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Dear Trade Partner

Re: Camper van rentals and foreign drivers

You may recently have become aware of a letter circulated by the Deutschen ReiseVerband (German Travel Association) to its members expressing a concern that customers with EU class B driver licences issued after 1 January 1999 may not be licensed to drive vehicles with a Gross Vehicle Weight over 3.5 tonnes when they holiday overseas. The letter says that this is an important restriction and refers in particular to camper van hires in the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

We have asked Deutschen ReiseVerband to issue a correction to this letter, as we believe that the concerns expressed in it are based upon a flawed premise.


The concerns expressed in Deutschen ReiseVerband's letter reflect driver licensing rules that apply in the EU. However, these often differ greatly from the rules that apply to foreign drivers in non-EU countries. It is a fundamental principle of law that independent sovereign states each have their own laws and regulations, including rules that govern which vehicles foreign drivers may drive when in those countries. EU rules do not apply in countries that are not part of the EU and there is no reason to assume that their rules for foreign drivers will be the same as the EU's rules. While many countries have signed international conventions that require them to recognise foreign driver licences, they each enact their own specific laws to govern which vehicles foreign drivers may drive.

Deutschen ReiseVerband's letter assumes that EU drivers, when driving overseas, are limited to the vehicles that they are entitled to drive in the EU. However, it has long been recognised in many non-EU countries that a tourist may drive any vehicle permitted under the equivalent class of licence issued by the authorities in that country, regardless of the weight of the vehicle. This makes sense, as the weight limits and rules in other countries reflect their particular driving conditions and the types of vehicles commonly in use there. For instance, we understand that many states of the USA do not impose any weight limit upon foreign drivers and those that do generally have a limit that is above the weights of the vehicles that we hire.

For the avoidance of doubt, we have discussed this issue with our insurers, who have confirmed that they do not view it as a concern.

In summary, the rules that apply to EU drivers who hire camper vans in non EU countries are the local laws of those countries, and there is no reason to assume that the limitations of their home licences will necessarily apply. EU drivers who were first licensed after 1 January 1999 should check with the hire agency in the country where they are renting if they have any concerns.

Kind regards


Chief Executive Officer
Tourism Holdings Limited

Self drive experiences

New Zealand
Australia
USA
UK

Design & manufacturing

New Zealand
Australia

Guided experiences

New Zealand