

Stick It to the Oil Man

The Motley Fool

By Tim Beyers

Burning gas = burning cash

It's no surprise to any Fool that oil stocks have been all the rage. Per-barrel prices soared above \$71 recently and gas prices here in Denver are inching toward \$3 per gallon. There's no relief in sight.

No wonder consumers are screaming. Integrated oil giants such as **Chevron** (NYSE: CVX), **ConocoPhillips** (NYSE: COP), and **ExxonMobil** (NYSE: XOM) as well as lesser-known names such as **Valero** (NYSE: VLO) have been earning record profits in this environment. And yet those profits have not come without their share of problems. For one, they've caught the eye of government officials and regulators, who are demanding more reinvestment, more capacity, and maybe even a windfall tax.

Frankly, I find many of these arguments silly, but I also see no reason to give the oil man exactly what he wants when he wants it. My wallet is telling me to stick it to the oil man by paying him less. Here are a few tricks I've learned recently.

Using the Web to drive home a point

The easiest way to save on gas, of course, is to not drive. But let's assume this isn't an option — you have to work, after all, and the office isn't exactly nearby. You can still save on your gas bill by shopping, and the Web can help. Two sites, in particular, can help you locate the best deals on petrol in your area.

First there's GasBuddy.com, which allows visitors to search for stations and prices by zip code and includes data on the 10 cheapest cities in terms of the cost to fill 'er up. Tulsa, Okla., leads the nation as of this writing, with an average price per gallon of \$2.52.

My next favorite is [the gas prices site](#) at MSN Autos, which shows local stations according to zip code. Locations are then organized from cheapest to most expensive, with embedded links to close-up maps. Talk about convenient. There's only one drawback: The price listings aren't complete for grades other than regular unleaded. That won't matter for most, of course. Just know that if you're set on premium gas, MSN Autos may not be of much assistance in helping you get the best price.

Tips from the lips of Fools

Of course, shopping is only one way to save gas. I asked the Fools on one of our best and most frequented discussion boards — [Living Below Your Means](#) (subscription required) — for more insights. Here's what they had to say:

Clean up and slow down: “I cleaned out my car of all the detritus I usually carry around in the back seat, slowed down on the Garden State Parkway, and saved about two miles per gallon.”



Don't sit, drive: "Plan trips with a maximum of stops and a minimum of engine idling. And don't get stuck in fast-food drive-thrus where idling can really pile up."

Treat your car well: "Get a tune up, keep the tires properly inflated, and minimize the use of air conditioning."

Do more with less: "When I drive, I try to run errands on the way to and from work rather than making a special trip later. It takes a little planning ahead, but it saves time as well as gas."

Try a motorcycle: "(Bought a) 1996 Yamaha XT225, which gets 50 mpg stop and go in the city, and up to 80-90 mpg on the open road! Paid \$1,800 for it. Cheap insurance, cheap in the parking garage at work, etc."

The \$360 solution

One of my favorite posts is the story of how one Fool's significant other tried driving more cautiously to save gas. The result? He was able to squeeze 70 more miles out of his 10-gallon tank of gas, upping his miles per gallon from an average of 23 to 30.

That's huge when you do the math. No, really. Driving normally, he was traveling 230 miles per tank. That's 920 miles per month if he, like most Americans, fills up once a week. Total cost? \$120 (\$3 per gallon x 10 gallons x 4 = \$120).

Driving cautiously, however, he could cover those same 920 miles on just 30 rather than 40 gallons of gas. And that reduces the monthly bill to approximately \$90 — good for nearly \$360 in savings over the course of a year. (Sweet!)

The Foolish bottom line

Sure, it pays to look for great investments. But it also pays to look for bargains. Remember: Money saved is *always* as good as money earned, Fool.

Money matters keeping you up at night? We're offering an [exclusive teleseminar](#) with Motley Fool co-founders David and Tom Gardner. They'll tell you when to [buy and sell](#) stocks in this uncertain market.

Fool contributor [Tim Beyers](#) doesn't drive much because he works at home. But if he did, he'd do his best to stick it to the oil man. Tim didn't own shares in any of the companies mentioned in this story at the time of publication. You can find out what is in his portfolio by checking Tim's Fool [profile](#). The Motley Fool has an ironclad [disclosure policy](#).

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