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Over the Hill - Maybe! & Travel Tips
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FEATURING

Over the Hill - Maybe! (*Better Than Being Under the Hill*)

Travel Tips (*Making Travel Pleasurable*)

SUV Comfort

XM Radio

Car Seating

GPS Use

Electronic Device Interference

This year I turned 60 and I discovered lately that things were changing a bit more than I imagined. Yesterday, I stopped at a local restaurant to pick up dinner, it was my turn to cook, and the clerk gave me the seniors discount without asking. The next day I stopped at McDonalds for a cup of coffee and they only charged me 75 cents, the seniors discount! Again, they didn't ask. Seems like I'm really looking the part these days.

Life has its way of sneaking up on you even if you are prepared for the inevitable. Over the past few years my wife frequently mentioned that I either had a hearing problem or that I was intentionally ignoring her when she was talking. We frequently went back and forth over the TV volume. I would turn it up and she would turn it down and tell me that I better get my hearing checked! One evening Mary and I were on the back porch and she mentioned how loud the Locust were this year, I couldn't hear anything and thought she was kidding. Last month Sears offered free hearing tests and I signed up. The specialist showed me the charts and said I had significant hearing loss. Especially mid to high frequencies which I attribute to working around jet aircraft during my military and government careers.

Well, now at least we all know I wasn't ignoring anyone and for those who I worked with for many years, if I missed something, it was because I apparently had this problem for many years.

I was skeptical of the results because Miracle-Ear, the company that administered the exam primarily sells hearing aids so I scheduled an exam with a local Doctor of

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Audiology. I didn't need to talk to the doctor after the test, when the technician asked me to come out of the booth she stood directly in front of me and talked slow and very loud. The doctor confirmed the results and the charts were almost identical for both tests. My chart looks like the Dow Jones stock market chart when the market was taking a beating earlier this year. At least the market can rebound, hearing loss doesn't recover as easily. They recommended hearing aids for both ears but I'm going to try one for my right ear to see if that helps first. They now have blue tooth enabled hearing aides that you can pair up to any cell phone.

I was surprised at the high cost of hearing aids. Anywhere from \$900 to many thousands for the best brands. They aren't covered by our insurance program so be prepared to pay for these out of your own pocket if you are having the same problem.

Travel Tips

SUV Comfort - Mary and I traveled over 5,000 miles this year so we have been around the block several times and enjoying it much to our surprise. Our trips are typically by car. We purchased a new Chevy Traverse SUV this year and we took it on a 1400 mile trip last month and really appreciated the ride and comfort. The Traverse comes loaded even in the mid range models and the ride is exceptional as I mentioned in the [July article](#).

XM Radio - What really made this last trip so enjoyable was the XM radio and seating believe it or not. XM is a must for anyone who travels frequently or lives in remote areas. Without XM you don't get the news, can't follow the stock market, and you have to be loaded with CDs for entertainment in rural areas. XM and Sirius are truly the travelers best friend providing weather conditions, news, talk radio CNN, CNBC, FOX News, and much more. We were so enthralled by it all that we won't go on another trip without it and will have it installed in our Lexus as well.

It isn't just the diversity of entertainment that it offers it's how well they target their audience. For example, they have commercial free stations such as 50s on 5, 60s on 6, 70s on 7 and so on. We relived our youth on this trip listening to music from the 1960s most of the trip down and back. It also offers laugh channels, radio shows from the 40s and 50s, sports channels of every variety and category selections for country, pop, rock, jazz and blues, and lifestyle with multiple channels for each category. What an entertainment bonanza.

Car Seating - The seating is exceptional in this vehicle. In most cars I'm uncomfortable most of the trip and have to get out and stretch frequently. The lumbar support and high seating made this last trip a breeze and easy to take.

GPS Use - Another must have for traveling is a GPS, we have the Tom Tom One and used it on trips for the past two years now. It really makes road trips worry free. For example, on the way home last trip we ran into a major accident on I79 just south of Morgantown, WV. I got off the first exit and selected alternate route and it took me around the traffic jamb.

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One of the problems with portable GPS units is where to mount them. Most come with a suction cup for the windshield, however you have to put the GPS away each stop because they are one of the most stolen items from cars today. If you don't clean the inside windshield frequently it will fall off while you are driving. I found a perfect solution to this. The web site www.arkon.com sells a variety of mounts for all GPS units. I purchased a unit that plugs into the power receptacle on the dash board and the Tom Tom mounts on a swivel head at the other end. The GPS is powered direct from the power receptacle so you don't have a GPS power cord hanging all over the place. I ordered model number TT121-USB for my Tom Tom One. One word of caution, before buying one of these call or email the company and make sure they send the correct counting plate for your GPS model. I had to have them send the correct mounting plate after my purchase.

Electronic Devise Interference - During our last two trips we had the same problem with both of our cars. During the trips we had frequent and annoying beeps without any dash alarm indication. The sound was similar to the fasten seatbelt alert that you hear on airplanes when you hear three beeps and they say fasten your seatbelts please. We listened to this for 10 hours each way during two different trips with two different cars. I took both cars to the dealers and neither was able to find anything registered in the computer systems. I even called OnStar on the last trip and they performed diagnostics while we were driving and they could hear the sound over the OnStar phone but nothing showed up on their diagnostic tests!

This was annoying and unpredictable. Sometimes the beeps would go off every several minutes, other times it would be an hour between beeps, there seemed to be no rational explanation for the alarms. I tried turning off traction control, parking assist, fastened all seat belts in the back seats to no avail. The Chevy dealer did have a service notice about electronic interference problems from placing cell phones and other electronic devices close to seat sensors, etc.

The only common denominator between both trips and two different cars was my new cell phone. It appears that I was keeping it in my pocket in close proximity to several seat sensors and I think that's the problem. I now keep the cell phone in a pocket on the visor to keep it well away from the many sensors they now have in all vehicles. If you are having this problem try different placements for your cell phone, GPS, Blackberries, etc. This will save you much aggravation.

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