

MOTOR RENTAL MARKET BOUNCING BACK AFTER TOUGH '09



Motor rental companies are confident of a much stronger year in 2010 with a return of consumer demand. But with supply remaining tight, operators are working hard to ensure they can meet the growing demand.

Image courtesy of Renault Eurodrive

By Jenny Burns

AFTER a tough 2009 caused by lack of consumer demand and supply issues, the motor rental market is predicting a more positive 2010.

While demand has been patchy for some companies, overall numbers are up on last year.

DriveAway chief marketing officer Chris Hamill said while demand was down in UK/Europe during 2009 for obvious reasons, it was also a very tough year due to lack of supply across the European continent.

"Lack of finance available led to a lack of cars being purchased/leased and a lack of supply," he said.

"New Zealand and US boomed thanks to Australians travelling closer to home and the great airfares available across the Pacific from September onwards.

"Domestic car rental has grown for us again thanks to cheaper airfares and Aussies travelling in their own backyard."

While internationally bookings were strong in 2010, supply was still an issue.

"Bookings in January and February

have exceeded expectations and based on phone calls and incoming enquiries, March and April reservations will be solid," he said.

"We are working very closely with our car rental partners in these areas to catch up as much supply as possible."

Creative Holidays general manager, product, sales and marketing, Andrew Yell, said the company had noticed more and more people were hitting the open road and going on an independent driving holiday which fitted into their personal interests and areas which they'd like to visit.

"Key driving holiday destinations for Australians continue to be USA, Canada, Europe and the UK, New Zealand and of course locally, in Australia," he said.

"The self-drive option is most popular with the 35 to 55 year olds and families who can benefit from the added flexibility of catering for family needs."

According to 1car1 managing director, James Frape, the market has been patchy. "It was very strong until Christmas and then it quietened in January," he said.

"It is starting to come back now. I'm not sure the reason for this, maybe



Image courtesy of Kea Campers

consumers were thinking rates would fall but they aren't going to so now people are booking again."

Ireland was amongst the strongest performers, with leasing in Europe also doing well.

Renault Eurodrive managing director Paul Hodges said the year had started positively.

"So far we are pleased with the level of reservations for Europe in 2010," he said.

"We have seen increases on 2009 levels and there is much more positive feedback from consumers about their plans to travel this year. There has been

a good number of advanced bookings for the year."

Hodges said as supply on the lease vehicle was sometimes tight in later months, more and more people were taking the opportunity to book ahead to make sure their vehicle of choice was available.

"Agents should highlight this fact to their clients, book early and then they get the product confirmed and a good price," he said.

"Prices are very attractive this year and we have taken the opportunity to reduce delivery fees to many of our depots outside of France."

Renault Eurodrive cuts rates on early birds deals

RENAULT Eurodrive is urging agents to take advantage of its early bird specials as soon as possible.

The early bird specials include up to seven free days plus an extra three free loyalty days for past clients since 2005.

Delivery fees that have already been reduced, also attract a 50 per cent discount off the fees if booked on the early bird offer.

"Prices on select models have also been reduced to further highlight the benefits of booking early," said Renault Eurodrive managing director Paul Hodges.



"For example the lead-in cost is a Twingo Petrol sedan for 28 days for only \$1329 and \$30 for extra days over 28. To collect this car in Paris and

return to Rome will only cost an extra \$175."

The lease period starts at 21 days and can be used for up to six months. Renault has a choice of 40 models to choose from.

Hodges said as every car was delivered brand new (the vehicles were sold on the second hand market after the clients return them) and as such clients were guaranteed a brand new tax free vehicle of their choice.

"Unlimited kilometres, full insurance

with zero excess and no charge for a second driver are just a few of the other benefits the Renault Eurodrive leasing option provides," he said.

"Established since 1955 and fully owned by Renault, our program continues to be a popular choice by Australians.

"The average lease period is almost 50 days and as Renault pays 17 per cent commission on the early bird offer, the financial benefits are well and truly there for retail consultants."

