



Get a sticker or be stuck with a fine

If you are heading to France by car and intend to drive anywhere near Paris, Grenoble or Lyon, you need to apply online for a “clean air” windscreen sticker for your car before you set off.

This new measure, called a Crit’Air vignette, has been introduced to identify a vehicle’s level of emissions and help limit air pollution.

A sticker costs €4.80 and can be obtained using information on a car’s registration document through the website of the French Ministry of Transport at www.certificat-air.gouv.fr/en

If pollution reaches a critical level — likely to be on hot, still, summer days when smog accumulates — the mayors of those three cities have the power to ban the worst polluting vehicles from urban areas. Although the restrictions will only apply on such days, it is a legal requirement for all vehicles to carry a sticker at all times in those places. Failure to do so could attract an on-the-spot fine of up to £120.

Rod Dennis, of the RAC, says: “If you think you may be travelling to any of these three cities this year, we strongly recommend you get one of these stickers. It’s simple and it’s not something that needs renewing. Once you’ve got a sticker it will last the lifetime of the car. So, if you’re planning a trip, do it early.”

The regulations are already in force but

the French authorities have said they will show leniency towards foreign drivers during the introductory period. The English language website is simple to use. However, you need to scan in the relevant page of your car’s registration document (V5C) and upload it with the application. This needs to be done with care as there is a limit on the file size of 400KB and it needs to be in jpeg, png or pdf format.

The sticker is usually posted out within a few days, although the RAC says that on one of its trial applications it was six weeks before a sticker arrived. The RAC has also warned motorists to check that they only apply through the official site.

The rules apply to all vehicles, from motorcycles to heavy goods and includes transport for the disabled.

There are six categories of Euro emission levels from the cleanest, non-polluting electric cars (1) to older, dirtier diesels (6), which are the most likely to be banned at peak times. Some very old vehicles may not have such a category and they are also likely to be kept out of the cities at peak times. A further 21 French towns and cities are said to be considering similar rules. If there is any difficulty finding the relevant level on a registration certificate, it can be checked at: www.rac.co.uk/drive/advice/know-how/euro-emissions-standards

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