

car care 2015

Fun amenities to consider for your next vehicle



Today's new vehicles boast more amenities than ever before, making for a more comfortable and enjoyable driving experience.

Today's automobiles come with more gadgets than ever before. New car buyers can now choose from a host of amenities geared toward making roads easier to navigate and long trips more comfortable.

Whereas nonessential amenities once cost buyers a substantial amount of money, nowadays many auto manufacturers include options once considered luxuries in their standard packages, meaning more drivers have the chance to enjoy their new vehicles in

style. While not all amenities are free, and some may still cost drivers a considerable amount of money, the following are a handful of features drivers may find too irresistible to ignore.

- **Satellite radio:** Satellite radio has been around for awhile, but only recently did it begin to become a standard offering in new vehicles. Drivers who buy a new car may find a deal where their initial satellite radio subscription, whether it's a few months or a full

year, is included in the cost of the vehicle, while others may need to foot the bill for their subscriptions from jump street. But many new cars are satellite-compatible, which is good news to drivers who want to expand their musical horizons beyond the offerings of their local terrestrial stations.

- **Television:** The vehicles of today often mimic mobile entertainment systems, and no such system is complete without television. Built-in televisions are nothing new, and many a parent has expressed gratitude that in-car televisions and DVD players can serve as mobile babysitters when taking the kids on long road trips. But some auto manufacturers have begun to offer broadcast television in their vehicles, which is made possible by a built-in television antenna that is capable of picking up nearby channels.

- **Massaging seats:** Heated seats have a reputation of being a luxury well worth the extra investment when buying a new car. But motorists with some extra cash to spend may want to consider

massaging seats. Such seats are typically limited to the backseats, but they work in similar fashion to massaging armchairs. Passengers or even drivers taking a break on a long road trip can jump into the back of their cars, recline the backseat and then enjoy a massage to iron out all those aches and pains that developed over the last several hours traversing the highways.

- **Adaptive lights:** If you're the type of driver who prefers his or her amenities be more about function than luxury, then adaptive lights might be the perfect feature for you. Adaptive lights may swivel as an automobile turns a corner, making it easier for drivers to see. Some adaptive headlights also can sense darkness, protecting drivers who may be distracted by the amenities inside their vehicles and forget to turn their lights on the moment twilight arrives or the sun sets.

Today's automobiles are a testament to innovation, and drivers may find that certain amenities make driving more enjoyable than ever before.

Tips for motorcycle beginners

Men and women who ride motorcycles often insist there's nothing quite like riding. Riding a motorcycle not only can be exhilarating and provide a feeling unlike any other, but it also requires patience and discipline for beginners and veteran riders alike.

Riding a motorcycle carries a certain stigma of being dangerous, but that's only the case for inattentive riders who forget their responsibilities while on the road. The following are some tips that beginners can put to use when hitting the open road.

- * **Gear up and stay geared up.** Beginners often don't have a problem gearing up, as many are understandably nervous and therefore less likely to leave necessary equipment in the garage. Always wear a helmet, motorcycle jacket, riding gloves, riding boots and motorcycle pants when riding. Many riders fall into the trap of wearing less gear once they become more acclimated to their bike. But gear should be worn whether you have been riding for 50 days or 50 years.

- * **Prepare, prepare, prepare.** There's no such thing as too much preparation when riding a motorcycle. Motorcycle training guides are valuable tools of information for beginners. These instructional videos or reading materials provide insight into all aspects of riding a motorcycle, and no beginner should get on a motorcycle without first watching or reading a motorcycle training guide.

- * **Practice away from other motorists.** Don't start riding on a freeway until you have grown accustomed to riding the bike at slow practice speeds you've honed away from other motorists. Empty parking lots make ideal training grounds. Once you feel comfortable in the parking lot, gradually move to roads without heavy traffic, such as residential neighborhoods. Once you're truly comfortable on the bike, then you can hit the highway.

- * **Go to class.** A motorcycle safety course might be a requirement in some areas but not required in others. Regardless of whether or not it's required, take the class anyway. Such classes might cost a few hundred dollars, but their value far exceeds that cost. A safety course prepares riders for anything they might encounter on the road. Just be sure to enroll in a class that teaches accident evasion.

- * **Get the right size.** Some riders envision themselves at the helm of a big hog, while others see themselves tooling down the highway on an ultra-light bike. But don't go to extremes in either direction, at least not with your first motorcycle. A heavy bike might be more stable, but it's also harder to control. A lighter bike might feel easier to control, but it's best to wait until you have had a year or two of experience before buying bikes often referred to as "crotch rockets," which are sporty and fast.

Tire maintenance an important safety precaution

Tires are the link between a vehicle and the roadway, and tire quality has a direct impact on the performance and safety of an automobile. But tire maintenance is easy to overlook. However, ignoring tire maintenance can threaten driver and passenger safety and make a vehicle operate inefficiently.

Steering, breaking ability and traction are all governed by good tires. Worn tread can result in longer stopping times and make it difficult to brake immediately in an emergency situation. Although driving tends to be the primary culprit behind worn down tires, sometimes bald or unevenly worn out tread is indicative of a larger problem, such as a misaligned wheelbase, improperly aligned tires or tires that are underinflated. The following are some common problems associated with tires and how to address these issues should they arise.

Blowouts

Worn tire treads increase the risk of punctures, which can lead to blowouts. Bald tires also may blowout as a result of friction on roadways that is met with minimal rubber. Getting caught on the side of the road with a tire blowout can be a hassle, so routinely check tire treads and replace tires accordingly.

Tread depth

Average new tires on cars usually start with 10/32 inch to 11/32 inch of original tread depth. When tread reaches a depth of 2/32 inch, they are considered worn out. There are different ways to gauge tread depth. Insert a penny into the tread groove with Lincoln's head upside down and facing you. If you can see all of Lincoln's head, it is time to replace the tires. Another coin test is to insert a quarter into the groove. If the tread touches Washington's head, you have at least 4/32 inch of tread left. Don't have any currency on hand? Then look at

the treadwear indicator bar molded into the tires. When these bars become flush with the adjacent ribs of the tire, the tires should be replaced.

Alignment

According to the Rubber Manufacturers Association, improper alignment causes rapid or uneven treadwear. Tires should be aligned and balanced periodically to avoid irregular wear and having to replace tires prematurely.

Tread pattern

Tires feature different tread patterns depending on the brand of tire. They may be directional, asymmetrical, nondirectional, and directional/asymmetrical. When purchasing replacement tires, it is advisable to match the tread pattern to the existing tires. This helps

enhance the performance of the car. In fact, some newer cars require tread to match. Mismatched treads may cause problems with transmission shifting or impact control and steadiness.

Tire pressure

Underinflation of tires can cause failure, stress and irregular wear. Underinflated tires also may contribute to loss of control that leads to accidents. Always maintain the manufacturer's recommendations for the correct pressure, which should be adjusted based on the temperature.

Tires should undergo the same inspection and maintenance as other parts of the vehicle. Tires are a vital component to safe driving, and routine maintenance can prevent accidents and other problems.

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