

Summer MOT and Service

Drowned or lost key fobs

IT'S not unusual for motorists to either lose their keys in sand or take their remote control keys for a swim and then find that car doors won't open. Salt in sea water can ruin electric circuits and render transponder keys useless.

Keep keys safe and dry but also make sure that you know the alternative method for getting into the car if the key fob fails. This is usually described in the handbook.

Punctures

Getting a garage or tyre centre to check your tyres is a good idea, as high summer temperatures heat up tyres and aggravate any existing damage to the rubber.

Under-inflation compounds this, causing friction and added heat which can prove too much for weak spots, causing punctures and blow-outs.

Check your handbook for the correct tyre inflation pressures, especially when towing.

Caravans laid up for the winter should have their tyres checked for cracks and any damaged tyres renewed before use.



- Clean the windscreen, windows and mirrors. Fill the windscreen-washer bottle using a screenwash additive to help clear traffic film and dead insects.
- Check and adjust tyre pressures — increasing them for heavy loads if necessary. The correct pressures will be given in the car's handbook.
- If a service is due, get it done before you go on holiday — repairs can be more expensive away from home.
- If in doubt, get a garage to do the checks.

Fuel-saving tips

- Load luggage on your roof rack as low as possible and wrap the luggage tightly in plastic sheeting or consider using a roof box to reduce the effect on fuel economy.

Overheating

Extreme summer temperatures, failure to keep coolant levels topped up, leaking coolant hoses and broken electric cooling fans can all result in overheating and temperatures fierce enough to cause severe and expensive damage. Check the coolant reservoir level regularly (refer to the handbook if necessary) and look out for wet or white staining on coolant hoses. If the fan is broken it will soon become apparent when you meet slow moving traffic and the engine temperature starts to soar.

It is best to get a garage to check it but you can also check it yourself by running the car to normal temperature and then allowing the engine to be idle for five to ten minutes — the cooling fan should cut in automatically.

- Try your air vents first before opening windows: you may find that the airflow is enough to keep two people comfortable in the front of the car, particularly on a motorway.
- Don't use the air conditioning all the time: once the air conditioning has cooled the inside of the car, you may be able to turn it down or off. Also, don't start the air conditioning if doors or windows are open.
- If you are carrying extra passengers or heavy luggage, pump up the tyres to compensate for the extra weight. The car's handbook gives advice on this.
- If you park in the sun, using a windscreen shade and opening up the car as soon as you get back to it will help to cool the interior. Opening windows while you drive out of a car park may lower the inside temperature several degrees before you start the air conditioning.

Quick checks before you go

- Check that brake, clutch and power steering fluids, oil, and coolant levels are up to the mark (refer to the handbook if in any doubt)

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