

REGENT STREET TRAFFIC FREE DAY

'A Taste of Spain' comes back to London on Sunday 6th June and Regent Street will be traffic free for the day. The free festival will have giant paellas, flamenco music, medieval food markets and a range of interactive sports challenges and events, whisking visitors away for a day to Spain's sunnier shores. Gastro fans or culture vultures can stroll through Aragón, Andalucía, Segovia, Valencia and Navarra to unravel the secrets of the regions and sample some tasty 'comida Española' such as jamón, gazpacho, piglet and paella. For island sunshine, Gran Canaria offers the chance to pick up a sunny holiday snapshot and guests can even try virtual horse riding in the Balearics. The main stage will welcome highly acclaimed Spanish guitarist Paco Fernández and La Gente del Sol plus Foc i Fum from Ibiza, Spanish indie artist Annie B Sweet from Málaga, brass band Charanga La Chicuelina from Segovia and traditional flamenco music from Andalucía.

The event will include many interactive sporting activities showing the wide range of sports that can be practised in Spain, including an F1 simulator featuring the Montmeló F1 track in Barcelona and state-of-the-art MotoGP simulators replicating the popular 'Circuito de Jerez' in Andalucía.

Also visitors to Regent Street A Taste Of Spain are going to play Wii Tennis, Speed Shot Analysis, the Longest Golf Putt, basketball and football.



VOLCANIC ASH LEAVES TAXI TRADE SHORT OF CASH

When European airspace, including that of the UK, was affected by volcanic ash during mid-April, it was hoped it was a one-off event. For the cab trade, the loss of work at Heathrow made the Feeder Park look like a ghost town. Renewed activity by the volcano has led to a sporadic pattern of airspace closures all over Europe. This causes major problems and current legislation leaves the travel industry carrying the liability for events over which they have no control.

With any closure of airspace incoming business is cancelled as clients are not able to arrive. It also means an emergency extension of stays as departing travellers are stranded. The moment flights are able to operate, airlines honour existing bookings before handling those held back from previously cancelled flights. This means that, whilst new groups and individual visitors start travelling, a backlog of travellers remains. Although there are some reports of taxi drivers taking longer and more unusual journeys for their passengers, in the main other methods of transport have been used, including rail and coach.

But the disruption has created some major financial difficulties; airlines have a responsibility for their non-delivery of service and many passengers are seeking redress from

their airline for expenses incurred whilst waiting. Some operators incur costs looking after their clients that have to be claimed from the airline. Airlines not only lose revenue from cancellations, they have to sustain their clients, often at a level disproportionate to the cost of the ticket. Then hotels have been affected with non-arrival of clients at hotels. Flights are cancelled on a 12 hour cycle so a client's non-appearance can only be anticipated in hours. Cancelling at such short notice means that charges apply. Such charges have been incurred by tour operators and they have no way of recovering them.

The disruption damages the entire tourism industry. The closure of airports causes immediate temporary lay-offs. But absent inbound visitors affect the entire service economy. Taxis, ticket agencies, attractions, hotels, restaurants and shops have all experienced damaging downturns as a result. Tom Jenkins, European Tour Operators Association Executive Director, said: "The situation is one which no-one predicted and so no-one planned. But any decision to close airspace is a decision to stop a wide range of economic activity. As safety cannot be compromised, we now have a real problem. When such a pronouncement causes so much damage, there should be reciprocal relief."

EAST LONDON CABBIES OUTING



Once again this year, the ELCO will be going to Maldon.

We need drivers for this years outing
on Wednesday 7th July.

If you would like to put a smile on the face of
a special needs child, please give us a ring.

Ken 07973462351 Jeff 07841395006

CONFUSION OVER CARELESS DRIVING

Transport Law specialists at Rothera Dowson Solicitors want the Department of Transport to abandon proposals to extend Fixed Penalty Notices to Careless Driving after survey results revealed that a staggering 95% of drivers are confused about what constitutes Careless Driving. The survey, conducted by the law firm this month, went on to ask drivers which activities carried out whilst driving constituted Careless Driving. In addition, drivers were questioned as to how regularly they engaged in such behaviour themselves.

During the same month where a Birmingham bus driver was filmed reading a book and steering with his elbows, an overwhelming 87% of drivers surveyed admitted to eating or drinking behind the wheel; 44% stated that they would not think twice about inputting data into a sat nav whilst driving; 24% admitted to applying make-up; and 27% said they regularly smoked whilst on the road. Neither London's taxi drivers, or private hire drivers, are not allowed to smoke in their vehicles, some ph drivers do rely heavily on their sat navs.

Anton Balkitis, Head of Transport Law at Rothera Dowson, explains: "Our driver survey confirms what we expected. Most motorists are confused about what constitutes Careless Driving. With recent high-profile media cases including one where a driver was charged with Careless Driving for blowing his nose whilst stationary in traffic, is it right to introduce Fixed Penalty Notices where drivers may lose the opportunity of challenging such decisions in Court if they "accept" the notice at the roadside?"

"Police officers aren't always right when it comes to the application of the law, particularly with an offence such as Careless Driving encompassing such a wide range of driving behaviours and standards. The way to ensure the best chance of applying the law correctly is to have a court where there are legally qualified advisers to assist the Magistrates hearing the case. To allow a police officer to become prosecutor, judge and jury on the matter is highly likely to result in the wrongful conviction of many innocent motorists."