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Motoring

SANTA'S A PETROLHEAD TOO



HAVE IT ALL MAPPED OUT

Rather than rely purely on your sat-nav for Christmas jaunts, why not buy a 2014 map so that you build up your geographical knowledge? The AA's Big Road Atlas and smaller Motorist's Atlas (fits in your car door pocket or bike top box, both are £10.99) are just the job, with clear mapping and route-planner pages. Both are spiral-bound.

theaa.com/shop.com

BOOTS MEANT FOR WALKING

Handcrafted in France since 1853 for farming, hunting and fishing... and perfect when you're jet-washing your car or driveway. These luxurious-feeling Aigle Parours 2 ISOs don't just look the business, they are extremely comfy too thanks to an adjustable gusset and snug 4.5mm neoprene lining for insulation on cold days. Keep them in the boot for snow hikes; built specially for all-day wear and long-distance walking. £154.99.

thewellyshop.com



TRAVEL KIT TO THE RESCUE

Avoid being unprepared for festive snow with Ring Automotive's £29.99 Emergency Travel Kit, which includes warning triangle, hi-viz jacket, bulb kit, torch, cotton gloves, jump leads, first aid kit and foil blanket... everything bar a brandy-bearing St Bernard.

ringautomotive.co.uk

What do you get the motorist in your life for Christmas, when they have it all? **David Williams** reviews a selection of excellent gifts that will make life in 2014 easier, more fun, or just plain luxurious



LET'S GET TALKING

Dreading the dull moments as you drive from one relative's house to the next this Christmas? Dubbed the 'talking games that have everyone talking', The Art of Conversation Cards will help. Lovingly produced and researched, they are packaged in fetchingly designed boxes, each containing 300 cards and listing three carefully selected opening gambits for conversations. A typical prompt in the Travel box might ask 'How and where have you overcome the language barrier?' or a famous travel quote for debate. Other boxes focus on literature and food. Questions are graded for the young and old. £9.98 each.

From Amazon, Foyles and Waterstones



FOR THE RECORD

Ever recorded your commute? Mostly it's like watching paint dry but I caught one roadside punch-up while testing the MiVue 338 personal drive recorder. Half the size of a phone and with a two-inch colour display, it "sucks" to the windscreen and records in a continuous loop, stopping automatically if there's a jolt, catching useful collision evidence. £99.99 from Halfords.

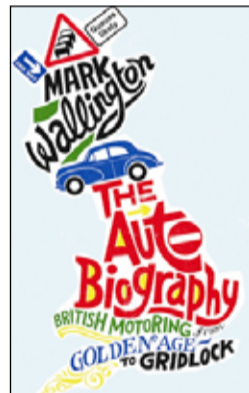
halfords.com



LET THE MUSIC PLAY

If you enjoy music in the car but miss the beat when you reach the hotel, the Bayan Audio's Soundbook is the answer. This 15W unit fits in your glovebox and has rechargeable batteries. It looks great and connects to your iPhone or similar by Bluetooth. It has an FM radio and automatically turns on when the tough travel cover is opened to form a stand. A built-in mic for hands-free switches to and from calls. £149.99.

bayanaudio.com



READING MATTERS

Christmas is the only time of year some people get for reading... so why not curl up with The Auto Biography, by Mark Wallington? It's an affectionate look at 'motoring in Britain from golden age to gridlock'. This warm tale, seen through the eyes of the author from boyhood to, shall we say late middle-age, is a lighthearted history of motoring from the 50s. £14.99, published by the AA.

