# Road Trip Car Maintenance Checklist

Work down the list from top to bottom. Shop items first, so there is time to order parts; the walkaround the day before; the quick checks at each stop.

Vehicle: _____ Odometer: _____ Date: _____

## One to two weeks before

- [ ] **Book any service that is due** Oil change message, overdue fluids or a brake job: get them done now, not on the road.
- [ ] **Fix any warning light** Have a check engine light read before you go. A flashing one means do not drive far.
- [ ] **Test the battery** 3+ YEARS OLD A free load test at most parts stores. Heat kills batteries, so test it before a summer trip.
- [ ] **Brake inspection** Squealing, grinding or a soft pedal means pads or fluid need attention.
- [ ] **Belts and hoses** Cracked, glazed or frayed belts and soft or swollen hoses fail most often in summer heat.
- [ ] **A/C blows cold** Get it serviced before a hot-weather trip. Replace the cabin air filter if it is dirty.
- [ ] **Check for open recalls** Enter your VIN at nhtsa.gov/recalls. Recall repairs are free at the dealer.
- [ ] **Tires old or worn?** Replace below 4/32 in of tread or past 6-10 years of age (last four digits of the DOT code).

## The day before

- [ ] **Tire pressure, spare included** On cold tires, to the door-jamb number, not the sidewall maximum.
- [ ] **Tread and sidewalls** Quarter test for 4/32 in. Look for bulges, cuts, nails and uneven wear.
- [ ] **Spare, jack and lug wrench** Know where they are. No spare? Check the sealant kit's expiry date.
- [ ] **Oil level** Between the two marks on the dipstick, engine off on level ground.
- [ ] **Coolant, brake fluid and washer fluid** Coolant only with the engine cold. Fill the washer reservoir to the top.
- [ ] **All lights** Headlights, high beams, brake lights, turn signals, hazards and plate light.
- [ ] **Wiper blades** Replace them if they streak, chatter or are cracked.
- [ ] **Load within the limit** The door-jamb placard gives the maximum weight of people plus cargo. Heavy items low and forward.
- [ ] **Emergency kit packed** Jumper cables or a jump starter, tire inflator, flashlight, first aid kit, warning triangles, water and snacks.
- [ ] **Documents in the car** Registration, insurance card and roadside assistance number.

## At every fuel stop

- [ ] **Walk around the car** Look at each tire for a low or damaged one. Glance under the car for drips.
- [ ] **Watch the dash** Temperature gauge in the normal range and no new warning lights.
- [ ] **Clean the windshield and lights** Bugs and road grime cut visibility at night.
- [ ] **Check the oil once a day on long trips** Some engines burn a quart every 1,000-2,000 mi at highway speed.

Notes

Pre-trip checklist for a passenger car. Your owner's manual sets the exact pressures and fluids.