

10 Ways

TO SAVE BIG AT THE PUMP

By Stephanie Oliver

This spring, Annie Hoffman will drive some 600 hundred miles from Michigan to Nebraska to visit her boyfriend. After several months apart, she is excited about the time they're going to spend together. "I can't wait to see him and every moment that we've been apart seems like forever." Despite her excitement however, she is not thrilled about the cost of the road trip which will run about \$200.

According to Tom Kloza, Chief Oil Analyst at the Oil Price Information Service, gas prices are expected to top \$3 a gallon this summer. We found some money-saving tips that won't leave your wallet empty when you get a fill up.

Ease off the gas pedal: Simply reducing your speed by five-miles-per hour can noticeably affect your gas mileage. It's recommended to stay under 60 miles per hour because every 5 mph increase can cost an extra \$0.20 per gallon. Keeping an eye on the tachometer will help you gauge engine performance.

Avoid premium and midgrade gasoline: Unless your automobile won't run on anything less, choose regular gas since premium does not increase your gas mileage. According to Nancy Cain,

AAA Michigan public relations director. "Using self-serve regular fuel compared to premium can save an average of 17 cents per gallon." Also be aware of the additives used to promote fuel economy since they really don't make a difference.

Accelerate slowly and coast to stops: Avoiding sudden spurts of speed and anticipating a change in the traffic lights before approach will also save in gas. Using this in combination with a speed reduction can reduce your gasoline consumption by 33%.

Don't let the vehicle idle unnecessarily: Most people don't realize that using the drive-through is a waste of gas. It's actually more economical to park the car, shut it off, and go inside to collect your order. Cain says, "Don't let the vehicle idle for more than a minute. Idling consumes half-a-gallon to one gallon of gas per hour and wastes more fuel than restarting the engine." For safety matters however, do not turn off the engine while waiting for a traffic light to turn from red to green.

Combine your errands into one to reduce your trips: Thinking about the stores you need to visit before starting off is helpful with route planning. Instead of zigzagging back and forth, try to plan your stops "along-the-way."

Car pool: Car-pooling has its benefits because the passengers can share the gas bill while combining even more trips into one. Combining shopping trips with others can also be a fun bonding experience.

Avoid the rush hour: During the rush hour you often have to deal with a combination of stop-and-go traffic as well as unnecessary idling.

Check the engine oil level regularly: Engine performance is boosted when the engine is lubricated and can run smoothly.

Empty the trunk and remove the luggage on the roof: Extra weight in your vehicle makes the engine run harder, thus burning more gasoline. Stashing stuff on the roof can also have a negative effect in disrupting the aerodynamic flow of the wind around the car, creating drag also causing increase in engine work.

Keep your tires properly inflated: The US Department of Energy has estimated that Americans will waste \$1.5 billion of gasoline because of failing to keep their tire pressure in check. Keeping them inflated according to the recommended p.s.i printed on the tire wall can save you up to \$2 every time you fill up. 