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My son, who is studying for a Social Sciences degree at Durham University, has opted to spend the coming academic year studying in Paris. I was somewhat surprised as French is not one of his subjects at University though was suitably impressed when he mentioned that virtually every single major French leader, ranging from Emmanuel Macron, François Hollande, Jacques Chirac and dating as far back as François Mitterand and Georges Pompidou, is an alumnus of Sciences Po where he will be studying. I also agreed with him that, Brexit or not, being fluent in French could be an asset!

More importantly, with the enthusiasm for driving with which all Advanced Drivers are infused, it gave me an excuse to repeat the start-of-term overloaded car journey undertaken by thousands of parents of

University students across the UK, except mine would be to Paris where the University term starts a few weeks earlier than in the UK.

Living in Kent, the actual driving distance to Paris of just under 250 miles is less than that to Durham (which is nearly 300 miles), though the toll paid for the Dartford Tunnel is greatly eclipsed by the same day return cost to use the EuroTunnel.

Not having taken my car to France for several years, I needed to check that I had the required equipment:

1. *Hi-Vis Vest*: Every motorist in France is required to carry, in the cabin of the car, a fluorescent yellow vest (now famous as the uniform of the Gilets Jaunes weekend protesters against austerity in France). As an Advanced Driver, I am sure that, like me, you have one for each

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- potential occupant of your vehicle even in the UK, as a breakdown on the motorway will be much safer when everyone is wearing one.
2. *First Aid kit and Red Warning Triangle:* Luckily these are standard and came with my car so I did not need to buy either.
 3. *Breathalyser:* I had the recommended number of two (purportedly in case you use one to check that you are safe to drive before the police stop you!) from my previous visit but, on examining them, realised that single-use breathalysers have an expiry date of 2 years from the date of manufacture so I needed to buy new ones. Interestingly, the fine for not carrying a breathalyser has still not been implemented despite the law existing since 2012 but I still ordered some.
 4. *Headlight deflectors:* Car headlights are generally set up to point towards the kerbside of the vehicle. Thus, driving my right-hand drive car on the right-hand side of the carriageway would mean dazzling oncoming traffic at night. Many firms sell self-adhesive deflectors that can be used by almost every model of car and I chose those endorsed and sold by the AA.
 5. *Insurance and breakdown cover.* I bought single trip breakdown cover and notified my insurance provider of my travel plans. While they did tell me to carry a copy of the insurance document, I was surprised that they did not mention that I also needed to carry the original registration document (V5).
 6. *Clean Air Vignette:* Similar to Greater London's Ultra Low Emission Zone, Paris and the surrounding area (and several
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other French cities) require vehicles to display evidence that they are well within pollution standards with an Air Quality Certificate, typically referred to as a Crit'Air sticker that costs €3.11 plus postage of €1.10 to the UK. **Beware of scams on the internet that look like an official site and charge much more.**

7. Some websites recommend carrying *spare headlight bulbs* in France but modern cars are often engineered to make it almost impossible for an untrained person to change the bulb so we opted not to buy these.
8. In case your *SatNav system* mentions *speed cameras locations*, remember that this is **illegal** in France and you can be fined over €1,000 if a police officer sees it. Our car has a basic in-built SatNav system so we often prefer to use the more up-to-date and comprehensive

traffic information from Google Maps where speed cameras stopped being mentioned as soon as we crossed the English Channel!

9. Our final preparation was to list a few important French words used on roads:

a.	Rappel	Remember
(used on many speed limit signs!)		
b.	Fermé	Closed
c.	Cédez le passage	Give Way
d.	Allumez vos feux	Turn on your lights
e.	Ralentir	Slow down
f.	Vous n'avez pas la priorité	You don't have right of way
g.	Travaux	Road works
h.	Péage	Toll Road
i.	Route barre	Road closed
j.	Déviation	Detour
k.	Toutes directions	All routes
l.	(Prochaine) Sortie	(Next) Exit

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We left home at 8.00 a.m. on a Saturday morning to catch the 9.50 train and reached the Eurotunnel site at Folkestone well ahead of the recommended 45 minutes minimum check-in time. The helpful lady at the check-in booth offered us a place on an earlier train which we naturally readily accepted.

The actual journey on the train through the tunnel is best described as monotonous, though is luckily only 35 minutes long.

Exiting Calais and onto the French autoroutes (or motorways) made me think of what we could learn from them (and vice versa):

1. **Keep apart 2 chevrons:
Safe distance markers
throughout the motorway:**

Most of us would have seen the two chevron safe distance markers on small



sections of some of our motorways, e.g., the M6 between Junctions 18 and 19, M11 between Junctions 8 and 9, the M1 in Northamptonshire, etc.

