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Welcome to You've Got This, a weekly podcast for higher education professionals looking to increase their confidence and capacity for juggling the day-to-day demands of an academic life.

I'm your host, Dr.

Katie Linder.

On this episode, I thought I would share some road trip travel hacks because I just got back from my first road trip that I've taken in a while.

My partner and I took a road trip from Denver to Los Angeles and back over the Thanksgiving week to see some family that we hadn't seen in about five years.

It had been since before the pandemic.

Way overdue.

We really wanted to go see this part of his side of the family.

First I thought I would explain why we decided to drive and not fly because you might think, why would you spend 16 hours driving to Los Angeles and then another 16 hours driving back to Denver when you could get on a two and a half hour flight?

One of the reasons for this was, first of all, we love a good road trip.

That was something that we were wanting to do because it had been a while since we've done that.

Second of all, one of the reasons we were going out there, other than of course to just see people and hang out with family, was my partner was planning to completely overhaul the network, like the technology in his parents' house.

He had to do this with a bunch of hardware that he had to configure before we left.

Once he configured it, he couldn't just ship it.

He wanted to take it with him in the car.

We had a bunch of stuff that we were taking with us in terms of technology.

He had tools.

He had all of this stuff that it was just a lot easier because of the volume of things that we needed to bring.

It was easier to do this by car.

We decided to do that.

As I mentioned, we spent about 16 hours in the car each way.

One of the things that was definitely on my mind is I lost about four days of what I would normally use for all kinds of things, kind of just tasks and getting things done.

Before I left for this trip, I had like 10 marathon days of getting up super early, staying up later than I normally would, to try to clear as much off my plate as possible so that I could just have this trip and not feel super stressed about it.

The other couple caveats I do want to mention before I get into the tips is that we did stay with family in a guest room.

We were not in a hotel situation.

We were with a family, a set of family members.

What was nice about that is if you know anything about Los Angeles, it takes forever to get anywhere.

It was really nice to stay with them so that we could just spend as much time with family as possible.

The other thing that I think is important to mention is that we didn't have a lot scheduled in advance except obviously the Thanksgiving holiday meal that we spent with family.

We had a lot of flexibility in the schedule that allowed us to think about things each day by day about what we're planning to do with family and what that might look like.

Here's some of the tips that I picked up.

I would imagine that some of these things are not new to you, but they're all kind of fresh top of mind because I literally just got back from this trip and I thought it might be useful to share.

One thing is we did get our car checked out and we got an oil change before we left for this trip.

Partly why we did that is because we had to switch our winter tires out.

We had snow tires on the car.

If you look at a map, you'll see when you go from Denver to Los Angeles and back again, you cross over multiple mountain passes.

That was something that we were a little bit nervous about.

We wanted to make sure we had everything we might possibly need and that the car was ready to go and it was in its best shape.

We did also buy a box of emergency supplies because we were traveling over those multiple mountain passes.

I am not the only planner in this family.

My partner is also a planner and he really wanted to make sure we had everything we might need if we got stuck somewhere.

He goes all the way to the dire situation of we're not in a hotel, we're in the car, do we have blankets, do we have food, do we have everything we need?

We had kind of this box of emergency supplies, which I will just say, spoiler alert, we did not use everything was completely fine, but that was something that I think is helpful depending on where you're traveling to.

You might consider having something like that in the car with you.

We did, as I mentioned, have those winter tires on already and we did not need to use them.

Another spoiler alert.

That was something that came really in handy, but one of the things we really tried to do with this trip was to keep our travel days super flexible because we didn't know what the weather was going to look like.

And we were trying to basically weave between storm fronts that we're going to come through and basically what happened is we left the Friday before the Thanksgiving week and we traveled Friday and Saturday and then basically the next day a storm front came through and it came through from the West and into Denver, dropped several inches of snow.

It closed one of the freeways that we were going to have to take it closed the I-70.

And we were already there.

So we were able to kind of miss that.

And then on the way back, all of that had kind of melted off.

And so we had no snow, no traffic issues with like the weather and we felt incredibly lucky, but part of that was just having a lot of flexibility about when we could leave and when we could come back.

Now the other thing we did look into is a couple of weather apps that allow you to basically track storm systems in real time.

And this is something that just because of the nature of the timing of this road trip for us, like we'd never used anything like this before.

And we ended up not needing to use it on the trip itself because we could kind of just watch the news and see kind of what was going on with the weather.

But it was something that was kind of interesting to know that these things exist if you're not kind of familiar with those kinds of apps.

