

# CAR CARE 1987

## Tips for mountain driving

When driving in mountains, it is important to remember that your car loses efficiency in high altitudes. Acceleration is slower and it takes longer to pass another vehicle.

American Automobile Association suggests that you do not ride your brakes on long downgrades. Use the compression of your motor — either

second or low gear — to help slow the car. When climbing long hills, a lower gear will help forestall overheating.

Keep a full radiator. Expansion and lower boiling temperatures at high altitudes may cause loss of coolant.

## Vacations easier if car in top shape

by BARBARA BROWER  
Staff writer

The family road trip is an all-American tradition that has seen a resurgence in popularity with the decrease in gas prices the past few years.

And the vehicle, whether car, truck or RV, is the one essential ingredient in a motoring vacation. Being sure that it is in top shape for the adventure will promote fun and peace of mind — two more essential ingredients for a vacation.

If the motor is due for a tune-up, do it before you go. A clean, well-tuned engine gives more miles per gallon and is less likely to have problems.

A complete car check will cost \$30 to \$40 at most shops and will take about an hour, says Ken Farley, part owner of a repair shop in Gresham.

"The most important things that need to be checked are the radiator and heater hoses and fan and fan belt," Farley says. Hoses and belts are most likely to break during hot weather, and if they break, your

vacation could be delayed.

"If you don't check the basic, elementary things, you're inviting danger," agrees Bill Frederick, who holds a mechanical engineering degree from Portland State University.

"The best thing to do is to take your car to your mechanic and tell him that you're going on an extended road trip," Farley says. "He'll check the lubrication, oil and filters and have all the components checked for you, including the universal joint and differential and transmission. Any good mechanic will do all that."

Tires, wipers, lights, belts and hoses, brakes, suspension and the engine tuning should be high on the list of things to check when the road trip is being planned.

The tires should have plenty of tread and be in good condition. They should be balanced and inflated properly, and the car should have a spare.

More than likely the family car will be carrying more weight than usual, and the tires will need to be

inflated with a few pounds more air.

"A tire specialist or your mechanic can check those things for you," Frederick says.

Inspect the points and plugs; the fuel emissions system and air filters; ignition wires; all belts and hoses; brake, transmission, battery, radiator and windshield washer fluids and wipers. Be sure all the lights are working.

"If you don't get those basics checked, and you blow a radiator hose or fan belt, you're at the mercy of whoever. We've all heard the stories about being charged triple and having to pay it because you don't have any choice. I'm not saying that a mechanic would do that, or that the car will break down if you don't check the elementary things. But why take a chance?"

Frederick adds that people often do not take the advice of their mechanic. "They tell the mechanic what's wrong with the car, but then don't listen to his advice and go on anyway," he says.

If you suspect something is not

right, don't keep going — get it checked, he says.

In addition, it's a good idea to take along extra belts and a roll of electrical tape, Farley says.

"The belts never wear out in the trunk and it's just a good idea to have them with you. If a hose splits, you can just tape it until you get to the next town or to a repair shop," he says.

Take an inventory of the glove box and trunk. Carry a fire extinguisher, an assortment of basic tools, lug wrench, jack, flares, a flashlight and a first-aid kit.

Also, it's a good idea to pack jumper cables, extra change for emergency phone calls, extra keys and replacement parts.

Lastly, carry proof of valid insurance and driver's license. And take time to arrange for care of pets, plants, mail, garbage and newspaper.

After all the preparations, the only thing left to do is wait for one of the children to utter the all-American road trip question, "Are we there yet?"

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## Extra care needed for desert driving

Desert driving is no longer as hazardous and uncomfortable as once was the case. But a few precautions are advisable, according to the American Automobile Association.

Check your tires in the morning when they are cool, and use normal pressures, or two to three pounds per square inch more as long as the maximum tire pressure molded on the sidewall of the tire is not exceeded. Although pressure will build up dur-

ing the day, the risk of tire failure is greater when tires are underinflated. Do not bleed air pressure out of a hot tire.

Check the engine oil in the morning, too, when the engine is cool. It should be at the "full" mark, or close to it. Don't overfill the engine with oil, even though oil is important as a coolant as well as a lubricant for your engine. If you check your oil when the engine is hot, wait a few minutes

after the engine has been turned off in order to get an accurate reading on the dipstick.

Never open the radiator cap on a hot engine. This could lead to serious burns from hot liquid and steam. If the engine overheats, open the hood and let the engine cool off naturally. Do not attempt to hasten the cooling process by pouring water on the engine. The best time to check coolant level in the radiator is, again,

first thing in the morning. If you plan desert driving, be sure the radiator and heater hoses and fan drive belts are in excellent condition because they will be tested to their limits. If belts and/or hoses are four years old or more, replace them before venturing into the desert.

While driving maintain a reasonable speed and don't overwork your engine.

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