In France, the entire length of hard shoulder (or la bande d'arrêt d'urgence, i.e., emergency lane) has a break at equivalent distances, with occasional signs to remind

one what it means.

Naturally, this made me wonder whether the hard



shoulder marker included a rumble strip so, when there was no traffic around, I tried it out – and yes, it does!

This would be a simple thing for the UK Department for Transport to implement: *let's hope they can do so quickly*

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2. **Tolls:** Sadly, most of the motorways in France are péages or toll roads; and, worse, they have toll booths at either end, leading to slowing traffic. If you remember the queues to enter the Dartford Tunnel before the ANPR based system, you know what I mean. And having a right-hand drive car in a country where vehicles are left-hand drive means you have to get down to collect the entry point ticket and then again to pay when exiting the toll road, making one very unpopular with vehicles behind.

If only the French would get the ANPR system from the British.

3. **Aire de Repos or Rest Areas/Service Areas:** French Autoroutes have frequent

and far more service areas than we have on Motorways in the UK. All have parking, picnic tables and children's play areas, while some offer electric vehicle charging points, fuel stations, ATMs, and restaurants that, from our limited sample, offer decidedly better food than available at most Services in the UK (though are also more expensive now sterling has fallen in value). Motorway signs tell you clearly what is available.



If only the UK can get more frequent service stops with better food!

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4. **Right of Way Signs:** These are the ones requiring the greatest degree of care for a British driver in France, more even than the mental 'drive on the right' that you need each time you get in the car. In the UK, Give Way and Stop signs are unambiguous and well understood by all. No one doubts that traffic on a main road has priority over that on small roads joining it. And French signs are by and large similar.



However, in France, the exception requiring particular caution is if you see this sign when you are on a main road. It means that roads **joining** the main road have priority.



To rectify this situation needs a complete removal of such unsafe priorities combined with re-education of French drivers so may take some time!

5. **Weather dependent motorway speed limits:** As you may know, the motorway speed limit in France is 130 km/h (i.e., 81 mph) but reduces to 110 km/h (i.e., marginally less than 69 mph) if it is raining with a self-explanatory road sign.

As Advanced Drivers, we know that stopping distances increase greatly in the rain so a lower speed limit is very sensible.



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6. Towing speed limits dependent upon road conditions:

Vehicles towing caravans on the autoroutes follow the same speed limit as other vehicles but in some situations, e.g., a downward gradient, may have a reduced limit with a self-explanatory symbol below the sign. In the UK, we inevitably see towing vehicles exceeding the speed limit, keeping pace with all other traffic!



7. Speed Limit Tolerances: In the UK, prosecution is not recommended if a driver is within 10%+ 2 mph of the speed limit, as I have mentioned previously, having received this information under a Freedom of Information Request to the then Association of Chief Police Officers (replaced in 2015 by the National Police

Chiefs' Council). This effectively allows a motorway speed limit of 79 mph. The French are more practical with higher speed limits and offer no leeway, though the size of fine is a function of the extent of infraction, e.g., if you are travelling 20 km/h above the speed limit in a 90 km/h zone, you will be fined less than someone travelling 40 km/h in the same zone. [When I first drove through France in the 1990s, I was warned that toll road entry and exit times were matched against distance to calculate your speed and you could receive a penalty notice based on this. While many websites assure us this is untrue, I have always stopped for a brief rest break to ensure I don't face a problem!]

Enjoy your next driving trip to France – I hope you find at least some of the information here useful.

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Tailpiece: Mentioning speed limits and tolerances, I was recently confused by an experience on the M25 around 5 a.m. on a Saturday morning last month. We were setting off on a family summer holiday to Heathrow to catch a flight departing before 7 a.m. My wife is only comfortable if she is amongst the first few people to arrive at the airport for her flight so we left home soon after 4.30 a.m. As you can imagine, there was negligible traffic so I was driving at my customary 70 mph + 10% + 2mph, routinely moving back to the left lane after overtaking the occasional slow-moving vehicle or two, and frowning upon the not unusual middle-lane hog. Between Junction 8 and 9, we hit some congestion that I only realised later was caused by a police car in lane 3 doing exactly 70 mph and all drivers demonstrating their

dutiful compliance with the speed limit by doing the same.,

Because of the congestion, I was in the fast lane, perhaps doing 75 mph, only to move back to lane 2 when space arose. Interestingly, the police car moved out behind me, flashed his headlights and blues, then overtook me and flashed a message saying "Watch Your Speed" followed by "Speed Limit 70 mph" in his rear windscreen.

