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“There’s a revolution in recreation underway in America. More leisure time, higher incomes, better transportation and renewed emphasis on family ‘togetherness’ have put the focus of family fun on the great outdoors.”

—*More Fun Outdoors with Coleman* (1953)

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# Family Vacation



**Susan Sessions Rugh**

\$16.99 U.S.

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Full of maps, ephemera, and old family photos, *Family Vacation* conjures the golden age of family vacations, when today’s baby boomers were backseat kids playing the alphabet game and arguing about who got the window seat.

In the good old days, when gas was 28 cents a gallon, families traveled the country in automobiles in search of monuments, the Wild West, the beach, the White House, a spot to camp, or Grandma’s house. Regardless of where your family went, *Family Vacation* will bring to mind all the fun and frivolity as it celebrates the memories of those treasured times with the family.

Susan Sessions Rugh, PhD, is a professor of History at Brigham Young University. She is an expert in the history of twentieth-century tourism and is the author of *Are We There Yet? The Golden Age of American Family Vacations* (2008), which the *Wall Street Journal* called “a fascinating journey through America’s recent past.”

Jacket designed by Kurt Wahlner  
Front and back cover illustrations and back flap photograph courtesy of the author



CHAPTER  
1

# Planning Family Vacation

**T**HE FAMILY VACATION required careful planning and budgeting. Oil companies helped their customers get on the road (and consume their products) by publishing travel guides small enough to fit into the car's glove compartment. The guides explained in detail how to budget for a trip, what to pack, how to entertain children, and how to have the car serviced for the trip. From what route to take to what motel to choose, the travel guides prepared family vacationers for the big road trip.



The Rand McNally map company also published various types of travel guides, including vacation guides and camping-and-trailer guides. Travel guides combined maps and texts to offer prepackaged travel itineraries that assured travelers a safe and secure journey. Vacationers depended upon commercial atlases and the maps produced for free distribution by gasoline service stations. Travel maps often depicted families on the cover as a way of advertising travel to vacationers. Service stations stopped handing out free maps in the 1970s, so travelers began to rely more on the American Automobile Association and state tourism offices to help them plan their trips.

**INSET:** Companies used road travel to sell their products, as in this advertisement for Coca-Cola. *LIFE*, April 1950.



## Family Budget

- \$2.60** Entertainment and tips per person per day
- \$3.30** Food per person per day
- \$7** Motel
- \$50** Gasoline and tolls for a two-week vacation (with gasoline \$0.28 per gallon)
- 300** Miles per day

Carol Lane, *Traveling by Car: A Family Planning Guide to Better Vacations* (1954)

## Checklist Tip

- |               |                        |
|---------------|------------------------|
| Pencils       | Towel                  |
| Balls         | Crackers or fruit      |
| First aid kit | Surprise bag           |
| Vinegar       | Camera and film        |
| Tissues       | Paper cups             |
| Scissors      | Wax bags               |
| Stamps        | Blanket, pillow        |
| Lollipops     | Thermos of water       |
| Washcloth     | Smallest favorite doll |

Frances W. Keene, *Travel Fun Book for Boys and Girls* (1954)

Map covers depicted happy families on vacation. Conoco, *Travel Colorado with Conoco* (1947).

# What to Pack in the Car

Sandwich supplies	Games
Snacks of fruits, raisins, and canned juices	Maps
Empty ice cream carton and rag in case of motion sickness	Sunglasses
Toys	First aid kit
Books	Sun lotion
	Pillows and blankets
	Mattress for back seat
	Bottle warmer

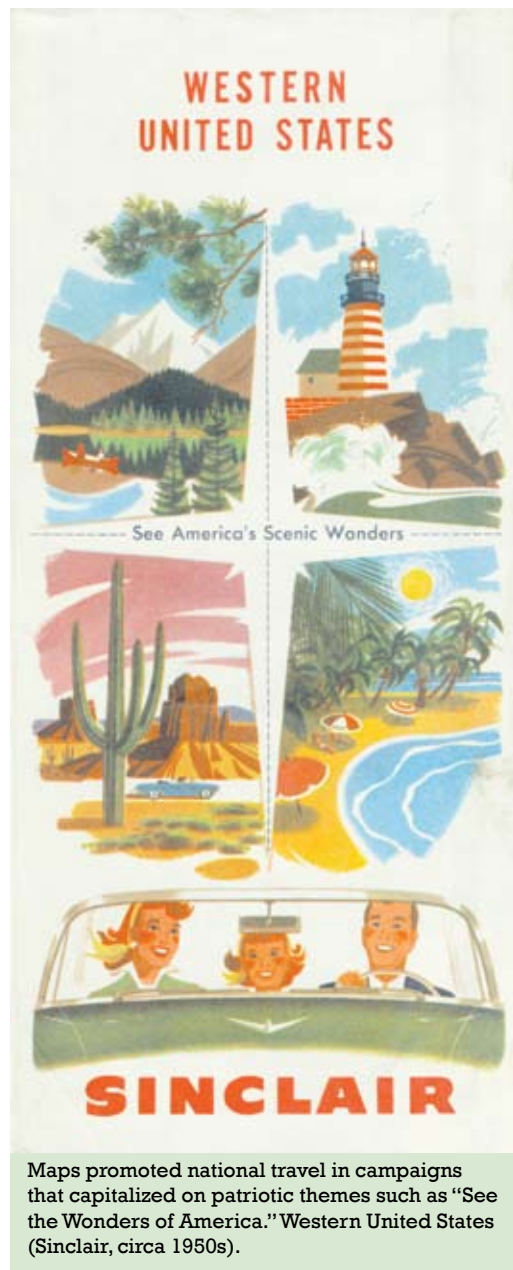
Carol Lane, *Traveling by Car: A Family Planning Guide to Better Vacations* (1954)

# Vacation Snacks

- Pineapple juice
- Toasted ham sandwiches
- Kidney bean salad
- Coffee, milk
- Assorted fruit

Make at least two sandwiches per person. More if you belong to a very hungry family. Cut bread fairly thin, butter, and spread with mayonnaise. Fill with generous slice of ham, lettuce leaf, and several slices of pickle. Toast lightly, cut diagonally, and wrap each sandwich in oiled paper.

*Child Life* (June 1941)



Maps promoted national travel in campaigns that capitalized on patriotic themes such as "See the Wonders of America." Western United States (Sinclair, circa 1950s).