

Most Nerve-Wracking Driving Experiences

As someone who loves to travel, I can attest that it definitely brings out the adrenaline and energy. However, I can also attest that it can bring butterflies to your stomach if you're traveling in the vast unknown.

Below are my six most nerve-wracking driving experiences of my entire life. Trust me, I have driven (and am told I still drive a lot), so these roads/experiences especially gave me the jitters enough to remember and write about them.

6. US 93-Idaho (From Twin Falls to Sun Valley, 2021)



(Good luck finding anyone or anything in these parts)

On a spontaneous decision, I decided to go to the ski resort town of Sun Valley, albeit in August, simply to check out the atmosphere. However, the short drive from Twin Falls up north to Sun Valley in central Idaho was anything but populated. A straight shot state route soared into the distance during the drive with an empty wasteland on all four corners of a two-lane road. Burnt grass, shrubs, tumbleweeds, and sand littered the landscape. A small peak rose in the distance.

As I approached Sun Valley, the landscape became more wilderness as mountains slowly crept up before being plunged into a forest-y landscape. That where chaos broke loose as ominous-looking, low-hanging fog clouded the mountains and a torrential downpour ensued, quickly flooding the roads with cars making gigantic splashes and drenching my vehicle. My windshield was being sprayed like you're in the car wash and the last five-mile stretch was the

most treacherous. You could barely creep along at low speeds just to make sure you're driving safely. After a good time in Sun Valley, it was time to run it back, but I bolted well before sundown to avoid driving in that barren country at dusk. Not trying to find out what happens.

5. I-80- Western Iowa (Des Moines to Omaha, Nebraska, 2016)



(Western Iowa's vast plains take travelers through true a massive corn country devoid of human civilization)

Ah, a 20-year-old me decided to venture out to Omaha one day from Iowa City, Iowa. It was a short drive, 4 hours, but after the capital city of Des Moines was nothing but a straight shot through empty, empty corn country for 120+ miles. No signs of civilization or even a McDonald's for crying out loud. There were lines of wind turbines into the distance on both sides of the interstate, stretching into the distance. The road of I-80 was bright red and looked burnt, which honestly I couldn't explain to you at all.

The road was quiet, sans cross-country bound tractor trailers, UHauls moving out West, and maybe what I think is a few hopeful California road trippers in a Corolla?? Anyway, as if the road didn't make you want to fall asleep, there was no cell phone connection so this was especially daunting for a "kid" like me. I could feel the butterflies in my stomach. Thoughts invaded my mind about where I was rather than the music getting through to my ears. I was an Indian kid traveling in the heart of the country by myself, near the geographical center. New York and Chicago were endlessly East and Denver and California were endlessly West.

On top of that, according to [ValuePenguin](#), Iowa's I-80 is notoriously in the top-10 in the country for worst highways to drive on in bad weather conditions, featuring elements such as rain, snow, deep fog, winds, snow drifts, freezing rain, hail, and blowing dirt (many of which I have encountered on this highway but luckily not on that day).

One breakdown and I'd desperately have been waving at semis to give me a hitch to the nearest truck stop. Or maybe I could have just hauled with them to Wyoming, Salt Lake, or whatever.

4. Wyoming Route 85 (South Dakota Border to Cheyenne, 2016)



(If you need solitude, take a drive through Wyoming)

Driving from Rapid City, South Dakota to Denver has no major interstates so I had to go through Wyoming, an empty state that is the least populated in the country. Just miles of empty plains with no civilization or even a gas station. I could see a massive cloud of smoke engulfing the air in the distance on the way up to South Dakota, which wasn't a wildfire but could have been something else.

On the way back, I tried to be too cute and decided to take a state road— in Wyoming, an empty, barren state— as a means for a shortcut. Stupid, rookie mistake. The road was filled with absolutely nobody and nothing and brief construction meant pebbles kept pounding the tires of my rental Mitsubishi Lancer. One needle and that would have been it. I would have been camping with who knows what in the middle of nowhere. Next time, I think I'll just take the road MOST traveled which isn't saying much in this state.

3. Atlanta to Chicago (2020)



(Northwest Indiana's farmland is notoriously prone to lake effect snow, which could result in this)

The longest solo drive in my life to date, the 800-mile trek from the South to the North had me running on fumes at the backend of the trip. For the reason of Christmas, I decided to drive this route instead of fly because of the presence of COVID.

