

# Family Travel

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# Making the Most of a Bathroom Stop

By Jennifer Close  
TravelingMom.com

If you have been on a road trip with kids, you have had that moment, the one where your little one says he has to go to the bathroom. Immediately, you look around only to remember that you passed a rest stop a few miles back so there won't be another coming up soon enough.

You get off at the next exit and frantically look for the gas station most likely to have a clean restroom. Conversely, you look for the closest fast food restaurant knowing it is likely to have somewhat cleaner bathrooms, thanks to periodic inspections from the health department.

Here's a better idea: When you map your road trips, look for stops along the way that can double as restroom breaks — factory tours, fun stores, unique restaurants, or something else. Chances are they will be a few minutes off the Interstate, but they are always worth the drive.

Here are some of our favorites from around the nation:

**Yankee Candle Company Flagship Store near Colonial Williamsburg, Va.** We just stopped to use the restroom but ended up buying some of the best tasting caramel corn we have ever had. We also hand-dipped our own candles to take home.

**Boyds Bear Country outside Gettysburg, Pa.** You will never see so many Boyd's Bears in one place. Make your own Boyd Bear, look at the displays, or pick up a sweet treat.

**Mayfield Dairy in Braselton, Ga.** You can tour the dairy or just wander the store and pick up some Mayfield ice cream at an excellent price.

**Priester's Pecans, off of I-65 in Fort Deposit, Ala.** These were some of the cleanest bathrooms we have seen anywhere. Sample the pecans, try some divinity, or pick up some Alabama or Auburn gear.

**Alfred B. Maclay Gardens State Park in Tallahassee, Fla., near I-10.** Whenever possible, we travel with food and look for a state park to stop for a picnic lunch. Maclay Gardens is one of the prettiest spots. The gardens are beautiful year round and you can spend a few minutes to a few hours here.

**The Corn Palace in Mitchell, S.D.** There isn't much along the interstate that runs between Sioux Falls on the eastern border of the state and Rapid City, the entrance to the Black Hills, Badlands and Mount Rushmore on the western edge. So plan a stop to see this community center decorated each year in a design made of corn. Bathrooms are clean and entrance is free.

**The Wyoming Dinosaur Center in Thermopolis, Wyo.** Spend time here wandering through the Dinosaur Center and get a snack. If you have time, head out to the dig sites.

*Jennifer Close is the Western TravelingMom for TravelingMom.com. After sixteen years in the South, her family relocated to Denver, Colorado where they are getting used to the cold weather, snow and big city living. She likes to read, craft and look for adventures with her children.*





# Eating and Entertainment

By **Cindy Richards**  
TravelingMom.com

**H**unger and boredom are the enemies of family road trip happiness. Focus on food and fun to make sure the hours in the car are building happy family memories.

For travel snacks, choose healthy foods that are less messy. For example, opt for tiny sweet, easy-to-peel-and-eat Clementine oranges rather than the big, juicy hard-to-peel navel oranges. Or freeze sweet seedless grapes. They will help keep the cooler cool and taste like little pop-sicles to kids.

Bananas are another good, less messy choice. But be sure to toss the peels at the next stop. Learn from my mistake: After a two-hour hike through the South Dakota Badlands in August, you won't want to get back in a car filled with the smell of banana peels that have been rotting in the hot sun.

For more substantial hunger, pack a bag with bread, jam, peanut butter and utensils for making sandwiches at a rest stop. Fill Ziploc bags with homemade trail mix made of Cheerios, raisins, and (a few) M&Ms.

For quenching thirst, stick with water. Kids might prefer juice or milk, but water is good for them and less hazardous to your car seats. Stay green (and save money) by refilling bottles at rest stop water fountains.

## ENTERTAIN WITH EASE

With built-in DVDs and personal head phones, it's tempting to let the TV babysit the kids. But this is not the best way to make family memories. Try books on tape rented from your local library instead.

Plug the CD, cassette or your iPod into the car stereo and listen together. Even tweens and teens can be enticed to take out their ear buds and join the fun if everyone else is laughing to the antics of the "Sideways School" stories or debating a plot point in a Harry Potter book.

Get kids involved in road trip route planning — and teach your tech-obsessed teens how to navigate without GPS — by encouraging them to follow along on a paper map. Buy laminated maps for younger kids who tend to have sticky fingers.

