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WHEN IN EUROPE . . .

by Richard H. Poe

ARE YOU planning an automobile tour through Europe? Here are some useful tips for any driver and special hints for the devoted one, based on living over here a few years.

Whether you bring your own car over, or buy or rent one here, certain papers will be needed for it. First is the "Carnet de Passage" or automobile passport. Contrary to government announcements and tourist bulletins, it is still required in crossing frontiers. Second, get your International Insurance Certificate or "Green Paper." Generally speaking, American policies are not good in Europe. You can buy the insurance on a short-term basis. Last, get an International Driving Permit and a special one for England. These documents can be arranged through local AAA offices in the States or through the agency which supplies the car.

While you are spending evenings calculating the budget for the trip, may I caution you to take two items into consideration? High-test or super-grade gasoline costs from 50 cents to a dollar per gallon. Gasoline coupons are available for France and Italy, however, at 30 to 40% under the normal rate. These coupons are for tourists only and can be purchased at any automobile club. If you plan to cross the English Channel on one of the car ferries, fare for the car and two people will be about \$35. Air ferry service is slightly more. Whichever way you go, a reservation is definitely required during the summer months. The automobile club or British Railways office can do it for you.

Just to make driving easier for you, there are standard international road signs. They are easy to learn and the AAA can give you a list or you may get one when you arrive. The really important things to remember are these: On the Continent, unless you are definitely given the right of way by a light or



"The American Ambassador is going to hear about this!"

sign, the car approaching from the right has priority at all intersections. Keep in mind that everything is reversed in England. If you have a left hand-drive car, an outside mirror on the right side will be very handy. In England there are black and white striped crosswalks for pedestrians. If a pedestrian has so much as a toe in that area, you stop. The fine for a mistake on this is a tough one.

If your plans call for a long stay in France, arrange for yellow headlights. They are standard there and will save your getting lights flashed and horns blown at you. When changing directions even to pass, use your directional signals and horn. France has a quiet campaign on, so use your lights instead of the horn in towns.

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Bicycles and scooters are a major form of transportation here. While their riders are generally pretty good about giving signals, be extremely cautious. Give them a signal in plenty of time and be sure not to misjudge their speed. They can travel at 50 to 60 miles per hour. Keep an eye on your rear-view mirror. On the open roads, there are no speed limits. A new Gran Turismo coming up at 100 mph can give you a real surprise.

Mechanical service is generally good and the car manufacturers provide lists of their agencies throughout Europe. Ask for them in advance. Shell and British Petroleum have small phrase books which will go a long way toward solving any problems a tourist might have along those lines. Another word of caution, though. With the exception of England and Germany, don't expect to have any work done between noon and two o'clock.

Let's start our tour with England. The Royal Automobile Club, Pall Mall, London, can set you up with maps, guides and accommodation directories. For the motor sport enthusiast, the competition department provides the annual fixture list and directory. This handy little book gives the competition rules, the list of events, and the addresses of every car club in Britain. The Automobile Association and Trust Houses, Ltd., are also sources of touring information and places to stay. Try some of the country inns. If you are here in winter or fall, keep in mind that the English are not great believers in central heating.

Bench racing and car gossip headquarters in London is the Steering Wheel Club, 2A Brick Street (10 steps from Park Lane). While it is a private club, Peggy Sandberg, the manageress, can arrange a visitor's membership for you. Frank, the only bartender in the world with his own private car badge, has a huge collection of car badges adorning the walls.

Next stop is any one of the three collections of cars and engines. The South Kensington Science Museum in London is open every day and houses one of the largest collections anywhere. The Beaulieu Museum, Beaulieu, Hampshire, has just added the Seagrave Golden Arrow to its collection. The Shuttlesworth Trust, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, has a collection of cars and World War I planes well worth seeing. It is open by appointment only, but a letter or phone call will take care of this.

Most of England's major race courses are within easy driving distance of London. It is a good idea to buy your ticket in advance and to start early.

On to France, where your first stop should be the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile at 8 Place de la Concorde. They can give you the international competition schedule. The Automobile Club of France has copies of the national competition list, can help with tickets, and is, of course, the place to go for touring information. With the exception of the Steering Wheel, the bar at *L'Action Automobile* is the only place on the Continent where motoring enthusiasts seem to gather.

