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Summer Travel: What to Consider in Deciding Whether to Fly, Drive or Take the Train There — Cameron on Transportation

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Going on vacation this summer? If so, how are you getting there? Car. Train. Plane. I'm eliminating the bus option because, well, life is too short to endure that kind of misery. I have no problems with commuting by bus, but a 10-hour ride is not going to happen.

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In most cases, the choice depends on how far you're traveling and what your budget allows.

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<https://darienite.com>, the train is my first choice — assuming it goes where I want.

In the Northeast, Amtrak service is frequent, convenient and affordable. But to other destinations, not so much.

But it also depends on how many people are going with you, because traveling as a family of four can add up, especially when each member needs a ticket.

Even going into New York City can be cheaper by car (including tolls and parking) than on Metro-North when you have three or more people.

Flying is faster, but maybe not if you include all of the door-to-door time: driving to the airport, arriving two or three hours before departure, checking your bags, going through security, then after arrival at your destination, grabbing your bags, finding your rental car, and driving to your destination.

In most cases by train, you go from city-center to city-center. And by car, well you get to determine where you're going.

By train, you get to see the country. But so too with driving. Train travel is pretty stress-free. Not so with driving, and certainly not in flying.

In about eight hours, you can drive 400-plus miles, even with pit stops. If two drivers can share the behind-the-wheel duties, a full 12-hour day's worth of driving can easily get you 700 miles. That's almost the distance to Chicago or maybe Atlanta. But staying alert can really take its strain.

Of course, having kids on board can complicate things — more stops, more whining. “No, we're not there yet!”

If you're confused about the fly-drive value calculations, there's a great website that can help: the [Be Frugal Fly or Drive Calculator](#). Plug in the information... origin, destination, make and model of car, driving hours — and voila! The app will figure the cost for both alternatives, even including highway tolls and your car's miles per gallon.

Mind you, gas prices are heading up this summer, so that's also a factor.

The final issue is safety. You do want to arrive alive, right?

On airlines, flight attendants used to say something like “The safest part of your journey has just ended, so drive safely.” Statistically, that's true.

Federal safety stats say that 1 person dies for every 100 million vehicle miles traveled. Interestingly, Connecticut's statistics are lower than the national average. Still, there are a lot more highway crashes than air disasters. In 2018, there were no fatalities on U.S. commercial flights and only one fatal accident worldwide for every 300 million flights.

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The National Safety Council says you have a 1-in-114 chance of dying in an automobile crash, but only a 1-in-9,821 chance of dying on a flight. You're eight times likelier to die by drowning on vacation.

Thanks to the stronger U.S. economy, a lot more people will be taking a vacation this summer. A little planning and you should be able to save time and money. So *bon voyage!*

Jim Cameron has been a Darien resident for more than 25 years. He is the founder of the [Commuter Action Group](#), sits on the [Merritt Parkway Conservancy](#) board and also serves on the Darien RTM and as program director for Darien TV79. The opinions expressed in this column, republished with permission of Hearst CT Media, are only his own. You can reach him at CommuterActionGroup@gmail.com.