Road Trip Car Checklist

A checklist for preparing your car before a road trip.

Fluids and engine

- [ ] Check engine oil level and condition; change it if a service is due.
- [ ] Verify coolant level when cold and that it suits the climate ahead.
  Long highway driving in heat raises engine temperatures — coolant matters.
- [ ] Top up windshield washer fluid for bug and grime removal.
- [ ] Check brake, power steering and transmission fluid levels.
- [ ] Inspect belts and hoses for cracks, fraying or leaks.
- [ ] Look under the car for any fresh fluid leaks.

Tires and wheels

- [ ] Set all tire pressures to the door-jamb spec, allowing for a loaded car.
- [ ] Check tread depth and look for cuts, bulges or uneven wear.
- [ ] Confirm the spare is inflated and the jack and tools are present.
  Know how to change a tire safely before you rely on the spare.
- [ ] Verify lug nuts are tight and the TPMS light is off.
- [ ] Consider a tire rotation or alignment if wear is uneven.
- [ ] Pack a tire inflator or sealant for minor punctures.

Brakes and steering

- [ ] Confirm the brake pedal is firm and braking is straight and quiet.
- [ ] Have brakes inspected if you hear grinding or feel pulsing.
- [ ] Check the parking brake holds on a slope.
- [ ] Verify the steering is centered with no pulling or vibration.
- [ ] Confirm ABS and brake warning lights are off.
- [ ] Listen for suspension clunks over bumps.

Lights and visibility

- [ ] Test headlights, high beams, brake lights and turn signals.
- [ ] Check reverse, fog and hazard lights.
- [ ] Replace worn wiper blades and fill washer fluid.
- [ ] Clean the windshield, mirrors and headlights inside and out.
- [ ] Confirm the defroster and demister clear the glass.
- [ ] Pack spare bulbs and fuses if your car uses serviceable ones.

Emergency kit and tools

- [ ] Pack jumper cables or a portable jump starter.
- [ ] Carry a flashlight with spare batteries and a warning triangle.
- [ ] Stock a first-aid kit and any personal medications.

- [ ] Bring drinking water, snacks and weather-appropriate supplies.
- [ ] Pack basic tools, gloves, a tow strap and duct tape.
- [ ] Keep a phone charger, power bank and printed backup directions.

Final pre-departure checks

- [ ] Confirm your insurance, registration and roadside assistance are current.
- [ ] Fill the fuel tank or plan charging stops along the route.
- [ ] Adjust mirrors, seat and headrest before you set off.
- [ ] Test the horn, climate control and infotainment.
- [ ] Secure cargo so nothing shifts or blocks visibility.
- [ ] Do a final walkaround for tires, lights and fluid leaks.