

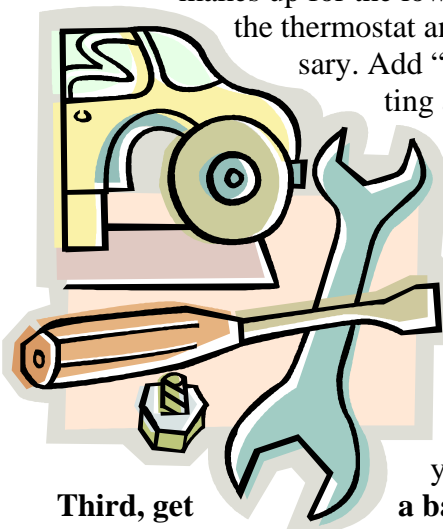
Preparing for a CARavan or 'Things I wish I had done before my first one'

By Paul Rydning

As we come on the new CARavan season, perhaps it is time to reflect on, and take action, on the work we need to do to have a relatively trouble-free tour. While I recognize that we are driving **old** cars with **old** engineering and **old** parts, there are a few things I have found which have made my tour experience more enjoyable.

First, if you are intending to drive a newly restored car on its first tour, drive it at least 200 miles before taking it on a tour. In my experience, no matter how carefully I and my professional help have been in doing the restoration, there will always be some unexpected issues which will require fixing during these first 200 shake-down miles. All cars are complex mechanical "beasts". If they are new, you have a warranty. If they are old but newly restored you are the warranty service center. Problems which show up at this time are usually minor but they sure make a tour less than enjoyable!

Second, take care of the normal maintenance items now! Change the coolant and replace with a new antifreeze mix. (Yes, I know that antifreeze is slightly less efficient than pure water in transferring heat, however the higher boiling point more than makes up for the lower efficiency.) Check



the thermostat and replace if necessary. Add "Super Cool," a wetting agent available from NAPA or other auto supply store, to the coolant to improve cooling efficiency. Check and repair any hose leaks. Check fan belts and replace if necessary. Carry a spare if you can.

Third, get you have more a basic tune-up done if car from the last tune up. than 2,000 miles on the Carry a spare set of gapped spark plugs ready to install if necessary. Bring a spare cap, rotor and point set if you have one.

Fourth, check the fuel system. Change the fuel

filter. If your car does not have a fuel filter, buy and install a filter now! You may want to carry a spare fuel pump. Modern fuel can be very hard on old style fuel pumps. If you are using an electric fuel pump, check to be sure that you have spare fuses for the pump circuit. Consider buying a tube of gas tank repair epoxy and bring it with you.

Fifth, look over the electrical system. Clean and check the battery cables. Check the battery for charge level and capacity. Inspect the leads to the generator. Remove and clean if necessary. Make sure you have spare fuses for all circuits. Consider buying and bringing an inexpensive Zvolt Ohm meter to test circuits if needed.

Sixth, change oil if necessary and check all fluid levels. Grease all fittings if needed.

Carry at least two quarts of replacement engine oil.



Seventh, check your tires. If you have been having trouble with a slow leak get it fixed now! Don't forget to check the spares. For those of you who have those nice side mount tires, you may want to think about carrying a spare in the trunk if you have room. I can remember how hard it was to remove one of my spares when I had an unexpected need to use it on the road.

Finally make sure your windshield wipers are working. Replace old wiper blades if you can. In any case carry and use RainX. This is an old hot rodder's trick but it really does work almost as well as wiper blades.

Buy and bring an inexpensive tool kit. I have found them at places like CarQuest or K Mart for under \$30 and no one seems to want to steal them! I leave my Snap On tools at home where I can find them again.

Good luck and enjoy the CARavan!