Given my serious opposition to the concept of speed limit tolerances, I am on their side for trying to enforce the actual limit (despite causing congestion at 5 a.m. in the process!). However, it does seem pointless unless every other police force in the country does the same. What do you think? Write in with your views: enquiries@kentrospa.org.uk

Conduite sûre (Safe driving),

Ravi Savur.

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I hope you all had a nice summer break.

Similar to Ravi, I also ventured into France, though for a holiday. We drove down the south part of Brittany, near Vannes. It was a bit of a long drive but with regular breaks and lunch in Le Havre on the way it was fine.

I used a Sanef Toll tag (now emovis-tag) for the motorway tolls. It is really easy and not too expensive, and saves the aggravation of the passenger having to feed the machine. It also means being able to avoid queues at most toll booths. It is worth checking out if you are travelling in France by car. See: <https://www.emovis-tag.co.uk/>. If you travel via Eurotunnel, get a discount on the cost of the tag by entering your booking reference at:

<https://www.eurotunnel.com/uk/promotions/emovis-tag/>. We also used it last year when we went to the Le Mans Classic meeting.

Committee Changes: Dave Harris and I have swapped roles on the Committee. Dave stepped down as Chairman due to having to have a medical procedure. He is now Deputy Chair and I stepped up as Chair until the AGM in October.

I am pleased to say that Dave is doing well after his procedure.

Following our visit to The Kent Fire and Rescue Services Road Safety Experience (RSE) we are working with them on joint initiatives, and I will provide more details when available.

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We have some interesting meetings in the coming months including a presentation on the Lower Thames Crossing (more details on the project mentioned on page 14), one by Gem Motoring Assist, and another by Road Safety Consultant Graham Feest

Finally, if you see something in the Press or on the Internet that you think may be of interest to the group, please send details to Ravi for inclusion in the next issue of our Group Newsletter.

I look forward to seeing you at our monthly meetings, the AGM and our meetings in the New Year.

John Corcoran

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Associates

We have just four new Associates awaiting induction and three who have recently had an induction so are waiting to be assigned to a Tutor. In addition, three additional Associates have been assigned to Tutors in the last quarter. As we have just had an Induction at the Pratts Bottom Village Hall, the date for the next one is yet to be arranged.

Tutors

We have fourteen Approved Tutors and three Advanced Tutors. There is one trainee Tutor waiting to attend induction.

Results

Please remember to send me details of your results with details of who the examiner was. Also, if you are willing to write a piece on your test experience for the Newsletter, it will help others awaiting their test.

Ray Davies

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Highway Code Quiz: True or False?

Please print out this page, mark T or F (without referring to your copy or the internet!) and bring it to the November 2019 Group meeting. The person with the most correct answers gets something special.

1. A green traffic light means go; you have priority over pedestrians wishing to cross.
 2. Hazard warning lights should only be used when stationary.
 3. A straight pelican crossing with a central island should NOT be treated as two separate crossings.
 4. You must NOT use a handheld mobile phone whilst driving. In an emergency, wait to find a safe place to stop before calling the emergency services.
 5. You may cross double white lines in the centre of the road where the line nearest to you is solid to pass a road maintenance vehicle travelling at less than 10 mph.
 6. You must NOT sound your horn in a built-up area between 2330 and 0700 hrs.
 7. When turning left or right, give way to pedestrians who have started to cross the road into which you are turning.
 8. If you breakdown on the motorway, you should stop in the hard shoulder with your wheels turned to the left and should NOT use a warning triangle.
 9. On the motorway, if red lights flash on a signal in the central reservation or on the side of the road and the red X lane closed sign is showing, you must not go beyond the signal in any lane.
 10. Cyclists should ride in single file and never ride more than two abreast.
 11. If you have to stop in a tunnel, leave at least a 5 metre gap between you and the vehicle in front.
 12. At a pedestrian crossing, you may overtake a cyclist nearest the crossing.
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Sad News

We are sorry to report that a motorcyclist was killed and another very seriously injured during a tutoring ride with the Nottingham Foresters group on Thursday, August 22. We are in touch with the Group Chairman and a third rider who was present at the time of the incident, and are also offering our support to the families of those involved.

Secondly, we have received a report today that a rider was seriously injured while on a ride-out with the Norfolk Riders group on Sunday, August 25. We are in the early stages of making contact with those involved and, again, will offer our support.

Please may I take this opportunity to advise groups that it is important that RoSPA is notified of all serious incidents that occur on ride-outs or tutoring rides, so we can offer our support to the groups and individuals involved and also to prepare us for any external enquiries we may receive about the incidents.

Sorry to have to share such sad news.

