

008 TRAVEL



008 RECOMMENDS

Festival Bound: Cross Country On A Budget

BY AGENT ERIN HOLDREN



Wall artwork,
Blues City Deli, St.
Louis, MO



Junction Bridge,
Little Rock, AR



Shaker Village, Pleasant Hill, KY

The general plan was to take our time driving to Lafayette and camp when we needed to stop.

After moving from Lafayette to Toledo, Ohio, there was one thing that kept me from getting woeefully homesick. Even though we had just driven the 1,100 miles from city to city, I knew that we would be making a road trip back to Louisiana for my very favorite thing about Lafayette, Festival International. Matt and I are road trip veterans, and we pride ourselves on being spontaneous and frugal in our meanderings across the country. The general plan was to take our time driving to Lafayette and camp when we needed to stop.

We set off early on a Wednesday morning and made our first stop in Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, Kentucky. It was 20 minutes out of our way, so it took some convincing on my part to get Matt on board. I have always been very interested in the Shakers for their architecture, flawless craftsmanship, and unusually progressive views for their time. In the end, we were both so taken by the idyllic views of the Kentucky hillside and the tour guides we met that we didn't want to leave.

Holly Wood (her real name) is a talented scholar in Shaker music. If you make this

educational pitstop, make a point to go to her program, especially if you want to sing and dance like the Shakers did. It was \$20 for both of us to spend time at the Village and \$30 to eat at their dining room. The cornbread muffins alone are worth it.

Camping along the way was the plan, but as we headed farther south, the weather made it seem somewhat less appealing. In this situation, priceline.com for last-minute hotel deals is usually the best bet. We found a mid-level hotel in Memphis for \$39 after tax and decided to hit the town. Beale Street is undoubtedly the best known option for Memphis nightlife, but a fellow guest pointed us toward Midtown. We were not disappointed. It was there that we found Soul Fish and shared a catfish platter that was one of the best I've ever had. That meal and our craft beers cost us about \$32.

We could have kept exploring Memphis the next day, but Festival was calling. We arrived in Lafayette just in time to visit with my family and head downtown. Other money-saving tips for budget travelers is to do free things like Festival International

and stay with people you know as often as possible to avoid hotel expenses. Our time in Lafayette was very cheap because of these two things, allowing us to spend a little more on road trip diversions.

The two of us festived hard, but we still had enough energy to have fun on the way back. Instead of taking the same route home, we traveled through Arkansas and stopped for coffee at Little Rock's Nexus Coffee. The downtown area there is just lovely. I recommend exploring the sculpture garden down by the river and walking across Junction Bridge for a beautiful view.

As lunchtime hit, we decided to stop in St. Louis to eat at Blues City Deli and walk around Soulard, the city's oldest neighborhood. I could probably write a novel about the pulled pork sandwich I had at BCD — the Memphis Stax. Give me that with a Cheerwine, and I am set.

All in all, the two of us spent about \$600 on this 9-day vacation. If you choose wisely how you spend your money, you get to enjoy all the perks of indulging in spontaneous treats along the way.