

## Holiday Travel Tips

By Jim Alauria

With the inconveniences and expenses of air travel, more and more families are electing to hit the highway rather than the airport this holiday season. With that in mind I thought it would be appropriate to outline some simple travel tips that will help ensure your holiday venture is enjoyable and safe. Below are some simple things to think about before you head out of town in the coming weeks.

1. Have your vehicle inspected by your mechanic at least three days before you leave. Most reputable shops will have a free or inexpensive road trip inspection that will cover all the basics like the tires, battery, fluids etc. An experienced mechanic will have an eye for anything that may cause you problems on the road so that you can get it handled before you leave. By getting the inspection done a few days before you leave, you shouldn't have any delays even if you do have something that needs to be addressed.
2. Make sure you 1) Have a tire jack in the vehicle and 2) you know where it is and how to use it. If you run into a situation where you need to replace a tire, you don't want to learn this information on the side of the highway. Take a few minutes to look in your owner's manual or go to your mechanic and have them help you. Again, most shops will be happy to help you with this type of thing before you leave.
3. Pack light and drive the speed limit to save fuel. Every pound you add to the vehicle decreases fuel efficiency. So make sure everybody in the family only takes what they need even though the extra space in your own vehicle may be tempting to fill "just in case". Also, driving the speed limit is safer and you will also significantly increase your fuel economy. The wind resistance of your vehicle increases with speed. At 85 mph your vehicle needs nearly 25% more energy than it does at 70 mph. For the average vehicle that is more than five miles per gallon!
4. Pack some safety items like a flashlight, blanket, water, flairs (or warning reflectors) and an old cell phone that has a car charger. If you run into a situation these items will be helpful. An old cellphone that isn't activated will always dial 9-1-1 so keep one in the car with a car charger for an emergency.
5. Slow down, stop and smell the roses occasionally and relax. One of the greatest things about America is its diverse beauty and rich history. Too many times we are in such a rush to get to our destinations that we miss out on all the novel attractions along the way. Map out your trip on Google before you leave and look where you are going. You never know when you're one exit away from one of those Diners, Dives or Drive-Ins you were just watching on TV.

I hope these help you have a Happy Holiday Season on the road!