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Driving in the Outer Hebrides

By Steve Hatherley

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When you think of the Outer Hebrides, you normally think of sandy beaches, ancient standing stones and lilting Scottish accents. You don't normally associate the Outer Hebrides with some of the best driving in the British Isles...

I certainly didn't expect to enjoy the driving so much when I visited the Western Isles (the other name for the Outer Hebrides) in Scotland recently.

It certainly isn't speed that makes the roads in the Outer Hebrides so exhilarating. In fact, for much of the time I didn't get out of third gear...

The roads are often single track with passing places. And where they are single track, often there are rocky ditches either side of a surprisingly narrow track. If you are at all in doubt of the width of your car, don't drive on the Outer Hebrides!

If the width of the roads wasn't enough, there are other distractions to keep you busy. The first are sheep. There are several times as many sheep on the Outer Hebrides as there are people, and for some reason sheep enjoy standing around in the middle of the road. Lambs are particularly lively and you have to take care when passing.

The other distraction is the often jaw-dropping scenery. Sometimes it's all too tempting to look at the view when you should be watching the road...

The roads themselves are often sinuous, snaking their way through rugged scenery. You can't relax for a moment when you're behind the wheel in the Outer Hebrides.

Fortunately there isn't much other traffic. And while it's always polite to wave to someone who pulls over to let you pass (and return their wave), you quickly find that everyone waves anyway - even

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where you don't need to pull over. (One chap painting his fence even waved as we drove past.)

The combination of sinuous, single-track roads with awesome scenery populated by obstructive sheep and polite drivers makes driving in the Outer Hebrides such a pleasure.

My top tips for driving in the Outer Hebrides: Make sure you have a car with a good third gear. You'll spend most of your time in third. The B8011 from Calanais to Uig Sands on Lewis is fantastic. The beach at Uig Sands is wonderful, but it's worth going there for the drive alone. If you have a passenger with you, get them to help by spotting approaching cars. An extra pair of eyes can be invaluable.

And although I have now returned from the Outer Hebrides, I have found that I've brought a little of the islands with me: I'm much more patient and polite than I used to be behind the wheel - and that can only be a good thing.

Steve Hatherley enjoys driving in Yorkshire as well as the Outer Hebrides. He is also a fan of murder mystery games murder mystery games (

) and is a

founding partner of Freeform Games LLP (

)

Hot Tips To Ace Your Driving Test

By Pete Lance

Undergoing the driving test is the most important criterion to getting your license. This test is usually conducted by Department of Transport of your country.

Usually the test consists of two sections, namely the theory and the practical.

If you'd like to get "high score" in the driving test to beat the test taking game, you should go through the driver's license test guide written by actual driving experts before appearing for the test.

You should study those books on road rules to get maximum marks in your driving test. You can easily grab a copy of the book by visiting the

and obtain it within 3–4 days.

Before taking your written driving test, practice answering the example questions available in test booklets and guidebooks. You can also enroll yourself in Driving Knowledge Tutorials, which are readily available in on-line. This is a good way to get a good grasp of the written test.

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While doing practical driving training sessions, it is highly recommended to drive your car on roads of different standards. You can also attempt to go for hill driving. This will boost up your confidence while doing your driving tests.

The vehicle, which you are going to use for your test, should be roadworthy and all tires should have a minimum depth of 1.6mm. Everything should be in perfect working order, e.g., mirrors, indicators, windscreen wipers, etc. The interior and exterior of your car should be clean. Do remember to display L-plates on your car on the day of your test drive.

The driving test authorities can ask you to do a technical check of your vehicle. Sometimes they will ask you to remove a tire by using a jockey. So you should be well versed in this aspect.

On the test day, you should arrive at the test center at least 30 minutes prior to your turn. When your name is called and you are brought in, your test officially begins. Good luck!

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