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Vacations Begin Here!™

Experience the world at the Pittsburgh Travel Showcase™

THERE'S NEVER BEEN MORE WORLD TO SEE than at this year's annual Pittsburgh Travel Showcase™. No passport is required. There's MORE Exhibitors, MORE Destinations, MORE Discounts, MORE Presentations and MORE AAA Advisors! It's a global extravaganza spanning all seven continents unlike any other!

The annual Pittsburgh Travel Showcase™ returns to the David L. Lawrence Convention Center on January 19, 20 and 21, and it's going to be bigger and better than ever! The region's only immersive travel show will bring more than 100,000-square feet of exclusive savings and exciting destination presentations. And this year, the Pittsburgh Travel Showcase™ will feature more than 30 new travel vendors and destinations, plus there will be more AAA Travel Advisors to personally help you plan and book your dream vacation on the spot!

Vacations Begin Here!™ At the Pittsburgh Travel Showcase™! There is NO better place to plan your next trip than at the Showcase. Knowledgeable travel experts combined with great savings opportunities provide endless ideas to fulfill your travel dreams. It's too good to pass up!

Take advantage of convenient one-stop shopping under one roof and exclusive AAA savings! These Showcase-only savings await visitors who book their next trip onsite. Simply put, enter with an open mind and leave knowing you just closed a fantastic deal!

AAA Travel Advisors will be on-hand to do the work and research for you and make sure you're ready for your trip. Their knowledge comes from first-hand experiences, allowing them to informatively suggest a variety of options designed make your vacation wishes come true!

continued on pg 21

Get Peace of Mind with Automatic Renewal

AAA Auto Pay is the convenient way to pay your membership dues! There are no checks to write, no stamps to buy, no late payments and no risk of having your membership lapse. Choose AAA Auto Pay and your membership dues will be automatically charged to your credit card, debit card, or checking account each year. When you enroll using your credit or debit card, your account will be charged seven business days prior to the membership expiration date. Enroll by using your checking account and your account will be charged one day in advance of the expiration date. To learn more or enroll in AAA's Auto Pay Program, call 1-800-441-5008 or visit your local AAA branch office. To sign up online, log in to your membership account at AAA.com and select "Enroll" in the Bill.

New branch opening in McMurray

AAA East Central expanded its footprint to better serve its members in Western Pennsylvania with the opening of a new branch office in McMurray. It opened January 2 and is located at 4000 Washington Road Unit 206. Members can contact the branch by calling 724-260-2168.

REAL ID Extended to May 7, 2025

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.

Find Lower Gas Prices with Auto Club app



Eager to find the lowest gas prices in your location? AAA's Auto Club app can help you save time and money by comparing prices of the nearest gas stations. The Auto Club app also goes beyond finding the lowest fuel prices. Members can use it to request roadside assistance, book travel reservations for flight, car rental, hotel, or cruise, and much more. To get the app, text APP10 to 86792 and you will receive a link to download it.

SAIL THE BALTIC ON PRESIDENT'S CRUISE



Cruise the storied Baltic Sea with AAA East Central President Terri Petrick via Azamara Cruises. Visit Denmark, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland and Sweden, and enjoy special AAA Member perks. The trip begins August 11, 2024.

See page 9 for more information.

Upkeep helps drivers avoid breakdowns

Components often overlooked can cause big problems

AAA has rescued drivers for more than a century, and there are no signs of stopping. It aids stranded members approximately 30 million times annually for a myriad of reasons. There is no telling what could lie ahead, but there are three most common reasons: dead battery, flat tires and overheating.

Remarkably, improved vehicle maintenance could avoid a quarter of these experiences, making it prudent to take care of your vehicle.

Battery issues are the leading cause for roadside breakdowns, particularly during the winter. Batteries lose as much as 35% of their efficiency when temperatures dip below freezing and as much as 60% when temperatures drop below zero.

Cleaning corrosion from the posts and cable connections, as well as washing all surfaces with battery-terminal cleaner or a solution of baking soda and water can keep your battery strong. Retightening all connections also lessens the odds your battery will lose juice.

Automotive batteries typically last between three and five years – less in hotter climate conditions. Don't forget to turn off your vehicle's lights once you've reached your destination. Keeping them on an extended period of time can reduce your battery's lifespan.



THERE TO HELP – Millions of members call AAA each year for roadside assistance. *Image: garry images. Adobe Stock.*

Safeguard against a dead battery by having it tested annually once you've had it three years.

AAA Battery Service offers quick, 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. You

can purchase a new battery and have it installed onsite if one is needed.

Tire care also is essential. Motorists should have them checked frequently during winter months. Pressure begins to drop as temperatures fall. Typically, the rate at which pressure lessens is 1 PSI for every 10 degrees. Proper tire pressure levels can be found in your car's owner's manual or on a sticker located on the driver's side doorjamb.

AAA recommends replacing a tire when 4/32 inches of tread remains. This can be tested by placing a quarter upside down in the tread groove. The tire should be replaced if Washington's head is visible.

Coolant leaks become more common when temperatures plunge. Metal engine parts contract in cold weather and hose clamps loosen. Your vehicle's coolant never loses its antifreeze capability, but the additives that lubricate the water pump and protect internal-engine components from rust, scale and corrosion can become depleted.

