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Meet the gas gloaters

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We've all seen and heard about how sky-high fuel prices have increased the cost of everything from our daily commutes to our weekly grocery-shopping trips.



BRANDON KRUSE/The Gainesville Sun
Dan Monteau and Ryan Curtis ride scooters as a way to save money on gas.

The Sun invited readers to tell us their "gas price gloats" - ways they're benefiting from the high gas prices, or reasons they're not personally affected.

Here's a sample of the responses:

The biggest change I made recently was my purchase of a scooter, inspired by the articles in The Gainesville Sun in May. Maybe this doesn't

sound too extraordinary, but I am a 44-year-old business owner in the real estate industry, where a "prosperous" image is generally the norm. You can imagine the looks I have received from many Realtors and lenders when I stop by their offices or attend real estate functions. A few days after I purchased my scooter, Ryan Curtis, my business partner and a real estate attorney, purchased a scooter for himself. You can see us most of the time riding our scooters around town as we run errands and do our "scooter patrol" (sales and marketing). Since purchasing my scooter, I have saved over \$200 in gas in the first month, not to mention wear and tear on my SUV.

Dan Monteau, VP/licensed title agent

I noticed about two weeks ago I was seeing a lot of new faces. On a Saturday, when we are usually quite slow, a couple new people told me, "We normally go into Gainesville, but we decided, with the high price of gas, to stay in town instead." The same thing happened that Monday. Every day, it's been picking up a little more. Now, I'm even getting phone calls from new people calling to ask if I have this or that before they come in. I think a lot of mom 'n' pop stores are going to find that people are shopping locally again, rather than traveling 10 or 20 miles to go to Wal-Mart in Starke. We have a lot of empty stores here. My hope is that this will lead to them filling up again.

Margaret Ertle, owner of Healthy Living 4 U in Keystone Heights

I travel to Jacksonville often to shop for my wedding in October. I try to fill up as often as possible when leaving from Jacksonville at the RaceTrac on Normandy Boulevard, where the gas has normally been sticking within the \$3.80 to \$3.99 range.

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FEATURED BUSINESSES



Thornebrook Gallery
2441 NW 43rd St Ste 6D
Gainesville, FL 32606
(352) 371-4940



Gaston's Tree Service Inc
1901 NW 67th Pl
Gainesville, FL 32653
(352) 378-5801



Florida Credit Union
3720 NW 13th Street
Gainesville, FL 32609
(352) 377-4141

Jill Ward, Gainesville

Farmers markets seem to be thriving during this time of high gas prices. For some people, the markets are closer to home, and they can either walk or bike to get their food. For others, an awareness of the amount of petroleum products used in the commercial production and shipment of food has induced them to shop local. In a time with food scares, like tainted spinach and tomatoes, people want to know their food is safe and they trust their local farmers, which is reflected in the numbers of new customers at the markets.

Stefanie Samara Hamblen, publishes the Hogtown HomeGrown Web site and newsletter

I have been riding a moped from my home to the UF campus every weekday since 1994. I bought it because of the insane parking situation on campus. However, I now benefit from the insane gas situation by getting 125 miles per gallon.

I drive the moped about 1,400 miles per year. I use about 11 gallons of gasoline in a year, at a cost of \$44 (at the current \$4 a gallon). If I were driving my Oldsmobile Intrigue to campus, I would be getting 14 miles per gallon. Almost no one in Gainesville rides a moped. It isn't fast enough for the young people, and adults (especially 78-year-old ones) look goofy on a little moped. I am not here to gloat. I just think it is always better to light a candle than curse OPEC.

Ralph Lowenstein, dean<oxoo0A>emeritus, College of Journalism and Communications

I, along with others in my community, have been hit by lean times. About a year ago, I began the process of making The Tioga Community Garden a reality. Two weeks ago, that actually happened. We have 35 small plots to hold a variety of flowers and veggies to save on grocery costs. We bend, hoe, rake and water to exercise our bodies and minds, thereby saving on gym memberships. We even have had a "wine share" while watching the sun go down, which is much less expensive than going to the bar. The garden has provided the opportunity to dig deeper in our community, to look for ways to engage adults and children alike in something very basic: The chance to get our hands dirty together and learn to make something bigger than ourselves. If nothing else, the gas crunch has allowed all of us to look closer to home for entertainment and contentment. How great is that?

Rhonda Samples Belcher, Tioga

My wife is a grad student, and I just received my master's degree in acupuncture and oriental medicine. We are about to move to Haile Plantation, where I've been working as a massage therapist since 1999 and where I am also opening my acupuncture practice. With this move, I can walk to work every day, which means that I don't have to drive there in my gas hog of a Jeep Cherokee. We also will be within walking distance to the weekly farmers market, where we can get our locally-grown produce, and will be a 5- or 10-minute bike ride from the Haile Publix, where we can supplement what we don't get from the farmers market. You can bet it was a decision based on the high gas prices.

Alberto Galvan

Thirty-five years ago, we adopted a lifestyle that was less dependent on gas and electricity

than others. Here is what we did:

1. Bought a house near the university and public schools so that one of us could walk or bike to work and so our daughter could use the same transportation to local schools.
2. Consequently, we only owned one car at a time, except when our daughter was a teenager. In 32-and-a-half years of employment at UF, I only had a parking sticker for six months (extenuating circumstances).
3. Lived with minimal air-conditioning in a house with trees, ceiling fans and a nice porch. Thanks to a clothes line, we also minimized the use of an electric dryer.
4. During winter, we used two wood-burning stoves for much of the heat. All the wood has been picked up in our neighborhood after tree cutting.
5. When shopping by car, we often planned a series of stops to minimize the use of gas.
6. Since we're now retired, we do 'destination walking' - to Publix or other stores, the university, the post office or to the public library. This is good for our health and minimizes driving. For longer trips, we periodically bike.