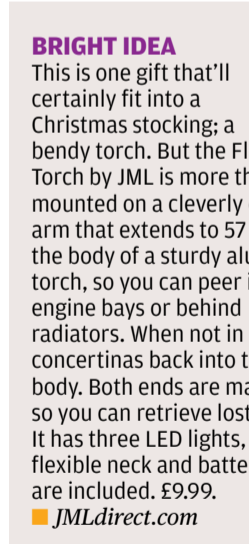
theaa.com/shop.com



BAG OF TRICKS

If you designed your dream cabin bag from scratch, it would probably end up exactly like the superb Gate8, a tough multi-function 'tri-fold garment bag', with more hidden pockets and pouches than there are days of Christmas. Made of tough, ballistic polyester with equally rugged zips, it ingeniously packs in a fold-out garment bag to keep up to two suits crease-free. £149.

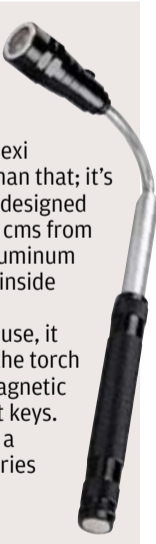
gate8-luggage.co.uk



BRIGHT IDEA

This is one gift that'll certainly fit into a Christmas stocking: a bendy torch. But the Flexi Torch by JML is more than that; it's mounted on a cleverly designed arm that extends to 57 cms from the body of a sturdy aluminum torch, so you can peer inside engine bays or behind radiators. When not in use, it concertinas back into the torch body. Both ends are magnetic so you can retrieve lost keys. It has three LED lights, a flexible neck and batteries are included. £9.99.

JMLdirect.com



SHOW OFF YOUR TICKETS

The simplest ideas are often best – and so it proves with the Tikettak, a clear, heat-resistant polycarbonate resin clip that self-sticks in your windscreen to hold parking tickets and passes. Prevents hours of rubbing with a cloth to remove all the glue. You'll wonder how you managed without one. £1.99.

amazon.co.uk



YOU KNOW IT MAKES SENSE

Drinking and driving is not only illegal but a mug's game... even if you do it by mistake. One way to avoid the 'morning after' effect is to use a breathalyser such as the AlcoSense Lite, designed to fit in your pocket or handbag. The device is simple to use and costs £39.99 – cheap compared with getting it all wrong. The makers say one-fifth of drink-related accidents occur the morning after; just three to four drinks the night before could put you over the limit the next day.

boots.com



HANDS ON THE WHEEL, PLEASE

Bluetooth earpieces don't come much better than the Jabra Motion, a discreet folding device. When the boom-arm is flipped open, it automatically turns on. The unit detects any movement instantly and when it's picked up, it answers calls automatically. If the user starts walking, the volume is automatically adjusted. £99.99.

amazon.co.uk



PEUGEOT'S PRACTICAL PACKAGE

SMALL Peugeots have always been fun to drive but a little cramped, so a crossover version of the firm's latest supermini, the 208, looks like a good idea.

Badged 208S, this taller, boxier model is certainly economical – on one cross-country run I managed well over 60mpg, although reaching Peugeot's claimed 70.6mpg seems a tall order. Like the 208, it has a tiny steering wheel and high-mounted instruments, so you read them above the wheel rather than through it.

The cabin is well-finished with a sat-nav and information screen at

ROAD TEST

PEUGEOT 208 FELINE E-HDI 115

Top speed:117mph; Combined fuel consumption: 70.6mpg; Emissions: 106g/km; Price: £19,145

the top of the centre console, but the minor switches below it are fiddly to reach and difficult to read until you are familiar with them. Between the front seats there is a five-setting rotary grip control switch aimed at optimising traction in slippery conditions. The ride is good and the

seats reasonably comfortable on shortish journeys, although my passengers and I developed slight backache after an hour or so.

The 1.6-litre diesel engine, which produces 115bhp and works through a six-speed manual gearbox, is quite adequate and smooth at motorway speeds, so overall it is a practical and economical package.

However, the one thing it lacks is any kind of spark or excitement. This won't matter to some, but anyone who enjoys driving will find this car as bland as they come.

Mike Stone



Crossover: Peugeot's 208 is economical, but lacks any spark or excitement