The toughest part of a road trip for kids, especially for kids young enough to need a car seat, is the forced stillness. Stopping every two hours to let kids (and adults) stretch and move is important. But you can get everyone moving during those two-hour stretches of driving as well.

Try a rousing game of head, shoulders, knees and toes. As the song name implies, you first touch your head, then shoulders, then knees, then toes. To make it more fun, speed up the pace. Or give each person a turn singing the song — in any order they choose. For examples, try toes, stomach, nose and head.

*Cindy Richards is a Pulitzer Prize-nominated journalist who serves as Editor-in-Chief for TravelingMom.com. She previously worked at Chicago's two major newspapers, 15 years for the Chicago Sun-Times and two years for the Chicago Tribune.*





# Your Road Trip Emergency Kit

By **Scotty Reiss**  
SheBuysCars.com

**W**hat's the best way to prepare to be safe on the road? If you ask a dozen different people you'll get a dozen different answers.

We asked family travel experts to share what they keep in their cars — whether they are driving through the desert, heading to an earthquake zone or just driving around town.

Here's what they had to say:

## ALWAYS KEEP HANDY

Stock your car at all times with paper towels, toilet paper, Dramamine, granola bars, Band-Aids, Ziploc bags (for trash and vomit), a multi-purpose tool like a Leatherman or Swiss Army Knife, work gloves, wet wipes, duct tape, the car owner's manual, cell phone charger, smartphone apps that will help you to find local things quickly, a towel and water bottles.

Toss in a few tools and repair necessities, including jumper cables, a ratchet set, pliers, screwdriver, electrical tape, a can of emergency tire inflator, road flares and automotive fuses.

Finally, keep near the driver's seat a hammer/seatbelt cutter in case you are in an accident and need to get out of the car fast.

## WINTER WONDERS

Winter requires special tools, such as an ice scraper and snow brush, but for safety reason, be sure to also bring a blanket, extra mittens or gloves and kitty litter to create traction when you get stuck on the ice. Keep the kitty litter in a sealed plastic container so it stays dry and doesn't spill all over the car.

If you're planning a winter road trip, it's also important to make sure you understand the differences among the various winter weather advisories issued by the National Weather Service. You might still be fine traveling under a winter weather advisory, but you might want to alter your plans if it's a more serious winter storm watch or warning.

## DESERT DESIRABLES

In the desert, gas, water and fellow humans can be in short supply. So prepare for longer-term emergencies. Bring three gallons of water (enough for the people and the radiator), space blankets for each traveler, 'Survival' chocolate bars, tire patch kit, an air pump, solar charger for your phone, hiking boots or good walking shoes and socks and sunscreen.

## QUAKE NECESSITIES

If you're traveling through earthquake country, bring along a small backpack filled with a blanket, jacket, duct tape, flares and three days' worth of water and dried food.

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# First Road Trips with Baby

By Anuja De Silva  
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If you were a road warrior in your B.C. (Before Children) days, there's no reason you can't still hit the road with a baby on board. It takes a little more planning and a lot more gear, but it can be a fun way to introduce the newest member of your family to travel — without the pain of airplane takeoffs and landings on tiny ears.

Here are tips to ensure both you and your baby have fun on your first road trips together.

## Newborns: Sleep is Key

As new parent, most challenging part of traveling with the baby was making sure we had enough of everything we might possibly need. The diaper bag which contained all our necessities was within an arm's reach.

We tried to keep the baby cool and comfortable in the summer heat to help him sleep easily. Once he was asleep, the trip was smooth sailing for us.

## 4-6 Months Old: Keep Trips Short

As the baby got older, he was sleeping less frequently and for shorter spells, generally less than two hours. Once he woke up from his naps, he wanted to be taken out of the car seat. That meant our drives were limited to his nap time with stops planned beforehand.

Having a full stomach and being exposed to fresh air made the baby ready for another nap, so we could put him back in the car for the second leg of our drive.



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## 6-9 Months Old: Distraction Helps

Once the baby started crawling and wanting to stand up, it was a challenge to convince him to stay confined to the car seat when he was awake. Since he was eating solid food by then, we could offer little snacks as distraction.

As a last resort for longer drives, we downloaded nursery rhymes to the iPad so we could play them without a wifi connection. Though we had vowed to stay away from gadgets, we found it necessary to keep our active little one engaged during demanding travel schedules.

Those few months where he really

wanted to walk and couldn't were our most trying times of traveling with baby.

