The final piece of vital equipment fit perfectly between the seat and the console as we pulled out of the driveway. That book of colored lines and dots is what would guide us to Niagara Falls and back.

We had considered a GPS device for this year's annual "Thelma & Louise" trip but decided a Garmin or TomTom may take a bit of adventure out of our travels.

Thelma drives, I navigate and we always get where we're going … eventually.

We made it across four states, found two camp sites including one on an island in Lake Erie, and traveled all the way to Cleveland (population 434,000) before we missed an exit.

Had we actually zipped onto the bypass around the city, we would have never encountered the majestic old houses or mom-and-pop businesses downtown.

And had we remembered how to get out of Westfield, NY, (pop. 5,000) the way we came in, we wouldn't have met a polite young man who questioned our lack of GPS. As we pulled away, I caught a glimpse of him shaking his head in disbelief.

Buffalo, NY, (pop. 271,000) wouldn't have been nearly as interesting either had we traveled the intended route on the outskirts rather than straight through. The cultures, the lifestyles, the melting pot of people made us realize how sheltered we are in central Nebraska.

The cute policeman in Brocton, NY, (pop. 1,400) would have had a boring night had he not seen the need to stop us to get us back on the right track and we'd have never seen the industrial avenues of Wheeling, WV, (pop. 29,000) if we hadn't gotten off the detour to buy a Power Ball

ticket.

There was only one time in the whole eight-day adventure that we truly felt lost. After stopping to visit with an eccentric old bait shop owner, we got directions to a winding road of potholes and forks through the hills and trees to a state park near Cloverdale, IN (pop. 2,000).

The unfamiliar territory with no cell phone service made us more than a bit uncomfortable. Good thing there were plenty of friendly raccoons to keep us company while we camped.

Once safely back in Nebraska, we realized the 3,000 miles of roads less traveled had changed our perspective of the world. We encountered people and places we'd have missed on a direct route.

We also learned there are no wrong turns, just memories to be made around every corner.