



'Ask Hanip'

Epic journey to Phuket

I have a six-month-old Toyota RAV4 and the furthest I have driven in this car is Kuantan. I have a group of friends who plan to drive to Phuket sometime in June. I know this is hardcore driving and I wonder if my RAV4 can take the distance.

I intend to bring my family along. Have you been on such a trip before? What are the things I need to do to the car before and after such very long journey? Vincent Tan

Hanip: No, I have never driven to Phuket before. I prefer to fly; it's much faster, although I can understand it is fun to be travelling and driving in a group.

With proper regular maintenance and servicing, a car like the RAV4 will last a very long time. And,



yes, it will easily take you to Phuket and back.

Your six-month-old car is still quite new, so I'm sure there won't be any problem. But don't take chances and have its engine cooling system, air-conditioning, electrical charging, suspension, lighting, etc, thoroughly inspected inside out. Simple but critical things like tyre condition must also be checked.

Try to avoid driving over many hours continuously at high speed with the air-con in full blast. The stress on the engine and other systems will be higher. In many ways, cars are like

humans. If you push your body too hard and for too long, the strain will accelerate the wear and tear. Take regular breaks to give yourself and your car sufficient breather. Enjoy your trip!

'My Picnic is thirsty!'

A few years ago, Wheels Asia voted the Toyota Picnic as the "MPV of the Year". I test drove the car after reading about the award and I agree with the Wheels Asia writers that this is a good MPV in terms of overall comfort, space and handling.

The Picnic, however, is disappointing in one very important factor – it drinks petrol.

I have tried all sorts of devices to save fuel but nothing seems to work significantly. Some of the gadgets do give some savings and extra mileage but just a little bit here and there.

I remember reading Mr Mazlan's story last year about how he managed to get more than 10 kilometres per litre. How does he do it? What are the things he has done to his car? I get on the average 8 kilometres per litre.

I am still running on 15-inch original rims and I have thought of changing to 17-inch but I know bigger rims and wider tyres

will make my consumption worse.

What do you advise? Hock Guan

Hanip: The Picnic is a relatively heavy car compared to its engine size. It is only two-litre and has a lot of metal to carry. If you frequently carry passengers, luggage and family members, the consumption will definitely be higher.

You would need to modify the cool air intake system so that the engine takes cooler air from the outside instead of the engine bay. This will benefit the engine greatly. Other things such as spark plugs, air filter and the correct tyre pressure also play a part.

Furthermore, if you always carry things in the boot which you don't need, I suggest you leave those at home. The more weight you carry the more fuel you'll burn.

If you want to know what Mr Mazlan does to his car, I think you should call him. I'm sure he'll be happy to tell you. Alternatively, you can always drop in to my workshop and we can discuss your car and the things we can do it.