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Keep your eyes peeled when buying a used car: the vehicle might have a shady past

“Keep your eyes peeled,” is the old adage when buying a used car. “And this is more than just a hackneyed phrase”, explains DEKRA used car expert Ronald Hufnagel. “Every car has its own unique past that, as a rule, remains unseen to the naked eye. Important to note about buying a used car is to pay attention to safety, otherwise things can get very expensive, very quickly.”

Safely negotiating the traffic jam: plan alternative routes and extra time

Motorists setting off on their summer vacation on main traffic arteries will most likely encounter long tailbacks at peak hours. Apart from the high volume of traffic, summer is also the season for roadwork sites. DEKRA experts’ advice is to avoid the main travel days if possible and wait for a quieter period before setting off on your vacation.

Safely off on vacation with campers and mobile homes

Anyone switching over to a camper or mobile home, or attaching a caravan for their vacation, can only ensure that they arrive safely at their destination if they are aware that the vehicle will behave much differently than their customary form of transport. “We recommend that readers should familiarise themselves with the handling of the vacation vehicle,” says DEKRA accident researcher Thomas Gut.

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DEKRA certifies Hockenheimring environmental management

Driving endorsements: it's not difficult to rack up the points

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Once every five years: point deduction possible

Driving endorsements

It's easy to rack up the points...

Although motorists can quickly rack up endorsement points in their driver's license, getting rid of them is another thing altogether. It doesn't take much to accumulate points and a license is easily confiscated: for example, overlooking a traffic light that is signalling red for longer than a second, or talking on the cell phone whilst at the wheel of a car and then, for good measure, driving too aggressively near a zebra crossing would already be enough if you were caught. These misdemeanours would have earned you four endorsement points: two for the traffic light and one point each for the other two violations. Eight points and you can say goodbye to your driver's license for a while.

And to make sure things don't get out of hand too quickly, the offending motorists receive a written reminder when they have racked up between four and five points. The letter contains information about a traffic aptitude seminar that they can attend on a voluntary basis. Participation is rewarded with the deduction of one point, although this can only happen once in five years.

It is to be noted that points for infringements are deleted after 2.5 years. The period increases to five years if the infringements and offences have an especially negative impact on road safety. Points for offences involving the withdrawal of the driver's license are only deleted after ten years.

The next stage kicks in at between six and seven points, when the offender will receive an admonition letter in the post. It threatens to withdraw the person's driver's license should they collect eight points and recommends voluntary participation in a traffic aptitude seminar. Once this tally has been reached, points are no longer deducted. "The step from four or five points to six is very slight and can quickly be reached through an oversight. This is why it makes sense to take part in a traffic aptitude seminar as soon as the four or five mark has been reached to take advantage of the point deduction," says Thomas Wagner, Head of DEKRA's Assessment Centers for Driving Suitability.

Information regarding your own points account in the traffic aptitude register can be obtained free of charge. A pre-printed form is available on the website www.kba.de under Forms. For more information on traffic aptitude seminars, please visit <https://www.dekra.de/de/fahreignungsseminar-punkteabbau/>

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Before setting off on vacation: Get used to the handling

Safely on vacation with campers and mobile homes

Heightened risk of skidding

People switching over to a camper or mobile home or attaching a caravan for the vacation, can only ensure that they arrive safely at their holiday destination if they are aware that the vehicle will behave much differently than their customary form of transport. “We recommend readers to familiarize themselves with the handling of the vacation vehicle,” says DEKRA accident researcher Thomas Gut. “Above all, the motorist needs to get used to the larger dimensions, the different braking and cornering behavior and the poorer situational awareness. The same applies to the lower acceleration compared to the car on its own.”

There is a considerable danger caused by the heightened risk of skidding of car and caravan combinations. They largely tend to a sideways drift at higher speeds and break away easier than a car on its own. Even a strong gust of wind on a bridge or the vacuum effect of an overtaking lorry can cause the camper or mobile home to veer off track. Instabilities frequently results from excessive speeds. Always keep to the speed limits. This helps the driver not only to control the vehicle but also reduces risks,” explains Gut. Participation in a driving safety training course for such vehicles is highly recommended.

One important factor in maintaining the stability of a vehicle is also the correct distribution of luggage and cargo. Heavy pieces of luggage belong close to the ground and near the axles. This ensures that the vehicle’s point of gravity stays low. Use tie-down straps and tensioning belts to make sure that a braking or evasive maneuver does not transform pieces of luggage into lethal missiles or dangerously shift the load. The permissible total weight must also not be exceeded and the permitted axle, trailer and nose loading values observed.

Of course, the vehicle must be completely in order for a safe journey. A check of things such as the brakes, electrics, steering, engine and trailer hitch is a must, as this is the only way to ensure that the vehicle can cope with the high loading of a lengthy trip. It is absolutely essential to have the gas cylinders checked by an expert every two years. This is required on many a camp site and provides the necessary safety for life on four wheels.