It's wise to have your vehicle's cooling system flushed and filled when recommended by the manufacturer. Newer coolant formulations can last as long as five years or 150,000 miles.

Check the coolant level in the overflow reservoir by opening the radiator cap. It should be filled to the "Full Hot" indicator line with a 50/50 mixture of antifreeze and water if it is low.

TAKE CHARGE

Count on AAA to turn battery problems into solutions. 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.

Road deicers cause billions of dollars in damage

Majority of Americans at risk for costly, dangerous rust problems

Pay now. Or pay later. That might be the best way to describe the winter-driving season.

Slick roadways are the primary cause of thousands of car crashes annually. Road crews work before, during and after snowstorms to plow and deice roads. Salts and other chemicals are used to melt snow and ice and allow drivers to safely reach their destinations.

It's an invaluable process but it doesn't come without a price. Millions of Americans are confronted with expensive vehicle repairs from rust damage caused by chemicals used to the clear roadways.

A AAA survey found that drivers paid more than \$15 billion in rust repairs caused by deicing methods over a five-year period. AAA warns drivers to take actions to prevent dangerous rust-related damage to brake lines, fuel tanks, exhaust systems and other critical components.

AAA urges drivers, who experience any of the following vehicle malfunctions, to immediately move it from the road to a safe location and have it towed to a trusted repair facility.

- In-dash warning lights for brakes and other critical systems.
- A "spongy" or soft feeling when applying pressure to the brake pedal.
- An unusually loud exhaust sound or the smell of fumes in or around



CLEARING THE WAY – Rock salt is used to clear millions of miles of road throughout the U.S. It's an effective measure, but it could cause rust damage to vehicles. *Image: robsonphoto. Adobe Stock.*

the vehicle.

- The prominent smell of gasoline or diesel fuel when the vehicle is parked or running.

Many state and local transportation departments have shifted from using rock salt to liquid deicers to combat hazardous road conditions. The alternatives have proved to be more effective than traditional salt because they can be

applied before a snowstorm, have a lower freezing point and quickly melt ice and snow.

These same characteristics, however, can be even more damaging to vehicles since the chemicals remain in liquid form longer and are more likely to coat components and seep into cracks and crevices where corrosion can accelerate.

AAA recommends drivers take the

following preventative steps to reduce vehicle damage:

- Limit driving immediately before, during and after winter storms when salt and deicing solutions are being applied and are at their highest concentrations.
- Frequently wash your vehicle, paying attention to the undercarriage. This will loosen, dissolve and neutralize road salts.
- Use quality car-wash solution, not a household dish detergent that will strip wax from the vehicle.
- Repair body damage and touch up paint scratches and chips that expose bare metal that could lead to rust.
- Thoroughly wash and clean the vehicle before the start of winter and apply a coat of wax to protect the finish.
- And give the vehicle and undercarriage a methodical cleaning in the spring. Deposits left over from the winter can continue to cause corrosion year-round if they aren't properly removed.

The winter-driving season is a conundrum for all motorists. Unkempt roads are more likely to lead to crashes and treated ones could lead to other forms of damage at later dates.

Responsible driving and proper car care can eliminate headaches and keep motorists from paying now – or later.

Costs can spiral if preoccupied behind wheel

Deep look into some lesser-known costs of distracted driving

By Robin Jones

By now, most of us are aware of the dangers of distracted driving. Drivers using their cell phones to perform tasks like texting or surfing the internet are two to eight times as likely to be involved in a crash, according to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

Even so, we regularly witness this risky behavior on our roads, and, if we're honest, some of us are guilty of it ourselves. A recent Traffic Safety Culture Index, a survey conducted by the AAA foundation, found that 97% of people consider texting or emailing behind the wheel as a serious or very serious threat to traffic safety, yet 41% admitted to viewing a text or email while driving in the past 30 days.

The resulting statistics are sobering: 3,166 people died in collisions involving distracted drivers in 2017, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

But aside from fatalities or injuries, drivers should consider the potential serious financial and insurance consequences of distracted driving. For example, if you cause a crash that



STAY FOCUSED – **exting** and driving is a bad combination behind the wheel of a vehicle. Image: SM3photos. Adobe Stock.

injures people or damages property, your insurer will cover damages up to the liability limits in your auto or umbrella policy. However, it's common nowadays for injured parties to seek compensation above and beyond those limits – and you'd have to pay

for those out of pocket. If the case goes before a jury, you could face punitive damages. In many states, insurance companies are prohibited by law from paying those damages.

Most states have outlawed texting behind the wheel, and several

(including California) ban any use of handheld devices. Fines range from \$20 to about \$300, but that won't be the only penalty: A growing number of states impose points on drivers who violate laws regulating texting and the use of handheld devices. Having points on your license can cause your insurance premiums to rise. If you accumulate too many points, your license can be suspended.

To avoid such penalties, don't put yourself in that situation in the first place. Always put your phone out of reach and out of sight whenever you're driving. Enable your phone's "Do Not Disturb While Driving" setting, which silences text alerts and sends a preset message to anyone who texts you while you're in the car. Lastly, take advantage of any in-car systems that allow you to set navigation, play music and make calls via voice commands.

