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## Holiday Headache: National Survey Finds Six in Ten Americans Stressed By Family Road Trips

- Families prepare to hit the road this holiday season, citing family time, comfort and control among top reasons
- The Dodge brand and recognized packing and travel expert, Susan Foster, provide useful tips to help consumers prepare for this season's holiday travel

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Nearly eight in 10 Americans (77 percent) plan to drive for their next family vacation – according to a national survey<sup>1</sup> – although nearly six in 10 Americans (59 percent) experience stress before or during a family road trip. In conjunction with the upcoming holiday season and the introduction of the all-new 2008 Dodge Grand Caravan – a virtual “family room on wheels” – Dodge commissioned a national survey to provide insight into how Americans deal with family road trips and to help prepare families for upcoming holiday travel.

Susan Foster, recognized travel expert and author, has teamed with Dodge to offer simple tips families can follow to avoid potential road trip disasters and focus on quality family time.

With the survey revealing that comfort, convenience and fun are important to families when they hit the road together, Susan Foster offers these tips for traveling this holiday season:

### Americans on the Road

- **Taking it on the Road.** According to the survey, nearly eight in 10 Americans (77 percent) say they plan to drive for their next family vacation, compared to 8 percent who plan to fly.

Part of the appeal of driving is the extra luggage and gear you can bring on your trip. Many of today's vehicles have innovative storage areas that give travelers more packing flexibility than ever before. When packing the vehicle, gather everything in one area and edit to fit. Soft-sided bags often squish in more easily than rigid rectangular suitcases.

- **Stressed to the Max.** However fun a road trip may be, nearly six in 10 (59 percent) Americans have experienced stress before or during an extended family car trip. The most common stress inducers are boredom or lack of entertainment (30 percent). And when asked what they would most want in a car, more than half (52 percent) desire more space or more comfortable seats for a road trip.

Minimize the “Are we there yet?” question. The best way to combat boredom is really having a combination of activities at your fingertips. Entertainment features such as DVD players and satellite radio have really changed the modern American road trip. Classic family games are great ways to supplement -- looking for license plates from different states, telling jokes or counting cars of a specific color.

- **Control Craze.** One in three Americans (33 percent) say that his/her reason to drive rather than fly this holiday season is to maintain control of the trip, including to have the ability to decide when to stop or to go sightseeing. When on the road, three-quarters of Americans (75 percent) say they enjoy being able to see different parts of the country.

Enjoying the journey – not just the destination – is a definite advantage of car travel. Choosing a vehicle that has a navigation system is an easy way to chart your itinerary, including stops at places of interest, instead of simply rest stops. Visit local parks or sights throughout the trip. History and geography become real when kids see the country for themselves. Choosing a different route for the return home helps to keep everyone interested for the entire trip.

- **Pack it Up.** One in four Americans (25 percent) have experienced stress on a family road trip related to packing the car. One in three Americans (33 percent) in households of three or more said packing the car has caused stress compared with 20 percent of smaller households.

Decide where things should go based on when they are needed – last in, first out. Use storage bins inside the vehicle to pack the clothes you're going to travel home in, but don't include items you need access to first while driving, such as the kids' stuffed animals they may want on the drive or the book you want to start.

Eliminate packing stress by working in advance of the trip to prep your vehicle.

- Two days ahead: Clean out the interior and cargo area and get rid of everything not needed for the trip. Make sure the interior light, especially in the cargo area, works properly.
- One day ahead: Pack as much of the vehicle as you can the night before you leave using the "last in, first out" rule. Packing always takes longer than you think it will, and this way you can actually leave first thing in the morning before everyone gets cranky.

- **Table It.** The survey found that half (50 percent) of Americans enjoy road trips for providing the opportunity to be together. Adding a table to the vehicle may actually help families bond as Americans said that they would be more likely to eat together (60 percent), talk (53 percent) and play board games or video games together (50 percent) if their car came equipped with this feature.

The survey also revealed that when it comes to vacations, Americans are eager to put down the homework and other work. Half (50 percent) say they would play board games or video games if their car were equipped with a table, but only 15 percent claimed they would use the table to do homework or other work.

The Dodge Grand Caravan Swivel 'n Go™ seating system features amenities once only offered in RVs – second-row seats that swivel 180 degrees to face the third row, with a removable table between the two rows so you can actually "sit around the table" for more family time.

"Today's families are on the move, and the all-new 2008 Dodge Grand Caravan is purpose-built to serve their everyday needs," said Ralph Gilles, Vice President – Jeep®/Truck, Advance Interior and Component Design, Chrysler. "With new features such as the Swivel 'n Go™ seating system, dual DVD entertainment system and SIRIUS Backseat TV, the Grand Caravan brings the comforts of home on the road."

#### **About the Dodge Grand Caravan:**

As the first to introduce the modern minivan in 1984 and with more than 12 million minivans sold, Dodge has revolutionized the traditional family road trip. Its all-new 2008 Grand Caravan has 35 new or improved features, including the exclusive Swivel 'n Go™ seating system, turning the minivan into a "family room on wheels." The vehicle also offers an entertainment system with dual DVD players and SIRIUS Backseat TV with family programming channels that include Nickelodeon Mobile, Disney Channel and Cartoon Network Mobile. For more information, visit [www.Dodge.com](http://www.Dodge.com).

#### **About Susan Foster:**

Susan Foster has been here and there ... and there—learning the hard way the dos and don'ts of packing smart, whether for short business trips, long vacations, or a combination. From sports-filled weekends to combination business/pleasure trips across the country and around the world, from cruises to driving jaunts, Foster has been traveling for more than 30 years and has spent her entire career living out of a suitcase! Having packed and unpacked more than 5,000 times, it is no wonder she writes with authority on the subject. Her helpful book, "Smart Packing for Today's Traveler," was first published in 2000, with an updated and revised

edition released in early 2004.

*<sup>1</sup>Methodological Notes:*

*This national survey was conducted by Kelton Research on behalf of Dodge, using an e-mail invitation and online survey. Quotas are set to ensure reliable and accurate representation of the total U.S. population of adults 18 years and older.*

*In this particular study, the chances are 95 in 100 that a survey result does not vary, plus or minus, by more than 3.1 percentage points from the result that would be obtained if interviews had been conducted with persons in the universe represented by the sample.*

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