

## Avoiding Family Vacation Nightmares

-Advice on How to Prepare

Today, finding quality time together as a family is becoming more difficult. With demands from work, school and outside commitments, families are finding fewer opportunities to be together.

One good way to spend time with your family is to drive instead of fly to the next vacation spot or family holiday gathering. Not only will this save money; it will give you and your family the opportunity to spend more time together while seeing the country.

All trips require planning, from hotel or campground reservations to the trip itinerary. In order to make the most of your next family road trip you'll need to spend some time preparing routes, outlining your agenda and making sure that your vehicle is in tip top shape. By following a few simple suggestions, your family vacation is bound to be a success.

Things to consider before the trip include checking and filling oil and other fluids and making sure your windshield wiper blades are working properly. Cooling system hoses should be checked and replaced if necessary, and the thermostat should be operating properly. Coolant or antifreeze should be drained and re-filled at manufacturer recommended intervals. To ensure your family's safety, properly inflate tires to recommended manufacturer specifications and replace those that show excessive wear. Have your brakes checked to verify that they are operating properly. It is always important to make sure headlights, turn signals and brake lights are also in proper working condition.

- While planning your trip, make a checklist of items you will need. A few necessities might include:
  - directions to your destination and any necessary maps
  - telephone numbers you will need on the trip
  - glasses and/or contact lenses for all drivers
  - sunglasses
  - flashlight and spare batteries
  - car insurance information
  - medical insurance information
  - names of people to be contacted if you are involved in an emergency situation

- necessary cash, credit cards and/or traveler's checks
- passports and/or other necessary identification information
- medications that may need to be taken regularly
- a cell phone for emergencies; if you are the driver, be sure to pull off the road when using your cell phone

No amount of preparation for the family trip can prepare you for the disaster of an accident. When driving anywhere, there is always a chance that one could occur. If an accident does happen, whether on vacation or not, pull off the road as far as possible and remember to close any doors that are next to traffic. Turn on hazard lights to notify other drivers that your vehicle is disabled or that there is an emergency. Remember to keep all objects (like flat tires, jacks or luggage) off the road and never accept a ride from anyone other than a police officer. Even the most sincere looking people may turn out to be dangerous. If you have a cell phone, call the police for help.

Make sure there are no injuries. If medical attention is needed, call for help. If no one is hurt, notify the police and fill out an accident report. An accident report will help you when dealing with your insurance company. It is important to fill this out even if there is no obvious damage to your car; it will help to ensure that hidden damage is accounted for.

After completing the police report, notify your insurance company as soon as possible; some companies require notification within 24 hours of the accident. Your insurance company will work with the other parties involved to ensure that the claims process is handled properly. They will also estimate the damage to the vehicle, so you know what to expect when having it repaired.

Your insurance company may give you options on where to take your vehicle, or you may want to choose your own repair shop. If you are responsible for choosing a repair facility, choose one that is current in technology and training. Examples of well-trained facilities are those that have qualified for the I-CAR Gold Class Professionals® program and those that have ASE certification.

When you find a repair shop that has qualified for the Gold Class designation, you'll know that they have been trained to repair your vehicle properly. Gold Class Professionals have a commitment to serve their customers with the highest level of quality service. For information on how to find a Gold Class Professionals® business in your area, call 1-800-ICAR-USA in the U.S., 1-800-565-ICAR in Canada, or visit our website at [www.i-car.com](http://www.i-car.com).