

Road trips should incorporate planned breaks

In a recent survey conducted by the Institute of Advanced Motorists in the UK, 65% of the drivers polled admitted that they often don't stop to rest on long journeys because they don't feel that they need to.



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"This is also true for South African drivers," says Tania Joffe, head of Auto & General Brokers. "There is less speed enforcement on rural roads, and with the long, quiet stretches between major cities a lot of drivers prefer to get it over with and drive continuously rather than stopping." But according to Arrive Alive, driver fatigue contributes to thousands of car accidents every year.

While uninhabited stretches like the Karoo portion of the Johannesburg to Cape Town route might inspire drivers to turn up the music (and their speed), Joffe suggests that a more relaxed approach that incorporates planned breaks will keep you more alert and could actually make the long drive more pleasurable.

The survey showed that 85% of drivers prepare for a long trip by filling up with fuel, and 60% programmed their destination into a GPS, while just 50% planned to stop at a service station, citing the high cost of fuel, food and snacks as a reason to drive by the rest stops.

Time well spent

"Not every break needs to be at a service station. Sometimes all it takes is 20 minutes of stretching to get re-energised, and if it helps you to drive more safely, then it's time well spent, and should be factored into your driving schedule," she says.

Joffe also recommends taking the following precautions while completing long journeys by car:

- Don't drink more coffee than usual on the road. Stick to water, and if you're feeling tired, rather pull over to rest. Excess caffeine can make you jittery and leave you even more exhausted when it wears off.

- Similarly, don't load up on fatty or sugary snacks - these can also leave you feeling flat or bloated.
- Consider spending the night at a mid-way point when doing extremely long trips. Driving on unfamiliar roads at night is unsafe, and the extra sleep will help your brain recover from the long drive.
- When you do pull over, go for a walk, or do some stretching - but avoid sitting down while out of the car.
- If you do feel the need to take a nap in the car, try to do it at a service station, or a protected parking area. Crime is a problem no matter where you are!

"While you're filling up with fuel, and packing padkos, it's a good idea to also save the emergency assist number from your insurance company onto your cellphone, and to write it down somewhere. If the worst does happen, you'll at least have access to emergency medical and roadside assist services," Joffe concludes.

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