Creative releases Alamo deals, free car hire offer

CREATIVE Holidays is currently offering several Alamo car hire packages.

Packages in the UK start from \$83 for two days' hire, in Ireland \$72 for two days, in France \$92 for two days, Italy \$86 for two days, Hawaii \$67 for two days and USA mainland \$35 a day.

Also on offer is a deal with Air New Zealand. Passengers who travel with the airline to Los Angeles, San Francisco or Las Vegas can receive three-days Group E Alamo car hire (economy – Chevrolet Aveo or similar) with GPS, unlimited mileage and collision damage waiver.

The package is only available in Anaheim, Los Angeles, San Francisco or Las Vegas (selected depots), there must be a minimum of two adults travelling together utilising one car (one free car per booking) and fuel is not included.

The offer is valid for use between April 1 and July 14 and September 1 and December 15.

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carRentals



THL signs on to eco-friendly national camping 'Leave No Trace' scheme

TOURISM Holdings Australia Pty Ltd (THL) has joined a national campaign at the forefront of promoting environmentally friendly camping.

The operator has signed up to the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia's (CMCA) eco-friendly Leave No Trace scheme, with 33 per cent of its entire Maui and Britz Australia fleet now accredited under the green scheme.

THL general manager marketing, Kate Meldrum, said over the next two years the company planned to increase its commitment to the scheme, with an extra 1000 Maui and Britz campervans expected to be rolled out under Leave No Trace.

"The CMCA's Leave No Trace scheme promotes environmentally responsible camping, demonstrating self-contained vehicles should not have a negative impact on the environment, even where a campsite

has no facilities," she explained.

"THL's commitment to Leave No Trace takes the number of vehicles involved in the scheme to more than 5000."

To qualify for the scheme, vehicles must be self-contained, featuring a shower, toilet, fresh and grey water tanks, and Leave No Trace of their visit to a site.

Vehicle occupants must also comply with a Code of Conduct that outlines appropriate waste disposal, alongside consideration for the environment, financially supporting local communities with the purchase of food, fuel and supplies where possible, and adhering to camping limits and restrictions.

Maui and Britz campervans accredited under the scheme will display the Leave No Trace sticker on the driver's window and carry the Code of Conduct.

Agent feedback drives brochure revamp for DriveAway Holidays

DRIVEAWAY Holidays has launched its revamped brochure for 2010.

"The Car Rental and Motorhome Book 2010 was designed based on travel agents' feedback and is more user friendly than ever before," said DriveAway chief marketing officer, Chris Hamill.

"It is packed with useful information on worldwide car rental, motorhome rentals, Peugeot Leasing as well as travel tips and hints."

New for 2010 is a guide to planning self-drive holidays, including what travellers need to know and things to look out for when collecting a rental car.

A dedicated Peugeot Leasing brochure is also available with details on leasing in the



UK and Europe. Copies of the brochures are available to order via the TIFS website.

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APTMS cuts Alamo car rental rates

ASIA Pacific Travel Marketing Services has reduced rates on Alamo car rentals in the United Kingdom by four per cent and in the US by 10 per cent. The reduction on UK car rentals includes early bird rates, but not automatic cars.

The 10 per cent off Alamo in the US is on the silver rate which includes CDW, minimum third party coverage, liability insurance and unlimited mileage. Extra inclusions include \$US1 million liability cover, sales tax, state taxes/surcharges, airport fees and customer facility charge.

In Florida daily rental of a 2/4 door economy car now starts at \$US45 daily or \$US219 weekly, in California, Nevada and Arizona \$US48 and \$US236, in Hawaii \$US48 and \$US236, Illinois, New York, New Jersey and Alaska \$US68 and \$US344, and the rest of the US \$US56 and \$US285.

The cars are valid for pickup from April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011.

1car1 offers more vehicles as it expands operations

1CAR1, renowned as a UK and Ireland car rental specialist, has expanded its operations to offer cars and motor-homes worldwide and has a new name to reflect this expansion, Compass Cars.

The 1car1 name will remain as the trading name for Australian car hire.