Best wishes

Amy

Amy Brant

RoSPA Fleet Services and RoADAR Manager

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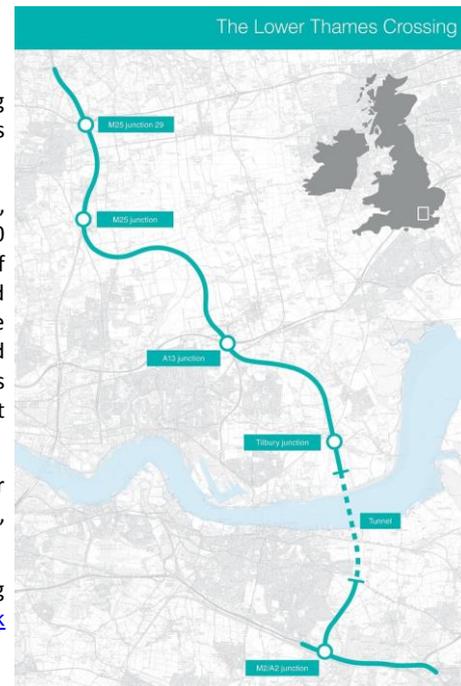
Lower Thames Crossing Consultation

The update of latest plans based on responses received during the public consultation that closed at the end of 2018 has been published.

The consultation received nearly 29,000 detailed responses, with some 15,000 people attending the programme of 60 events held over a ten-week period, with hundreds of thousands more engaging online. Responses were detailed and insightful, providing unique perspectives and many have raised important issues that will inform the continued development of the project. Some 80 per cent of respondents support the need for a new crossing and 70 per cent support the location.

A revised planning application (Development Consent Order application) will be submitted in summer 2020. This, however, does not impact the target road opening in 2027.

For more information about the Lower Thames Crossing project visit their website at www.lowerthamescrossing.co.uk or **attend the Group event on 13 February 2020.**



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Safety initiative reduces collisions on M1

An initiative to check HGVs by Highways England on the M1 helped to reduce collisions by almost a third during their trial week in May this year.

It involved the use of three HGV supercabs which have derestricted speed limiters (and flashing lights for use by police forces in an emergency) that allow police officers to film evidence of unsafe driving behaviour by pulling up alongside the offending vehicles. The drivers are then pulled over by police cars following a short distance behind.

Highways England found that during the initiative, incidents fell from 90 during the previous week to 64 during the week of action.

What issues did they find?

- 57 drivers on mobile phones
- 37 drivers not wearing seatbelts
- 26 drivers who were driving carelessly or not in proper control of their vehicle

There were 133 traffic offence reports and five prosecutions for the most serious offences.

Highways England is now planning similar safety initiatives for other motorways across England.

To read more, click

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/m1-safety-week-reduces-collisions-by-a-third>

and to see a video on YouTube of one of the offences, click <https://youtu.be/lrEWBIGNBAA>

Highway Code Update dated 25 July 2019 *Motorways*: Updated rule 258 to clarify that if red lights flash on a signal and a red "X" is showing, you *must not* drive in the lane shown as closed beyond the signal. This applies until you pass another signal indicating that the lane is no longer closed. Added wording to say that if red lights flash on a signal in the central reservation or on the side of the road and lane closed sign is showing, you must not go beyond the signal in any lane.

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Autonomous Cars to Face Rain Challenge

As mentioned on page 6, rain challenges all drivers and autonomous vehicles are no different. Waymo, the Google-spin-off that is perhaps the furthest ahead of all major companies in autonomous vehicle testing, is starting a heavy-rain test of its self-driving cars. Jaguar I-Pace and Chrysler Pacifica minivans will be tested in the US “sunshine state” of Florida, on a closed course in Naples and then moved to Miami, a city that apparently averages nearly 62 inches of rain in summer which coincides with hurricane season.

According to Waymo, rain can create “noise” in the cars’ sensors. Also, people drive differently when it is wet. More information at:

<https://www.cnet.com/roadshow/news/waymo-florida-self-driving-cars-heavy-rain-testing/>

Pony.ai and Toyota partner to build self-driving cars and services

Chinese self-driving company Pony.ai is working with Toyota to test driverless technology using the Lexus RX and Pony’s autonomous driving system in both Beijing and Shanghai.

More details at:

<https://venturebeat.com/2019/08/25/pony-ai-toyota-partnership/>

Do you know someone learning how to drive or who has recently passed?

Ask them to join Driver 2020, a research project looking at ways to make young drivers safer, more confident and more skilful in their first year of driving: <https://driver2020.co.uk/>.

As a reward for participation they are offering regular incentives and a prize draw to win top prizes of a year’s free car insurance, or smaller prizes like vouchers and iPads.