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Rental car vacation: distraction included

DEKRA experts recommend that vacationers who pick up their rental car for the holidays should familiarize themselves with all the most important functions, in particular the touch screen display, before setting off. While real switches and knobs were commonplace in the cockpit just a few years back, modern vehicles are increasingly being equipped with a touch screen. This can cause problems when switching to a vehicle type that the driver is unfamiliar with.

A new travel companion from July: the "black box" is on board

When an accident occurs, it is not always possible to determine exactly how it happened, where the vehicles came from and how fast they were going. The "black box", which has now been introduced following an EU regulation that will make it mandatory for all new vehicles from July 2024, along with other electronic aids, promises to bring more clarity.

Motorhome travel: the journey is the destination

The popularity of motorhomes remains unabated. Last year the number of homes-on-wheel rose again to an impressive 70,000 vehicles, representing an increase of more than eight percent. This means that there were already 908,000 of these recreational vehicles on the road at the beginning of 2024. Many a motorhome trip involves drivers switching from their tried-and-trusted car to a home-on-wheels. This is a particularly daunting task especially for motorhome debutants.

Other topics

- Cool tips for hot days
- When the car becomes a furnace
- Tire pressure monitoring system: Now also fitted to commercial vehicles



*Picked up the hire car: Now, how
do the lights work?.*

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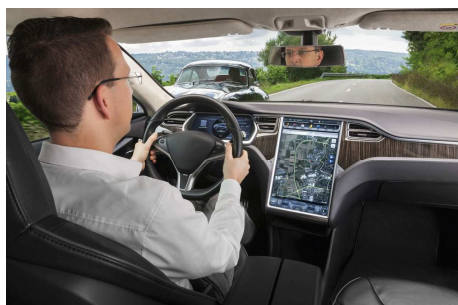
Rental car vacation

Distraction included

DEKRA experts recommend that vacationers picking up their hire car for the holidays should familiarize themselves with all the most important functions, in particular the touch screen display, before setting off. While real switches and knobs were commonplace in the cockpit a few years back, the modern vehicle is being increasingly fitted with a touch screen. This can cause problems when switching to a vehicle type the driver is unaccustomed to. Apart from the navigation and sound system, some manufacturers have even introduced touch screen control of the air conditioning or windshield wipers.

DEKRA road psychologist Thomas Wagner warns readers that “Problems can be caused especially when switching to an unaccustomed vehicle type or also when car sharing.” While innovative touch screen technologies fitted with intuitive navigation systems can principally reduce the risk of distraction, the opposite could, however, also be true. “The reason for this is that the touch screen lacks haptic feedback and can distract drivers even more than before because they need to spend more time glancing at the controls.” This problem is exacerbated by the wide differences between the user navigation systems of various manufacturers.

Tests conducted by DEKRA Accident Research demonstrated that the 80 participating drivers required much more time to operate safety-relevant functions like windshield wipers or dipped headlights on more recent vehicles, and in some cases, more than twice as long. The learning curve for operating responsive control surfaces was deemed as relatively high especially for the elderly driver. The modern control concept could even impair driving safety especially for those needing to wear reading glasses. Without them they cannot see the operating controls correctly, but wearing them means they can hardly see anything at longer distances. The vacationing driver is already distracted enough, what with new holiday destinations, in unaccustomed environments with different road and traffic situations, without struggling with the touch screen and thus increasing the risk of accident even more. Wagner recommends readers picking up their hire car to take a few minutes to familiarize themselves with the general layout and the touch screen operating concept as well as finding a suitable radio channel, programming the navigation system or hitching up the smartphone before setting off. If the driver discovers that additional changes are necessary along the way, then they should pull over and make them when the vehicle is parked. Drivers should normally only allow themselves a “brief” glance” at the operating screen. (DEKRA Info)



*"Black Box": A new travel
companion on all new cars from
July*

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More assistance systems installed in new vehicles

The "Black Box" – a new travel companion

In the event of a traffic accident, it is not always clear exactly how the accident occurred, where the vehicles came from and how fast they were travelling. The "black box" now being introduced as part of an EU regulation will provide greater clarity and will be mandatory for all new vehicles from July 2024, along with other electronic aids such as emergency brake assist, cruise control, lane departure warning, reverse assist, driver fatigue detection, and emergency brake lights.

"The "Black Box" is not a device, i.e. not a piece of hardware, but a software function of a control device which receives the required data from an array of vehicle sensors and stores information during the course of a collision. DEKRA accident analyst Pavlos Triantafyllidis explains that "The airbag controller is ideally suited for this task due to its location."

The "Event Data Recorder" (EDR), to give it its official name, can detect the type of accident – front, rear, side, pedestrian and register data both before and after the collision. This spans such driver activities as steering, braking or acceleration, but also vehicle data such as speed, engine rpm, ABS or ESP regulation and deceleration after the collision. This data is recorded over a period of about five seconds before and approximately half a second after the accident.

The introduction of the Black Box improves the chances of explaining accidents; however, the EDR system always remains active so the driver cannot intervene in the system. If the EDR data is read out following an accident as part of legal proceedings it is recommended, as the affected party, to consult a lawyer and to demand and apply for an expert analysis of the data. This expert will then factor in the situation at the accident site and other visible evidence.

