check off your Bucket List.

The theaters include videos and vendors who will have you dripping with fervor to book your next vacation. Wanderlust is alive and kicking at the Pittsburgh Travel Showcase™, and AAA Travel will be sure that it's satisfied.

At the Travel Showcase™, the canals of Venice and Amsterdam will seem like they are only a gondolier away. The midnight sun of Iceland is lighting the path to fjords, lagoons and waterfalls. Fields of purple Alaskan lupine and unique, friendly villages help make this island a rising star among destination hotspots.

Barcelona, Budapest, London, Dublin, Berlin, Rome, Paris, Copenhagen, Lucerne, Strasbourg ... The list goes on and on and on, and the Travel Showcase™ is here to make sure each and every adjective will be available to describe these wonderful places down to the very last detail.

Don't forget about Asia, Africa, Australia and Antarctica. These places alone are premier Bucket List destinations, and we haven't even gotten out of the A's! Questions abound; the Pittsburgh Travel Showcase™ has the answers.

Indulge your imagination. You're on the high seas or a famous river. A luxury cruise on the Mediterranean will have you witnessing first-hand the Ancient Greek Ruins. A river cruise will put you on the Rhine, Danube or Nile.

And not all top destinations are outside of the United States of America. How does Hawaii sound? How about Alaska? Maybe California?

Whet your palate on a trip through Wine Country in Northern California. Tour by train, bus or rented vehicle. Also at the Travel Showcase™, learn about what America's national parks have to offer. Utah is home to Moab and Arches National Park. It's a red-rock wonderland that sits in the foreground of the snowcapped Rockies. Geysers let off steam by the hour in Yellowstone. The sightings of elk, bison, bears, moose and a bevy of other animals enhance the experience. Mount Rushmore is a majestic stone portrait of history in South Dakota. See the northern lights at Montana's Glacier National Park or Denali National Park and Reserve in Alaska, where you'll witness the highest point in North America.

Train excursions barrel through the Rocky Mountains. The scenery lights up your senses. A desolate barn may rest in the untouched snow of an abandoned field. Mountains rest in the background and a calm lake snuggles with the front door. The hilltops reflect off the water.

How's that for variety? It's a time to recharge your curiosity to travel to all of these destinations, and many more! The Pittsburgh Travel Showcase™ will guide you in the right direction.

Plan a destination wedding. Imagine tying the knot while standing barefoot in the soft sand of the Caribbean or Hawaii. Or how about under the bright lights of Las Vegas? Or a cruise ship – the moon dotting the sky while you exchange vows on the top deck?

Group tours could take you through the dashing surroundings of the Canadian Rockies by motorcoach. There's even a motorcoach onsite for you to examine, sit in and dream about riding through the parts

of the world that you never imagined would be possible.

For cruisers, Regent, Azamara and Silversea rank among the finest lines in the world. Journese by Pleasant Holidays unlocks a treasure chest of opulence that will take you to all corners of the globe, and vendors will be on hand to tell you about your options.

The impressive roster of vendors at the Pittsburgh Travel Showcase™ includes AAA Member Choice Vacations, AmaWaterways, Amtrak Vacations/Railbookers, Anderson Madison County-East Central Indiana, Carnival Cruise Line Cayman Islands, Celebrity Cruises, CIE Tours, Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, Holland America Line, Jamaica Tourist Board, MSC Cruises USA; National Aviary, Norwegian Cruise Line, Pennsylvania's Laurel Highlands, Pleasant Holidays, Princess Cruises, Red Roof, Rocky Mountaineer, Sandals and Beaches Resorts, The Florida Keys & Key West, The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau, The National Comedy Center, Travel Resorts of America, TTC Tour Brands, Viking, Virginia Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau, Virgin Voyages, Visit Anchorage, Visit Clearfield County, VisitErie, Hurtigruten, Azamara, Royal Caribbean International, Regent Seven Seas, Integrity Construction & Windows, Iberostar Hotels & Resorts, Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance, Sight and Sound Theatres, Visit Hershey Harrisburg, LadyLedLuxury, Visit Tampa Bay, Visit Potter-Tioga, Majestic Resorts, Athens County, Convention & Visitors Bureau—Athens, Ohio, SoIN Tourism, Chautauqua-Allegheny Region, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Resort Sales by Spinnaker Inc., Palace Resorts, Nemaquin, Explora Journeys, RushMyPassport, New York State Tourism Industry Association, Camp Bow Wow, Allegheny National Forest Visitors Bureau, The Hertz Corporation, Allianz Travel, Karisma Hotels & Resorts, Visit Hagerstown

### GET SHOWCASE TICKETS!

To purchase admission tickets, visit [PittsburghTravelShowcase.com](http://PittsburghTravelShowcase.com). Tickets also will be available at the door. **Save \$2** with the special AAA discount coupon on **page 15**.