If you're a passenger in a vehicle where the driver starts to use the phone, speak up or offer to make the phone call or type the address into the navigation app so the driver can keep his or her eyes on the road where they belong.

More than half of drivers threats on highways

AAA survey finds speeding is a bad habit that is hard to break

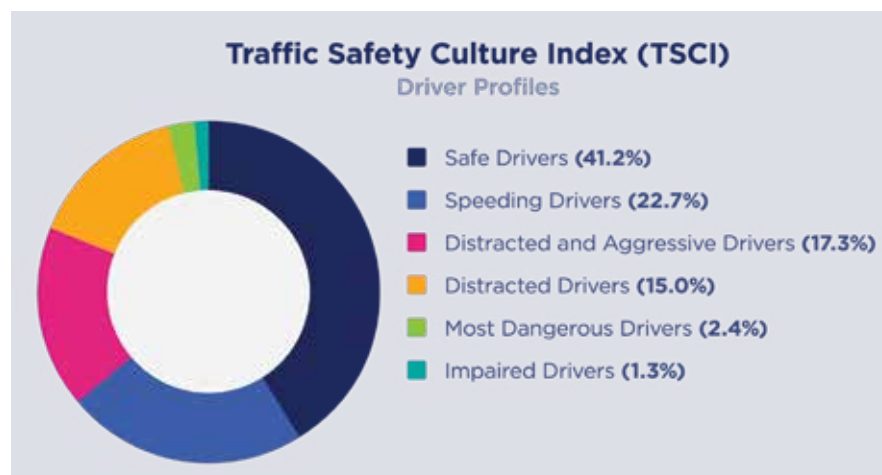
A report by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety identifies six types of drivers by analyzing risky driving behaviors.

Speeding, distracted driving and aggressive driving were the most common dangerous behaviors. The annual Traffic Safety Culture Index (TSCI) survey developed these six driver profiles by examining patterns of self-reported risky driving behaviors among a large group of drivers. Only four in 10 surveyed fell into the category of "safe drivers."

"Despite acknowledging the dangers, some drivers continue to engage in potentially deadly behaviors, particularly speeding," said Dr. David Yang, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety President and Executive Director. "Understanding the different types of risky driving behaviors and the characteristics of drivers who engage in them is crucial for developing targeted interventions to achieve safe mobility."

As daily driving patterns and traffic rebound from pandemic lows, traffic fatalities remain alarmingly high. Evidence points to fewer traffic stops, while fatal crashes, involving risky behaviors like impaired driving and speeding remain an epidemic on our roadways.

"This study highlights a near-term and important opportunity to concentrate on enforcement that makes an immediate safety impact," said Jake Nelson, AAA's director of traffic safety



Graphic: AAA.

advocacy. "Many risky drivers in this study were classified into profiles that involved speeding behavior. Focusing on speeding drivers will deter other risky driving behaviors like impaired driving and red-light running. This traffic safety measure will have the greatest impact on safety."

The new TSCI report reads that fewer drivers perceive speeding as dangerous, and speeding behaviors have the lowest perceived social disapproval of all examined unsafe behaviors.

It's worth noting that a motorist's need for **speed** consistently fails to deliver shorter travel times. It would take driving 100 miles at 80 mph rather than 75 to shave five minutes off a trip.

The six profiles identified by the most recent TSCI are:

Safe Drivers (41.2%) – Few in this group reported engaging in any risky driving-related behaviors, and more women (57%) composed the Safe Drivers group.

Speeding Drivers (22.7%) – These drivers reported driving 15 mph above the speed limit on freeways and/or 10 mph above on residential streets but did not engage in most other dangerous behaviors.

Distracted and Aggressive Drivers (17.3%) – Reported **distracted driving** behaviors (texting while driving), speeding and aggressive behaviors like red-light running and switching lanes

quickly.

Distracted Drivers (15.0%) – These drivers reported distracted-driving behaviors like reading text messages and texting while driving.

Most Dangerous Drivers (2.4%) – While these drivers consisted of only a small percentage of the drivers, they pose a serious risk to themselves and other road users as they reported engaging in all risky driving-related behaviors.

Impaired Drivers (1.3%) – Most live in nonmetropolitan areas. Interestingly, drivers with a four-year college degree were less likely to report driving while impaired. At the same time, the most "overrepresented" group consisted of those with some college or an associate degree.

The survey asked drivers about their perceived level of danger for various driving behaviors. The majority of drivers perceived unsafe-driving behaviors as very or extremely dangerous, and yet, as in past years, many admitted to doing these behaviors at least once in the previous 30 days.

With a steadfast commitment to examining traffic safety, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety has conducted its annual TSCI survey for more than a decade. As traffic safety concerns have escalated, insights from the most recent TSCI shed light on public perceptions, attitudes and engagement in unsafe-driving behaviors, offering valuable guidance for developing effective countermeasures.

Beaches, culture put Thailand atop bucket lists

Splendor, architecture and intrigue bless East Asian nation

Bucket list trips share many commonalities, but a more popular one might be distance. The farther the destination, the more likely it is to be on your list.

Europe, Australia, an African safari, China, Japan and Egypt quickly come to mind as once-in-a-lifetime visits. But they're just a snapshot. Here's an interesting one: Thailand.