Managing director James Frape said the new dedicated website www.compasscarrental.com.au provided travel agents with a simple and hassle free car rental booking site.

"Over the last six months we have listened to what the travel agents like and dislike about their current car rental suppliers and how the service and product offering could be improved," he said. "We have taken those comments on board and created a product which they should all be happy with."

Frape said this included no reductions in commissions if agents called and made an amendment, and unlike some competitors, "we don't cancel out if they don't pay within seven days".

"And most importantly, 100 per cent confirmation all of the time," he said.

"We are confident that agents who have been used to the friendly and personal 1car1 service will be



delighted to know this is now extended to worldwide car rental irrespective of whether they call and pick up the phone or make a booking online."

Frape said through relationships negotiated over the past six months, the company now offered Australian travel agents the ability to rent from an independent company, whilst still offering excellent prices from the leading suppliers in the country they wish to hire in.

"Our benchmark is still the premium product travellers receive when travelling to the UK and picking up a vehicle with Enterprise Rent-A-Car from one of their 300 plus locations. These

benefits are now being passed down into the other countries we service."

New countries were being loaded on a weekly basis.

In other news, 1car1 has added the locally made Toyota Camry Hybrid to its New South Wales fleet.

"We can now provide a green solution for customers arriving in New South Wales and wanting to tour around in a family size car without leaving a heavy carbon footprint behind," Frape said.

"With our pricing, travellers can hire the Hybrid for not much more than a standard sized car and receive all the cost savings associated with driving a vehicle as small as a Yaris."

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Hertz adds 'fun' and 'prestige' to Australian car rental fleet



HERTZ Australia has expanded its national car rental fleet introducing a Prestige Collection and a Fun Collection, both of which already operate successfully in the US and Europe.

At selected key locations around the Australian mainland, Hertz will offer luxury Mercedes Benz and Lexus vehicles through the Prestige Collection and Mini Cooper S and sporty Mini Cabriolets in the Fun Collection.

"The car rental market is very competitive and success relies upon continually offering new and different vehicles, value for money and excellent customer service and product support," said Hertz Australia managing director and regional vice president, Jacqueline Lehmann.

"Our customers have also told us that while car rental is an essential element of travel, they want it to be a more exciting element as well, which is why we have decided to expand the successful Prestige and Fun Collections to Australia.

"With these vehicles, there is the opportunity for the rental car to become the actual reason for travel, with customers taking day trips or longer driving holidays just so that they can experience our Prestige or Fun fleets.

"We expect our Prestige and Fun Collections also will appeal to business and leisure travellers who already own similar vehicles and want to maintain the same level of luxury or excitement while they are travelling."

Hertz has chosen two of the most popular Mercedes-Benz models – the C Class sedan and the CLC Sports Coupe – as part of the inaugural fleet for its new Prestige Collection.

"Mercedes-Benz is a global brand immediately associated with prestige

motoring," Lehmann said. "It is a natural choice for the Hertz Prestige Collection in Australia, and we are proud to welcome Mercedes-Benz to our Australian fleet for the first time.

"The Mercedes-Benz C 200 CGI Saloon is a four-door, four cylinder sedan, with leather upholstery and trim, satellite navigation system and a seven-inch colour foldaway monitor, while the stylish CLC 200K Evolution Edition is a three-door sports coupe with features including a glass panoramic sunroof."

Also joining the Prestige Collection is the Lexus IS 250 sedan and the RX 350 SUV.

"Lexus is a premium motor vehicle brand which continues to grow in popularity around the world," Lehmann said.

The four-door, six-cylinder IS 250



features leather-accented interior, satellite navigation, a Bluetooth™ – capable audio system with iPod connectivity and reversing camera.

The Fun Collection includes two of the latest Mini models, the Cooper S and the Cooper S Cabrio.

"The Fun Collection is a fleet of sporty and stylish cars offered for those seeking an exciting driving experience," Lehmann said.

"The Mini is one of the world's most recognised and most loved cars and we are delighted to be using it to launch our Fun Collection in Australia."

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