So they do exist.

They're relatively easy to find if you need to be kind of tracking weather in real time.

Okay.

My next kind of tip is bring a blanket in the car.

So I am a big person of, I just get cold everywhere.

Like it doesn't matter where I am.

It doesn't matter what the temperature is.

We have heated seats in our car.

We have dual climate control in our car and I will still get cold.

And so I brought a blanket with me and actually the thing that worked really well for this that I was not expecting, I really just brought it so I wouldn't be cold is it actually helped my shoulders and like by my upper body because I was sitting for so long in the car.

And typically when I sit for that long, I'll kind of hunch over and my shoulders and my neck will get really tight.

And when I was holding this blanket kind of in my lap, it kind of kept everything like shifted back a little bit in terms of my neck and shoulders.

And it ended up really helping me to sit better if that makes any sense, um, to have this kind of blanket that I could, could hold like throughout the trip.

So that was something that was kind of a little bit unexpected, but worked really well.

Um, another, I think kind of obvious one is to dress for comfort.

So we were wearing like sweats and sweatshirts and things that would be warm, you know, because it was cold where we were traveling to and from, we did have overnight stays and hotels and the places that we stayed were like in the mountains.

And so it was very cold when we got there.

So we were trying to be kind of comfortable that way, but I wore like a pair of slippers in the car.

You know, I had tennis shoes if I needed them, but I wanted to be able to like slip my shoes on and off like really easily.

So really dressing for comfort was important.

Now the other thing that we used, um, on both routes to and from, um, our destination was the multi-stop feature on our maps app.

And basically what we would do is kind of roughly plan our stops in advance.

So we kind of knew like where we were going to be stopping for the night, but then we would find like a halfway point for like a meal, like a lunch or something like that.

And because we both have dietary restrictions, we were looking for very specific kinds of meals.

So on the way from Los Angeles back to Denver, for example, we stopped in Las Vegas and they had a whole foods on the outskirts of the city.

And we could just easily drop into the whole foods, grab lunch, and then continue on to our next destination.

And what was nice about using the multi-stop feature in the maps app is if you just say, okay, we're driving from Los Angeles to Denver.

It looks really bleak.

It's just a lot of hours.

It's a lot of time.

Whereas if you break it up and you put all your stops in, it's usually only like two and a half to three hours to your next stop.

And it makes it a little bit easier to kind of chunk it and kind of count down the time.

So that was something that we did on the way there and on the way back.

The other thing that we did, which I found really helpful is we packed an overnight bag just for the hotel that we were going to be staying in in the overnight of the two days that we were in the car.

And what that allowed us to do is not unpack the entire car to get everything that we needed for the trip, but to just unpack the one bag.

And what we would pack in that bag, obviously we're kind of our pajamas for that night.

The clothes we wanted to wear the next day, I packed some workout clothes because I was getting in workouts at the hotels.

But it allowed us to just take like one small thing out of the car instead of unpacking everything, which was really great.

I would recommend checking your hotel for amenities.

So when we were looking at hotels, one of the things that we were looking for is that it had an indoor gym that I could do like a quick workout before we were just in the car all day long.

And I, one of the things I didn't look for that we got lucky in in the first hotel, but not in the second hotel is that the gym was 24 hours.

In the second hotel, um, it didn't open until like 6am, which you might be like, you know, that's not a big deal, but as a very early riser and as someone who was like anxious to get on the road and like try to get back home, it was kind of annoying that I had to wait and get into this gym at 6am, which by the way, it was completely deserted at 6am.

Um, but you know, knowing that you have these amenities and you might even want like a restaurant in the hotel, depending on when you're arriving and things like that, you can kind of look ahead of time and see what's available.

Now one of the major things that was a huge win in this trip for me is we decided to book a guest pass at a local gym when I was there.

Now you can imagine staying in a hotel, there's a gym, you could use it, but when you're staying with family, they probably are not going to have exercise equipment or they may not have the exercise equipment that you're used to using.

Now I have a small like personal gym where I've collected equipment over time and I have multiple different things that I use.

And so it just made the most sense for me to go to like a 24 hour fitness and get a guest pass.

And it was basically the equivalent of like $5 a day to be able to have access to these indoor machines and just go in and do like a workout first thing in the morning.

Now my partner did have to drive me.

It was maybe like 15 minutes away, you know, from where we were staying, but it did allow me to like do this in the morning, get it out of the way.

And then I could spend the rest of the day with family and other activities that we were going to do.

