

Presse | News | Prensa | Tisk | Imprensa | Prasa | Stampa | Pers | Пpеcca

Seven top tips for planning the perfect road trip

The Spring Bank Holiday is almost here and it's expected that thousands of people across the UK will pack up their cars for a staycation over the long weekend.

Recent research from Volkswagen Financial Services UK (VWFS) found that almost half of the population (47%) say they are likely to drive to a UK holiday destination this summer, whilst the number of Volkswagen California campervans financed by VWFS has increased by 621% from Q1 2020 to Q1 2021.

So we have rounded up seven top tips for planning the perfect road trip this Spring Bank Holiday.

1) Plan your route

Our data insights team recently found that two thirds of us (65%) are reliant on satnavs when driving to a new location, but even if you need the help of technology to reach your destination, it's still really important to plan your route.

Planning your route will decrease the likelihood of potential problems further down the road, such as looking for a petrol station if you're running low on fuel or hunting down service stations if you need an urgent comfort break.

Government advice recommends taking a 15-minute rest every two to three hours to beat tiredness, so make sure that your route includes safe places to take regular breaks, too.

2) Carry out pre-road trip car maintenance checks

This is a great habit to get into generally, and we can't emphasise the importance of car maintenance checks enough. Make sure you've plenty of time to give your vehicle a once-over before you hit the road so that if you do encounter any issues, you can get them resolved with plenty of time to spare before you start your journey.

Some of the major checks you can do are:

- Making sure the oil level is between the minimum and maximum markers
- Checking your tyre pressure and tread depth. To check the tread depth, insert a 20p coin into the tread grooves on the tyre. If you can't see the outer band of the coin face, your tyres will likely be above the legal limit (1.6mm)
- Check that your lights are working properly – ask a family member to check the back lights for you
- Make sure that your washer fluid levels are topped up before setting off

It's also worth checking that your car's MOT is valid for the entirety of your road trip. For extra peace of mind, you could book your car in for a service before you travel. Find out more about our servicing options for Volkswagen, SKODA, SEAT, Audi and Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles at www.vwfs.co.uk.

3) Pack the essentials

There are some universal essentials that you should always pack in your car before setting off on any long journey. It's more than likely that your road trip will go exactly according to plan but it doesn't hurt to prepare yourself for any unexpected eventualities.

With that in mind, we recommend that it's worth packing plenty of water for all passengers, a first aid kit, a physical road map should the sat nav and your 4G not work, your driver's licence, and warm outdoor clothing should you need to wait outside the car for any reason. Oh, and sweets and crisps are always good options, too!

4) Choosing the right playlist

A recent survey from Volkswagen Financial Services revealed that one in five people admitted they long for more time behind the wheel as it gives them the opportunity to sing out loud without the embarrassment of being overheard.

So we know that getting the music right in the car is essential for a lot of people – and if you're travelling with others, picking the best songs to suit everyone's tastes is how to ensure a harmonious road trip journey!

If that's too difficult a task, you could always try to find a podcast ahead of time that people will enjoy.

5) Check the weather

Isn't it strange that most of us have a weather app on our smart phone despite being able to look outside the window whenever we like? However, a quick check on the weather could be the difference between making the most of panoramic vistas and a dreary, cloud-covered drive.

More importantly, though, being flexible and altering your travel time depending on certain weather warnings could help you avoid a potentially unsafe journey.

6) Share the drive

It's relatively common for one person to drive the entire road trip, but before you set off, it's worthwhile seeing if you can share the driving responsibilities with somebody else.

Driving for long periods at a time requires lots of concentration and can make us tired – a state that sometimes leads to road traffic accidents. Therefore, subbing in and out with one or more drivers will ensure your concentration level remains high throughout the journey.

Naturally, make sure that all drivers have the necessary and relevant insurance before setting off.

7) Check that your documents are up to date

As a result of COVID-19, there have been some big changes to certain rules and regulations that motorists need to be aware of.

For example in March 2020, the DVLA automatically extended licences that were up for renewal.

The DVLA said that all licences that were due to expire between February 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020 would be granted an 11-month extension.

But that extension started from the day the licence expired, so drivers whose licences were due for renewal early last year will now have to update their documents.

For example, if your licence expired in November 2020 then you have until October 2021 to get it updated.

Looking for a road trip rental vehicle?

There are currently 23 Volkswagen Financial Services Rent-a-Car locations around the UK, based in Volkswagen Group showrooms, with Volkswagen and ŠKODA passenger cars, and Volkswagen vans, available to hire for a day, weekend or longer.

For more information, visit <https://www.vwfsrentacar.co.uk/>

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