## 9-12 Months Old: Engaging with the World

Around his one year birthday he was walking and running about quite steadily. He was also on a two-nap schedule for the day. To make the trips easier on us, we did the bulk of our traveling after breakfast to coincide with his longer morning nap. Once he was able to recognize things in his surroundings, we stopped using toys and the iPad and encouraged him to look out the window instead.

When your child is old enough, sitting in a forward-facing car seat makes a huge difference. It provides a better view of the road, letting kids see cars and buses.

We also learned the hard way that eating and drinking tends to give him motion sickness. We now stop every 2-3 hours so he can eat and has time to play before we all get back in the car.

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# Multi-Generational Car Travel

By **Christine Tibbetts**  
TravelingMom.com

**I**ncreasing the number of front seats would help mightily for road trips with elders who have trouble lowering themselves into back seats when their balance is shaky and strength is not at its peak.

Alas, that is not an option. So consider these tips and ideas for helping seniors keep their humor — and dignity — intact during long family road trip excursions.

These ideas are the product of many a multigenerational road trip — everything from long journeys to visit other relatives to half-day drives to catch a plane or a cruise ship.

## PILLOWS, BLANKETS, FOOT RESTS

Parents know that keeping young ones comfortable helps make the road trip go more smoothly. The same goes for seniors. Bring along pillows to provide lower back lumbar relief and for nodding napping necks.

If you like to keep the car cool to help the driver stay alert, bring a blanket or cover to ensure comfort for elders who tend to chill easily. It can save many discussions about the air conditioning controls.

Besides, there's a good chance those controls are inconveniently high in an SUV ceiling or too far front on the dashboard, so some members of the greatest generation might be more likely to endure than complain.

## BATHROOM STOPS

The classic father-threatened “hold it” instruction simply won't do when traveling with the elders. Gracious is the code word for these road trips.

That means pulling into rest stops



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whether the driver wants to or not. Just do. Don't ask. The benefits of a little walking add up too — for everyone. Elders aren't the only ones who get stiff after long periods of inactivity.

## BATHROOM MECHANICS

I've seen toilets on interstate highway rest stops low enough for kindergartners. Gently guide your grand-

mother to the stall with grab bars and a taller toilet.

Take nothing for granted; my 90-year-old mother got rattled in a public bathroom and could not open the door to her stall. Crawling under worked for me but what if I had waited outside enjoying the sunshine?

Automatic faucets confound many users; count on that with elder road trippers.

High-intensity hand dryers can

cause immense pain for elders with tinnitus or hearing aids dialed high enough to hear the grandchildren in the back seat. Just air dry as you walk together.

## SUSTENANCE

A thermos with milk and a package of cheese crackers to share was my parents' notion of responsible dining on road trips when they were 80.

That's when they were driving, and stopping every 100 miles to switch drivers. Even on the interstate shoulder if that's when mileage arrived.

Once they became passengers on family trips, restaurant stops only happened if the rest of us said eating was our need, not a favor for them.

## DEVICES AND GADGETS

Unless your elders also amuse themselves with the latest small electronics, chances are they will feel neglected and insulted if everyone in the vehicle is so engaged. Build in conversation.

## STEPS AND STOOLS

Giving granny's fanny a boost to get up into the SUV is not a good way to help her keep her dignity. Bring along a sturdy step stool.

*Christine Tibbetts is the Blended Family TravelingMom for TravelingMom.com. She currently focuses on practical and contemplative travel features built with in-depth interviews and abundant musing.*

# How to Save on Gasoline

By **Cindy Richards**  
TravelingMom.com

The cost of gas is enough to make some families think twice about taking a family vacation. These four tips from Ronald M. Weiers, author of “GA\$ SMART\$: Hundreds of Small Ways to Save Big at the Pump” will help you make the most of every gallon.

## 1. Relax in the Vehicular Parade.

It's inevitable: At some point, you will be trapped in a stream of vehicles on a curvy road or in a no-passing zone.

The typical driver will alternate between the accelerator pedal and brake pedal as though they are buttons on a keyboard. That kind of jerky driving is very inefficient. Instead, try to relax — listen to some music or gaze around at the countryside — and remember that eventually you will be the person at the beginning of the parade.

Use that same soft and gentle approach whenever you drive to get the best fuel economy.

