

"Where are we?"
Puzzled youth worker
who did not read this

14 TERRIFIC TRAVEL TIPS FOR YOUTH GROUPS ON THE ROAD.



1. GET DIRECTIONS WELL IN ADVANCE.

Double-check online directions with other web sites and with road atlases. Best to be extra careful than get lost in unfamiliar territory with tired/hungry teenagers.

2. FIGURE YOUR TRAVEL TIME CAREFULLY.

The more kids you have, and the younger the group is, the more time it takes to unload and load at each stop. Also figure you'll need to stop every couple hours or so for bathroom breaks. It's wise to build in a little "fudge time" for the unexpected. Having a realistic timeline for your trip allows you to plan for accurate arrival times at your destination and build in fun stops along the way!

3. MAKE SURE YOUR DRIVERS ARE WELL-RESTED.

If you hire a bus company, there are laws that require certain amounts of rest-time to driving-time. Make sure you account for this. If you and other adults will be driving, make sure everyone has rest. This is hard when you have to stay up late the last night of camp to pack and spend time with your kids, but getting them home safely is your number one concern. And please, please, please...don't ever plan to drive all night.

4. PRINT A DETAILED ITINERARY FOR YOUR DRIVERS AND FOR PARENTS.

Distribute your itinerary far in advance. The more details you provide parents and the sooner you provide them, the more you build trust with them. The details you need in the itinerary: what times you leave and arrive at each stop, contact name, address, and phone number for each overnight stop, and the mobile phone numbers of you and/or adult leaders going on the trip (for emergencies). Ask yourself: What would I like to know if my child were going on a trip like this without me?

5. SET A SPECIFIC TIME FOR LOADING THE VEHICLES AT THE CHURCH AND THE DEPARTURE TIME.

Allow an hour or so for loading. Emphasize this to everyone. One family that doesn't take this seriously and arrives with a ton of luggage just as you're leaving can put your group way behind and start your trip on a bad note. Promise to leave without anyone who doesn't show up on time.

6. GATHER YOUR TROOPS TOGETHER BEFORE EVERYONE BOARDS THE VEHICLES THE FIRST DAY.

Invite your pastor to bless everyone and give you a send off with prayer. It also doesn't hurt to remind them of the basic behavior expectations and what will happen if these are violated. Follow through on any consequences you set.

7. HAVE YOUR YOUTH AND ADULTS PACK AN OVERNIGHT BAG.

They can access easily if you're stopping for the night on the way to or from camp. That way you don't have to unload everything along the way. (Mention this in the itinerary.)

8. SPEND YOUR TRAVEL TIME BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR STUDENTS.

Don't have an adult ride shotgun, get a kid up there—rotate different kids as you drive. When you're not driving get in the back to meet with your kids. When you stop for meals, sit with your kids. Encourage other adult leaders to do the same: spread out among your youth. This trip is all about them.

9. ALLOW TIME ON THE WAY TO CAMP FOR SPIRITUAL PREPARATION.

Before you get to camp, make sure your entire group has time to get into the right frame of mind. This could be as simple as letting everyone share how they're feeling before they get there, or it could be as elaborate as specific devotion activities for each van along the way. Whatever you do,

make sure you take the time to remind everyone what this trip is all about and why you're going. Your students should understand that the service aspect is secondary to growing closer to Jesus.

10. REMEMBER: SAFETY FIRST!

That means seat belts, observing speed limits, and driving defensively. It also means the driver controls the music volume.

11. HAVE A FIRST AID KIT AND A FILE FOLDER WITH EACH STUDENT'S HEALTH INFORMATION AND PERMISSION SLIPS IN EVERY VEHICLE.

If a vehicle gets lost or breaks down, that driver will have everyone's important information for emergencies.

12. ALLOW TIME ON THE WAY HOME FOR RE-ENTRY.

It can be a bit of culture shock to take kids directly from the camp experience and plopping them right back into their home lives. They need a bit of time to process what happened at camp and transition to home. Help them think about what happened and what that means for their home lives. Celebrate the trip. Talk about upcoming ministry events in your youth group.

13. RECRUIT SOME PARENTS TO PLAN A WELCOME HOME CELEBRATION

for your group when you pull into the church parking lot after the trip. Get balloons, signs, a brass band... whatever it takes to welcome your group home like the heroes they are. You'd be surprised how good this feels.

14. GATHER PARENTS AND YOUTH IN A BIG CIRCLE IN THE PARKING LOT.

Hold hands (after the vehicles are unloaded and before everyone leaves). Tell the parents how great their kids were and how proud they should be of them. Sing a worship song and lead a closing prayer. This puts that nice finishing touch on the whole experience.