I left Atlanta in the wee hours of the morning (7 AM ish) only to counter heavy rainfall in the nearby suburbs before sunrise. The downpour was unrelenting and the darkness didn't help. That was only a sign of things to come as a few hours later, in the Tennessee mountains near Chattanooga, fog shot straight out and took me by surprise.

It was then some twisty turns into the unknown as I navigated my car through a brief mountain range. All was clear in the rolling hills of Kentucky. However, upon reaching Indy, I could feel a sense of mental fatigue. It had been 8-9 hours of driving up to that point. And unexpected flurries began falling, which is no shock in the Midwest. However, that's where the real challenge began.

The stretch of Interstate 65 from Indy to Chicago goes through complete corn country and is littered with wind turbines. It is also notoriously one of the fastest traveled highways in the entire

country. Everyone's pumping well into the 90s. Not this time. Due to the geographical proximity of Lake Michigan right above Northwest Indiana, snowfall could come at unexpected times. It was while I was in that corn country that the vaunted Lake Michigan snowfall made an appearance, of course. Merry Christmas to me.

It turned into a full snow drift with snow pushing across the interstate like you would push a curtain, daring to push cars off the interstate and into the cornfields. The wind was fierce and up ahead was only white. The wind turbines kept singing (or turning of whatever) and I recall Drake's 10 Bands playing at that moment, a song with kind of a mysterious vibe, so the entire experience was ominous. Flurries kept pounding my windshield as I crept along at a reasonable speed. I just had to stay the course and it required every ounce of energy that I had left to navigate through this monster drift. I ended up in the Chicago area after 13+ hours driving solo. On the bright side, I plunged straight into food upon completing this journey.

2. Montana Route 191 (Bozeman to West Yellowstone, 2021)



(Montana's true and unbridled wilderness is on display when taking Route 191)

Montana's untamed wilderness was on full display as I traversed from the small college town of Bozeman south through the depths of the jungle to reach the town of West Yellowstone. A road less traveled, it was a fight against time as I raced to reach West Yellowstone before sundown as the winding narrow roads would be a nightmare.

It was a scenic, yet truly lonely drive as there were no traces of humans inhabiting this wilderness. What lurked beyond the trees on the side of the road I didn't want to know. On top of that, early August fog (if that's even a thing) kicked in around 7-8 PM. Ominous gray mountains loomed in the distance and they seemed to be endlessly far away. Winding up and down and left to right through this chilling fog was certainly a teensy bit nerve-wracking. Especially when you're generally in the middle of nowhere. As dusk began to settle in and I reached West Yellowstone, I was relieved but came to a chilling conclusion: there was not one car ahead or behind mine on the entire 90-mile stretch. It was a truly lonely and eerie drive through a jungle in the depths of the fourth-largest state.

Honorable Mentions: (Mobile, Alabama- New Orleans, 2018), (Denver to Moab, Utah, 2016), Wichita to Topeka, Kansas, 2012)

1. Colorado Route 160 (Monte Vista to Walsenburg, 2016)



(Even the most seasoned drivers may be thrown off by Colorado's rugged Rockies)

Coming in at the top spot is a drive through Colorado's stunning, yet rugged Rockies. I was driving from the southwestern Colorado town of Durango east to Pueblo. After stopping at a Pizza Hut in the town of Monte Vista, the real challenge loomed. While the pizza was good, to reach Pueblo, I had to cross through a mountain range and while approaching it, dusk settled in.

As I reached the winding roads of the Rockies, it was pitch-black dark and the rental car had no GPS. At this point, relying on senses was the only way to go. Guardrails may have loomed on

the sides, but one false turn could mean plunging down into a ravine deep in the mountains. And who knows what I would have ended up face-to-face with.

Speed was hard to pick up and it seemed nobody wanted to pass anybody else on the one-lane road. The only sense of light was headlights from other cars. I clutched the side of my door as this was likely the most challenging drive I had encountered. Nerves had certainly taken over but precision and focus were key to navigating this treacherous stretch. Endless curves are what the Rockies represent and there was no shortage of those. Route 160 challenges even the most seasoned of drivers, especially at night time in a pitch-black bubble where no towns exist. New life lesson: maybe fly everywhere instead?