

## **Safety Tips**

### **Driving On Malaysia's North-South Expressway**

#### **Overtaking**

When overtaking, remember that there is always the possibility of a vehicle jamming its brakes to avoid an obstacle. For example, before overtaking you should:

- Fall back a little from the vehicle in front - this will give you a wider field of vision
- Turn on your right indicator
- Check your rear view mirror, ensure no vehicle is overtaking you
- Check your blindspot before accelerating into the overtaking lane

Once you have overtaken the car in front, activate your left indicator light and check that it is safe, then ease back into the left lane.

#### **Crosswinds**

Along the North-South Expressway, crosswinds may cause your car to veer off course. Warning signs have been erected at spots particularly prone to such crosswinds. When you encounter a strong wind, slow down to maintain control of your car.

#### **Stopping along the Expressway**

Do not stop your vehicle along the Expressway. If you wish to rest or use a toilet, drive into a designated rest area. These are available every 50 km or so. If you have to make an emergency stop on the expressway, move your vehicle into the breakdown lane and lane and switch on your hazard lights.

#### **Pre-trip Preparations**

Vehicle breakdown ranks high on the distress scale among other incidents that would ruin a driving holiday. The last thing you want is to get stranded in a remote place with a vehicle failure – and worse if it's the middle of the night.

If you are driving your own car, ensure that it is in top condition. AA provides Pre-trip Car Inspection Services that checks 56 areas of your car to ensure that it is ready for the long driving distance, and highlights any area(s) that requires rectification so that you can get it fixed before setting out on your trip. A report will be issued after the inspection, stating the condition of the vehicle and the necessary item(s) to rectify.

The money spent is well worth the peace of mind, knowing that your car is in tip-top condition for your road trip. For more information, visit <http://www.aas.com.sg/benefits/pretrip.htm>.

#### **Travel Insurance – Are you insured?**

When travelling overseas, it is always advisable to protect yourself against any unforeseen circumstances. Make sure that you have a valid local insurance coverage.

**The Association offers an assortment of motor, personal accident and travel insurance schemes through its wholly-owned subsidiary, AA Financial Planners. Visit AAFP's website at [www.aafp.com.sg](http://www.aafp.com.sg) for more details.**

### **Breakdowns Along the North-South Expressway**

When the car owner sense that there is something not right about his/her vehicle and it is about to breakdown, follow these steps:

1. Move the car to the extreme left side of the road, or drive into the nearest rest area if possible.
2. Switch off the ignition.
3. Switch on the hazard lights,
4. Place the reflective hazard triangles at least 30 metres behind the car so motorists know well in advance there is a potential hard ahead. You may wish to also open your car bonnet and boot to be more visible to other approaching motorists.
5. Move to the side of the road for your own safety.
6. AA members can call Automobile Association of Malaysia (AAM) for assistance. If your vehicle is within the Free Breakdown Zones in Malaysia, roadside assistance and towing services to the nearest workshop are provided free-of-charge to AA members.
7. In order that help can reach you fast, identify your breakdown location as accurately as possible, such as the nearby landmarks e.g. lamppost number, and direction of travel if your vehicle is on the road/expressway. Describe the make, model and colour of your car too.
8. While waiting for help, do not stay in the car or stand in front or behind it. Stand at the side farthest from traffic and behind guardrails if any.

AA will reimburse members up to RM50 per year for roadside assistance and towing services rendered by AAM.

### **Driving conditions and habits**

Research on the Malaysian driving and road conditions before you set out. Clue-up on the local safety signs, signals, and speed limits (they are usually in Malay), before embarking on your holiday.

On roads that run through industrial, residential and *kampong* areas, drive with caution and look out for heavy vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, two-wheelers, and wild animals on both sides of the road when passing through these areas.

In Malaysia, many drivers communicate using their cars. Some drivers on the opposite side of the road use their right signal indicator to let you know their line as they approach you.

When overtaking a slow vehicle in front of you, do not flash your high beam as the locals may not understand your intention and may think you are antagonistic. Instead switch on your right indicator. Most drivers would filter left and give way.

