

Cameras to calculate average speed

NEW average speed cameras are to be installed on roads from next year in a bid to cut the 4,262 annual death toll.

So-called *radars-tronçons* will be installed throughout France, with 100 expected to be in place by 2012 – although the transport minister would not detail the sites to be used. Two sets of speed cameras are set up, over several kilometres, and they scan the registration and speed of each vehicle underneath.

A computer linked to the cameras calculates the average speed of vehicles between the two points to avoid the well-known trick of slowing down after the *zone de contrôles radar fréquents* signs.

Test radars on the A10 at Orleans show drivers their average speed but the ministry has not said if this will continue as it wants to cut road deaths to under 3,000 by 2012 and may issue penalties.

Travel Q&A

Carte bleue not accepted

I GOT an unpleasant surprise when I tried to pay online for a Flybe flight from Bergerac to Birmingham.

Breaking down autoroute driving

By Simon Watkinson

FRENCH motorways are mostly toll roads built by private firms.

The network of more than 8,600km has some basic rules:

In dry driving conditions, the motorway speed limit for a car is 130kph, but in wet conditions and at all times for drivers who have held a licence for under two years it is 110kph. Drivers should drive on dipped headlights – not fog lamps – in wet conditions.

Some motorways – such as the A8 – have a 110kph limit to try to cut down on pollution, with ozone being a particular problem in strong sunshine.

Anyone caught travelling at more than 25kph above the limit could have their licence confiscated on the spot.

There is also a minimum speed limit of 80kph on the outside lane of motorways during the day and where the road is level.

On occasions the right-hand lane is reserved for slow vehicles – like a crawler lane – and vehicles in this lane should not go above 60kph. Before setting out it can be worth consulting the website <http://tinyurl.com/autoroutes> which details all speed camera locations by region.

For safety's sake, keep at least two complete lines, of the long lines along the right-hand edge of the autoroute, between yourself and the next vehicle; double this safety braking distance in wet conditions. Any infringement could mean a fine of up to €750.

By law you must carry a yellow fluorescent high-visibility jacket inside your vehicle, otherwise you could



HELP: The woman faces a fine for not wearing her high-visibility jacket – or, worse, being hit by a passing car

incur an instant fine of up to €130. If you break down you should put this on before getting out of the car.

If you break down on the autoroute or are involved in an accident, switch on your hazard lights and, if possible, park on the hard shoulder.

Put the jacket on and exit the car on the right side – the side furthest from traffic. Make sure all passengers get out the same side and then step behind the safety barrier at the roadside.

French law says you should carry a red warning triangle and set it up 30m behind your car, however this does not apply to motorway breakdowns where

it is considered too unsafe to do this.

The best way to get help is to find an emergency telephone box (orange post). These are located every 2 km along the motorway. Wearing your safety jacket, keep behind the safety barrier until you come to one.

Pressing the button puts you through to the motorway surveillance team and they or the police will send assistance. Go back to the car and wait behind the safety barrier for help to arrive. Alternatively, dial 17 from a public phone, or 112 from a mobile phone.

The French motorway network has a

24-hour breakdown service provided by approved operators. The flat fee of €113 (incl. VAT) for weekday recovery of a vehicle weighing up to 1.8 tonnes fully laden between 8.00 and 18.00 is higher at weekends and on bank holidays. This fee includes a repair of up to 30 minutes, either in situ or after towing to a service area; or towing to an approved garage or location requested by the motorist, including the first five kilometres from the motorway. Some insurance companies reimburse the cost of towing to an exit junction and expenses such as a taxi – but check with your insurer.