

MOTORING

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TUNE YOUR CAR FOR THIS FESTIVE SEASON

BY FATUMAH NALWANGA

Travelling can be stressful during the festive season, especially if you have not prepared well for it.

The sight of drivers stranded as they cruise on long journeys to meet their loved ones, especially in the countryside are uncommon.

Many people ignore pampering their cars in preparation for such journeys, only to be caught between punctures, flat tyres, fires, bad fuel and other avoidable breakdowns.

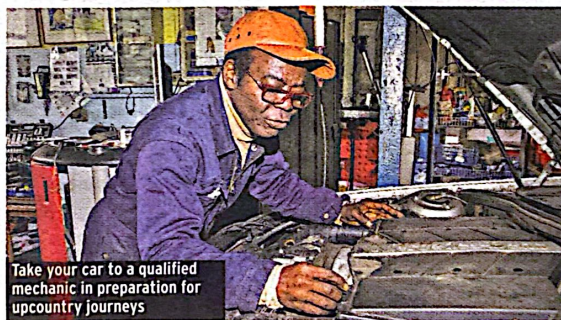
The few, who want to give a treat to their machines in preparation for such eventualities, usually end up in the hands of unqualified fellows who provide substandard items and poor services.

To save you such a hassle, Johnson Kibirango, a senior salesman from the auto section at Game Stores in Kampala and Martin Afeku, a driving instructor at Naguru, take you through the must-have car accessories this festive season, if you plan to travel upcountry.

FUEL JERRYCANS

Transporting spare fuel in plastic containers used for water can be hazardous. Use a container designed for fuel storage. Kibirango says there are two types of fuel jerrycans, which are used for both diesel and petrol.

"A metallic jerrycan for petrol goes for sh243,000 and the one for diesel costs sh262,000. A plastic jerrycan for petrol costs sh262,000 and the one for diesel costs sh209,000,"



Take your car to a qualified mechanic in preparation for upcountry journeys

Kibirango says.

Use these jerrycans to carry extra fuel in case it runs out when you are in an isolated place. Carrying quality fuel is also safe because most upcountry areas sell adulterated fuel that can spoil your engine, especially the D4 type.

COOLANT

Just like its name, it helps to cool heated up gadgets. Afeku, who has been instructing drivers at Naguru for the last 10 years, says: "It is important to have a coolant by your side while driving. Coolants are used in the radiator to improve the cooling system of a car. It keeps the engine from over-heating."

"Slow traffic situations make the engine heat up more and can spark a fire," he says.

At the same time, getting

COSTS

1 A metallic petrol jerrycan costs about sh243,000 while a diesel one costs sh262,000.

2 A plastic diesel jerrycan costs about sh209,000 and a petrol jerrycan costs sh262,000

accustomed to using a coolant will save you from the frequent visits to the mechanic since it prevents staining of the car parts and reduces fuel consumption when the engine operates at the recommended temperature.

ENGINE CLEANER

An engine cleaner keeps your

engine clean and safe. You can buy a diesel injector cleaner or a petrol system cleaner.

Afeku says: "to protect your engine, flush your engine at regular intervals during servicing. If you have used dirty fuel, you mix the cleaner with fuel to clean the engine and reduce fuel consumption."

One 350ml of engine cleaner can treat 60 litres of fuel, he says.

MINI AIR COMPRESSOR

A flat tyre is a nightmare to every driver. It is terrifying if it happens in an isolated place or upcountry where service stations are far. Also remember, that in the festive season, most mechanics travel upcountry on holiday.

A portable mini compressor will help you manually pump air into a deflated tyre and drive the car to the nearest service centre.

FIRE EXTINGUISHER

You can never know when a fire may break out along the way. Johnson Kibirango, a senior salesman from the auto section at Game Stores, advises all drivers to have a fire extinguisher in their car.

"It is not easy finding someone to help you put out fire on the highway. It is better to carry an extinguisher just in case a fire breaks out," Kibirango says.

Extinguishers come in different sizes and go for different prices. The smallest can weigh 0.1kg and is meant for motorbikes. It costs about sh65,000. While a 2.5kg fire extinguisher for small cars goes for about sh150,000. For a medium-size car, you need a 4.5kg size extinguisher which goes for over sh165,000.



"Manual compressors which can refill car tyres for small and big vehicles like tractors. They are portable and easy to use. The smallest 26 litres for motorbikes goes for sh250,000. A 75-litre pump costs sh590,000 and the biggest which can refill a tractor or bus costs sh900,000", Afeku says.

SEAT COVERS

Replacing your old seat cover with a new one will give you comfort and a beautiful interior this season. It will also make driving a pleasure.

There are various types of seat covers. Some are pure leather while others are synthetic. Seat covers protect the car seats from wearing out fast and make the interior look attractive. One can acquire soft ones that prevent sweating and those that hug the driver and reduce body aches," Afeku says.