Due to adopting this lifestyle years ago, the impact of gas and electricity use has been lessened except for out-of-town trips. After all, we do need to go to the beach and springs!

Lenny and Helene Rhine, Gainesville

My husband and I run a local business that specializes in music lessons taught in clients' homes. With the recent surge in gas prices, and the budget cuts on music in the schools, we seem to be getting more calls than ever. The parents tell me they appreciate being able to save at least one trip to an activity per week.

Kaley Shorter, instructor and principal, The Kaley School of Music

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COMMENTS

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• [nearuf](#) says...

June 29, 2008 7:43:39 am

RE: <http://www.gainesville.com/article/20080629/NEWS/27795857>

While saving gas makes since for the environment, I still drive my gas guzzler all I want because even at 5 bucks a gallon, 10 thousand miles at 10 miles per gallon is only 5 grand a year. And I get a lot more pleasure out of driving what I want whenever I want than I get paying \$5000 in property taxes. It's the government that should cut back not the citizens!

• [gatorpe](#) says...

June 29, 2008 8:02:50 am

I get great pleasure watching single individuals driving in around in vehicles that could carry an entire work crew. Imagine what your grandchildren will do one day when there is no gas an our govt. and its lethargy and web of rules hinders the next step so completely that we all are walking. Hell, wait a minute, that may be the best thing for all of us as so many eat themselves into fast food oblivion and obesity. As for me, I have beaten the oil bonanza for the fat cats completely. I moved to the country and 2 blocks from my job. I have cut my gas consumption by about 85% and am now so far away from instant(fast)food that I cook and eat leftovers most of the time. And got away from those insane ALA CHUA county taxes. Also, finding many fresh vegetables out here in the country for sale along with some bodacious blueberries just south of Graham, Fla on the Santa Fe River.

Little note, this sites spellchecker red lined bodacious thinking it was not a word. Weird.

• [Vinividi](#) says...

June 29, 2008 10:53:31 am

Have got to agree with you gatorpe, work trucks should be for working, "sport" utility vehicles should be 'utilized' for hard to reach places, off paved roads, not on suburban or city streets.

They waste fuel, cause deadly accidents, and American auto manufacturers have been feeding into consumers lust for power and status. Now it's come around to bite them in the butt, as they can't give them away.

Thankfully, these over sized status symbols have met their demise with rising fuel costs.

• [gatorpe says...](#)

June 29, 2008 2:14:47 pm

V V, I remember well the arab oil embargo and how everyone was selling those big luxury cars like Imperials and Continentals. In fact two old fellas (construction workers) basically bought new ones for a song when the old folks in Sarasota were getting rid of them. We rode in style awhile. Cause gas had gone to the UNHEARD of price of 50 CENTS a gal. I believe in free will and the American way but people need to get real. The Chinese and soon the Indians will be sucking up gas at the rate we have for years and it will be gone soon.

• [josegal says...](#)

June 29, 2008 3:40:16 pm

I have one of those SUV's ... it gets 20mpg. I'm in a carpool of four, so I only drive one week out of the month. Even at \$80 to drive for that one week, and another tank for getting me around here, it doesn't pay to buy a new car. Mine's been paid for seven years now.

• [Vinividi says...](#)

June 29, 2008 4:01:46 pm

I remember the period very well, as my dad had been an Exxon dealer through the '60's until 1976 when he had to give it up. Tough times all over, especially here in Florida, most of the tourists still relied heavily on their cars to get here, so the Fla. economy took a big blow for several years. Hopefully that won't happen again, and shouldn't as the Fla. economy is more diverse and international as before.

Actually American consumption has already begun to decline, as well as miles driven. Whereas, as you pointed out, oil consumption in developing parts of China and India won't reach their peak for decades, if ever.

The expense and growing rarity of fossil fuels will continue to pressure society and industry to be more resourceful and self reliant, while spurring innovation and cleaner technologies.

The new focus and priorities away from fossil fuels just wasn't going to happen by itself.

People like nearuf will still be able to drive their gas guzzlers if they want to, but there will be far fewer like him. Anything that gets those rampaging soccer moms out of those 2 ton rolling death traps is fine with me.

Plus, American and Japanese engineers and manufacturers will be able to pass on their developments to the next generation of Indian and Chinese users, probably just in time before the oil wells finally dry up.

• [sfcwoodret says...](#)

June 29, 2008 5:26:22 pm

I must say a sports car with a modified engine still looks good with one driver.

• [gatorpe says...](#)

June 29, 2008 6:28:01 pm

I hear you Les, My damned mazda with a 4 cylinder only gets about 20mpg but its got 230,000 on it and still runs great. I just dont have to drive much anymore. I did that carpool thing for years and it was saved a ton.....

• [Vinividi says...](#)

June 29, 2008 8:26:56 pm

Two door ragtop can be just as cool. Should almost be a law, if you're going to live in Florida for more than a decade, then you have to own a convertible. Florida climate and especially North Florida two lane blacktops were made for top down, radio turned up, chasing the sun or working on a moon tan, it's all good.

Much can be said for the pure joy of driving.

• [sfcwoodret says...](#)

June 29, 2008 8:48:14 pm

I agree. I had that option but was concerned about the common thugs roaming the parking lots.

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