## 2. Obey the Speed Limits.

Speed limits exist for safety reasons, but they contribute to fuel economy as well. Many drivers routinely exceed speed limits, taking the chance they won't get caught.

Even if the police don't catch you, the gas pump will. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, each 5 mph you drive over 60 mph can reduce your fuel economy by about 8 percent.

## 3. Keep Your Tires Properly Inflated.

Underinflated tires are dangerous and inefficient and the increased rolling resistance can greatly reduce fuel economy. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, when all four tires are underinflated by 10 pounds, your fuel economy will be reduced by 3 percent.

Tire pressure recommendations can be found in

your owner's manual or on a sticker on the trunk lid, driver's side door or door frame. Buy a tire gauge and check your tires regularly.

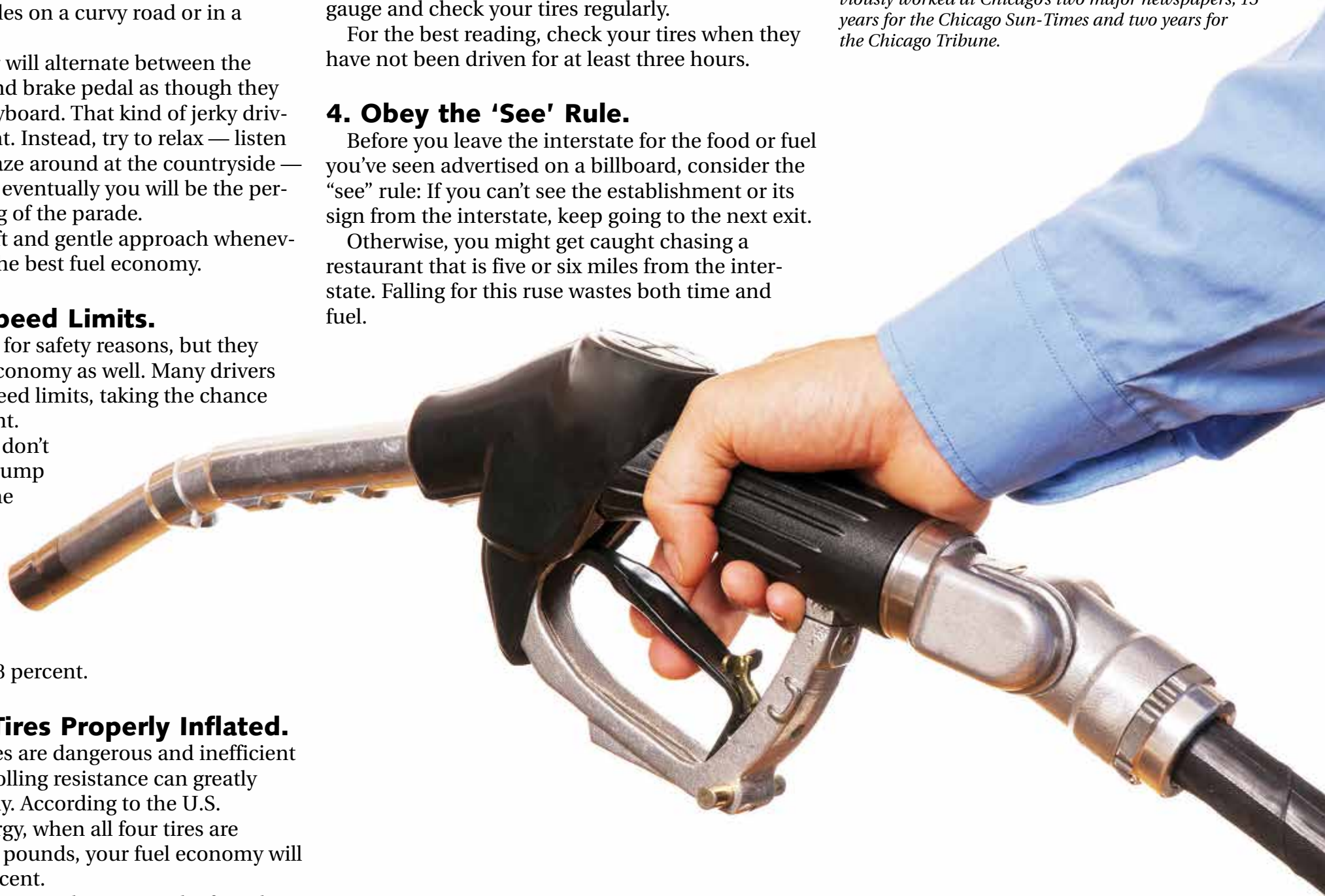
For the best reading, check your tires when they have not been driven for at least three hours.

