

# Ready for a **ROAD TRIP?**

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**W**e're heading into summer road trip season. Before you hit that sweet highway, make sure your car is as ready for a trip as you are.

Here are some tips from the experts on what to check before to pack the car.

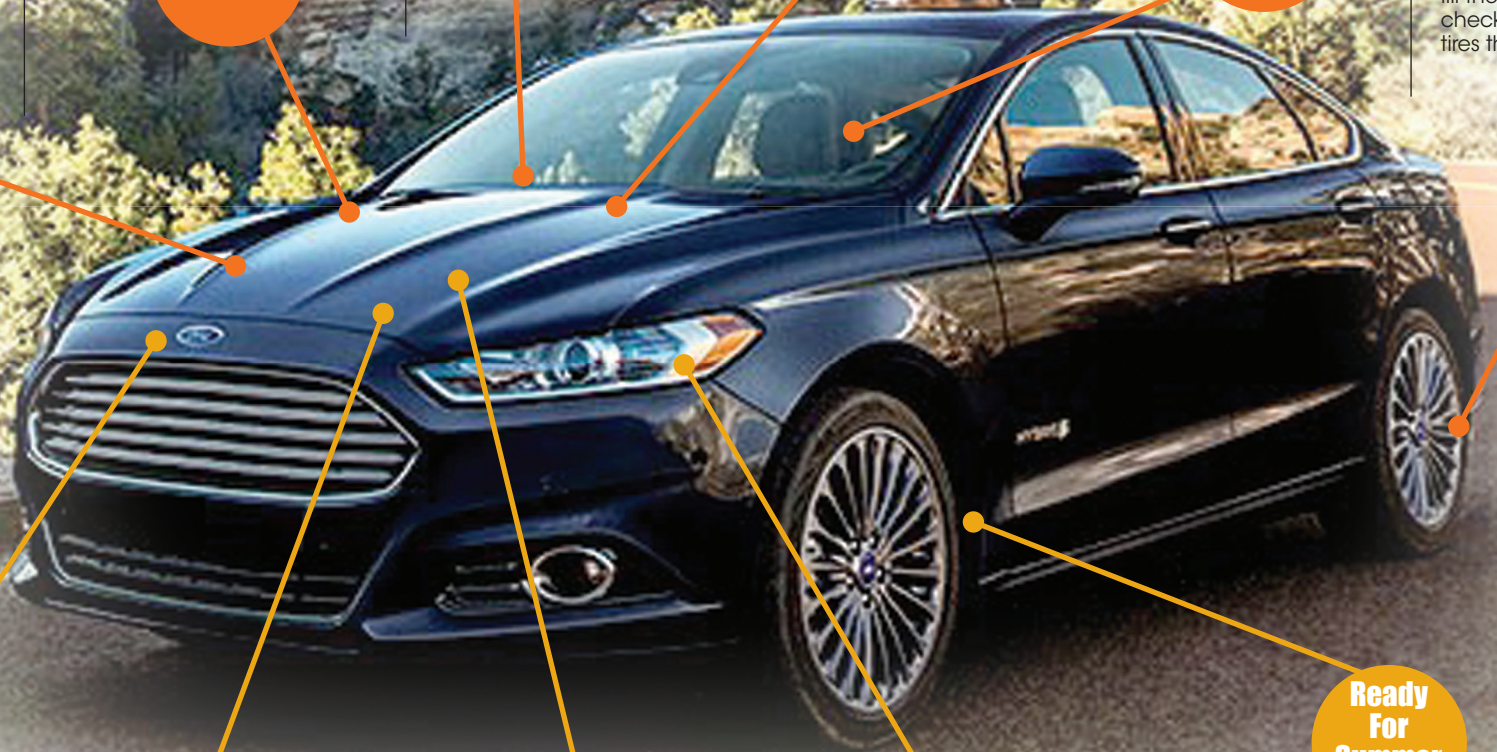
Check your automatic transmission fluid. Consult your owner's manual for the how to on this one, but if the fluid is red or pinkish, you're good to go. The more brown it is, the more likely it needs a change, especially if you're going to tow something.

Got your owner's manual? You don't know what you don't know until you find out you don't know it. Say, for example, whether your SUV can pull that rental camper-trailer or not.

Check your engine coolant. Just check out the tank under the hood to see if the fluid inside is between the "low" and "full" marks.

Windshield wipers - Check to make sure the washer jets are spraying and the wipers are cleaning it off. Replace and/or refill as needed.

Tires - Pressure makes all the difference here. Check inside your glove box or the inside of the driver's side door for your car's tire pressure requirements, and check your tire every time you fill the gas tank. Also, check the tread on the tires themselves.



**Red & Ready**

**Look It Up**

**Keep Cool**

**Wipe On, Wipe Off**

**Miles To Go**

Is your drive belt worn looking, cracked or glazed? Time to replace it.

**Belt It Out**

**Charged Up**

**So Fresh & So Clean**

**Top It Off**

**Bright Lights, Big City**

**Ready For Summer Brake**

How's your battery look? Are the posts clean? Check to make sure the acid isn't leaking or that the casing isn't cracked. You can't tell if your battery is close to dying, so if you're headed out on a long trip and your battery's 4-5 years old, it's better to replace it and be safe rather than stuck in a parking lot somewhere with a dead car and sorry.

Air filter - Just like with your vacuum cleaner, the dirtier the filter the less effective the engine. If your filter is black or gray-ish in color, take it in to get replaced.

Check the oil. Warm up the engine, turn it off. Then pull out the oil dipstick, wipe it off and check it again. If it's not at "Full," you need oil. If the oil is black, get it changed.

Lights - Do a perimeter check to make sure other drivers will know when you're braking, turning or coming upon them in the dark. This is especially important if you're towing something. Check those lights, too.

Brakes, steering, suspension and drive train. Worn CV joints, warped rotors, loose suspension, worn or leaking struts ... Lots can go wrong with these parts of your car. Be safe and take your car to a local mechanic for a quick look-see to make sure your car is road-ready.