

Designated Drivers

Have your next road trip customized, complete with classic cars and onboard beverage service.



STORY **Allegra Muzzillo**

□ Everyone has, at some point, longed to be freed from worldly responsibilities, to be an individual who answers to no one, to be able to simply get up and go. Road trips have long satisfied this urge, especially for the young craving exploration and adventure. But road trips also demand tedious planning, perpetual reserves of money, and superhuman foresight. Are you ready to run your car (if you own one) ragged by crossing no less than six state lines? Are you really ready to quit your job, forgo your health insurance, and start showering in truck stops?

Dropping out of the life for just a few days is a sane, affordable alternative to the typical crash-and-burn, three-month cross-country extravaganza. Two new companies are now developing the next wave of road-tripping excursions—with

your trip planned, routes determined, and vehicle provided.

Marko Paavolainen, founder of Palmer California Alternative Tours & Road Trips, offers a distinctly West Coast version of the road trip (especially if you're living in LA and enduring commuter traffic is a daily ritual). Paavolainen buys vintage American-made cars and uses them to take groups of people on a series of drives in and around LA. Some of the trips are based on a theme, like the "Sex and Violence" tour, which hits the site of Hugh Grant's career-crippling blowjob, the strip club where Courtney Love used to work, the Viper Room, and the motel where Janis Joplin overdosed. Palmer's Route 66 trips drop you off at either Joshua Tree or the Arizona border for the night; and the Mojave Desert,

Death Valley, and Border Town excursions test your ruggedness with a few nights of camping. "I realized I'm not the only one who thinks that an abandoned motel in the desert may look really beautiful," Paavolainen says of his reasons for starting the company.

Meanwhile, over on the East Coast, Brooke Geahan, founder of Middle of Nowhere Destinations (MOND), offers atypical urban excursions for New Yorkers who tend to have a hard time getting out of the city. Geahan has a fleet of luxury Mercedes vans (outfitted with a retro '60s jet-set aesthetic) to speed you into "the country" while enjoying a full continental breakfast (with mimosas!), use (or abuse) of the fully stocked wet bar, and unadulterated control of a state-of-the-art sound system. MOND specializes in such odd locales and

bizarre destinations as Opus 40 (a stone sculpture spread across six acres in the Hudson Valley), a rodeo in the Catskills, and Bash Bish Falls, a hidden public waterfall in the Berkshires. Geahan maintains that MOND's itineraries appeal to individuals who feel that public transportation diminishes the true spirit of road-tripping. "The road offers a haphazard freedom that a train track lacks," she says. "It allows travelers to follow their instincts, get truly lost, forge new directions, and offers trajectories away from the everyday."

To find out more about Palmer California Alternative Tours & Road Trips, check out www.palmerca.com.

For more info on Middle of Nowhere Destinations, contact A Kinetic Corporation, 212.591.1129.