PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 19 May 2009

EMBARGO: Not before Tuesday, 19 May 2009, 06:00

Good service – A concept unknown to many car rental agencies

Finally summer holidays start: bright blue skies and a happy family arriving at the holiday destination. The idea of renting a car and taking an adventurous trip into the countryside comes up. But the adventure begins sooner than expected in the office of the car rental agency where the waiting begins. When the time finally comes to approach the counter, staff seems to have no interest whatsoever. Questions about insurance and deposits are laughed off, and the only information provided is that the car is somewhere out in the car park. When the family finally finds the car, the tank is empty, the radio is broken and the mood is far from sunny.

For the third time the EuroTest partner clubs tested car rentals in popular summer holiday destinations: 60 rented cars along with the service provided by the car rental companies were tested in Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain, Croatia and Turkey. It was very disappointing that this test failed to show any improvements compared to previous years: 37 companies failed to pass the service category.

The cars were rented directly on site for a spontaneous day trip during the main travel period between 5 and 18 July 2008. In order to gain a representative sample, the testers were incognito and rented six vehicles within four days from different car rental companies on location. Since the test had a "day-trip" orientation, small cars as well as one off-road vehicle were rented.

This time the last-place went for the Nissan Micra, offered by Europcar in Thira on the Greek island of Santorini, which was found to be in terrible condition: numerous serious defects, such as two distorted rims on the front axle, a badly damaged tyre side wall and a missing wheel nut on the rear right tyre, meant that this car should not be on the road - and especially not for hire! Together with poor service across the board, last place was the only ranking possible for this renowned car hire agency.

The 2009 winner was the car rental agency National on the Greek island of Kos which provided good service and a very good vehicle in the form of a Chevrolet Matiz. Second and third place went to Croatia. Hertz in Dubrovnik, with a brand new Fiat Punto, was the only agency in the test to come up with a perfect car without a single fault. However, this agency was found to have some flaws in service and this was why it missed first place.

Five of the seven off-road vehicles in the test were found to have considerable defects including damage to the chassis, steering or brakes. Equipment and passenger safety in these vehicles were also found to be lacking. Airbags for the front passenger and rear seat belts were seldom found. The poor ratings for off-road vehicles are all the more worrying since many tourists only ever get into a jeep when on holiday and hence have very little experience with these vehicles.

Top service, a car in perfect condition and no-surprise terms and conditions - that would be ideal. But the aim of a care-free holiday trip with a hired car has yet to be reached in many places. Especially when it comes to service, car rental agencies still have a lot to learn. It is important that holidaymakers be able to rest assured that car rental agencies will treat them fairly and inform them correctly, and that the vehicle provided will be in a technically perfect, road-worthy condition.

For more information about the EuroTest Car Hire study visit: http://www.eurotestmobility.com

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Notes to editors

1. The Car Hire study study covered 60 rented cars along 6 holiday destinations in Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain, Croatia and Turkey.
2. Through EuroTest, 18 automobile clubs in 17 countries, members of the FIA, have been putting the quality and safety of mobility in Europe to the test since 2000 for the benefit of their members and all mobile consumers in Europe. The EuroTest partners have constantly called for a Europe where the mobile consumer can circulate freely using quality infrastructure and in safety.

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