### VALUABLE PRIZES

Don't forget to register for great giveaways upon entering the Showcase. No purchase is necessary to win. Rules and restrictions will be available at the registration area. The prizes include:

1. 3-night Smokey Mountain Motorcoach tour from the Pittsburgh region. Retail value: as much as \$
2. \$1,000 AAA Travel Gift Certificate
3. 2 Delta Air Lines Tickets to any city in Florida from Pittsburgh

**PRIZE INFORMATION:** No purchase necessary. Must be 18 or older to win. Enter in person at the Pittsburgh Travel Showcase™ or mail a plain 3" x 5" postcard (with hand-printed first & last name, complete address and telephone number) to Pittsburgh Travel Showcase™ Drawing, AAA East Central, 5900 Baum Blvd, Pittsburgh PA 15206, to be received by Jan 19, 2024. Winners need not be present. Drawing will be held Jan 23, 2024. Winners will be notified by mail. No substitutions. Limit one entry per household. Odds of winning depend on number of eligible entries received. Sponsor owns all entries and has no liability for lost, delayed, incomplete or misdirected entries. All prizes will be awarded. Noncompliance with rules or fraud will result in disqualification. Decision of sponsor is final. Winners list can be obtained at above address through Feb. 23, 2024. Taxes on prize are responsibility of winner.

- 1) Sept. 7, 2024. One complete package as advertised for 2 adults sharing room. No cash value.
- 2) Certificate can not be reissued. There is no cash value. Reservations are subject to availability and must be submitted at least 45 days in advance. Valid towards a prepaid package or cruise.
- 3) For travel in 2024. Coach class. Must reserve 45 days in advance.

& Washington County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Lindblad Expeditions, Corning Museum of Glass.

Pack your bags and put in that PTO. Choose your destination and allow AAA Travel to take it from there.

# Italy is work of art waiting to be admired

## Style, splendor put it among world's top destinations

Italy lights up our senses. It's charming, romanticizing and stunning. Few places blend art, passion, food and sights better.

Italy feasts on our ambitions and turns them into reality. It meshes the sunny splendors of the "Bel Paese" (beautiful country) with architecture, culture and history. It's unparalleled zest for good living includes an unbridled obsession for delectable dishes and fine wine.

Simply put, there are as many ways to experience Italy as there are coins in the Trevi Fountain.

Tuscany is a region blessed by brilliance of nature and man. Olive groves and vineyards meander up rolling green slopes. Hill towns emanate a special glow under the evening sun, setting on a quiet hillside.

Italian Renaissance flourishes in Florence. Piazza Signoria housed Michelangelo's David for centuries. Today, it rests safely in the Accademia Gallery. Witness the towering belvedere from Piazza Signoria and Boboli Gardens. They offer sights that will sooth your senses and tell a story about one of the world's most unique countries.

The treasures of the Medici and other masterpieces like Botticelli's Birth of Venus and Leonardo da Vinci's Adoration of the Magi sit in Uffizi Gallery, a museum in the Historic Centre of Florence.

The town of Sorrento sits atop some



**THAT'S AMALFI** – Bright houses settle into a hillside in Positano on Italy's Amalfi Coast. Image: GISTEL. Adobe Stock.

of the Mediterranean's most breathtaking cliffs and crowns Italy's Amalfi Coast – royalty among shorelines in the Old Country. Absorb the stunning panoramas. Salerno is home to the Path of Gods and is a three-hour trek along a trail overlooking the Amalfi Coast, offering a magnificent view over Conca dei Marini.

The Isle of Capri is a ferry ride across the Bay of Naples. A celebrated retreat

since the Roman times, it's famous for the Blue Grotto – a sea cave, where the sunlight imparts an otherworldly blue glow to the water. The villa of Swedish doctor Axel Munthe offers wonderful views of the Bay of Naples and Vesuvius.

Amalfi drips in beauty throughout every morsel, but no place better than Positano. Sun-bleached homes come in subtle shades of pink, peach and ochre. They rise like dominoes on steeply

terraced streets.

Venice, meanwhile, is the Adriatic's "Bride of the Sea." Ride a vaporetto through canals to Byzantine Basilica, Doge's Palace and St. Mark's Square. Climb to St. Mark's Campanile – a bell-tower of St. Mark's Basilica – to spot the location where Galileo demonstrated his telescope in 1609. Lord Byron immortalized the "Bridge of Sighs" and connected the Doge's prisons with the Inquisitor's chambers. It's believed that sighs of the condemned prisoners inspired the name.

