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4 road trip safety tips



Getaways come in many forms. A getaway can be restful and relaxing whether it involves a journey to a small island thousands of miles from home or a favorite campsite that's just a few hours away by car.

As the world gradually emerges from a pandemic that put travel on the back burner for billions of people across the globe, people anxious to get away from home may finally feel comfortable seeking getaways that don't involve air travel. If the open road beckons you in the months ahead, the excitement ahead can make it easy to overlook certain safety measures. The following are four easily forgotten safety measures to keep in mind as you head off for parts unknown.

1. Have your vehicle serviced before hitting the road. The pandemic significantly affected people's driving habits. Millions of people spent the pandemic working remotely, and many have continued to do so even after being vaccinated. Total driving distances fluctuated throughout the pandemic. For example, the Federal Highway Administration reported that the total distances driven in July 2020 had declined by 11 percent compared to the same month a year earlier. That decline was more drastic according to figures examining total distances driven in April 2019 and April 2020, when driving had decreased by 40 percent compared to a year earlier. Though driving may have increased as the pandemic wore on, it's still a good idea for drivers to have their vehicles serviced before a road trip. Request a full tune-up that includes

an oil change, a battery check and a tire rotation. These services and other maintenance tasks like fluid refills can reduce the likelihood of breakdowns and reveal any issues that might make driving less safe.

2. Determine if your vehicle is the subject of a recall. Recalls are issued if a safety issue has been uncovered since a car hit the market. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has a list of recalls available on its website at [NHTSA.gov/Recalls](https://www.nhtsa.gov/Recalls). Recalls are fixed free of charge, and it's best to look well in advance of a trip to ensure you have time to take the vehicle in for its update.

3. Get used to driving with accessories on the vehicle. Summer road trips are typically taken with bicycle racks attached to rear windows or the top of the vehicle. Drivers unaccustomed to having bicycles or storage units attached to their vehicles should make a few trial runs so they can get acclimated. Backing up with bike racks on the back of the car can be tricky for novices, so a little practice with the bikes on the back may be helpful. Drivers who intend to tow campers also may benefit from a little pre-trip practice.

4. Pack a map. Though maps have long since fallen out of favor due to the availability of GPS, people traveling to remote areas may find their smartphone signals fading in and out as they get closer to their destinations. A map can help road trippers overcome service interruptions and arrive at their destinations on time.



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