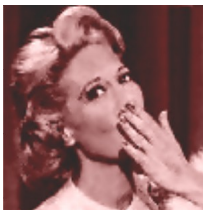


If you're planning your annual road trip for this season, of course, everything depends on where you start, time allowed, budget, companions, physical limitations, time of year and many other factors. And location, location, location. Here are just a few of our favorite locations.

Grand Canyon, Hoover Dam and Las Vegas: Everything from the sublime to the ridiculous. Spend at least a couple of days at the Canyon, do some rim and trail hiking, watch the sun go down, get some sleep, then see the sun come up. The ever-changing colors and lighting on the magnificent rock formations prove that Mother Nature is the best artist ever.



When driving over the roadway above the Dam, stop and admire the wonders of the man-made miracles of Lake Mead and surrounding areas. Be sure to take the tour, which means going down to the bottom of the Dam to get scared of your wits, worrying about a possible leak or the whole structure crashing down on you under the pressure of a million tons of water above. For humorous scenes about a family's Hoover Dam visit, see the 1997 Chevy Chase movie, "Vegas Vacation"

If you're driving to Las Vegas, try to get to the resort-lined Strip just at very early dawn. It's a beautiful, uncrowded sight. Don't drive it at any other time, because the street gets impossibly jammed from 7 am through to midnight. If you're staying overnight, best to park your car at your hotel, and move around the Strip by walking or take the Monorail. Taxi rides are expensive and inevitably jammed in traffic.

A fun side trip, or if you want to avoid Vegas totally, drive to the little gambling town of Laughlin, about 40 minutes south. It has only six or seven casino-hotels, but its location along the Colorado River can offer you some beautiful views, sailing or motorboat fun. It's also the valhalla for RVers, mostly seniors.

Of course, there are many, many roads to travel for seniors. New England in its wonderful summer and autumn colors, Colorado for its snowy mountains and Florida, where many of America's seniors go to spend their twilight years.

Along the road, you're certain to find many old friends, former working pals, ex-GI buddies or retired relatives in senior communities in Florida, California, Arizona, Nevada and elsewhere. It'll

give you comfy stops on your journey, where you can park your car, take a shower, wash your highway-stained clothes and talk about the good old days.

For planning driving trips, check the hundreds of info sites on the net. We found some of the best were AAA, AARP, Fodor and Elderhostel. Online auto trip data is always being updated, and when you're getting ready to hit the road, check out the latest info about roads, repairs, detours and such. Better still, get a GPS doohickey for your car, so you can get road conditions ahead by the minute.

If you're as old as we are, and are ready for that driving trip, remember what Dinah Shore sang and blew a kiss, with a few words changed: "See the USA in (the senior way); America is asking you call!"