Located in East Asia and boasting the appearance of a gerrymandered congressional district, Thailand rolls natural beauty into urban and historic hotspots. Beaches flourish, and cities rise. Culture reverberates, and adventure accentuates this multidimensional country.

Its history spans centuries and its culture is as exotic as it is friendly. Thailand embraces tourists with its white-sand beaches and bustling cities. Lush resorts populate its myriad shores to make your visit as relaxing as it is memorable.

It might not be easy to step away from Thailand's beautiful beaches that snuggle with the Andaman Sea or the Gulf of Thailand. Light breezes carry the scent of salt water, putting a stamp on its tropical climate. Long-tail boats sail on calm, blue waters through gorgeous terrain. Perhaps a beach chair, umbrella and cocktail might seem to be all you need, but there is so much more.

City-dwellers will find sanctuary in Bangkok, Thailand's capital city. It has more than 8.2 million residents



ONE NIGHT IN BANGKOK – Temples light up in the foreground a of setting sun in Thailand's capital city. Image: *sahachat. Adobe Stock.*

and nearly as much to see and experience. See ancient temples, including Wat Arun. It's 270-feet high, is covered from top to bottom with mosaics and is named for the Hindu god Aruna, God of Dawn. It's glorious to behold at dawn or sunset.

Wat Pho – Temple of the Reclining Buddha – is a temple complex that houses the most Buddha's in Thailand.

Opulent statues, ornate pagodas and striking stonework spread throughout and tell the story of the local culture.

The Golden Palace once served as the residence of Thai kings, their royal courts and multiple branches of government. Witness fine art at the Bangkok Art & Culture Center. And don't forget to satisfy your appetite. More than 300,000 street vendors serve stir fries,

fried rice, curries, grilled meat and fish skewers.

Escape the commotion of Bangkok with a stop in Chiang Mai. Absorb the beauty of mountainous landscapes and historic temples, such as Wat Phra Singh and Wat Chedi Luang. Visit the Chiang Mai Night Bazaar and leave time to visit the Elephant Nature Park.

Thailand's culture continues to permeate through the city of Ayutthaya. A UNESCO World Heritage-listed city, it's populated with monasteries, temples, statues and archaeological ruins. Visit Bang Pa-In Palace, Wat Lokaya, Wat Phra Si Sanphet and Wat Chaiwatthanaram.

Had enough culture? Thailand is teeming with national parks, including Mu Ko Similan, Khao Sok and Khao Lak-Lam Ru. Scuba divers flock to spend hours admiring coral reefs and marine life. Limestone cliffs, awe-inspiring waterfalls and a lush evergreen forest will take your breath away. And a myriad of ecosystems and diverse flora and fauna will keep naturalists animated for hours.

Phang Nga is a Thai province on the coast of the Andaman Sea. Tourists descend upon it to visit Mu Ko Surin National Park, one of the best diving sites in Thailand. Explore by hiking or snorkeling and visit Ao Phang-Nga National Park to **adventure into** its stunning caves, emerald-green waters and the picturesque James Bond Island.

Don't be too quick to change air filter

Maintaining our vehicles is the best way to keep them running smoothly. It's wise, however, to make sure a part *needs* to be replaced before replacing it.

That often is a conundrum with air filters. Service technicians and the EPA for years encouraged motorists to change the engine's air filter to ensure maximum fuel economy.

It worked well for carbureted vehicles, but a U.S. Department of Energy study found that air-filter condition has no significant impact on the fuel economy of modern, fuel-injected engines. A badly restricted air filter, however, will reduce the engine's maximum power output.

So, when should air filters be replaced? Visible dirt on the filter's surface is not a good indicator. Air filters do a better job of trapping contaminants once they have been in operation long enough to gain a light coating of dust and dirt.

To test an air filter, remove it from its housing and hold it in front of a bright light. It can be returned to service if the light passes easily through **more** half the filter.

The light test works well with pleated paper filters. Some cars, however, have extended-life engine air filters with dense fabric filtering agents that are highly effective, but don't allow light to pass through them. Unless a filter of this type is visibly caked with dirt, replace it at the mileage intervals specified by the vehicle manufacturer.

Some vehicles, primarily pickup trucks, have an engine air filter-service indicator on the filter housing. This indicator measures the air pressure drop across the filter when the engine is running. The pressure drop increases as the filter becomes more restricted.

It's recommended to check the indicator at each oil change and replace the filter when the indicator reads to do so.

Drivers can change an air filter on their own or have it done by a professional technician. AAA has more than 7,000 Approved Auto Repair shops from which to choose.

Members can find a nearby shop by visiting AAA.com/AutoRepair to find a nearby AAA Approved Auto Repair facility.

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Extending family awaits on AmaWaterways cruise

Smaller ships' cozy settings spark invaluable friendships on river

River cruising's amiable environment ranks high among the primary reasons to choose sailing intimate waterways. Cruises often begin with handshakes and conclude with hugs.

Ships' limited capacities make it nearly impossible not to meld friendships. The setting sparks cordial greetings and interesting conversations. Journeys create extended families that result in memories destined to last a lifetime.

Laugh, tease and toast. Share stories or make new ones. Backgrounds differ but add color to discussions. Commonalities initiate unforgettable times.

