

Q: We're driving more than 400 miles for the holidays, which means at least eight hours on the road. That's usually OK with us, because we take turns every two hours. One drives while the other naps. However, this year, we'll have company on our trip, two grandkids, age 4 and 6. How do we keep them occupied, or more important, prevent them from driving us nuts?



A: No guarantee that you won't arrive at your destination ready for a rubber-walled room, but there are ways to deal with two active kids. First, prepare for the trip. Even if the kids are out of diapers, take along clothing changes and other necessities, just in case you must make a quick potty stop. Put an insulated cold box in the trunk with ice, cold drinks, milk and nibbling foods.

Check ahead for a good midway pit stop at about 200 miles into your trip, where there's a gas station, attractive restaurant, clean rest rooms and a gift shop. It also allows everyone to stretch legs and get ready for the final miles of the trip.

As for entertaining the kids, it won't be like your trips with your parents many years ago. Today, they won't have to count cows or sing "99 Bottles on the Wall". There are all kinds of electronic gizmos you can take along. Take a laptop with internet access to hundreds of games, animations and everything else to keep kids busy for hours. Many brands of cell phones have video and animated games to play. A portable DVD player with a dozen or so kid-oriented DVDs can provide hours of movies, games and cartoons.

OK? Ready, get set ... and good luck. You'll need it!