

Nitrogen in tires is not worth the effort

Nitrogen-filled tires are said to slow the loss of tire pressure. It's been proved that gas escapes more slowly than air. Better gas mileage and extending the life of the tires are the benefits of moving on fully inflated tires.

Nitrogen also is said to prevent tire "rot" by limiting moisture that occurs inside the tire and stops corrosion of the wheel – an issue that is caused by contact with moisture.

These claims, however, are questionable. The advantages of tires filled with nitrogen rather than air, aren't big enough to justify the cost or the inconvenience. On a new car, the cost can range from \$70 to as much as \$179. On existing tires, owners can expect to pay as much as \$30 per tire for service to drain air and refill with N2. Refills could run \$5 to \$10 per tire. Drivers can expect to do this less often with air-filled tires, but they'll need to be topped off every two or three months.

What makes nitrogen-filled tires unique?

Small amounts of air naturally leak from tires over a period of time,

particularly when they are subject to large temperature swings. This is because the walls of the tires are slightly porous. When a tire gets hot, the air inside expands. The added pressure pushes minute quantities of air through the side pores, forcing drivers to have air occasionally added to their tires.

Promoters of nitrogen tires stress that they don't lose pressure as quickly as air-filled tires. Since nitrogen molecules are bigger than normal air molecules, it's more difficult for them to leak. Therefore, drivers will be operating vehicles on tires that always are properly inflated, resulting in better fuel economy and longer tire life.

Nitrogen will slow the amount of inflation lost by a tire by about one-third of what it would experience with air. Drivers still will need to check and top off their tires' air roughly every other month to remain within ideal inflation range.

Drivers should expect to spend more having their tires filled with nitrogen than they would save on gas and tire-tread life, making it more economical to keep the tires filled with air.

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Pa. small towns often have most to share

Host of quaint communities ideal destinations for getaways

Researching destinations for a short getaway often causes many to only consider popular hotspots.

Major cities quickly come to mind. Beach towns, as well. But what if there was a gem shrouded by the temptation of bright lights or sandy shores? A small town that's within a reasonable vicinity? That could change a determined traveler's mind.

These towns replace glamor and glitz with peace and beauty. Their mom-and-pop atmospheres are a covered-bridge jaunt to another realm – one that resides in an antique setting that provides guests a needed hiatus from their everyday grinds.

Pennsylvania is home to many of these charming towns. Some of its most enticing destinations include:

Johnstown – Synonymous with a tragic flood in 1889, it's situated among the Allegheny region. Visit the Johnstown Flood Museum to learn how the town reinvented itself after 20 million tons of water nearly destroyed it. The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art is a soothing way to spend an afternoon, watch a performance by the Johnstown Symphony Orchestra, or visit the Johnstown Inclined Plane – the steepest vehicular inclined plane in the world.

Lititz – Located in Lancaster County, Lititz is best known for its tasty American snacks. Julius Sturgis Pretzel Bakery was the first of its kind



FULL STEAM AHEAD – The Strasburg Rail Road provides guest with fantastic scenery of many of Pennsylvania's best farmlands. Image: Ispi138. Adobe Stock.

in the U.S. Guests can tour the facility and take a lesson in pretzel twisting. The Wilbur Chocolate Factory has been operating since 1894 and remains famous for its Wilbur Buds – specially blended chocolate shaped to resemble a flower bud. Tour the neighborhoods in this Dutch Country town and admire the architecture that dates more than three centuries.

Bloomsburg – This Susquehanna Valley town combines art, architecture

and history. It's easily walkable to see the myriad of shops, art galleries and entertainment venues. Bloomsburg's unique eateries feature specialty hoagies and homemade treats from mom-and-pop bakeries.

Milford – Hidden within the Pocono Mountains, Milford has a host of beautiful Victorian homes to visit. Guests should begin at Grey Towers, a National Historic Site and former home to a previous state

governor, Gifford Pinchot. The Columns Museum is a 22-room mansion that sheds light on local history. Visitors can see the flag that was draped from the Presidential box the night of Abraham Lincoln's assassination. Go hiking, biking or view the scenic waterfalls at Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.

Lancaster – No place in the state is better associated with the Amish community. Absorb the countryside and share roads with horse-drawn buggies. Lancaster Central Market is the oldest public market in the U.S., operating since the early 1700s. Visit the Amish Farm and House to tour an Old Order Amish home and farm, a peek inside the lives of Pennsylvania's strong Dutch heritage.

Strasburg – Located at the crossroads of Lancaster and Philadelphia, Strasburg transports guests to past times. A stagecoach stop and trading center in the 18th and 19th centuries, this town continues to boast artifacts from those eras that define small-town living. Explore thousands of acres of farmland onboard via the Strasburg Rail Road. Visits to the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania and the National Toy Train Museum are essential following a train ride.

These are only a handful of Pennsylvania's quaint communities that are hiding in plain sight. Sometimes, the best options can be found where they're least expected.

Snow, ice on car shouldn't be ignored

Failure to remove them could cause crashes, injuries

It's scenario we've all experienced. Overnight snow mixes with frigid temperatures to create an icy layer on our vehicles by morning. Snow blankets the roof, hood and windows, hiding the irritating concoction.

Even worse, we're running late and are rushing to make it to work on time. This could be called the "peephole-driving season." But that isn't an option, anymore – at least in Pennsylvania. Christine's Law, signed into law in 2022, requires drivers to thoroughly clear their vehicles of snow and ice.

Removing ice can be difficult, but there are some tricks. Spatulas, CD cases and credit cards are commonly used to scrape ice and snow off car windows. Auto-glass experts recommend using a proper ice-scraper or deicer spray. Only use a scraper on windows to avoid damaging the finish, exposing metal surfaces to corrosion.

Investing in a windshield cover also is an alternative to scraping. They're relatively inexpensive – ranging from \$20 to \$30 – and are dependable. An alternative is placing a piece of cardboard or a plastic tablecloth over the windshield and securing it with the wipers.

An unconventional solution, mean-



SCRAPING BY – Clearing snow and ice off your vehicle is essential to keeping our highways safe. Image: Natasa. Adobe Stock.

while, might seem difficult to believe. Cut a potato in half and rub it over the windshield the night before a heavy frost. Potato juice functions like anti-freeze by lowering the freezing point of water.

Hot water is not recommended. The significant difference in temperatures

causes a thermal shock that could crack the windshield. Also, water that tumbles to the ground could freeze and create a risk.

Frost could form inside windows if humid air from inside the vehicle reaches a cold windshield. Wet clothes, a hot cup of coffee or tracking snow or

water into the vehicle all could contribute to the problem. It's important to regulate the temperature and humidity inside the vehicle. Remove as much snow and ice as possible before entering.

These actions are crucial to maintaining safety on our roadways, particularly during the most dangerous season. Often, drivers remove just enough snow and ice from their windshields to have limited visibility. Know as "peephole driving," it drastically reduces vision. Chunks of ice or snow could project from the vehicle, causing danger to other drivers.

Snow ignored on your hood or front bumper could blow onto your windshield and obstruct your vision. Snow blowing off your roof could blind other drivers.

Simply put, never drive before all the snow and ice from your vehicle have been removed and defrosted. Set vents to fresh-air positions to prevent windows from fogging. Open a window as soon as you enter the vehicle to speed up the process. And turn on your lights anytime daytime visibility is an issue.

Snow and ice form a dangerous combination. Don't let them lock you up in a terrifying situation.