"The EDR data can only provide an indication of how a vehicle approached and how the driver could have reacted," explains the accident analyst. "There can be a time lag between the actual course of the accident and the recording, and this means that it is possible that details can be incorrectly interpreted in the timeline. "An evaluation of the EDR data would therefore only make sense if seen in combination with an accident analysis report. (DEKRA Info)



*Unrestricted sea view: The perfect
vacation*

Motorhome travel

The journey is the destination

The popularity of motorhomes remains unabated. Last year the number of homes-on-wheels rose again to an impressive 70,000 vehicles, representing an increase of more than eight percent. This means that there were already 908,000 of these recreational vehicles on the road at the beginning of 2024. Many a motorhome trip involves drivers switching their tried-and-trusted car for a home-on-wheels. This is a particularly daunting task for motorhome debutants, especially as they need to become acquainted with the features of their new vehicle. DEKRA experts give some tips on what to look out for.

The greater weight and the bulkier dimensions translate into different handling characteristics in comparison to a standard car. This can represent a considerable transition for the less experienced driver. Motorhomes generally take longer to come to a halt when braking and accelerate more slowly than a car. Overtaking maneuvers can therefore be easily misjudged.

The higher center of gravity also takes getting used to, as it means lower speeds in curves than a car and makes evasive maneuvers more difficult. Apart from that, the higher sensitivity to lateral gusts of winds also needs to be borne in mind. Parking and reversing, especially with the more voluminous examples, will not be as easy as usual. In these instances, it would be better to have oneself directed.

Also, safe driving requires the vehicle to be loaded properly. A check at the vehicle documents will reveal how much additional cargo the motorhome can take. But also, a sensible distribution of cargo adds to safe driving. Remember to stow heavy articles at the bottom and lighter ones on top and make sure luggage is suitably secured.

DEKRA experts advise readers that a generally relaxed, defensive driving style is the best way to avoid hairy situations. It is also advisable to familiarize yourself with the handling and operation of the vehicle before setting off. Participation in a safety training program especially dedicated to motorhomes can be a wise move; especially for new members of the motorhome community. True to the principle "The journey is the destination" plan sufficient time for the journey and take a break every hour or two. A regular changeover of driver also fosters a relaxing driving experience. (DEKRA Info)



*Hot head:
Concentration and reaction
quickly wane*

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Cool tips for hot days

Hot heads lead to hazardous driving

It's easy to stay cool in a lounge chair in the shade or by the pool on a hot day, but it's not so easy to stay cool behind the wheel. When the thermometer climbs to a record high, it means that concentration and reaction time drop more quickly, many people become more irritable and impatient on the road, and driving errors become more common. The bottom line is that this leads to an increased risk of accidents, remind the accident experts at DEKRA. But drivers can do something about it.

Check the climate. A well air-conditioned vehicle is an absolute must on hot days – and not just for driving comfort, for safety, too. If the air conditioning is not working properly or if the car interior is unpleasantly musty, it would be strongly advisable to have the air conditioning checked before departing on vacation. Also, the level of coolant should be checked to avoid the engine from overheating and sustaining damage.

Cold shock. Do not direct cool air from the air conditioning vents straight onto the body, as it might cause you to catch a cold. Even if the sun is blazing outside, do not set the temperature too low, as you might suffer a hefty heat shock when you get out the car. A feel-good temperature of between 22 and 25 degrees is a good rule of thumb.

Equipment. Sun shields and a reflective aluminum cover to protect the front shield perform sterling service on hot days. Keep a pair of gloves handy so that you don't burn your fingers on a hot steering wheel. Also a few bottles of mineral water, preferably in a cool box, should always be on board to compensate for the greater loss of fluids.

Heat buildup. The unavoidable buildup of heat in a parked car is dissipated by opening all doors, rear lid and ventilating. To cool things down quickly, set the air conditioning to the circulating air position to low temperature as well as starting the fan. These can be adjusted later as required. As far as possible, park in the shade, but not in a dry meadow or wooded ground. Hot vehicle parts run the risk of setting the vegetation on fire.

Defensive Driving. A defensive driving style is also recommended; remember that others can make mistakes, too. Take breaks every hour or two and drink regularly. Use caution: Do not fill the tank to the top. Fuel expands in the heat and can overflow and catch fire. (DEKRA Info)



*Never leave children or animals
unattended in the car on hot days*

Cool tips for hot days II

When the car becomes a furnace

DEKRA experts warn readers not to leave small children or animals unattended in cars exposed to the blistering heat of the sun on hot days, even if it's only for a few minutes. A vehicle parked in the sun could quickly transform into a lethal furnace. Hot days can also damage the road surface. The asphalt softens at high temperatures and track channels can form or be deepened. On non-asphalted roads there is a risk of "blow up," i.e. surface splits. Flip-flops and slides are not an alternative to proper footwear for the driver. They offer no grip and can easily slip from the pedal or get caught in the pedals and fail to perform that essential emergency stop in time. It is important to check tire pressure when the tires are cold and not warmed up by driving. Also, follow manufacturer recommendations when filling or topping up air. (DEKRA Info)



*Mandatory from July: Tire
pressure monitoring system for
new commercial vehicles*

Tire pressure monitoring system to be mandatory for commercial vehicles as of July

Safety plus

What has been the case for cars for many years will soon be a reality for commercial vehicles: starting July 1, 2024, tire pressure monitoring systems will be mandatory for all trucks, buses and heavy trailers registered in the EU. DEKRA accident analyst and tire expert Christian Koch says "This may entail more expense and challenges for haulage companies and the tire service branch, but also improved safety," Tire damage is the primary cause of commercial vehicle breakdown. Most of this damage could have been prevented by a pressure monitoring system as correct tire pressure and any slow pressure loss can be detected. This reduces the risk of accident and means that the correct tire pressure results in longer durability and lower fuel consumption. "The tire pressure monitoring system is an important component in the safe and economic operation of commercial vehicles. This more than makes up for the greater effort involved," explains Koch. (DEKRA Info)

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