

FORMER PRESIDENT ALAN DOMVILLE CONTINUES HIS REMINISCENCES AS A MOTORING WRITER & LIFELONG GROUP FRIEND.....

One of the nightmares of travel is missing a plane; it has happened to me on four occasions and, quite astonishingly, every one of them has occurred when I have been with Kia.

The first time it happened my co-driver and I had lots of time to travel from our hotel in Milan to the city's Malpensa airport. That was until one of the tyres on our Kia was punctured. It was only a short time after repair kits rather than spare wheels were being fitted to cars and neither of us had a clue what to do. At length the back-up car arrived on the scene, we swapped cars and continued on to the airport. Our gate had closed and we had to be booked on the next (and last) flight of the day back to London.

On the second occasion I had been booked on a flight from Manchester to Heathrow to take part in a new car launch, fortunately in the south of England rather than abroad.

At that time I was trying to save money for my company by leaving my car at one of the less expensive parking areas. I waited, somewhat impatiently, in the minibus that would take me into Terminal Three while the driver smoked and chatted with one of his pals. Once again, on arrival at the terminal, the gate had closed. Happily, after making a quick call to the agency handling Kia's travel arrangements I had a ticket for the next flight.

A year or so later I was travelling back to London from Slovakia where I had visited Kia's new factory when the pilot announced that due to strong winds on take-off the fuel wouldn't be enough to get us home. He landed at Dusseldorf in an electric storm and duly topped up the fuel; naturally all this meant I had missed my connecting flight to Manchester. It was another expensive re-booking for Kia.

And then, finally (hopefully) I landed at Luton after a test driving exercise on mainland Europe with a tight connection at Heathrow. I arranged to be first off the private plane and Kia had a taxi ready for me with the engine running to take me to west London. But half-way into the journey the driver received a call from Luton saying we had to return there on account of a discrepancy regarding passports; all of those in my party had to be re-examined. Yet another missed flight. By the time I arrived back at Luton Kia had already organised a new ticket for me to fly home.

One flight I nearly missed was from Farnborough to Vienna quite recently. I was due to travel by the first train out of Warrington Bank Quay, making two changes to reach the aerodrome. But that first train was cancelled. I managed to tack my way down the country and was met at the adjacent station to Farnborough by a driver from Toyota.

After a quick security check in the terminal I raced to the plane, its jet engines running. As soon as I had fastened my seat belt we were hurtling along the runway.

FUNNIES

I didn't realize how bad of a driver I was until my sat nav said, "In 400 feet, do a slight right, stop, and let me out."