### **Routes & Terrains**

If possible, try to find out in advance any unusual terrain along the route that you are taking so as to anticipate them. Uneven surfaces and potholes are common on Malaysian trunk roads. Do not be distracted by the scenery and be careful when you manoeuvre the bends.

Also, obtain a reliable map and plan your route in advance. AA offers a comprehensive range of Malaysia maps for your references.

### **Night Driving**

Reduced visibility and drowsiness combined with the effects of bright oncoming headlights are common night driving problems one has to overcome. Hence, travellers are advised to avoid night driving whenever possible. If you have to, drive with caution and take regular breaks in between.

### **Driver Fatigue**

Long-distance driving can easily lead to driver fatigue, which is a major cause of accidents.. Driver fatigue is a physical as well as mental condition. Often, drivers do not realise that they are suffering from fatigue until it is too late.

Look out for the following signs and symptoms:

- Heavy and sore eyes, and blurred or dim vision.
- Droning or humming in the ears.
- Sweaty palms.
- Constant yawning.
- General discomfort.
- Deterioration of concentration and slow reaction time.
- Poor gear change.
- Inconsistent travelling speeds.
- Tendency to drift out of lane.
- Impatience and rising temperament.

As a general rule, once you experience any of these signs and symptoms, pull over and stop at a safe spot to get some rest. Show this list to your passengers and seek their assistance to warn you of these signs and symptoms.

Here are some tips to avoid or reduce driver fatigue:

- Make sure that you rest well before you drive. Avoid driving immediately after a flight.
- Avoid driving when you are feeling sleepy.
- Get comfortable. Adjust your seat and backrest to suit your driving posture or style, and make sure your back is properly supported. If necessary, use a cushion.
- Sit upright to maintain your spine in an erect position.
- Allow proper blood circulation to avoid stiffness and cramps.

Hold the steering wheel with both hands and keep a relaxed, but firm grip. Rotate your

head periodically to prevent stiff necks.

- Take a break at least once every two hours.
- At each stop, get out of your car to stretch and exercise your limbs. Rest for at least ten minutes.
- Appoint an experienced co-driver to rotate with you. Change driver at every stop.
- Eat proper and well-balanced meals at your usual mealtimes but exercise restraint. An excessive meal will induce drowsiness.
- Have some water, wet face towels or mist sprays readily available so that you can refresh yourself when you need it.
- Avoid driving for more than eight hours a day.

Drinking coffee, smoking, talking, listening to the radio, or opening the window might help to keep you awake in the short term, but only sleep can restore your concentration.

Rest and Service Areas (RSA) can be found along the North-South Highway. Motorists can take breaks and freshen up at these stops.

### **Bad Weather Conditions**

Avoid driving in bad weather conditions. In a downpour, always turn on your headlights and windshield wipers. Reduce speed to give yourself more time to react to hazards and let your speed drop gradually. Keep a lookout for hazards like fallen tree branches, landslides and big sprays of water from puddles.

The North-South Highway has crosswinds frequently. Warning signs in the form of windsocks are usually found at places prone to strong crosswinds. In the absence of windsocks, swaying trees along the roads is a good indication.

### **Dealing with aggressive motorists**

Do not do anything that will frustrate other road users or cause them to react adversely.

If you encounter road peevies like motorists / bikers cutting in front of you or road hogging for example, stay calm and do not overreact or react adversely.

If you have accidentally cut in front of another car, or may have unintentionally exercised inconsiderate driving, do apologise with a friendly hand gesture.

If you encounter road rage, stay in your car. Do not retaliate or respond aggressively with angry gesture or action. Instead, use an apologetic gesture. If need be, drive to the nearest town to seek help or to call the local police for help.

### **Accidents**

If you meet with an accident involving injury, stop your car immediately. Call the police and an ambulance. A report to the police should be made within 24 hours.

Keep a copy of the report. Note down the details of the scene. Names, identity card numbers and addresses of witness should be taken down and if you have a camera, photograph the vehicles and debris, if any, before they are moved. Do take note of the exact location and any road markings.

It is advisable to file a police report on your return to Singapore and to notify your insurance company as soon as possible.