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Summertime

By Wesley Trobaugh



Take a walk around San Sebastian and you'll see...the Americans are on vacation. You see, while Europe takes August off, Americans tend to take their week or two of vacation time in May, June or July. When I was in college, final exams were the week of my birthday, May 9th. Then we were off! August meant already thinking about going back to school.

My vacations were spent in the South. In Iowa, summer temperatures rarely dropped below 30° Celsius, so what better idea than to go to somewhere even hotter? Every year, the family got in whatever car happened to be big enough to take all of us, rarely fewer than five, to Texas, the land of unbearable heat and humidity. The drive to Houston was 24 hours so we didn't mind when my aunt and uncle decided to move to Dallas, only about a fifteen-hour drive. We did usually stop in Arkansas, an eight-hour drive, which broke the drive up slightly. Air conditioning was usually not an option; I don't know why but we always had the luck of not having that widespread luxury.

We would leave Sioux City and work our way down Interstate 29 and Highway 69, hoping the car wouldn't break down, as it inevitably did.

Once we didn't even make it past St. Joseph (3 hours drive) and another time we got to spend the evening in a mechanic's house in some horrid Oklahoma town (now that I think of it, they are all horrid). What made that experience even more horrid was that these people had pet snakes. I dare any of you to go through that experience. I dare any of you to step foot in small town Oklahoma...

The drive down consisted of looking out the window, fighting with my sisters, reading magazines, fighting with my sisters, stopping for gas, fighting with my sisters, eating fast food, fighting with my sisters and getting the age old "IF YOU KIDS DON'T STOP FIGHTING RIGHT NOW I'M GOING TO TURN THIS CAR AROUND AND DRIVE HOME." We never went home, no matter how badly we misbehaved. More than once, my mom devised a way to hook up a TV and VCR, thinking that would keep us from fighting. It did not. Movies are 90 to 120 minutes long. A fifteen-hour journey gives enough time for about eight movies. Who can watch eight movies? I can't. And neither can my sisters.

"Are we there yet?" was a common question, even though we knew perfectly well where we were. "I have to go to the bathroom" was a common statement. Hunger and thirst were never an issue because there was always plenty of food, especially if grandma went along and took her stash "for the kids" with her (Grandma always had junk food "for the kids" even when the kids were no longer kids).

I don't know if it is age or Europeanization but now I don't think that I would be physically, mentally, or emotionally able to do one of those two-day drives. Now even Bilbao seems to be irritatingly far and whenever possible, my trips to Barcelona or Madrid are by plane. But I guess when you're on vacation it's different. A car trip isn't so bad, I suppose, if you don't have three kids teasing each other in the back seat...

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