Embarkation opens a sea of unlimited opportunities to meet others. AmaWaterways' vessels – including *AmaSerena* – build bridges to an unknown future that is destined to result in everlasting relationships.

It doesn't take long to familiarize with the surroundings. The lounge is a melting pot. Guests meet for happy hour. Bartenders pour cocktails, the cruise manager makes a speech and a pianist plays relaxing music that enhances the ambiance.

Soon enough, guests begin chatting with fellow cruisers. Subjects vary, depending on interests, but rarely is anyone at a loss for words. Topics range from sports, families or hometowns – and that barely scratches the surface. Not even politics can ruin a conversation.

Tourism bonds people, and river



MEETING PLACE – The intimacy of AmaWaterways ships sparks an environment meant to create lasting friendships. *Image: AmaWaterways.*

cruising unifies individuals in a way few travel options can. Ages vary from baby boomers to millennials. Couples celebrating golden anniversaries converse with newlyweds. It's a generation gap that closes quickly and opens doorways to new beginnings.

Cruisers relish dining for more than satisfying their appetites. They share tables and anecdotes with fresh faces. Wine glasses rarely are empty. Self-deprecating

tales spark laughter and strengthen connections. In no time, photos are taken and shared on social media.

Each night concludes in the lounge. Entertainment varies but never bores and AmaWaterways thrives in keeping the party alive. Dancing is nearly a nightly ritual on *AmaSerena*. Karaoke allows guests to unleash their vocal cords. A DJ and cover band ignite the dance floor. Others flock to the bar or tables for a nightcap. Last call

Tourism bonds people, and river cruising unifies individuals in a way few travel options can. Ages vary from baby boomers to millennials. Couples celebrating golden anniversaries converse with newlyweds. It's a generation gap that closes quickly and opens doorways to new beginnings.

finalizes a fantastic day and has travelers eagerly awaiting the next one.

Excursions expound comradery. Touring towns and medieval castles uncovers common interests. Extra time likely means shopping, having lunch or finding a local establishment. An afternoon libation leaves an indelible mark. Good luck ordering a vodka and soda in a German brewery.

Whoever said river cruising is dull never has been on one. It couldn't be more false. Sailing cozy waterways highlights cultures and brings people together.

Vessels are transporters to an alternate universe. They allow cruisers to escape their daily grinds, find tranquility and make a few new friends along the way.

By week's end, the "Cheers" theme song perfectly sums up the trip because ...

Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name.

Admit it. You sang that previous sentence.

Mysteries of Greenland make it enticing

Planet's largest island sparkles near the top of the world

The world's coldest places rarely seem like attractive locations to vacation. Intriguing? Well that's another story.

Greenland ranks among the most intriguing. The world's largest island doesn't boast all-inclusive resorts and don't expect to absorb much of a sun-tan. You will experience an eye-opening trip few travelers make.

The island is covered by more than 80% ice, snow and glaciers. Nothing is green about it. You might want to call it "Iceland," but that name already has been taken.

Greenland is a mystery waiting to be solved. Its rugged terrain and majestic scenery define its characteristics, making it one of the more fascinating places on the planet.

It passes through the Arctic Circle while nearly sitting on top of the world. Humans have inhabited it for more than 4,500 years and today it's home to fewer than 60,000 citizens.

The Midnight Sun shines bright in Greenland, with the sun never setting from May 25 to July 25. And Winter Solstice welcomes more than 20 hours of darkness.

Viking Erik the Red named it in the 10th century, believing that using the word "green" would attract Nordics to emigrate to the island. Perhaps the first marketing scam – ever?

Greenland becomes more intriguing with each fact. Its unvarnished beauty



SUN-SATION – A sailboat sits in the foreground of an iceberg during the Midnight Sun season. *Image: Marc Pelissier. Adobe Stock.*

makes it enticing for naturalists and travelers who can't resist a challenge.

A series of expeditions comprise a schedule of things-to-do while visiting Greenland. Capital city Nuuk is the starting point. Built on a peninsula, it's as close to a metropolitan area you will find.

Boat or plane is the best way to explore the island. Its waterways make it easier to travel, considering there are no

roads outside city limits.

Northeast Greenland National Park is the largest in the world, covering more than 375,000-square miles. It's a refuge for polar bears, walruses, caribou, seals and other arctic wildlife. It also is uninhabited. Visitors must acquire a permit from the Ministry of Nature & Environment to reserve a spot on an expedition cruise that features mountains, glaciers, fjords and icebergs.

Ilulissat Icefjord is an initial place travelers should visit. The area features thousands of icebergs. They vary in size, providing a natural beauty few places can match. The area also features the Sermeq Kujalleq – the fastest glacier in the world.

Kayakers shouldn't skip Blue River. The clear waterway shares the appearance of a vein dissecting a frozen desert of ice. It's found on the Petermann Glacier, which feeds the river with its melting snow, changing its shape annually.

Hikers can take advantage of Greenland's unspoiled nature. Its rocky surface provides clear pathways and Arctic greenery during the summer months. Discover plants, flowers, dramatic rocks, icebergs and glaciers and hardly any people.

For those who don't prefer hiking, a cruise is another exciting way to explore the island. Cruises offer varying itineraries and allow up-close views of marine animals like whales and seals, as well as stunning sights of Greenland's sprawling landscape.

