

Winter driving puts your skills to the test

Winter-driving season is most challenging to our nerves, vehicles and skills. The scenario is too familiar. Temperatures drop, snow falls and ice forms. It's a losing trifecta.

Slippery roads cause many of us to shudder behind the wheel. Our familiar commutes just became a treacherous nightmare.

Snow and ice, meanwhile, aren't the only culprits. Fewer hours of daylight obscure our vision and the sun's glare reflecting off the snow can have a blinding effect.

Rapidly changing weather conditions make it essential drivers remain alert and vigilant. Here are 10 winter-driving tips to help make the experience safer and less stressful:

- Monitor weather and travel conditions. Know the difference between a Winter Storm Watch and Winter Weather Advisory, and how they could impact your plans.
- Think cautiously if you must drive in wintry conditions. Make sure your fuel tank is full. Clear all snow from the hood, roof, windows and lights of your vehicle. Clear windows of fog before driving. Make sure the windshield-wiper fluid is full and wipers are in good condition.
- Not all vehicles respond similarly to icy, slippery roads. Familiarize yourself with the vehicle's braking

system, tire tractions and all-wheel-drive systems. Avoid using cruise control in wintry conditions.

- Don't panic if your vehicle becomes trapped in a storm or snowbank. Avoid overexertion and exposure and stay in the vehicle. Run the motor sparingly and keep fresh air in the vehicle. Stay moving and don't fall asleep. Stay alert for traffic and first-responders.
- Try to avoid secondary roads and drive with caution. Measure your speed to road and weather conditions. Avoid passing other vehicles when road conditions are at their worst. Bridges, ramps and overpasses freeze first.
- Plan your route and make sure someone knows which way you will be traveling, your destination and expected arrival time, especially when driving long distances. Report a safe arrival.
- Leave room for maintenance vehicles and plows. Remain at least 200 feet behind them.
- Carry a winter-survival kit in the trunk or storage area of your vehicle. Fully charge your cell phone; and always keep a road map, flashlight, first-aid kit, blanket and shovel in your vehicle.
- And most importantly, drive slowly. Take your time. The posted speed limits are meant for dry pavement.

Charging EVs in cold requires preparation

Questions abound regarding the purchasing of an electric vehicle. One of the more common is how do colder temperatures affect charging and mileage range.

The driving capacities of all vehicles – no matter the source of power – suffer during the seasons when our weather patterns reach their coldest conditions. The U.S. Department of Energy found that fuel economy suffers by 15-24% in gas-powered vehicles and the ranges of EVs drop by roughly 39%.

Driving and charging an EV in colder weather has its nuances, according to the University of Michigan. Temperatures below 40 degrees can reduce charging power, but with preparation and planning, an EV will meet your needs year-round.

Here are tips to keep an EV running smoothly during the winter:

Charging may take longer – The vehicle controls the charging rate, not the charger. Lower temperatures result in an EV's software reducing its charging power to avoid stressing the battery. The Idaho National Laboratory found that at 32 degrees, an EV battery absorbed 36% less energy than when the battery was charged the same amount of time at 77 degrees. It's important to plan for longer charge times when temperatures drop.

Pay attention to overnight changes in your EV's range – Be aware of overnight low temperatures. Cold temperatures overnight can lower an EV's driving range by an average of 20%, according to the Norwegian Automobile Federation. Pay attention to the vehicle's console display. Some EVs can predict these range reductions during extreme temperatures.

Plan your charges – Expect to stop at public-charging stations to avoid finding yourself with a limited range. The Electrify America mobile app assists drivers to easily navigate to nearby ultrafast charging stations and see which chargers are available.

Park indoors when you can – Parking an EV in a garage with higher indoor temperatures can help the battery charge more quickly and hold that charge longer.

Understand your EV's cold-weather features – Some EVs have preconditioned features that allow drivers to program or manually warm the battery to more optimal temperatures. This process uses battery power to provide a warming effect, but it can make the battery more efficient while maximizing driving range.

By understanding your EV and its charging needs, particularly during colder weather, you'll be better prepared to rely on your EV, no matter when and where you are driving.

Las Vegas museums entertain and educate

Galleries offer informative settings throughout the town

Extravagant resorts, massive casinos and lights bright enough to take down a power grid have symbolized Las Vegas for decades. But there's much more to the City That Never Sleeps than the sounds of ringing slot machines and decadent neon signs.

Las Vegas is home to museums. They're educational and comical, unique and irresistible, and an ideal way to avoid the afternoon heat and gaming tables.

The galleries carry outrageous themes that range from pinball machines to monsters. There's a children's museum; a haunted one, too. And who could imagine a Las Vegas that didn't pay homage to the King of Rock and Roll?

The King's Ransom Museum can be found on Fremont Street at Binion's Gambling Hall & Hotel. A variety of Elvis' cherished possessions are on display, making it one of the biggest exclusive accumulations of his treasures outside Graceland.

