PRINTABLE CHECKLIST

The Road Trip Packing & Planning Checklist

Everything to sort before the first mile — and the kit that lives in the car.

◆ PRINT IT · CHECK IT OFF · BREATHE ◆

Plan the route

Legs, overnights and an honest drive time.

- [ ] **Break the trip into daily legs.** Start, end, miles and drive time.
- [ ] **Set a comfortable daily limit.** Agree on it before you leave.
- [ ] **Book overnight stays.** Especially in busy seasons or small towns.
- [ ] **List the stops worth making.** Star the must-dos.
- [ ] **Note gaps in services.** Long stretches without fuel or signal.

Budget the fuel and the rest

Fuel is the one cost you can estimate fairly closely.

- [ ] **Estimate fuel cost.** Total miles ÷ your MPG × price per gallon.
- [ ] **Budget lodging, food, activities and tolls.** Estimated, then actual.
- [ ] **Check tolls on your route.** Some roads are cashless.
- [ ] **Log fill-ups as you go.** Gallons, price, odometer.

NOTES

Check the car

Do this a week ahead, so there is time to fix what you find.

- [ ] **Check tire pressure and tread.** Including the spare.
- [ ] **Check oil, coolant, washer fluid.**
- [ ] **Test lights, wipers and the horn.**
- [ ] **Schedule service if it's due.** Before the trip, not during it.
- [ ] **Find your registration, insurance card and roadside assistance number.** Keep them in the car.

The emergency kit

Pack it once, leave it in the car.

- [ ] **Jumper cables or a portable jump starter.**
- [ ] **A tire inflator and pressure gauge.**
- [ ] **A first-aid kit.**
- [ ] **A flashlight with spare batteries.**
- [ ] **Water and shelf-stable snacks.** Enough for a long wait.
- [ ] **A blanket, and seasonal gear.** An ice scraper in winter, sun shade in summer.
- [ ] **Basic tools and duct tape.**

NOTES

The cooler, electronics and bags

Pack so the things you need often are within reach.

- [ ] **Pack a cooler for the drive.** Drinks, sandwiches, fruit, ice.
- [ ] **Bring car chargers and a power bank.** One cable per device.
- [ ] **Keep a day bag within reach.** Snacks, wipes, tissues, medications, a jacket.
- [ ] **Pack an overnight bag.** So you don't unload the whole car every night.
- [ ] **Bring trash bags and paper towels.**
- [ ] **Pack entertainment for passengers.** Downloaded, not streamed.

Before you pull out

Five minutes that save an hour.

- [ ] **Share the route with someone at home.** Including overnight stops.
- [ ] **Download offline maps and playlists.**
- [ ] **Fill the tank.** Start full.
- [ ] **Do a last walk-through of the house.**

> **If you take one thing from this checklist:** pack an overnight bag. On a multi-stop trip, one small bag with a change of clothes and toiletries means you never have to unpack the whole car in a dark parking lot.

NOTES

WHEN PAPER STOPS BEING ENOUGH

This checklist can't do the fuel math.

Paper is great for the car kit. It is less great when the route changes, the fill-ups need logging, and the budget needs comparing against what you've actually spent.

The MDRN Roadtrip Planner

Day-by-day driving legs, a fuel cost estimate with real fill-ups, a budget, stops, lodging, and a packing and car kit list. Opens in any browser. No account, no subscription.

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