The Northern Lights appear from early autumn through April. They irradiate a sky that is nearly free of light pollution, making it one of the best places in the world to witness this phenomenon.

There's irony in Greenland's thick ice, considering it's a diamond in the rough.

Tips From a AAA Travel Advisor: Erin Zmuda

South Africa an eye-opening experience

Breathtaking natural wonders, wildlife and more await

Who doesn't want to see a penguin live in their natural habitat at Boulder Beach? Experience the sunrise on



AAA Travel Advisor:

Erin Zmuda

a morning-game drive, complete with your own personal tracker? Take a cable car up Table Mountain to take in the breathtaking views of South Africa's Peninsula – the city, harbor, and boats below? I have been a Travel Advisor with AAA for 29 years – most of my adult life – and I love to make my clients' dreams come true. This time, it was my turn, and I still have not woken up from the dream!

African Travel greeted us upon arrival and its guide provided VIP service – accompanying us through customs and immigration, with a van transfer to the hotel and check-in. Our hotel – Table Bay – in Cape Town was conveniently located by the Boardwalk at the Victoria Albert Waterfront.

After a much-needed sleep, Day 1 was all about the culture! We met the owner of the Thunaris Organic garden. She started her business with the goal of teaching the locals to grow their own



EYE CANDY – Cape Town is one of the more beautiful cities in Africa. Mountains rise in the foreground of blue waters. Image: Erin Zmuda. AAA.

food and to improve their health and eating habits. Then, we visited the Ekhasa Ekasi non-profit art and education center. They teach the local women crafts to try to create positivity in the community. The highlight was a visit to a local kindergarten, where we attended a graduation ceremony. The school was built out of trash and recycled materials.

Boulder Beach was a remarkable wildlife encounter with the hundreds of African Penguins who reside there. The beach is a sheltered inlet between granite boulders. Boardwalks make the

area wheelchair friendly, but also provide protection for the penguins.

Next, we drove along Chapman's Peak Drive, a toll road on the Atlantic Coast between Hout Bay and Noordhoek in the Peninsula renowned as one of the most spectacular marine drives in the world. Cape Point is where two oceans meet – the cold waters of the Atlantic Ocean on the west and the warmer Indian Ocean waters on the east. The views were spectacular. I rode the funicular up but decided to do the 10-minute walk down to enjoy the views.

And it kept getting better. Our Winelands tour took us to quaint towns, complete with wine-tasting at family led Haute Cabriere. We enjoyed lunch at the five-star Delaire Graff Estate restaurant, where we tried local delicacies with a view of the Winelands as our backdrop.

On our Safari, we flew to Skukuza, and stayed at the Sabi Sabi Bush Lodge inside Kruger National Park. As the oldest lodge in the collection, every room is a suite with a blend of relaxed luxury mixed with local tradition, inspired by the owners' love of Africa. Upon arrival we were briefed about our next two days at the Lodge.

Our stay was all-inclusive with three meals and drinks. We did two game drives by jeep each day – one at 6a.m. (with an early 5:30 a.m. wakeup call), and 4:30 p.m. (the afternoon time is seasonal), for 2.5-3 hours. Each jeep had a tracker who knows from tradition how to interpret the animal footprints and patterns, and a ranger who sat up front to explain the animals. Over the two days our tracker did not disappoint. We saw the BIG 5: Leopard, Lion, elephant, American buffalo and rhino.

Some tips I learned from my experience include discussing the recommended medications and vaccinations with your doctor. It is a personal choice. Bring neutral not bright clothes, and layers; and keep your arms in the jeep, but your camera ready. You do not want to miss any photo opportunities!

I-95 road trip that reaches great heights

2,000-mile highway home to big cities, eclectic destinations

It's common to hear the phrase "cross country," particularly when it comes to road trips. Miles and miles of highways crisscross our country. They meander through some of our finest natural wonders and most unique locations. Tiny towns, blessed with immense personalities, grab your attention. Mountains, canyons and rock formations leave you in awe.

It isn't a coincidence that travelers often choose cross-country trips. But what about a vertical excursion? Of course, Pacific Coast Highway quickly comes to mind, but it's not your only option.

Interstate 95 is a highway that stretches more than 1,900 miles from the Canadian border in Maine to Miami. It passes through 16 states, as well as the District of Columbia. It takes travelers through a host of metropolitan regions and hugs much of the East Coast shoreline.

There isn't a bad time to witness all I-95 has to offer. See the trees bloom in the spring and their leaves turn brown in the fall. Enjoy miles of beaches. Vibrant scenery lines the roadway like streetlights. Cities and communities are populated by colonial architecture and there are sure to be plenty of eateries, serving mouthwatering, eclectic dishes.

Your only issue might be deciding which places to visit. Many options make research and scheduling priorities before beginning your trip.



PARK PLACE – Maine's Acadia National is must-stop destination while taking a trip on Interstate 95. Image: Skyler. Adobe Stock.

Planning to visit the obvious destinations is easy. Maine's Acadia National Park, Boston, New York City, Miami, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. should be givens. It's finding the hidden gems that will make your trip unforgettable.

It could be a bed-and-breakfast town in Connecticut or Rhode Island. Perhaps a museum in Virginia, an estate in Georgia or historic landmarks populated throughout your journey. There's no telling what could turn up.