## 4. Obey the 'See' Rule.

Before you leave the interstate for the food or fuel you've seen advertised on a billboard, consider the “see” rule: If you can't see the establishment or its sign from the interstate, keep going to the next exit.

Otherwise, you might get caught chasing a restaurant that is five or six miles from the interstate. Falling for this ruse wastes both time and fuel.

*Cindy Richards is a Pulitzer Prize-nominated journalist who serves as Editor-in-Chief for TravelingMom.com. She previously worked at Chicago's two major newspapers, 15 years for the Chicago Sun-Times and two years for the Chicago Tribune.*





# Entice Tweens with a 'Twilight' Trip

By Karin Sheets  
TravelingMom.com

The first episode in the “Twilight” movie saga was set in Forks, Wash., but it was filmed in Oregon and southwest Washington. As a family of Twi-hards, we decided to celebrate my youngest daughter’s 13th birthday with a “Twilight” road trip.

My daughter, V, is a sweet girl who happens to have a few challenges. She’s blind, can’t walk, but communicates in her own way, and loves to be a part of the action. Travel not only opens the world to her, it gives her a way to connect with other people. That is priceless to me.

## Day 1: Locations for Bella's house, Port Angeles, School of Dance and Forks High School

About 40 minutes from Portland in St. Helens, you’ll find Bella’s house and the setting for the “Port Angeles” scenes, including “Petite Jolie,” the shop where Bella helps Jessica and Angela find their prom dresses, the parking lot where Edward rescues Bella from a group of boys, the Bloated Toad restaurant where Edward reveals his mind-reading abilities, and Thunderbird & Whale bookstore.

Bella’s house looks just like it did in the movie, with the addition of a friendly note tacked to a tree that reminds visitors this is a private residence so we shouldn’t peek in windows. It kind of made us feel like paparazzi. At first this made us a little uneasy, but soon we got comfortable with the whole stalking thing and headed back to get a picture of us standing in front of the house.

On our way back to Washington, we stopped at Kalama High School, used for the outside scenes of Forks High School.

With the sun beginning to set, we headed into Portland for our final stop of the day, the site of Mimi’s School of Dance, the setting for the final confrontation between Edward and James. In the movie this is set in Arizona, but the exterior shots were filmed at the Yale Union Laundry Building in Portland.

We spent the night where the cast slept during

filming: at the Portland Hotel Monaco.

## Day 2: Locations for café, prom and Cullen's house exterior scenes

First stop: the Carver Café, where Bella and her dad ate dinner a couple of times. It looks exactly like it did in the movie. Don’t expect to order Charlie’s favorites; those items aren’t on the menu. But the chocolate chip pancakes and bacon were terrific.

Next stop: the View Point Inn, the scene of Bella and Edward’s prom. The inn burned in a fire last year, but the stunning views of the Columbia Gorge remain.

Then it was on to the sleek, modern Cullens’ house, home to Edward and his vampire family. The family that lives here welcomes Twilight fans to take photos — from the end of the drive way. You can still see plenty from this vantage point.

We spent the night at the lovely Ocean Lodge at Cannon Beach. My daughter wasn’t up for going out to dinner, so we got take out and ate it on our veranda with better seats than any restaurant could provide.

## Day 3: Location for La Push surfing and beach scene

The La Push beach scenes were filmed 200 miles away at Indian Beach. The path down to the beach is not accessible. We made it anyway, but even from the parking lots, the stunning views are worth the trip.

*Karin Sheets is the Special Needs TravelingMom for TravelingMom.com. A mom of a special needs child, Karin believes that stepping outside her world by traveling, although challenging, helps keep things in perspective. In her spare time she writes on her own site, specialneedstravelmom.com.*



**TOP:** Bella’s house, set in “Port Angeles” in the movie, is located about 40 minutes from Portland, Ore. **MIDDLE:** Home to the Cullen family in the movie, the owners of this house let “Twilight” fans take pictures from the edge of their driveway. **BOTTOM:** The Carver Café looks exactly like it does in the movie, even if the menu is a bit different.

PHOTOS BY KARIN SHEETS