

ROAD TRIP GUIDE

# HAVE KIDS, WILL TRAVEL

A trampoline contest on the back seat and a sudden rattle under the hood – all best avoided on the open road. Here's how

BY PIETER VAN DER LUGT

**M**any people seem to think that the family holiday starts once they have arrived at their destination, unpacked the car and sent off the kids to the playground or pool.

They have it all wrong. "A good traveller has no fixed plans and is not intent on arriving," said Lao Tzu, better known as Confucius.

Well, some preparation and planning are in order, but getting there is part of the adventure and the trip should be fun. If it isn't, you're wasting precious holiday hours. So, share the driving duties, stop often and take in the scenery.

## MUST-HAVES

Make a list. Lay out all the clothes and everything you want to take,

then put half of it back again. You always need less stuff than you think. Besides, an overloaded car is uncomfortable and uses more petrol.

Clean out the car's cubbyhole. Throw out the old receipts, sticky lozenges and last year's parking disc. Replace these with the car manual, vehicle registration papers, insurance and roadside assistance cards, important contact numbers and a good map.

Buy a pre-packed medical kit or assemble your own in a soft bag that will fit under the front seat, where it is out of the way but easy to get to. If there is a cooler bag on the passenger side, make it a soft one that doesn't take over all the leg room.



## PREPARING YOUR RIDE

If your car will reach its next service mark during the trip, take it in for the service before you go. "In peak hour traffic, your engine is working hard even though it's standing still for as much as half of the journey time. That's all the more reason for an earlier service," says Michael Turnbull of the Midas Group.

The service should include inspecting hoses, belts, shocks and bearings, replacing oil, aligning tyres and centring the steering wheel, if needed. It might also reveal other problems. If the air conditioning seems weak, have the coolant looked at.

"Don't forget that your car has five wheels," Turnbull says. "The spare must also be checked for wear or cracks and pumped, along with the other tyres. Make sure the jack is working and that no parts are missing. See that your wheel spanner is the right size, especially if you have custom wheels."

On modern cars there is not much you can repair yourself but Turnbull suggests you keep a small fire extinguisher, a tyre inflator that blocks leaks, a tow rope (for manual cars) and a warning triangle (now required by law) in the boot. A small tool kit might also come in handy.

## THE CHILDREN

Involve the kids. Show them that preparing, packing and driving to a destination are part of the experience. Give each child a road map and mark the route. Let each family member pick one thing to do along the way. Pack activity bags with notebooks for older kids

and colouring books with crayons for tiny tots. Activity books with puzzles and word games, small toys and a few treats are also good options. Electronic games and MP3 players are great for older children. Pack extra batteries for each gadget and don't forget the chargers.

Kids get bored quickly. Regular shorter stops are better than one long break. And while the N1 might get you there faster, a route dotted with farmstalls and towns might be more interesting.

Encourage your kids to notice what is different in this part of the world. Tune in to a local radio station and try local dishes when you stop to eat. Don't fight their urge to buy mementos – they will bring back memories years from now. ▴

## SNACKS IN TRANSIT

### Road food tips from the experts

- Kids under six get an energy high from refined sugar. Rather try dried or fresh fruit, cut into shapes to make them more appealing, says Mariam Forgan from the Association for Dietetics in South Africa.
- Have plenty of fluids available to prevent dehydration. Bottles of still water are the best option for long journeys. Select the ones with sports lids to help prevent spills.
- Ayesha Seedat, a dietician with the Heart and Stroke Foundation SA, suggests 'take-along' foods like mini-muffins (carrot and nut, bran and raisin) and finger sandwiches that are manageable for little hands. Choose fillings that will stick the sandwich together, such as peanut butter or hummus.

## ROAD TRIP ESSENTIALS

FOR THE CAR



**Firestone MultiHawk** general tyre, R000, Supa Quick

**Midas tyre fix**, R000, Midas

**Moto-quip** 1kg fire extinguisher, R159, Pick 'n Pay



FOR YOU



**Jumbo cooler**, R120, Cape Union Mart

**Q Premium** Emergency roadside safety kit, R249,99, Checkers



FOR THE KIDS

**Leap Frog Leapster GS**, R900, DionWired



**REMEMBER, YOU CAN USE YOUR RCS CARD AT MORE THAN 250 SUPA QUICK STORES. THEY ALSO OFFER A FREE AND COMPREHENSIVE SAFETY CHECK.**