

Be prepared

Arriving late at night at Malaga airport, we picked up the hire car and headed for the hotel. I had asked the desk clerk how far it was and she said an hour or so. Blimey (or something similar) I thought. I had imagined it to be much closer

Climbing up the road in the dark I started to get worried as my shoulders were aching from constantly turning the steering wheel to negotiate endless switchbacks with only the glow of the headlights to guide me and not another soul around. This went on for miles and became so surreal, I thought that I was hallucinating until eventually pinpricks of light appeared and we arrived with perfect timing to find the hotel night-porter having a fag outside of the otherwise locked hotel

“Welcome to Ronda” he said. Anyone who has driven to this beautiful town atop a mountain will know all about the road up to it; not for the feint hearted. I had made a classic blunder when booking the hotel for a one night stop on the way to Cadiz. I hadn’t realised that Malaga was not only the name of the city, but the province also; no wonder the hotel was nowhere near the airport. I hadn’t planned my trip properly

Trip planning

Trip planning is vital as we all know when we are setting off on a long journey for instance from Calais to Cartagena, but it is easy to become complacent when driving locally as I have found out to my cost in the past and was reminded of again the other week. I had taken the car of an elderly lady to the ITV station and on the return journey the dash lit up “STOP”, so I did. As suspected the fan belt had come adrift. What to do? Call the customer? What could she do and I would only worry the old girl. How about a Grua? Maybe. Then I think that as my regular mechanic is close by I’m sure he could help. Yes he could

Being July, it was red hot so thought that I would amble back to the ITV station, especially as I was thirsty and there is a nice cafeteria there. What a prat, no drinking water. The ITV glinted like an oasis in the far distance so I crawled on bloodied knees the last few yards with pleading eyes, cracked lips, wet with perspiration and snatched a cool beer from a startled customer whilst the waitress nearly fainted at the pitiful spectre before her as she fetched a cold flannel. Well alright I am embellishing this tale a bit, but as it wasn’t the first time that I had broken down with no water available. It certainly will certainly be the last as I now constantly carry a bottle in the boot of whatever car I’m driving

Camel trek

The modern day camel-trek reaches a peak this weekend with thousand and thousands of Arabs making their annual pilgrimage home via the Mediterranean ports that service the African coast. Their camels are now vans, loaded with all kind of imaginable goods, not to say kids who constantly ask “are we nearly there yet?” Quite a few of these don’t make the journey. Shock absorbers collapse under the strain, head gaskets blow and mattresses litter the motorways. No doubt a few dads go doolally

and give up. They sleep in parking bays in the service stations and more than once I have had to brake suddenly to avoid disturbing someone's dreams. Their desire to be back with their families is overwhelming, but I wonder about the planning

Imagination

This week I have witnessed the usual loonies on powerful bikes zipping past me, their T-shirts flapping in the breeze, at which a customer mused "how much skin would they have left if they came off the bike, have they got no imagination?"

A ten-car crash was reported on the A7. The cause, according to a press report, was the lead driver suddenly stopping. Not so, the trigger was a sudden deceleration by the car at the front, but the cause was nine drivers all travelling too close to the vehicle in front. The 11th driver did have imagination

So what's the point here? "Be Prepared" as we former Boy Scouts were advised. Always carry drinking water in the car especially during the summer. If you buy a large bottle of branded water it can stay in the car for ever; after all it was underground for several hundred years, so the "consume by" date seems a tad meaningless. Make sure that you have plenty of fuel so that you can get to the other end of your journey on more than fumes. Have sensible footwear available in case you have to walk; keep a parasol or umbrella handy for shade. Is your mobile phone fully charged; do you have the emergency telephone number of your insurers available in case you break down? Have you planned your route? Do you have some cash to pay for unexpected expenditure? Is your spare wheel up to scratch; do you know how to remove and fit it? Are the tyres inflated correctly; if your car is loaded more than normally, the recommended pressure will be higher

Legal requirements

What does the law expect you to carry in your car? A high visibility jacket for each passenger plus driver, two warning triangles, spare bulbs (not that anyone seems to use them in Spain), spare spectacles. Recommended but not obligatory are a first aid kit and a fire extinguisher. Jump leads are a useful accessory too. Most of these things you only have to think of once, so that you can get on with your own mountain climb or camel trek knowing that if the worst happens, you are better placed to deal with it

Don't be a prat like me and wait to be told twice

Spanish Number Plates
Graham Shelton
Orihuela, Alicante
www.spanish-number-plates.com
info@spanish-number-plates.com
966 753 375
605 319 889