Road Trip Preparation - To Do Lists

3 Months Before You Go

___ Start daydreaming about where you'd like to go.
___ Buy "Planning Road Trips" book from Amazon.com
___ Buy roadside attraction apps, park guides.
___ Buy phrase books or language guide apps.
___ Research monuments, attractions and parks online.

___ Define the purpose of your trip (visit, attractions, roaming).
___ Decide where you want to go if time limited vacation.
___ Use Google Maps to calculate the driving distances.
___ Buy GPS unit, or GPS software and practice using it.

___ Arrange annual vacation time, or leave of absence from work.
___ Arrange for an elderly care giver or live-in assistant for parents.

___ Renew the passport if not six months remaining.
___ Get a second credit card, from another vendor, as a back up.
___ Visit the doctor for travel vaccinations and medications.
___ Obtain any visitor visas required by destination countries.
___ Get child consent letter (Your right to accompany them).
___ Get an eye exam and update prescription eyewear.

___ Scan important documents into your computer.
___ Make photocopies of important documents, if no scanner.
___ (See the Documents Packing List at PlanningRoadTrips.com)


1 Month Before You Go

___ Join the local auto club AAA or CAA.
___ Get an international drivers license if required.

___ Arrange pet care or accommodations.
___ Go to the dentist for checkup and cleaning.
___ Notify the day care, school, etc, of away time.
___ Arrange for a housesitter and emergency contact.

___ Create a budget for the trip, if money is tight.
___ Calculate your car's gas usage to budget accordingly.
Revisit and revise your road trip plan.
Create your itinerary if on the time limited trip.
Map out the route you plan to drive.
Plan which days will be driving days.

Research the hotel chains you're considering.
Use Google maps for virtual tours of towns.
Decide on which towns you'll be exploring.
Purchase special event tickets.

Buy video, or digital camera and practice using it.
Buy adapters & cords for AC power, USB, data transfer.

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2 - 4 Weeks Before You Go
Go to bank and set up auto credit card payment.
Get destination currency if traveling out of country.
Buy travelers checks if you'll be using them.
Get roll of quarters and change for tolls etc.

Phone utility companies and switch to credit card billing.
Get travel & medical insurance from agent, or auto club.
Get prescriptions from doctor to last the entire trip.

Set up a post box at the UPS Store.
Buy a postal mail redirect to the box.

Shop, compare and buy food coolers.
Buy collapsible bowls and eating utensils.
Visit the "Apps Packing List" to prep the smartphone.

Make reservations at your first destinations.
Buy maps or print out Google maps for GPS backup.

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1 Week Before You Go

___ Do a visual inspection of car tires and engine.
___ Get the routine car maintenance done.
___ Get a fresh can of tire puncture sealant to fix flats.
___ Get any windshield chips or cracks fixed.
___ Prepare the emergency kit (Emergency Kit Checklist)
___ Prepare the first aid kit (First Aid Kit Checklist)
___ Research the attractions you want to see.
___ Plan your final itinerary for time limited vacations.
___ Get spare home keys made.
___ Put valuables in safety deposit box.
___ Buy automatic light timers and learn to use them.
___ Buy security locks for sliding doors and windows.
___ Enter important phone numbers into mobile.
___ Enter medical info into cell phone notes.
___ Create encrypted drive or folder on computer.
___ Put all important scans, docs into encrypted drive.
___ Put regular deliveries (newspaper, grocery, etc) on hold.
___ Put utilities on hold (hydro, internet) for long trips.
___ Get a haircut and any personal stuff done.
___ Pick up any dry cleaning, tailoring, etc.
___ Check memory cards and batteries for electronics.
___ Tell neighbor you trust about the vacation.
___ Remind the housesitter and emergency contact.
___ Notify credit card companies of your itinerary.

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1 - 2 Days Before You Go

___ Take out cash at ATM and have at least 200 on hand.
___ Check bank account balances and transfer funds.
___ Pay all monthly bills, if auto payment not used.
___ Pay utility bills in advance if leaving for a long time.
___ Clean out the car interior of non essentials.
___ Load the "stay in the car" items into the car.

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___ Check for the spare tire, jack and essential tools.
___ Get gas and top up the window washing fluid.

___ Cut the lawn and do any yard maintenance.
___ Buy snacks and food for the day and next morning.
___ Prepare music playlists, ebooks to listen to.
___ Charge up the cell phone and all electronics.

___ Give spare home keys to housesitter.
___ Show housesitter how to use home security system.
___ Notify the alarm monitoring company of your itinerary.

