

fact sheet | driving holiday



While it's important to maintain your vehicle all year round, having your car in excellent condition is particularly important before you set off on a driving holiday.

Before setting out, it only takes a couple of minutes to do a few checks to ensure your holiday gets off to a great start.

Tyres

Your tyres are the only contact you have with the road, so it's important to make sure they're in good condition.

Make sure you have at least 2mm of tread on each tyre, and if you're going to be travelling long distances on your holiday, it's wise to consider purchasing new tyres before you leave.

This is particularly important if you are going to be towing, as the extra load can accelerate tyre wear.

Your vehicle's tyres should also be inflated to the recommended pressure, which you will find in the owner's manual. Remember to include the spare tyre in your checking procedure.

Windscreen wipers

Make sure the windscreen wipers are operating and the blades haven't split or perished. If your wipers are leaving smears across the windscreen, replace them.

Make sure the reservoir bottle is filled to the correct level and the washer jets are aimed correctly. A recognised additive in the washer bottle will also help clean the screen when the wipers are used.

Brake lights and indicators

If you don't have someone who can help you check your indicators and brake lights, back your car up to a window or the wall of the garage and use the reflection to check them yourself.

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While you're at it, make sure your headlights are correctly adjusted so they don't dazzle other road users.

If you can't do this yourself, RAA Members can have their car's headlights adjusted free of charge at the Mile End Service Centre.

Battery

Make sure your battery is held securely in place and all the battery terminals are secure and kept clean and dry at all times. A loose battery will vibrate, causing terminal damage to the battery plates.

It is recommended you only use distilled water to top up your battery's fluid levels should it require topping up.

Never over-fill your battery as it will overflow during charging and damage your car's paint and panels.

Engine oil level

With your engine switched off, check the engine's oil level. If the level is low, top it up to the 'full' mark.

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If you know your car does use some oil during operation, it's wise to carry extra oil so you can top it up. If your car is starting to use about one litre every 1,000 km there is the potential for it to be blowing visible smoke and you may risk getting your car defected.

Cooling systems and drive belts

While the engine is cold, check the coolant level in both the radiator and expansion tank. Inspect hoses for soft spots, bulges, signs of leaks and corrosion, cracks and loose clamps.

Inspect drive belts for correct tension, cracks or excessive wear. The most common area of deterioration in your drive belts is generally the multi-ribbed or V shaped section (depending on the type of vehicle you drive).

Your belts may appear in good condition until the drive section is checked.

Make sure your engine warning gauges and lights are working properly by turning on the ignition and seeing that all the warning lights that are supposed to be illuminated are, and that they turn off after the engine is started.

Carry spare hoses and belts, as it may be difficult to source a replacement for your car in remote areas.

A mechanic can easily fit your replacement parts and have you on your way.

Extra equipment

As well as extra belts and hoses, before you set off on your holiday it's a good idea to pack a few extra supplies.

Carry water as either an emergency drinking supply or for topping up the radiator, fuses in a variety of sizes, electrical tape and a small amount of electrical wire, a good quality torch, a tow rope and a basic tool kit.

The tool kit should include, at a minimum, an adjustable wrench, straight blade and Philips head screwdrivers, ring and open-end spanners and a pair of pliers.

Don't forget the first aid kit!

RAA PLUS and RAA Premium

If you're planning to venture far, it may well pay to upgrade your RAA Membership to RAA Plus.

Should your car break down more than 100km from home, RAA will take care of your towing, transport and accommodation needs.

RAA Premium members enjoy unlimited call-outs, extended towing – up to 50 km in metropolitan areas or up to 200 km in the country – and emergency accommodation.