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RAC warns drivers about wider roll-out of French pollution control scheme

A third of drivers planning a trip to France this year are unaware of new emissions regulations that can in some cases ban vehicles from entering built-up areas, according to new data from [RAC European Breakdown](#).^{*} With more locations joining the country's Crit'Air scheme the RAC is urging motorists to check if they are affected now.

Lille, a popular former European Capital of Culture just 90 minutes' drive from Calais, has now introduced an emergency emissions control scheme in its city centre plus 11 other districts within the Haut-de-France region. This is

applied during so-called 'pollution peaks', and the city has plans to introduce a permanent scheme as early as this autumn.

The Crit'Air scheme requires all vehicles entering particular locations – including those arriving from the UK – to display a 'vignette' or sticker that shows how polluting it is based on its Euro emissions category. The cleanest vehicles display a green sticker, the dirtiest that still qualify for the scheme a dark grey one. Cities and towns can then choose to restrict access only to those vehicles that are displaying particular stickers, in an attempt to improve local air quality. Those vehicles that do not qualify for any sticker also face restrictions. Nearly 50,000 UK drivers have already applied for Crit'Air stickers, [French media reports](#).

The city of Lille follows Paris, Grenoble and Lyon which all introduced emissions controls affecting private and business motorists earlier in the year. Paris has a permanent scheme, affecting drivers every weekday, while the other cities only restrict vehicles when pollution reaches a certain level – but for most drivers it will be difficult to predict exactly when these peaks will occur meaning it makes sense to [apply for a Crit'Air sticker now](#) if there is any chance they will visit any of these areas.

The roll-out of Crit'Air will not be stopping with these four cities. Strasbourg, a major tourist centre in the east of France, has announced it will begin to adopt the scheme from 1 November 2017 to control emissions. The restrictions will apply to the city centre plus 32 other areas within the wider city region. The RAC understands Bordeaux in the south west is also set to introduce a scheme before the end of the year. In total, between 2017 and 2020 a total of 25 cities are expected to begin to restrict vehicles using the Crit'Air scheme as France attempts to tackle its poor air quality.

Separate RAC research of drivers planning visits to the near continent this year has also cast a light on other things that could catch them out. Nearly half of those driving abroad before the end of 2017 did not know that motoring offences committed elsewhere in the EU can now, in effect, follow the offender back to the UK – while 55% of those planning a trip to France did not know how to recognise a French speed camera, a common sight on major routes in the country.

RAC European Breakdown spokesman Rod Dennis said: "The Crit'Air scheme is one of the ways the French government is trying to clean up the air in its

towns and cities, with some having unlawfully high levels of air pollution. Only time will tell how effective it is, but for UK motorists travelling across the Channel it's important to know the scheme is expanding and that the threat of a fine up to €135 (about £123) looms for anyone caught out by it.

“With Lille now joining the scheme, and plans afoot in popular tourist destinations including Strasbourg and Bordeaux, our message to drivers is simple – if there is even a small chance of you visiting any of the places which are affected then apply for a Crit’Air sticker now. Presuming you don’t change your car you only have to do it once as the sticker stays with the vehicle.

“It’s also important to remember that France is in effect operating two different types of emission control schemes, both of which rely on vehicles displaying a Crit’Air sticker. Paris and Grenoble have started operating permanent schemes that apply to particular times during the week, while others such as Lyon and Lille currently only use emergency schemes – giving the cities power to ban vehicles when pollution is expected to reach a certain level. But we expect as time moves on that an increasing number of towns and cities will probably opt for permanent schemes.

“A Crit’Air sticker costs about £4.40 (€4.80) and applying for one is a relatively simple, if not particularly fast, process. Drivers should ensure they apply only via the [official French government website](#) as the RAC is aware of a number of third party websites that sell the same sticker for substantially more money. A scan (or photo) of the car’s registration form will need to be uploaded, and it will also be necessary to check the Euro emissions category of the vehicle.”

The RAC has a [full guide to the Crit’Air scheme](#) for drivers, plus a [table to help motorists understand which Euro emissions category their vehicle falls into](#).

Notes to Editors

* Research conducted for the RAC by Ragdoll during July 2017

About the RAC

First formed in 1897 the RAC has been looking after the needs of its members and championing the interests of motorists for 120 years.

Today it has more than eight million members and is one of the UK's most progressive motoring organisations, providing services for both private and business motorists. Whether it's roadside assistance, insurance, buying a used car, vehicle inspections and checks, legal services or up-to-the-minute traffic and travel information – the RAC offers a solution for all motoring needs. The RAC is committed to making motoring easier, safer, more affordable and more enjoyable for drivers and road users.

The RAC is the motorist's champion and campaigns to support the interests of its members and UK motorists at a national level. This includes voicing concerns about the increasing cost of motoring, particularly the price of fuel and the high level of tax levied on it, advancing levels of road safety, and supporting the needs of all drivers, from young to old.

The RAC's annual [Report on Motoring](#) – first published in 1989 – provides a clear insight into the concerns and issues facing today's motorists.

For the very latest news on UK fuel prices, check [RAC Fuel Watch](#) or follow [#racfuelwatch on Twitter](#). RAC Fuel Watch is a comprehensive guide to the latest UK unleaded petrol and diesel prices – both at the wholesale level and at the pump. RAC Fuel Watch analyses how prices changed through the previous month and compares the most recent prices with those from three, six and 12 months before.

Key facts:

- RAC patrols fix four out of five vehicles at the roadside and on average within 30 minutes
- RAC vans carry more than 500 parts and tools to get members' vehicles going again
- 92% of members would recommend RAC Rescue to their friends and family

Contacts



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