___ Give copy of itinerary to emergency contact.
___ Give copy of important documents to emergency contact.

___ Start packing by organizing stuff into piles.
___ Pack the storage clothing bag and cleaning tote.

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The Day You Go

___ Pack the main overnight bag.
___ Pack the non perishable storage cooler.
___ Pack the toiletries into zippered container.

___ Turn off the clock radio, PVR, cable box, etc.
___ Turn off all electric heaters.
___ Set air conditioning to vacation mode.
___ Unplug any chargers, adapters not being used.
___ Shut off the breaker to outside power outlets.

___ Turn down, or shut off the hot water heater.
___ Turn off furnace, water heater, fireplace, pilot lights.
___ Turn off the gas mains to the house and appliances.
___ Turn off water main, or at least the laundry hoses.

___ Water and feed all the plants.
___ Set all of the automatic light timers.
___ Empty all the garbage and dispose of it.
___ Hide remaining valuables around the home.
___ Set up the home phone answering machine if using.

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Just Before You Go

___ Get changed into your comfy driving clothes.
___ Listen for traffic closures and road conditions.

___ Do one last visual inspection of the car.
___ Set up the GPS on the mount in the car.
___ Do quick perimeter check around yard.

___ Fill up water jugs and bottles.
___ Empty, clean and put away water filter.

___ Pack the main cooler around the ice packs.
___ Clean perishable items out of the fridge.

___ Turn off the lights, stove, fans, heaters, etc.
___ Check all doors and windows are locked.
___ Take digital photos of your home.

___ Take out any remaining kitchen garbage.
___ Everyone goes bathroom for the last time.
___ Set the home security system.


While on the Road

___ Use a hands free device if talking while driving.
___ Take turns driving if one of you feels tired or dizzy.

___ Stop every two hours at rest areas, stretch and play.
___ Give pets water when arriving at (not leaving) rest areas.
___ Lock the GPS in the glove box, when leaving the car.
___ Empty trash from the car after each day’s drive.
___ Do visual inspection around the car before driving.

___ Phone the hotel if you’re going to be late.
___ Arrive, inspect, check in, sanitize the hotel room.
___ Ask the hotel staff their favorite restaurant.
___ Ask the hotel staff about local events & activities.
Use the GPS search near me function to explore.

Write a journal of the trip.
Update your travel blog daily with photos.
Transfer photos from camera to computer as backup.
Tag photos with keywords like name and location.

If roaming and exploring, pick your next destination.
Plan driving days and overnight stays to next destination.
Reserve the next few hotels several days in advance.
Plan attractions to see along the way if no itinerary.

Take digital photos when checking out.
Collect the reward points for the hotel chain.
Keep all receipts from purchases and hotels.

Returning Home

Unpack bags in the garage, hallway, or mudroom.
Leave bags outside main living area for quarantine.
Toss travel clothes into laundry piles.

Listen and make notes of home phone messages.
Water all plants if no housesitter came.
Pick up the pet from the kennel.
Pick up mail from post box.

Go shopping for groceries and stock the fridge.
Wash the water jug and start a new filter.

Phone the neighbors to tell them you're back.
Call the housesitter and set a date to return key.
Phone the emergency contact to thank them.
Call the office to let them know you've returned.
Phone the daycare, school, club, kids, parents, etc.

Turn the hot water heater back on.
Put the air conditioning back to normal operation.
Turn on the water mains, or laundry taps.
Turn on the gas and light the pilot lights.

Turn off the automatic light timers.
___ Switch on the breaker to the outside AC plugs.
___ Turn on the clock radios, set clocks, PVR, etc.
___ Program new entry codes into home security system.

___ Wash all clothing used on the trip before putting away.
___ Wash all dishes and utensils before putting them away.
___ Wash the cooler interiors with mild bleach solution.
___ Vacuum out the luggage exteriors and pockets.

___ Cancel the yard maintenance and mail pickup.
___ Cancel the elderly care giver, or live-in assistant.
___ Restart utilities that were placed on hold.
___ Restart the newspaper and grocery deliveries.

___ Start watering the lawn and yard if they need it.
___ Check the yard and home for any signs of damage.

___ Login to online banking and check balances.
___ Verify all credit card charges with online banking.
___ Stop auto payment of bills, if you really want to.
___ Do any outstanding bills and tax matters.

___ Vacuum out the car and empty any trash.
___ Wash the car and front grill free of bug juice.
___ Make list to restock emergency and first aid kits.

___ Transfer any remaining photos or video to computer.
___ Organize digital photos of the trip into albums.
___ Back up computer to the back up USB drive.

___ Buy a gift, or take housesitter out for lunch.
___ Get the spare house keys from the housesitter.

___ Go back to work and school. (Sigh!)
___ Start planning your next road trip ! (LOL)

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