

## GLOBAL NEWS



### WANNA USE A BUS LANE IN NEW ZEALAND? USE A BLOW-UP DOLL!

Motorists in Auckland, New Zealand are resorting to some ludicrous measures to justify driving in bus and taxi lanes in which vehicles carrying at least three occupants can have the use of. Multiple occupancy means you can move much faster along the congested arterial routes of the country's biggest city. Perhaps the traffic doesn't quite match that of London, but it's a close second!

Some drivers have even placed pillows in the vehicle's baby seats in an attempt to convince traffic inspectors that they are not alone in their vehicle. The city's North Shore council traffic manager, Andre Dannhauser, told Taxi Globe:

"We never cease to be amazed by the antics that people come up with - and the excuses they offer! Probably the most common one is the imaginary passengers they claim we couldn't see because they were so small! But surely the desperation of some who really believe that they can get away with using a blow-up doll is just laughable. In fact, if it were not deliberate deception, we probably would laugh!"

Some enterprising students even charge a small fee to get driven past the enforcement officers before running back up the road to repeat the trick! But according to Andre, the cash they generate from that stunt isn't enough to pay for the beer thirst they generate by running there and back. Aucklanders are notorious for their love of cars. Relatively low fuel and vehicle prices compared to most other places and a dearth of public transport in a city stretching across the same area as London, led to a higher car ownership rate than Los Angeles.

Drivers caught trying to beat the system are fined NZ\$150. About 20 drivers are caught out each day, with North Shore council amassing up to \$80,000 a month in fines. One Auckland cab driver, Pete Ross, who emigrated there 12 years ago from Blackpool, told us: "I've seen the Fools and Horses episode where Del boy gets the delivery of blow-up dolls. Believe me, however funny that was, it's nowhere near as amusing as seeing a car trying to pull in front of you with a passenger" who keeps wobbling from side to side!"

### PARIS LOOKING FOR MORE TAXI DRIVERS...

Following negotiations with the government, militant French unions have agreed to increase the number of taxis in Paris by over 4000 over the next four years. Vehicle numbers will rise from the current 16000 to 20,000 over that period.

A spokesman for the National Taxi Federation said the move was made because of intense pressure to increase the number of taxis in the French capital, where even President Sarkozy claimed that Paris was the only major city in the world where there was a problem finding a taxi.

Unlike London, Paris has virtually no minicabs, which more than doubles the number of licensed vehicles over here. In January and February this year, taxi drivers went on strike and blockaded city centres in protest at reforms proposed by a special commission – set up by President Sarkozy to investigate methods to improve the French economy.

Prime Minister François Fillion said the reforms, which included deregulation of the sector to allow minicabs, were merely a suggestion and not government policy.

### £1500 OF IRISH RUBBISH...!

A taxi driver from Dublin was "shocked beyond belief" when an Irish court fined him £50 for throwing a used phone card out the window of his taxi. Then, when Patrick Murphy didn't pay the on-the-spot fine, the Dublin District Court at a hearing that he failed to attend, increased it to £1,500! Mr Murphy immediately lodged an appeal against the decision.

However, when the case was called in the Circuit Civil Court, Mr Murphy failed to appear yet again and Judge James Birkley reaffirmed the £1,500 fine - the maximum payable under the 1997 Litter Pollution Act.

Taxi Globe was told that last year the number of fines under the Litter Pollution Act is increasing yearly and according to a spokesperson at Dublin Corporation, around thirty maximum fines are imposed each year. "While we do not keep records that say whether the perpetrator is a taxi driver or not," he told The Globe, "I do know that there have been several instances of taxi drivers being caught for disposing of rubbish through their window. We have 20 litter wardens working around the clock and an increasing number of public spirited individuals who have reported litter louts to the authorities, whether they be cab drivers or not."

He finished by saying that any member of the public could make a complaint and that they would act upon that. "The Litter Pollution Act is one piece of legislation where the onus is on the accused to prove they did not do it, rather than the other way around," he finished. And for London drivers? According to a police spokeswoman, anyone disposing of rubbish on the public highway or byway is liable to be fined if caught. And, if Patrick Murphy's case is anything to go by, it could be an expensive throwaway...!

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