Those interested in the history of the U.S.'s most ruthless gangsters should visit the Mob Museum. It chronicles the connection between the mafia and law authority by presenting shows and antiques. There's even a Wall of Shame that highlights a legendary group of criminals.

Sail back in time at the Titanic The



LIGHT ME UP – The Neon Boneyard Museum is home to many of the former signs that once lit up Las Vegas. *Image: jovannig. Adobe Stock.*

Artifact Exhibition Las Vegas. A 17-display exhibition hall brims with curios and diversions of the Titanic, a cruise ship that sank in the Atlantic Ocean more than a century ago. The museum includes shows, ancient pieces and reproductions of ship areas like the Grand Staircase, a first-class cabin, the Verandah Café and the boilers. Unfortunately, Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet will not be available to sign autographs.

The Pinball Hall of Fame is comprised of ... well ... pinball machines. More than 2,000 of them in working condition are available to be played to avoid going "full tilt" at the Texas Hold'em table.

The Ground Zero theater is the primary attraction at the National Atomic Testing Museum. The hall takes guests through the historical backdrop of nuclear testing in Nevada from 1951 to present day. The theater allows guests to

encounter a reenacted bomb test, strolling them through the course of events from the bomb's creation to showing them how to survive a nuclear blast.

Discovery Children's Museum is considered one of the best galleries in Las Vegas. It offers a range of exhibits and programs to encourage kids from all backgrounds to participate in exciting and engaging experiences.

Signs that once lit up the town are on display at Neon Museum and Boneyard. It houses the greatest exhibit of neon signage in the nation. Stroll through the Neon Boneyard in the evening to encounter Las Vegas' most famous signs.

The Las Vegas Natural History Museum focuses on dinosaurs and marine life. Guests also can experience an Egyptian demonstration, focusing on the life of Tutankhamun – aka King Tut.

Antagonistic spirits are rumored to be wandering through Zak Bagans' the Haunted Museum. Hoover Dam Museum chronicles its massive construction; taste the finest chocolates at Ethel M Chocolates Factory and Botanical Cactus Gardens; REAL BODIES at Bally's is mind-boggling; and Tom Devlin's Monster Museum is a terrifying screen-used prop from films.

Museums are as much a part of Las Vegas as gaming tables, with an obvious difference: visitors can find entertainment without losing their shirts.

Stormy conditions can cause problems

Vital steps to follow should rain cancel your flight

By Samantha Brown
Host of "Samantha Brown's
Places to Love"

There's nothing like these major storms to make us think, "What would I do if?" And since storms that shut down air space and lay waste to entire regions can happen any time of the year, here's my checklist to consider when the next big storm comes around:



Samantha Brown

Always try to get out ahead of the storm – With an impending weather event, airlines will waive any fees associated with changing your trip. For instance, American Airlines once announced three days before a recent threatening storm that it would rebook people for free. Only for the dates affected, of course, but take them up on it. I know a lot of people, once they're on vacation, don't want to cut things short. But trust me, just cut your vacation short and get out. Don't be the family that's stranded somewhere unfamiliar.

Follow your airline on social media – I can't stress enough how important it is when you travel to have Instagram or X (formerly Twitter) for updates and alerts, as well as getting answers to your



RAIN DROPS – Travelers should have a contingency plan should their flights be canceled because of stormy conditions. *Image: Nick Starichenko. Adobe Stock.*

direct questions. Airlines have pulled a lot of their customer service from their phone banks to social media but not everyone is on social media. You could receive a much faster response than if you call. This is more important if you're already at the airport and your flight is canceled. It's sometimes possible to get rebooked via social media more quickly

than if you wait in line with the 150 other people whose flights are canceled or called the airlines' toll-free number.

Use Gethuman.com – It's **is** a handy website to visit when plugging in those toll-free contact numbers into your phone. Enter the company and it will tell you what number to keep pressing to get a representative.

There's nothing worse than seeing your cell phone battery drop as you navigate through 10 minutes of prompts.

Book an airport hotel as a safety net – If you chance it and choose to stay put, make a hotel reservation as a safety net in case flights get canceled. At the very least have the nearby hotel numbers ready to go, so you can call immediately if you need to. And be sure to note their local number, not the 1-800 number. If you make your flight, then congratulations. Many hotels will likely waive the 24-hour cancellation fee since they will have about 200 other people interested. Plan C: If it's safe and makes sense to drive, stay out of what will be a storm zone, then book a car rental. There's no cancellation fee and that could be your last chance out of the area.

Always stay calm – As stressful as this situation can be, it won't be better if everyone is venting their frustrations. No one sits hoping for a major storm to impact vacations or work days, and you're all on the same side, even if it doesn't feel like it. If you need to, walk away for a bit to just breathe before pushing forward.

Know when to stay put – All that said, sometimes the safest option is to stay exactly where you are and wait out a storm. If you've weighed out all your plans and backup plans for getting home and things still seem unsafe, stay put.