St. Augustine, Florida is the oldest city in the U.S., founded in 1565. It's home to the Fountain of Youth, as well as Castillo de San Marcos – a masonry fort that dates to the 17th century. It's withstood attacks from Napoleon in the early 1800s and would be an ideal stop for history buffs.

Few places in the U.S. showcase magnificent Victorian-style architecture like Savannah, Georgia. Its Historic District and Bonaventure Cemetery are comprised of cobblestone streets and intricately

detailed homes. Visit Fort Jackson, which has daily cannon firings. And foodies should take advantage of the traditional and innovative tastes of Southern cooking that only can be found in a number of mom-and-pop restaurants.

The spirit of the 18th century is alive and well in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Several sites date to the Revolutionary and Civil wars. The Rising Sun Tavern is a pub that once was a house built by George Washington's brother, Charles.

Battleship, New Jersey is where you can find one of the largest and most decorated battleships that can be toured and you can learn more about New Jersey's role in World War II, Korean War and Vietnam. Hardcore war aficionados even can arrange to stay a night in one of the bunks.

The Breakers is an elaborate mansion that can be found in Newport, Rhode Island. Commissioned by Cornelius Vanderbilt, it has 70 rooms, massive chandeliers and an abundance of gilt.

Stop by the Eleanor Cabot Bradley Estate in Canton, Massachusetts. Mystic, Connecticut's seaport recreates a 19th-century village with more than 60 restored buildings and more than 500 historic ships. And South Carolina's Congaree National Park offers 26,000 acres of parkland.

There's no telling what you might discover on I-95, but it's likely to be a treasure.

Las Vegas Strip golf course raises stakes

Beauty, creativity of Wynn Golf Club put it in upper class

There isn't much you can't find on the Las Vegas Strip – including a golf course.

That might shock travelers who aren't familiar with Sin City. The Strip is four miles of resorts, venues and congestion. Hotels reach the sky. Themes range from Venice to Paris. You can “walk like an Egyptian,” admire the New York City skyline or catch a show in a Roman colosseum.

The Strip is rivaled by few locations in the U.S. It's a parallel universe where up is down and even is odd. A sense of normalcy might best be found on a golf course – Wynn Golf Club, to be exact.

The course sits behind the Wynn Las Vegas resort on the northern end of the Strip. It's a stunning championship course. It's 6,722 yards of lush green paradise. The fairways are soft, the rough is tame and the greens are smooth. The cost is steep.

Golfers can expect to pay at least \$550 per round. The green fee includes a caddie, cart and complimentary loaner clubs from Callaway Golf. It's a bargain for avid golfers eager to play one of the most magnificent casino courses in the U.S.

Wynn Golf Club's history extends beyond the day resort owner Steve



GREEN WITH ENVY – The Wynn Golf Club is one of the finest courses in Nevada. It's behind Wynn Las Vegas resort on the Strip. *Image: dashagorbenko. Adobe Stock.*

Wynn opened it in 2005. The previous Desert Inn Golf Club played host to a plethora of PGA tournaments during its five decades of existence. Golf greats Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Sam Snead, Greg Norman and Tiger Woods are among the many stars who played it.

Wynn purchased the property in

2000 and had Tom Fazio redesign the course before its opening five years later. Fazio has designed nearly 50 golf courses, including Pinehurst No. 6 and Pinehurst No. 8.

Wynn closed the course in 2017 and considered using the property to build a lagoon and more hotel rooms but reversed his decision after seeing

a significant drop in revenue. Fazio updated the layout and it reopened in the fall of 2019.

No. 18 is its marquee hole, a 249-yard par-3 that screams Las Vegas. Players must hit over a pond and a creek to a green situated at the base of an active constructed waterfall. The hole's seamless fit into the environment is similar to No. 18 at Pebble Beach or No. 12 at Augusta National.

Golfers also have a new partner. The opening of Sphere – a multibillion-dollar entertainment venue – adds to the entertainment. An LED lightshow encompasses the venue's outside appearance, turning it into a different appearance almost daily. It sits in the foreground of holes. It might even be smiling.

The course, meanwhile, fits like a puzzle on 129 acres. Streams and foliage – 100,000 shrubs and 8,000 trees – cause players to forget they're in the desert.

Each nine of the par-70 course has a pair of par-5 holes. Water comes into play on 12 holes and 37 bunkers are strategically located throughout the course. Four of the first five holes are reconfigured from the previous design.

Golf – Vegas style. It's all you ever could image and more.

Clearwater avoids the dreary, gray skies

Sun always shines bright on the Florida, gulf-coast town

Western Pennsylvania is dubious for its gray skies. So much so, the sight of a blue sky might seem like witnessing a unicorn.

A recent study found that Pittsburgh ranks fourth among major cities for number of cloudy days. It's hardly an honor of which to be proud, but it does keep people yearning to choose the perfect spot for their next vacations.

The options are plentiful. Florida is an excellent place to start – Clearwater to be exact. The city that hugs the Gulf of Mexico on the state's western side is synonymous with sunshine. Gray skies are an enigma, and rain is a rarity.

Clearwater averages 361 days of sunshine per year. And it holds the record for consecutive sunny days with 768 – more than two consecutive years.

