Kbb.com's Top 10 Road Trip Cars of 2011: Editors Recommend Best Road Trip Rides for Various Life Stages

From Student Years to Golden Years and Beyond, Kbb.com Recommends New Road Trip Vehicles for All; Kbb.com Road Trip Contest on Facebook Offers Consumers Chance to Win Gas Money toward Future Travels

IRVINE, Calif., May 19, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- The expert editors from Kelley Blue Book's www.kbb.com, the leading provider of new car and used car information, today named the Top 10 Road Trip Cars of 2011. In a new twist on an annual list kbb.com has published since 2004, this year the editors identified 10 various life stages of American drivers on the road today, and then chose the most fitting new cars for those times in life.

The call of the open road seems to appeal to drivers of all ages and life stages. From the time we're born until the time we roll down that final highway, it seems the majority of drivers love road trips. The promise of new vistas, the hope that there is greener grass on the other side of the hill, the expectation that what comes next will be better than what has come before, all create a desire to get in the car and get gone.

Just in time for the kick-off of the traditional summer driving season, now car shoppers can discover the best road trip ride for their particular life stage in kbb.com's all-new list. The editors cover the best picks for the following life stages: student years, on the prowl, first real paycheck, dating years, young family, full-on family mode, midlife crisis, cougar years, golden years and the last ride.

Furthermore, to accompany the kbb.com editors' Top 10 Road Trip Cars of 2011 choices, Kelley Blue Book Market Intelligence recently conducted a quick poll on the kbb.com homepage to find out if car shoppers have summer road trips planned, and if so, how many people will be along for the ride. They found that nearly three-quarters of those polled (72 percent) have a summer road trip planned. With regard to the number of people participating in their road trip, 31 percent said that two people would be making the voyage together, 16 percent said three or four people would be along for the ride, and 13 percent said five or more people were going to pile into a vehicle for their road trip. Only 12 percent said they planned to take their road trip solo.

In addition to matching the ride to the life stage, the kbb.com editors also kept key road trip criteria in mind when choosing each Top 10 Road Trip Car -- things like a comfortable cabin, good fuel economy, utter reliability and superior over-the-road driving dynamics. They also enjoyed considering the vehicle's overall image and desirability when choosing this year's list.

"Let's face it, a road trip for a student will be a different animal than for someone in their retirement years, so this year we decided to change things up a bit, identifying 10 various life stages of American drivers, and then brainstorming the best road trip car for each one," said Jack R. Nerad, executive editorial director and executive market analyst for Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com. "Since our editorial staff has collectively driven nearly every vehicle available on the U.S. market, we had fun narrowing down the choices and deciding which ride best corresponded to each life stage. The resulting list is comprehensive whether you're a young single on the prowl, going through a mid-life crisis or riding off into the sunset."

Select Choices from Kbb.com's Top 10 Road Trip Cars of 2011 List with Editorial Commentary

Student Years: 2012 Ford Focus

You're a student who longs for the open road. What to drive? Try the new Ford Focus. It looks cool, sports an upscale interior, rides and handles incredibly well and costs about the same as some of the more boring compact cars. For road trip duty we're inclined to suggest the five-door variant with extra cargo room, and not to be overlooked is highway fuel economy up to 38 miles per gallon (40 mpg for the sedan with SFE Package). Remember students, the less you spend on your car, the more you can afford to drive cool places. Class dismissed.

On the Prowl: 2011 Camaro Convertible

It's Friday. You're young, you're hip and you're about to embark on a weekend road trip getaway with your closest friends, all hoping to meet someone special. But in order to be seen, you, like Rebecca Black, have a decision to make: Do you kick it in the front seat? Or do you sit in the back seat? If you're in the Camaro Convertible, you can chill in either row and still grab the eye of the hottie in the next lane. And if you're behind the wheel of the 426-horsepower, 6.2-liter V8-enhanced Camaro SS, you can quickly chase down any car trying to play coy.

Young Family: 2011 Honda CR-V

When starting a new family, some tough decisions need to be made: Do we make the "man cave" the new baby room? Do we trade the IROC-Z for something more practical? Should we get rid of the cat? The Honda CR-V can't help with all the hard calls, but it deftly answers the transportation needs of any 2+1 family. Its high riding stance makes it easier to buckle in the baby, its fuel-efficient, 2.4-liter engine means fewer stops at the gas station and the available satellite-linked navigation can ensure smoothly guided trips to the nearest Disney property. And while it might not save the man cave -- or your precious kitty -- it will at least provide peace of mind for the budding new family.

The Cougar Years: 2011 Mercedes-Benz E-Class Cabriolet

Recently divorced, she has money in hand and she's ready to hit the open road. What cougar wouldn't want to road trip in a Mercedes-Benz E-Class Cabriolet? In addition to being lavishly equipped to meet the needs of any recently liberated lady, this convertible can be outfitted with Mercedes-Benz's "Airscarf" neck-warmer system to keep delicate skin warm while trolling top-down through beach communities in search of young cubs. Plus, a new "Aircap" system deflects air over the passenger compartment keeping every hair in place, ensuring a perfectly coiffed head of chemically colored hair for baiting her prey.

The Golden Years: 2011 Toyota Avalon

Arthritis getting you down? Does every little bump in the road leave you reaching for the Flex-a-Min and Advil? The last thing you want on that road trip to visit the great-grandchildren is to be feeling stiff and achy from the expansion joints on the highway. The Toyota Avalon floats along the road, absorbing all of the potholes so you don't have to. In addition, it's easy to get into and out of, offers a massive trunk for luggage, and you can fit three full-size adults in back when you want to treat the whole family to an early-bird dinner special.

For the remaining five vehicles on the Top 10 list, including full editorial commentary and reasoning behind each of the editors' picks, visit the Top 10 Road Trip Cars of 2011 story in kbb.com's Latest News section at http://www.kbb.com/car-news/all-the-latest/top-10-road-trip-cars-for-2011/.

Because this year's Top 10 Road Trip Cars list is focused on road trips during various stages of life, Kelley Blue Book is asking its Facebook fans to share the greatest road trip of their lives for the chance to win gas money toward future travels. To enter, visit Kelley Blue Book's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/kbb and click the tab labeled 'Road Trip Contest.' Users will be able to upload photos and tell their story from May 19 at 8:00 a.m. Pacific through 5:00 p.m. Pacific on May 26. Voting will begin on May 26 at 5:01 p.m. Pacific and continue through 8:00 a.m. Pacific on May 31. The winners will be

announced via Facebook in the afternoon on May 31. The story with the most votes will win a $100 gas card grand prize, while two runners-up will each win a $50 gas card.

The latest Kelley Blue Book Market Intelligence quick poll about summer road trips was fielded to 115 car shoppers on the homepage of Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com from May 9 - 11, 2011. Kbb.com's Market Intelligence team is part of the Analytic Insights division of Kelley Blue Book.

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