The Road Trip Packing List

Pack by car zone: what you need while driving stays within reach. Check items off as they go in the car.

Zone 1: The Cockpit (Driver's Reach)

- [ ] Phone mount
- [ ] Car charger and cable
- [ ] Sunglasses
- [ ] Lip balm and hand lotion
- [ ] Insulated water bottle
- [ ] Small trash bag
- [ ] Cash and quarters
- [ ] Napkins

Zone 2: The Glovebox

- [ ] Registration and insurance card
- [ ] Paper map or road atlas
- [ ] Tire pressure gauge
- [ ] Spare charging cable
- [ ] Pen and a small notebook
- [ ] Pain reliever and antacid
- [ ] A few bandages

Zone 3: The Backseat Bag

- [ ] Snack bag
- [ ] One warm layer per person
- [ ] A packable blanket
- [ ] Wet wipes
- [ ] Sunscreen
- [ ] A gallon of drinking water
- [ ] Headphones
- [ ] One book or magazine per person
- [ ] Plastic grocery bags, five or so
- [ ] The kid or dog kit, if applicable

Zone 4: The Trunk

- [ ] Luggage, one soft bag per person
- [ ] The cooler
- [ ] The $45 emergency kit
- [ ] Jumper cables
- [ ] A roll of paper towels
- [ ] Two reusable shopping bags
- [ ] A real towel
- [ ] Duct tape
- [ ] Work gloves
- [ ] Seasonal extra

The $45 emergency kit (trunk)

☐ Jumper cables, 12 ft	around $18	☐ Reflective warning triangle	around $6
☐ LED flashlight with batteries	around $7	☐ Bottled water, 1 gallon	around $1
☐ Basic first aid kit	around $10	☐ Shelf-stable snack bars, 6-pack	around $3
☐ Emergency mylar blankets, 2-pack	around $3		

Typical big-box prices, checked 2026. Kit contents follow AAA's car emergency kit guidance.
Write a roadside-assistance number on paper and keep it in the kit: a dead phone is exactly when you need it.

Trip notes: route, motels, confirmation numbers