



Guest Senior Correspondent Marilyn McG, Tucson AZ: We recently went on a road trip with neighborhood friends, a one-week journey to a national park. My spouse and I agreed to pay for gasoline and our neighbors did the driving in their car.

Everything went well until we arrived at the hotel desk to check in. The clerk said our reservations were actually for the next day, and she wasn't sure she could find us rooms for the night. Before she could say another word, our neighbors went into a loud fit of complaints and threats. Despite the fact that she showed us the computer printout proving we had arrived a day early, our neighbors kept up their harangue.

The clerk seemed to weather the storm and clicked her computer. She then said she had two rooms available, not in the main hotel, but in a cabin area a few minutes' hike away. We were all tired, and our neighbors seemed to quiet down a bit.

They didn't like the rustic style of the cabin rooms, but reluctantly agreed to stay one night. I'd like to say that was the extent of the problems, but they were only starting. When we asked if they'd join us at breakfast in the hotel dining room, they agreed to 9 am. They didn't show, and we ordered our meal at 9:30. They arrived at 10 and were angry that we didn't wait for them.

This pattern of disruption and unnecessary anger at hotel, restaurant servers and us seemed to be their normal behavior. We were greatly relieved when the week finally ended. Here are some suggestions for making sure you travel with compatible companions.

1. Sit down together before you leave home with the fellow travelers, and work out all the ground rules. Be thorough, so there will be no misunderstandings.

2. Where will you stop each night? Before you depart, scan the online info together. Be sure to agree on the motel, campground or other overnight facilities.
3. Agree on times of pit stops for gasoline, bathroom visits and meals. When we do long road trips, the general rule is to stop every three hours. Of course, if other travelers need more frequent pit stops, they'll be accommodated.
4. Who pays for what and who drives? It's usual that the passengers pay the driver's fuel costs. When appropriate on very long road trips, passengers should volunteer to take over some driving shifts.
5. Today there's no need for one person in the car to blare out loud music that could offend others' ears. Take along enough electronic sound and sight doodads and noise-cancelling earphones to satisfy everyone's entertainment tastes, as well as need for silence during the journey.
6. There should be a pre-trip agreement about smoking. Unless everyone on the trip is a smoker, there should be no smoking at all in the vehicle. Smokers can use pit stop times to indulge in their habit.
7. Once at your destination and checked in at the hotel or other facility, make specific times for getting together for meals and other events, and stick to schedules. Today, with everyone carrying smartphones, schedules are easier to keep or change.
8. Settle all arguments by calling quick and effective meetings. It may be beneficial to appoint in advance one of the travelers as the arbitrator, so damaged relationships can be repaired quickly. No one wants to slouch through a vacation avoiding hostile eyes and sneering lips.
9. If the group eats many meals together in hotel and on-the-road restaurants, ask for separate checks. Nothing causes resentment more than when everyone else gets \$10 dinners, while one person runs up \$50 for booze and meal, and then says, "Let's split the check."
10. Drinking for the driver should be absolutely zero during all times while at the wheel. If it becomes a problem, be sure there's another driver to take over when obviously necessary. Better still, if you know the driver has a drinking problem, never go on the road with that thoughtless person.