

# Going the Distance

Preparing for a long drive isn't just all about your car. Conditioning your body is just as important. Here are some easy-to-follow tips to get you in shape



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**T**here's a saying, “The car's most important part is the nut behind the wheel”. As the ‘nut’ refers to the driver, this adage is true in many ways. All the airbags and safety devices in the world won't be of any use if the driver is unable to concentrate on the road. Driving when you're tired or stressed can be as dangerous as drunk driving.

Whether it is a long or short drive, the driver must always be mentally alert behind the wheel so that he or she can react quickly if an unforeseen situation presents itself.

Ironically, a driver should always be alert but relaxed at the same time. It may sound like a contradiction, but just being on your guard at all times can be tiring and fatigue will soon set in. Relax by finding a comfortable seating position, loosen your grip on the steering wheel a little and lower your speed so that you won't have to concentrate quite as hard. Not only will driving be less stressful, you'll also be able to stay alert over long distances. Take frequent breaks as well by stopping every two hours or so to stretch out and walk about for better circulation. You'll also minimise shoulder, neck and back aches.

## SLEEP WELL

The most important part of preparing your body for a long distance drive is to get enough rest. If you are going to embark on a full day's drive, be sure to get a good night's sleep first. This can be tricky when travelling to faraway places where different time zones come into play. In this situation, don't plan on driving for eight or ten hours right after you step off the plane. Spending a night or two at the city you've arrived in to help adjust your body's ‘internal clock’ to the local time would be a good idea.

## EAT WELL

Just as you wouldn't want to put an inferior grade of fuel in your car, your food intake has a big influence on your body's energy levels. Foods that are high in sugar and starch might give a burst of energy but these ‘peaks’ should be avoided as the subsequent ‘crash’ once the food wears off can make you tired or sleepy. Foods that are high in protein can also have a similar effect as the body uses a lot of energy to digest ‘heavy’ foods like meat or dairy products.

For your body to maintain a steady work

rate try skipping the bacon and eggs at breakfast in favour of some

cereal, fresh fruit, nuts and a little yogurt or foods that have a high water content to curb dehydration.

In moderate amounts, spicy foods and caffeine can help ‘jump start’ your body's metabolism and take away any lethargy you might be feeling. Coffee and energy drinks might give a boost when you need it but don't wait until you're completely tired before drinking them as caffeine can take up to half an hour to ‘kick’ in.

## DRINK DRINK DRINK

Water that is. Even if you're just sitting in a car for hours, your body dehydrates very quickly as it is effectively an air-conditioned glasshouse. Always have a bottle of water on hand when travelling and make it a point to consume at least a litre of water a day. Avoid hydrating yourself with soft drinks as they tend to have a high sugar content that can lead to the problems mentioned earlier. As always, alcohol is strictly taboo when you're on the road. **HW**