

Blazing Trails

Tired of spending weekend after weekend cooped up in the city? Get out of town by hitting the road in a trailer—it could be just the new adventure you've been waiting for.

The experts' verdict is in: Soaking up a little nature—let's just call it Vitamin N—can boost your health in countless ways, and not just by amping our Vitamin D intake. Studies have found that spending more time outdoors can increase our brain function, reduce stress levels, spur on weight loss, make exercise easier, feel happier, or even heal from wounds faster and age more gracefully.

If you are a thrill-seeking, outdoorsy woman who likes to spend the weekends exploring in the desert or hiking in the mountains, you probably already know that trailering trouble can really hamper your quest to stay active—and, let's face it, it can ruin your mood too. When you're on the way to a great new destination, few things are more of a buzzkill than unforeseen trailering issues that are frustrating and time-consuming to fix. So, before setting off for the weekend with a trailer in tow, GMC offers us a few

tips and reminders to help ensure that your experience is safe, fun and easy. "If it is not done right, pulling a trailer can be stressful for anybody—especially in the desert or other rural areas," say General Motor's experts, adding: "So it's essential to know what you should and shouldn't do to ensure smooth sailing. At GMC, we know that nobody wants their action-packed outdoor adventure ruined by trailer malfunctions. With this in mind, we have rounded up a list of quick tips and tricks to avoid any unforeseen predicaments."





1. Under pressure. Proper tire inflation is key when trailering for optimal handling, driver control and fuel economy—and this rule isn't limited to the vehicle pulling the trailer. Check the trailer's tires, too, and don't exceed the manufacturer's speed rating for them. Under-inflation is a major cause of trailer tire failure, so avoid a desert disaster by ensuring that every tire meets manufacturer pressure standards.

2. Spare me. Your vehicle has a spare tire, but does your trailer? A flat trailer tire and no spare in a remote area can quickly ruin your weekend adventure, so make sure you've got a spare and that it's properly inflated.

3. A view un-askew. The regular position of your vehicle's outside mirrors may not be suitable when you add on a trailer. Adjust them so that the rear of the trailer can be seen at a glance, for a clearer view of what's behind the trailer and beside it when changing lanes or turning a corner. And if your mirrors aren't well-suited for the task, consider adding temporary trailering mirrors for a wider view during your drive.

4. Sharing the load. When loading a trailer, don't put the majority of the weight on the rear end of it; this can cause sway and instability. The weight should be distributed so that at least 10 percent is on the hitch. Check periodically on your trip to ensure that the cargo hasn't shifted, and check tie-down straps at the same time to make sure they're still tight.

5. Parking perfection. Plan your moves ahead and try to find parking lots, gas station pumps or outdoor spaces where you can pull straight through, without the need for difficult backups or sharp turns.

6. Reversing course. Backing up with a trailer can be a challenge, so practice ahead of time. Start by placing your hand at the bottom of the steering wheel and looking over your shoulder. Move your hand to the right to make the trailer go right and left to make it go left. If the trailer starts to jackknife, simply pull forward to straighten it out and start over.

7. Cutting corners. For sharp, 90-degree corners such as intersections, pull the vehicle a little farther up into the road before turning and try to cut a wider arc. This will help prevent the trailer from hopping over the curb or brushing up against something on the side of the road.

8. Braking well. Certain types of trailers require trailer brakes—and even with them, your loaded vehicle and trailer will require more distance for stopping. Keep this in mind as you exit the freeway, and remember that you'll need to leave extra space between you and the vehicle ahead of you, too.

9. Sway away. If the trailer begins to sway excessively or “whipsaw” on the highway, simply take your foot off the gas pedal to reduce momentum. Do not hit the brakes or speed up.

10. Downhill run. For greater control when driving on steeper downhill grades, take your foot off the gas and slow down just before the grade begins. If your vehicle is equipped with tow/haul mode or a diesel engine brake, be sure it is activated, which enhances engine braking without dragging or overheating the brakes.

Now that you're equipped with these tips, nothing can dampen your adrenaline-fueled weekend. Have fun!