

## Driving to Euro2004? Don't Score an Own Goal

Football fans heading to the Euro2004 Championships this month should be extra-careful if they plan to drive in Portugal, which is top of the European road death league, warns The AA Motoring Trust. Nearly four times as many people per head of population are killed on roads in Portugal than in the UK. Each year, more than 1,600 people die on Portuguese roads equivalent to 21 deaths per 100,000 population. This compares to 6 per 100,000 population in the UK. At Portuguese rates, the UK road death toll would be more than 12,000 a year, instead of the 3,400 that it is currently. Speeding, drink-driving, dangerous overtaking and poor lane discipline are largely to blame, along with the poor state of some of the countrys roads.

Research\* shows that the A1, which links Lisbon and Coimbra the venues for Englands first-round matches is among the most dangerous routes in Portugal. The A2, which joins Lisbon with the Algarve, where many fans are flying to before hiring a car to drive to Lisbon, is also among the most risky. And the worst road of all is the IP4, a key route into Porto, where England could play a semi-final clash.

Andrew Howard, head of road safety at The AA Motoring Trust, says: Thousands of fans are either taking their own car to Portugal, or hiring one when they get there. They must remember that, no matter how much experience they have of driving in the UK, it can be a completely different experience overseas especially in Portugal, which has a notorious road safety record.

The AA Motoring Trust also warns that the local brew could land football fans in drink-drive trouble in Portugal, where the alcohol content of some bottled beers is nearly 6 per cent.

To compound the problem, the drink-drive limit in Portugal is 0.05 per cent, which is lower than the UK limit of 0.08 per cent (80 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood).

Andrew Howard says: Drink-driving is already a real problem in Portugal, and motorists caught up in the football fever may be tempted to have one or more for the road. It could be fatal. The advice is for drivers to stick to soft drinks no matter which country they are driving in.

### NOTE TO EDITORS

\*Study by the Association for Safe International Road Travel. Road safety across Europe is set to improve as more motoring organisations support the AA-led EuroRAP (European Road Assessment Programme). The Portuguese motoring club (ACP) has expressed an interest in joining the programme.

General advice for UK motorists driving in Portugal:

- Photographic proof of identity needs to be carried at all times.
- People can be fined on the spot for motoring offences. Drivers are advised to get an official receipt showing the amount of the fine. Foreign motorists refusing to pay an on-the-spot fine will be asked for a deposit to cover the maximum fine for the offence committed. If a motorist refuses to do this the vehicle will be taken by the police.
- Unleaded petrol (95 and 98 octane) is available; there is no leaded petrol, but lead-replacement petrol is available as 98 octane. Diesel is available, but LPG availability is limited. Credit cards are accepted at most filling stations, but drivers should check with the card issuer to make sure it can be used in Portugal.
- Dipped headlights must be used in poor daytime visibility, in tunnels and on the main road linking Aveiro/Vilar Formoso at the Spanish frontier (IP5).
- Third-party motor insurance is compulsory.
- Children under 3 cannot travel as front-seat passengers unless seated in approved child seat; children over three and under 12 must use approved restraint system unless the car is a two-seater.
- Front and rear seat occupants must wear seat belts where they are fitted.
- Speed limits (varied by signs) for private vehicles without trailers: built-up areas 31 mph (50 km/h), outside built-up areas 55 mph (90 km/h) or 62 mph (100 km/h) and on motorways 74 mph (120 km/h). Minimum speed on motorways is 24 mph (40 km/h). Drivers who have held a driving licence for less than one year must not exceed 55 mph (90 km/h) or any lower speed limit.
- Warning triangle or hazard warning lights are compulsory in accidents or breakdowns. The AA Motoring Trust recommends that drivers carry a warning triangle.

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