And cliché intended: All roads lead to Rome. The Baths of Caracalla mark the beginning of the Appian Way that boasts monuments like the Circus of Maxentius. The Arch of Titus watches over the Forum and offers sweeping views of the ruins on Palatine Hill.

By April, parks and gardens are overflowing with flowers. Villa Borghese, once a cardinal's private estate, is an oasis of formal gardens, lakes and winding pathways in the middle of the city.

Savor la dolce vita on the Via Veneto or linger over cappuccino in one of Piazza Navona's outdoor cafés. Piazza de Spagna gives way to the Spanish Steps, perhaps the most romantic rendezvous in the world.

Italy's attributes create a peerless masterpiece that is best experienced in person.

# Badlands is just too good to pass up

## South Dakota natural masterpiece opens minds and souls

Natural beauty doesn't get much better than at Badlands National Park.

A jewel in South Dakota, its incredible rock formations, expansive horizons and animals attract more than 1 million visitors annually. They arrive with high expectations and leave in awe.

Badlands is the result of millions of years of rock formations and erosions that have made it one of the most impressive environmental attractions in the U.S. The park's 244,000 acres protect an expanse of mixed-grass prairie that today are populated by bison, bighorn sheep, prairie dogs and black-footed ferrets. Many of the creatures roaming Badlands include some of the most endangered species in North America.

Badlands is nirvana for stargazers. The sky opens up at night. Its remote location and dearth of light pollution creates a perfectly dark palette to showcase the brightest stars. It's clarity reveals constellations, the moon, satellites and airplanes.

But the unique darkness allows visitors to see planets, the Milky Way, star clusters, nebulae, the International Space Station, shooting stars and occasionally the aurora borealis – aka the northern lights.

Badlands' natural wonders share similar splendor. Clastic Dikes are



**COMING TO LIFE** – The sun rises over the horizon of Badlands National Park.

*Image: Zak Zeinert. Adobe Stock.*

impossible to miss. They are vertical sheets of rock that crosscut the horizontal layers of the badlands. They normally are a different color than the surrounding rock, with tan, green and red shades most common. Many of the spectacular ridges and spires in the park are partially supported by clastic dikes.

Sod tables reside throughout the prairie land. These rarities are broken sections of grass and soil that sit atop badlands material. The different rates of erosion make it appear as if sod tables are springing out of the Badlands, where they actually are wearing away more slowly than the rock surrounding them.

Most archaeological sites found in Badlands have been discovered in sod tables, including those surrounding the Ancient Hunters Overlook. Tools, pottery, charcoal fragments and butchered bison bones from ancient inhabitants are preserved in the sod – some as long as 12,000 years.

Badlands Loop State Scenic Byway is recommended to visitors as the best way to tour the park. It's a two-lane, 31-mile stretch that passes through buttes, cliffs and multi-colored spires. Drive cautiously. Wildlife roam the area and could wander onto parts of the roadway.

The highway contains numerous passes, 15 overlooks and eight trails. Big Badlands Overlook and the Door, Window and Notch Trail are must-visit attractions, as well as Pinnacles Overlook and Yellow Mounds Overlook.

Badlands is home to one of the richest fossil beds in the world. Tourists can visit the Fossil Preparation Lab. Watch park paleontologists perform fossil preparation. It includes identifying species based on fossil characteristics, removing rock from fossils and preparing and cataloguing finished specimens for display.

There are plenty of sights to witness. Visitors should take their time and absorb all Badlands has to offer. It's certain to be a good time.

# Winter driving puts your skills to test

## 10 ways to keep you safe on dangerous highways

**W**inter-driving season is most challenging to our nerves, vehicles and skills. The scenario is too familiar. Temperatures drop, snow falls and ice forms. It's a losing trifecta.

Slippery roads cause many of us to shudder behind the wheel. Our familiar commutes just became a treacherous nightmare.

Snow and ice, meanwhile, aren't the only culprits. Fewer hours of daylight obscure our vision and the sun's glare reflecting off the snow can have a blinding effect.

