

A Road Trip is More Than a Road Trip

A road trip isn't just a vacation across the country in your family's minivan.

A road trip can be your child's away game on the weekend. It can be the switch from commuting in the city to commuting in the suburbs. It can be visiting family an hour away (when you know the drive is always an extra 30 minutes).

It's not just road trips that take a toll on your car's health. It's these repeated journeys that we make once, twice, even a few times a week that we forget affect our vehicles in the same way a road trip would.

Stay road trip/away game/long commute ready with these 5 easy monthly tips and your car will thank you.

1. Check the tires

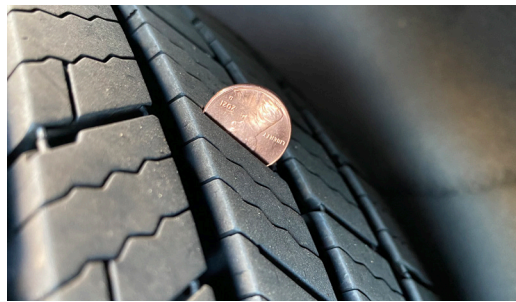
Look for bubbles, cuts, bulges, anything that looks abnormal with your tires. If your tires are under inflated, it is a guarantee that your car will work harder to drive, wasting your gas and money. Each vehicle's pressure is different, so check your owner's manual or the sticker on the driver's side door. If you experience a drastic weather change, your tires may need to be checked more frequently.

The tread wear on your tires is important to pay attention to as to avoid a blowout, uneven steering, and skidding. Here's a trick we like to use to determine whether your tires need to be rotated or replaced:

Take a Lincoln penny and place it upside down, facing you in the tread, as shown in the pictures below. If the top of Lincoln's head is showing (Picture A), it's time to replace your tires. If the tread is at least as deep as Lincoln's forehead and you can't see his hair (Picture B), your tires still have some wear left.



Picture A



Picture B

Go the distance: Check your spare tire as well - emergency situations are best handled when you're prepared for them.

2. Listen to your brakes

If you hear grinding, screeching, or feel your car vibrating when you brake, take your car to an auto repair shop for a full brake inspection. These signs of trouble are important to pay attention to before hitting the road.

3. Fill her up

There are several different types of fluid and oils in your car that work to keep you and your car safe. Give the below list a top off to avoid problems with braking, steering, and visibility while driving. If any of these are running low (besides your wiper fluid), it may be an indicator of a larger issue, and it's best to bring your car in for a full inspection

- Engine oil
- Transmission oil
- Coolant
- Brake fluid
- Wiper fluid

4. Test the battery

Take your vehicle in to your auto repair shop to make sure your battery is working properly. Without enough juice in your battery, you won't get anywhere. Literally.

Go the distance: Keep jumper cables in your trunk at all times. As mentioned, emergency situations are best handled when you're prepared for them.

5. Inspect the belts and hoses

No, not the belt around your waist and not the hose in your garden.

The belt kick-starts the alternator and helps operate the water pump. The hoses carry brake fluid, anti-freeze, gas, and air through your car. Both of these components need to be in proper working condition, so your engine can do its job properly. Take your car in to your auto repair shop to check the status of your belts and hoses for a regular inspection.

