

Tips for a perfect road trip

We've just come back from a long road trip to North Karnataka. Over the last seven years, we have enjoyed quite a few road trips and while we aren't adventure junkies, there is always something to be learnt. So here are my top tips for making sure road trips do not turn nightmarish.

■ **Get your car serviced:** Do this well in advance in case there is a major problem. Check the tyres, including the spare one. You don't want to start a trip with a puncture in the middle of nowhere.

■ **Sort the car documents:** Ensure the car documents are in place (Registration certificate, pollution certificate and insurance) and that you have a valid driving licence. On a trip to Goa once, we realised that our pollution certificate had expired and we ended up paying a fine. Also, keep that fine receipt as you don't want to keep paying for your sins for the rest of the trip!

■ **Take breaks:** This keeps you brimming with energy. Also do not drive post 7 pm. Many highways have dividers with plants so your eyes are not strained by the beaming headlights but you might enter a bustling town just after evening which at times is even more tiring as the traffic may be chaotic.

■ **You need more than one driver:** A long trip needs a minimum of two drivers. If there is only one driver, you never know when the tired soul will need a break.

■ **Pack more than you need:** We are light travellers and tend to always pack just what we need. But if you are getting ready for a long trip, pack extra pairs of shoes, essentials, even clothes to suit different weathers.

■ **Take extra bags:** Extra bags in different sizes come handy. I bought dried flowers in Matheran once and didn't want them to get crushed, so off they went into a cotton bag. We bought vegetables from a local bazaar in Bordi and they went in a roomy jute bag.



■ **Make a list of essentials:** Don't leave out the little things a road trip cannot do without. A car-phone charger, for instance. These days GPS is so important that you cannot be running out of battery.

■ **Don't forget music:** An unlimited store of music will keep you refreshed and you should never run out of music that suits the landscape, mood and spirit of the ride.

■ **Pack favourite snacks and water:** You may not run into a lot of nice places to eat in so pack munchies just in case you are famished and with no food in sight. On short trips, we carry our own bottles of water so that we don't have to buy bottled water in a new city.

■ **Carry newspapers:** These sheafs

help to soak up a leaking water bottle, to layer a rather dirty table before you sit down to eat, to wrap up some banana skin in if you are nowhere near a dustbin or to just clean up muddy shoes after a trek.

■ **Carry towels, napkins, cushions:** All these come handy at some point during the trip.

■ **Remember the first-aid kit:** This comes handy during small emergencies.

■ **Get your contact list in order:** Always make sure you are pre-booked in a hotel or that offbeat homestay. Always call in advance to get directions. Save the contact numbers, emails of all your hosts on your phone and in a diary.

■ **Explore the road:** Search for local restaurants. And if you are passing through a big town, it's not that much of a diversion to just sample the delights of a famous restaurant there.

The beauty of a road trip is that you own your time and you can decide your route and if you choose to meander, you can! Do it all, stop and click those pictures, go check out places that may take you off the beaten road but will give you memories of a lifetime.

— *Bhavani is a traveller and blogs at merrytogoaround.com*