Rapidly changing weather conditions make it essential drivers remain alert and vigilant. Here are 10 winter-driving tips to help make the experience safer and less stressful:

- Monitor weather and travel conditions. Know the difference between a Winter Storm Watch and Winter Weather Advisory, and how they could impact your plans. Allow for extra time to travel, wait for conditions to improve or stay home if possible.
- Think cautiously if you must drive in wintry conditions. Make sure your fuel tank is full. Clear all snow from the hood, roof, windows and lights of your vehicle. Clear windows of fog before driving. Make sure the windshield-wiper fluid is full and wipers are in good condition. Turn



**SNOW DOWN** – Drivers should take extra precaution when driving during a winter storm. Image: fotoyou. Adobe Stock.

on the headlights when you turn on your windshield wipers.

- Increase your following distance. Focus as far ahead as possible. Avoid hard braking. It could keep you from sliding into another vehicle or barrier.
- Not all vehicles respond similarly to icy, slippery roads. Familiarize yourself with the vehicle's braking system, tire tractions and

all-wheel-drive systems. Avoid using cruise control in wintry conditions.

- Don't panic if your vehicle becomes trapped in a storm or snowbank. Avoid overexertion and exposure and stay in the vehicle. Run the motor sparingly and keep fresh air in the vehicle. Stay moving and don't fall asleep. Stay alert for traffic and

first-responders.

- Try to avoid secondary roads and drive with caution. Measure your speed to road and weather conditions. Avoid passing other vehicles when road conditions are at their worst. Bridges, ramps and overpasses freeze first.
- Plan your route and make sure someone knows which way you will be traveling, your destination and expected arrival time, especially when driving long distances. Report a safe arrival.
- Leave room for maintenance vehicles and plows. Remain at least 200 feet behind them.
- Carry a winter-survival kit in the trunk or storage area of your vehicle. Fully charge your cell phone; and always keep a road map, flashlight, first-aid kit, blanket and shovel in your vehicle.
- And most importantly, drive slowly. Take your time. The posted speed limits are meant for dry pavement.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit [AAA.com](http://AAA.com) for information on all things automotive including tips on buying, operating and maintaining a vehicle.

# Cold weather can be unkind to battery

## Take steps to reduce chances it leaves you in bad spot

**C**old weather affects your battery more than any engine component. Batteries are filled with fluid, most of which is water. They are susceptible to freezing if a battery is not fully charged.

Cold also thickens engine oil, forcing the battery to work harder when starting the car. Your vehicle's battery loses approximately 35% of its efficiency when the temperature dips below freezing and nearly as much as 60% of its efficiency when the temperature falls below zero.

Slow cranking is a common sign your battery might be getting weak but diagnosing battery problems can be tricky. Your battery terminals could be calcified, or a parasitic draw, often from a mobile device, is draining its power. Unplug your phone and charger when you don't need them.

AAA Battery Service offers fast, accurate and convenient mobile-battery testing and replacement. State-of-the-art diagnostic equipment will confirm whether your battery will hold a charge, or if the problem lies deeper in the electrical system. The service is included with your AAA membership.

If a new battery is needed, you can purchase one and have it installed on the spot. AAA Battery Service vehicles carry batteries compatible with 90% of cars, SUVs and light trucks on the road. And each AAA-branded battery is covered by



**STONE COLD** – AAA Battery Service quickly will have you on your way if your battery loses charge. Image: AAA.

a nationwide 36-month, free-replacement warranty.

Our Instant Quote battery-price calculator on [AAA.com](http://AAA.com) will give you member and nonmember pricing for your vehicle's battery, reflecting your exclusive AAA discount. In addition, every battery that AAA replaces is safely recycled to protect the environment.

AAA also recommends you take these special precautions with your vehicle's battery this winter:

- Have the starting and charging systems tested every year.
- On frigid days, shut off the heater fans, radio and other devices before cranking the engine.
- Inspect the battery cables, posts and fasteners. Cable corrosion prevents power from flowing freely from the battery, reducing the power available to start the car. Clean the battery terminals with a wire brush or battery-cleaner spray.

- Avoid short trips. It can take as long as 30 minutes for a car battery to fully charge. Short trips can diminish the amount of reserve capacity.
- Preventative measures – such as garaging your vehicles or using a battery charger like the AAA Battery Tender – can help extend a battery's lifespan.

Winter also means fewer hours of daylight and increased use of lights, wipers and heating, all of which extract a heavy toll on your battery. The more electrical devices in the car – such as electronic fuel-injection systems, power windows and infotainment systems – the more power the battery should have.

Your best defense against failure is a fully charged battery and adequate cold-cranking amps – 500-700 – depending on the type of engine in your vehicle.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

If your battery is failing you, give yourself the added peace of mind by calling the AAA Battery Service for a no-cost evaluation. AAA Battery Service is available from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. seven days a week. To verify AAA Battery Service availability in your area, call our toll-free number: 1-800-222-4357.

