

New Year checks

This Christmas and New Year will see me in the UK for a well earned break. Nice place to visit but who would want to live in that climate? The UK weather forecast is for fog, frost and icy roads so I am hoping that my hire car is well equipped with snow chains, de-icing windows and a good heater. Incidentally there is no problem hiring a car with my Spanish licence

Here we bitch if the air-con isn't working and very few drivers seem to know how to switch on their fog lights. Yes I know that some of you live inland where it can be much colder than on the coast in which case refer to paragraph one and throw some more logs onto your lovely open fire

Basic checks

Despite the relatively warm conditions there are certain things that can catch us all out. Rain not only makes the roads slippery but when it dries out roundabouts can become lethal as I found out when my rear end went sideways the other day. Last year I was a prat and didn't check my tyres which didn't help, so take a good look at yours also to ensure that there is plenty of tread above the wear bars and the inflation is correct

Now is a good time to check that all of your lights work. For the locals, lights are an optional extra and if only one or two are working this seems to be acceptable. Better though to ensure that you don't look like an oncoming motorbike if a headlight is out and at that least two out of three brakes lights come on!

Remember back home when the car wouldn't start cos' your battery was flat? Yeah great fun trying to find the jump leads and pleading with a neighbour to park alongside when you are both freezing cold and early morning tetchy. Not much different here, so if your car engine turns over slowly at first attempt, could be time to get a fresh battery from Oldham or call Torchy, Torchy the Battery Boy

Breaking down

In the car as well as the all important documents and driving licence I kid you not that a blanket or coat is a good idea as it is cold when the sun goes down and if the car breaks down when wearing nothing but a T-shirt and illegal flip-flops you may need it. Ensure that the number for the breakdown service as supplied by your insurer is handy. A torch is a must. Hi-viz vests should be to hand for every person in the car as well as two warning triangles to be deployed front and back at a distance allowing oncoming traffic to see you. I didn't think that I was going to break down either until a few weeks ago when an engine sensor went so I was glad that I remembered my Boy Scout training and was prepared

Down came the rain

Recently I experienced my first downpour of the year. Most drivers continued to tailgate despite the spray making visibility difficult; lights were not used and speeding

was common. Most of these guys are not used to these conditions thereby making the roads more dangerous; so I guess that the two serious accidents that I passed were caused by failure to drive accordingly. Mind you, unlike in the UK the motorway remained open for use. Our experiences in the freezing north help us to cope better but although we all think that we are good drivers, so do the idiots.

Being the bloody goody two shoes that I may appear, I have developed the habit of using the windscreen washers every day, so suffer no smearing when the rains came allowing me to see fairly well when driving into the setting sun which is always a dangerous time. Reminds me, do you remember the impatient folks back home that cleared a porthole sized area of their windshields from ice and took off into the rush hour? Dear God!

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