

Safer driving

Oh those stressful days of learning to drive! Pushing one pedal down, releasing the other whilst moving the gear stick, steering the car and remembering to perform mirror, indicate, manoeuvre. You must be kidding; I'm a bloke and this seems remarkably like multi-tasking!

Nowadays especially when on motorways we drive on autopilot only becoming alert when our senses wake us up; this is when you wonder where the heck you are. Thousands of miles of experience has brought us to this latter stage. Unfortunately along the way we have picked up some bad habits; well some of us anyway as surveys show that we all think that we are good drivers!

The press this week is full of stories and statistics regarding fatal accidents. These show perhaps surprisingly that Spain has fewer fatal accidents per capita than most other EU countries. The biggest drop in fatalities has been due to the introduction of seat belts, breathalysers and speed cameras. Accidents due to mechanical failure are not common as most are caused by human error. A recent announcement from Trafico stated that motorways were pretty safe and the emphasis for accident reduction would be switched to National routes. This will inevitably lead to an increase in speed cameras and police presence on these roads

So what can we do?

Well as we are such wonderful drivers and are fully aware that it is the other idiots on the road that cause accidents, then we need to take steps to avoid the loonies. Whilst in a management position with UPS the giant parcel carrier I was taught defensive driving techniques to pass onto the drivers and these worked spectacularly well. A main cause of accidents was reversing so we always reverse parked on the basis that you have a good view of the area when doing so as opposed to reversing from a parking spot when you are virtually blind to the surroundings

During general driving we were taught to leave space around us. Not tailgating is a simple example as this increases your reaction time should you need to stop or slow down. The optimum distance between you and the vehicle in front is two seconds which is calculated by slowly counting to 2 when you and the vehicle in front pass a fixed object; the greater your speed the greater will be the distance. If someone is tailgating you it is tempting to brake to make him back off, but the safer bet is to slow down to let him pass or even pull in and stop. Looking as far ahead as you can will allow you to spot any potential problems in advance so that you are not forced into sudden braking or swerving

Unsurprisingly for a delivery company we were encouraged to drive as fast as we could, with two provisos, which were never to break the speed limit and to drive only as fast as the conditions would allow, which in rain for example would mean lower speeds. I've got to admit that the only time I get concerned on Spanish motorways is when it is raining heavily as most drivers seem unaware of the added danger

Give it a try

Whilst in a queue such as at traffic lights and especially at roundabouts, leave sufficient space that you can see the rear wheels of the vehicle in front; this not only gives you an out if this vehicle stalls but also allows more reaction time if the lead car starts off and then suddenly stops, a major cause of accidents. Making people aware of your intentions through signalling makes the roads safer for all- go on Jose give it a try!

As a one-time biker full protective clothing, fluorescent tabard and headlights were a must. The seemingly held belief that the roads are soft in Spain so you won't get ripped to shreds if you come off is just not true!

Safer driving to you all

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