It's astonishing, particularly to the many who reside north of the Mason-Dixon line. Here, clear skies and sunshine are a bonus; in Clearwater, they're a given. The temperatures **rage** year-round from the low 70s to the low 90s. The water is just as unblemished as the sky, and the beaches are softer and more pristine than a country club's fairways.

Clearwater's sugar-white sand and tranquil setting create a gorgeous and captivating environment for guests. The beaches are arguably the city's



SUNSATIONAL – High-rises sit in the background of beautiful Clearwater Beach. *Image: Scott. Adobe Stock.*

greatest attribute. Visitors spend hours bathing in the sun or sitting under an umbrella. The scent of saltwater wafts from the gulf, enticing beach bums to take a dip.

Beach Walk is one of shore's primary attributes. The \$30 million redevelopment initiative has transformed the look and atmosphere of south Clearwater Beach. It's a long and meandering promenade – a half-mile

in length – surrounded by resorts, entertainment, restaurants and artwork. It's dotted with palm trees, resting areas and lush landscaping.

Pier 60 is a recommended stop on Beach Walk. Dangle a fishing pole during the day, but by evening, don't miss the free sunset celebration, a local tradition for more than a quarter century. Highlights of the sparkling festival include street performers,

artists, crafters and live music. The event begins two hours before sunset and concludes two hours after the sun drops beneath the gulf's horizon.

Clearwater's revitalized downtown area offers shopping, dining and live entertainment. The Cleveland Street District overlooks the eye-catching Clearwater Harbor and Marina and provides a stunning backdrop for a variety of concerts, festivals and exhibits throughout the year.

The Gulf of Mexico is home to an abundance of delicious seafood, making Clearwater well known for its fresh daily catches. Grouper is the town's favorite. The flaky, white fish can be prepared many ways and is a hit among the locals and visitors. Stone crab is another specialty, available from May to October.

Food festivals and events are held throughout the year, including Frenchy's Stone Crab Festival, Cooters Annual Crab Fest, Clearwater Beach Uncorked and many more. The seafood might be just as delectable as the beaches.

Guests also can golf, charter fishing boats, go dolphin watching, or simply ... just relax.

The sky is blue, the sun is shining, and the gulf waters are pure. It's safe to assume that Clearwater more than lives up to its name.

So, let's begin to dream.

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 and witness France or Italy saying hello and welcoming you.

No destination is out of reach at the Pittsburgh Travel Showcase™! Engulf yourself in three Destination Theaters and experience 42 information-packed presentations. The World's top travel experts not only tell you about the destinations, they tap into their own extensive 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 Destination Theaters will be full of presentations that will have you dreaming 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.

Is Alaska on your adventure list? This year, Travel Juneau not sure joins Visit Anchorage to give you a variety of options, including large and small group tours. If you're thinking of visiting by sea, Alaska remains one of the top cruising destinations!

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!

Barcelona, Budapest, London, Dublin, Berlin, Rome, Paris, Copenhagen, Lucerne, Strasbourg ... The list goes on and on and on, and the Pittsburgh Travel Showcase™ can get

you there!

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 Seine.

Whet your palate on a trip through Wine Country in Northern California. Tour by train, bus or rented vehicle. Also at the Pittsburgh 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.

Or, if a drive destination is more of what you had in mind, the Pittsburgh Travel Showcase™ will feature new vendors this year welcoming you to some of the best destinations in our backyard. Pigeon Forge, Tennessee and Dollywood Parks & Resorts offer a country-themed getaway, and closer to home Destination Gettysburg, Visit Atlantic City and Colonial Williamsburg provide options for the whole family.

Train excursions barrel through the Canadian 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.

Plan a destination wedding. Imagine tying the knot while standing barefoot in the soft sand of the Caribbean or Hawaii.



Image: Lubomir. Adobe Stock.

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 parts of the USA that you never imagined would be possible.

For cruisers, Regent Seven Seas, Azamara, AmaWaterways and Tauck rank among the finest luxury ocean and river cruise lines in the world. Royal Caribbean International, Celebrity Cruises and Princess Cruises will introduce you to the newest and grandest ships on the high seas. Visit with the beautiful beach destinations of the sunshine state - Daytona Miami, St. Pete-Clearwater and Tampa Bay and relax in the Caribbean with the Caymans, Curacao, Jamaica and the United States Virgin Islands.

Pack your bags, choose your destination and allow AAA Travel to take it from there.

Get your tickets, details and updates at PittsburghTravelShowcase.com or for tickets, details and updates visit www.PittsburghTravelShowcase.com.

SHOWTIMES

Jan. 19 - Noon to 6 p.m.
Jan. 20 - 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Jan. 21 - 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

GET SHOWCASE TICKETS!

The Showcase is open to AAA Members and nonmembers. Everyone's invited! To purchase admission tickets, visit PittsburghTravelShowcase.com. Tickets are also 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. 4-night Mackinac Island & Frankenmuth Oktoberfest Motorcoach tour for two September 16-20, 2024, from the Pittsburgh region. Retail value: as much as \$2,870
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 18, 2024. Winners need not be present. Drawing will be held Jan 22, 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. 11, 2024. One complete package as advertised for 2 adults sharing room. No cash value.
- 2) Certificate cannot 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.

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