The other thing that we did, which felt like a huge win, it was kind of a fun technology hack is we had groceries delivered to the house we were staying at.

So roughly like 24 hours before we got there, we knew that we were going to put in a grocery order for all of the kind of random stuff that my partner and I usually have as kind of like staples.

So one example of this is like almond milk.

We use it in smoothies.

We use it in protein drinks.

You know, like it's something that we use all the time.

I have a certain kind of yogurt that I eat, you know, things like that, that my in-laws were not going to have in their house.

And so it was helpful for us to just do a grocery order.

And then it showed up like right when we got there and we were able to just stock the fridge and have everything we needed and not have to worry about going out and grabbing that.

A couple other things we did that I found really helpful is we brought refillable water bottles and then a large bottle of water to refill when those got empty.

And we had those in the car with us in both routes, obviously when we went to and from, but we also had these refillable water bottles with us the whole trip.

And when I was going back and forth to the gym and when we were just like out and about, it was really helpful to have this to make sure that we were staying hydrated.

So that was something that was really helpful.

Another thing that I did, um, and this probably won't surprise you at all is I made a list of kind of what I consider to be must do items that I wanted to get done while I was there.

I still had a few things on my list and they weren't like, you know, do or die things, but it was little things that I wanted to kind of get checked off if I had the time.

And I knew that I might have a little bit of flexibility because my partner was going to be working on this like internet project and the networking of his, his parents' house.

And so I thought, you know, I might have some downtime to do some things.

And it basically allowed me to have a list of things that if like some time opened up, I could quickly, you know, kind of check some things off my list while still staying really flexible based on that daily schedule of what everyone else was wanting to do.

Now along with that, I think it's helpful to communicate your work needs ahead of time.

If you have like one to two hours a day that you need to kind of step away and do some things.

I typically have that when I'm at my in-laws.

This is not new to them and my father-in-law still works as well.

And so like, it's not a big deal for me to do that.

But we do try to communicate it ahead of time.

So it's not a surprise.

Okay.

A couple more things.

One is planning one stable and healthy meal per day, which was for me a breakfast smoothie.

I was able to do this relatively easily.

I would go to the gym, I would get back, I would have my smoothie and it gave me, you know, my 50 plus grams of protein in the morning and I could kind of move on throughout the day.

This was a situation where we were kind of going out to eat.

We were seeing family, we were traveling here and there.

We weren't always at the house.

And so it was always not clear what the meals were going to be.

So I was trying to find one meal that I could kind of just know what I was going to eat.

And that also meant that I had some flexibility throughout the rest of the day, just based on kind of what was put in front of me.

And because of dietary restrictions, I sometimes had to eat things that were a little bit strange and just kind of cobble things together.

And so it was nice to have that kind of stable meal in the morning.

The other thing that is a major tip is if you can do laundry while you are at the location that you're staying at, which obviously we could do because we were at my in-laws house, pack accordingly because we didn't have to over pack because we knew that we could do a couple loads of laundry while we were there.

And it allowed us to have less clothes that we had to worry about because we could recycle them.

This worked really well with like my gym clothes.

For example, I didn't have to pack for like seven days of going to the gym.

I could just pack a couple of outfits and wash them as I needed to.

And then the last thing I would say that was really helpful for me on this trip is I relaxed some of my expectations for habits.

Like a good example of this is I got in some reading while I was there, but just definitely not my typical amount.

We were around people way more.

We had a less flexible schedule.

We were going around seeing different people.

And I was able though to stay on routines that made sense.

And so exercise was a good example of that.

I was able to get that gym time in the morning.

And so I think that there's some just flexibility about knowing what can you do and what can you maybe let go of, because it's just not going to be possible based on what you're doing, depending on what your road trip is looking like.

So I will say then coming home from this road trip, which as I've recorded this, it was just earlier today that we got back into Denver.

And one of the first things I did was I took a little bit of time because we had the margin.

We got home around dinner time is I threw in a couple of loads of laundry.

I kind of got everything unpacked and put away.

I took a shower, which felt amazing because you get back to using all of your own like products and things like that that you're used to using after a road trip.

And it was just really nice to kind of settle back in.

And then again, as I record this, this is a Saturday.

So I have one more weekend day before I go back into the kind of work schedule.

And that's also really nice to have a little bit of downtime, do some meal prep and things like that before I dive back in.

So I would also love to hear what are your road trip hacks that you love that you find really helpful.

You can always email me at hello@drkati lindr.com.

You know, I always love to hear from you.

Thanks so much for listening.

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