Make your next stop in Lyons. Henri Malartre, 136 Avenue Berthelot, has a collection of over 170 antique, veteran and vintage cars, some of which are for sale.

In Italy, the Stadio Comunale (municipal stadium) is the home of the old cars, spe-

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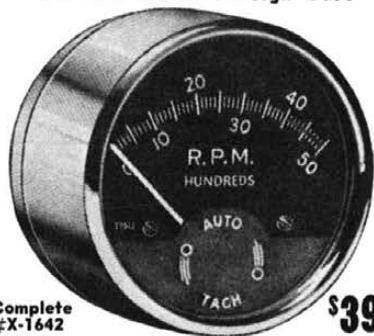


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cial of past years, and the racing Alfas, Ferraris and Maseratis. It is open six days a week and is the only collection of cars in Italy open to the public.

Another must stop is, of course, the Daimler-Benz museum in Stuttgart. Your reception will be a highlight of the trip. While on the subject of Germany, the Nurburg Ring is open all year; for a small fee, you can drive around it. (This is also true of Monza.) While most of Europe's race courses are within an easy drive of at least one large city, the Nurburg Ring is an exception. The nearest town, Adenau, is very small. Unless you make a definite hotel reservation well in advance for race days, plan to camp out. There is plenty of space, and cafes and restaurants are in abundance. If you are not planning to spend one or more nights there prior to the race, Luxembourg City is a fairly easy three to four-hour drive away. Though grandstand seats must be arranged in advance, tickets for areas around the course are readily available on race day. For advance tickets, write to the Automobile Club von Deutschland, Munich. The German touring club is the Allgemeiner Deutscher Automobile Club in Munich.

Continuing north, you can make your next stop in Gent, Belgium. Ghislain Mahy, St. Pietersnieuwstraat 11, owns a 100-car collection. As this is a private collection, a phone call or letter in advance is a necessity.

If you are going on to Copenhagen, the Science and Technical Museum has the surviving sample of the only car ever designed in Denmark. It is a motorized wagon called the Hammel and was built in the 1880's.

The automobile plants throughout Europe are usually open for tours every day. A call to the public relations department will give you the information as to times or how to arrange a special tour. A trip to the new Fiat plant in Turin is especially worthwhile.

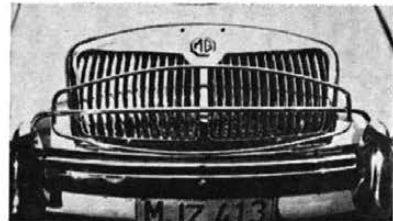
On the drive from France to Italy (or vice versa), the two main routes are along the coast toward Genoa or over the mountains to Turin. Both are beautiful drives, but it is best to avoid the coast on Sundays. The mountain passes start closing about October or November. For the late fall or winter tourist, there are trains from Modane, France, to Bardonecchia, Italy. These will carry you and your car through the mountains. A similar service operates from Brig, Switzerland, to Domodossola, Italy.

At least a part of the fun in coming to Europe is choosing the food and lodgings. You can select the de luxe hotel or the country inn. In whichever direction your taste and pocketbook run, may I suggest that you get a copy of the *Guide Michelin* for both France and Italy? These list hotels and restaurants (with prices), service agencies, things to see, and invaluable city maps with the hotels marked.

While talking about food, here is a money-saving idea. Picnicking along the road is an old custom here. The hotel can prepare lunch for you, or you may buy the ingredients in a local store. In France, Switzerland and Austria, you can take your picnic into a cafe (not a restaurant) if you order wine or other beverages there.

The problem of language should not concern you. Naturally, it will be easier if you speak one of the European languages. However, English is becoming the second language here, so it is no real problem.

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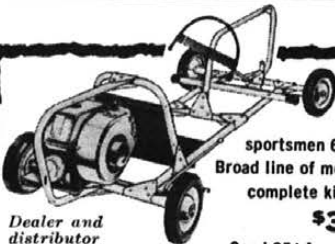


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