

A few tyre-check tips to note after your Easter travels

By [Hein Venter](#), issued by [Havas Johannesburg](#)

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We've just come back from road trips over the Easter long weekend and it is essential to do a few checks to ensure that the long drive did not compromise the fitness of your vehicle. The last thing you want is to find yourself on the side of the road, late at night in a situation that could be easily avoided.

Here are a few thoughts on things to consider triple checking after a road trip:

Ensure that the car is in roadworthy condition

Just like you have to assist the pilot when the plane is landing by keeping an eye out your window, and so should you after a long distance drive. Walk around the car, and look out for any anomalies. Check on your tyres' tread wear indicators situated in the main grooves of the tread. If you have Michelin tyres fitted, look for the Michelin Man figure on the shoulder of the tyres, which shows the location of the tread wear indicators. These indicators are small raised areas at the bottom of the grooves of the tread pattern. If the surface of the rubber is at the level of these raised areas, it's time to get new tyres.

If you are unsure, pop into your nearest tyre centre, many offer free inspections, and get feedback on the overall status of the car. Some people may use mechanics or their preferred service centre. Either way, giving your car a good check is important after long distance drives.

Cool it on the bigger wheels, you're safer with the right size wheels

Even though bigger wheels might look appealing on your car, there's a specific coding that matches the tyres and wheels with the car.

Generally, if you opt for a bigger wheel, you'll have to use a lower aspect ratio tyre. For the car to handle properly especially around turns, the sizing of the tyre has to be the same as the original tyres. Bigger wheels mean shorter sidewalls, and sidewalls affect handling, and therefore comfort and noise. For instance a shorter sidewall means reduced motion ability when the car turns, reduced ability to absorb shocks with bumps and pavement irregularities. All this is to say, a bigger wheel can lead to a tougher ride, with squeaking noises. And as we know, the bigger the wheel and tyre, the heavier, and heavier tyres increase the weight of the car and negatively impact your suspension, fuel consumption and possible mileage. Stick with the right size wheels, and you will be safer.

Always keep a spare tyre, and the right tools for a tyre change

After travel, checking on your spare tyre is important especially if you happened to use it during your road trip. The spare tyre check is also about ensuring that your tyre changing toolkit is complete - tools and all. Think of the spare tyre with the right tools like a kind of drivers' insurance, or like a back-up. Ensure that the tyre remains in good condition, good quality



and is safe to use should you need it. Always ensure that you are aware of the limitations of your spare tyre. For instance, if it is a biscuit tyre, you have a limited range with it, check your tyre's range, after which you will need to replace it with a proper tyre. That means, if you used your biscuit tyre for any part of the trip, you may need to completely replace it. You're better safe than sorry.

Always have a matching set of tyres, or at least rotate them

According to research conducted by the Automobile Association (AA), front tyres on most vehicles often wear out more quickly than rear tyres largely because they do the heavy lifting with regards to braking and steering. There are other factors however that can increase this disproportionate wear, such as rough driving, underinflated tyres and unaligned wheels.

Rear wheels are not connected to your steering wheel, which makes it extremely difficult to judge their grip while driving. Always fit new or the least worn tyres to the rear wheel positions, irrespective whether your car is front or rear wheel drive. This will ensure better control in emergency braking or tight corners, less risk of losing control of your vehicle, especially on wet surfaces and better road holding.

To get better return from your tyres, it is advisable to rotate tyres regularly to even out the wear. So if you do not have a matching set of tyres, ensure to get the wheels balanced and the tyres rotated before your long distance drive to get the best out of them, and ensure your safety.

Check your tyre pressure, and your tyre's valve caps

Tyre inflation is an essential factor, not only for optimisation of tyre performance but also in terms of safety. It is essential for maintaining the integrity of the tyre and ensuring good vehicle handling (road-holding, braking).

It also protects your tyres from premature wear and irreversible internal damage. Low pressure increases the risk of damage to your tyres and excess pressure can reduce the life of your tyres. So after a long drive, it is wise to check if your tyres maintain the correct pressure. For the right measures of tyre pressure, look in your vehicle user manual or on the labels inside the side door beside the driver's seat or the inside of the fuel flap.

Tyres valves are also important. Valves and their components are ordinarily made of rubber, which deteriorates over time. At high speeds, a cracked, deteriorated rubber valve stem can bend and allow air loss. The valve cap is also important as it's the primary air seal and helps to keep out dust and dirt particles. Check your tyre valves after a long drive. Replace them if they are worn out. Remember to also replace them every time you change your tyres. It's an inexpensive way to protect your tyres, vehicle and yourself.

Wheel balancing

After a long drive, check the balancing of your wheels. Balancing is absolutely indispensable for driving comfort and continued tyre performance. Balancing helps prevent premature wear of your tyres and eliminates vibration. It also protects the suspension, steering system and bearings of your vehicle. A wheel is out of balance when one area is heavier or lighter than the rest. This causes uneven and rapid tread wear, vibration, more stress on front-end parts, and front-end parts to wear prematurely. For a reliable diagnosis and guarantee of safety, call on the services of a professional at your nearest tyre centre.

The importance of knowing the service centres around you

Many drivers take their cars to brand-designated service centres and others drivers, to local, well-known and unofficial mechanics. When traveling, these service centres are not always available in different locations, especially in the countryside. So in the event of a breakdown while traveling, you end up visiting service centres that may not know your vehicles. So after the trip, pop into your usual and ensure that your vehicle gets a tune up, and that all is ok with it.

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