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Used car check gives peace of mind

Keep your eyes peeled when buying a used car

Safety first – otherwise it may be expensive

“Keep your eyes peeled” is the old adage when buying a used car. “And this is more than just a hackneyed phrase,” explains DEKRA used car expert Ronald Hufnagel. “Every car has its own unique past that, as a rule, remains unseen to the naked eye. “Has it spent its life being passed from one driver to another as a hire car? Did the previous owner use it as a beast of burden to build his house? Was it thrown around on an unpaved gravel road? Does the vehicle have a shady past hidden by shiny paint that will entail costly repairs down the line?”

“It is often difficult to precisely reconstruct the vehicle’s past,” says Hufnagel. “Buying a used car is about paying attention to safety, otherwise things can get expensive, very quickly.” The minimum requirement is to take a knowledgeable friend or acquaintance along with you to view and test drive the vehicle, because four eyes can always see more than two.” What is also essential as a rule is a recent technical inspection. If the visit was some time back in the past, a small detour to a car test center would be advisable. Frequently, the normal periodic inspection can lead to some very interesting findings.

It would be even better for potential buyers to opt for a neutral all-round check carried out by an automotive professional. Depending on the service provider, such inspections also trade under the name of used car certification, quality seal or check. The reason of such inspections is to provide the potential buyer with a sound basis for their decision-making and to give peace of mind. “The buyer gets a clear picture of the condition, existing faults and any essential repairs needed. It means the most important facts can be seen at a glance and used to come to a reasoned decision about the purchase,” explains Hufnagel.

It is not always necessary to give the entire vehicle a thorough check; if, for example, it has recently passed a periodic inspection. For this reason, DEKRA experts have set up their used car inspection on a modular basis. It means that interested parties can have the mechanics, the bodywork and the electronic systems inspected by the expert on an individual basis. Hufnagel: “The increase in the number of electronic systems in the vehicle makes this check all the more important. The inspection establishes whether the claimed systems are installed in the vehicle, whether they function correctly and whether the mileage reading given on the speedometer is at all plausible.”

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High traffic volume during the summer vacation period

Safely through the traffic jam

Plan alternative routes and extra time

Motorists setting off on their summer holiday on main traffic arteries will most likely encounter long tailbacks at peak hours. Apart from the high volume of traffic, summer is also the season for roadwork sites. DEKRA experts' advice is to avoid the main travel days and if possible wait for a quieter period before setting off on your vacation. For those stretches that are plagued by traffic jams, plan detour routes which will prepare you for traffic meltdown.

In such situations a good navigation system is worth its weight in gold, however, only for those that know how to operate its intricacies, for example, the route guidance options. Most devices provide alternative routes in real time as soon as the unexpected traffic jam develops. But be careful you are not guided through the back of beyond. A glance at the common Smartphone apps can be worthwhile for checking on current traffic density along your travel route.

Also pay attention to traffic announcements on the radio, which can frequently be useful if you have to make a large-scale detour to avoid traffic jams and completely blocked roads. It is also advisable to plan in extra time, should you need to reach a destination by a certain time, for example to catch a ferry. This too can avoid stress. "The most important thing to do in high traffic density is to embrace predictive driving and a steady driving style," says DEKRA accident researcher Luigi Ancona. "The motorist who allows sufficient distance to vehicles ahead and desists from unnecessary changes in speed or lane is not just safer and more relaxed during the journey, but she or he is also helping to avoid traffic jams."

When joining the back of a traffic jam, reduce speed and switch on your warning lights. This will give due warning to vehicles behind and reduce the danger of a rear end collision. When travelling in convoy, offset driving provides more safety because the brake lights of vehicles in front can be detected sooner. And do not forget that those caught in a traffic jam are obliged to keep an emergency lane free between the far left and the adjacent lane. Anyone who is not observing this and as a result hinders police or emergency services must reckon on two endorsement points in their driving license, fines of between 200 and 320 euros as well as a driving ban.

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Certificate for the race track (from the left) Dr. Rolf Krökel, Managing Director of DEKRA Certification, as well as Jochen Nerpel and Jorn Teske, both Managing Directors at Hockenheim-Ring GmbH. (Photo: Hockenheim-Ring GmbH)

DEKRA certifies Hockenheimring environmental management

Keeping the ecological footprint low

Hockenheim-Ring GmbH has put its environmental management to the test and has been DIN EN ISO 14001:2015 certified in the areas of motor sport and major events as well as event management by DEKRA Certification GmbH.

The certification is an international standard for environmental management systems, which evaluates companies and helps them to reduce environmental pollution and make ongoing improvements in their environmental performance.

Dr. Rolf Krökel, Managing Director of DEKRA Certification GmbH, visited the race track to hand over the certificate to the two Managing Directors of the Hockenheim-Ring GmbH, Jorn Teske and Jochen Nerpel. "We are delighted to be able to help companies become more sustainable, especially in the case of such a traditional institution as the Hockenheimring, which we have been associated with as partners for a long time, among other things as part of our DTM commitment," stressed Dr. Rolf Krökel during a tour of the drivers' paddock

Examples of measures already implemented to reduce the ecological footprint of the Ring include the deployment of photovoltaic systems, the conversion to LED lighting across the entire site, the use of modern sensors to monitor energy usage and efficiency control of the buildings, an all-round monitoring and self-restriction as regards noise emissions, as well as the establishment of protective zones for protecting wildlife diversity.

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