

('Motoring Weekly', 10 January 2014): We are all familiar with a daily car rental service like Hertz or Avis, but renting a car by the hour is something new. This is the service that 'Car2go' now offers. It was launched as a trial in 2010 by the German company, Daimler. It was successfully tested on employees at their headquarters in the southern city of Ulm. It was then made available to the general public the following year. Since then, 'Car2go' has expanded to other European countries. It now serves eight countries and twenty-five cities, and hopes to be in twelve countries and fifty cities by the end of next year.

People planning to use the service should register on-line at least two weeks before their trip to allow time to receive their membership card in the mail. Once this card is received, the renter can pick up 'Car2Go' vehicles directly on the street. A green light in the windscreen shows that the car is available. The renter then swipes the card in a special reading device, which is also in the windscreen. After entering his or her PIN on the touch screen, a key will be released, allowing the renter to drive.

Members can also reserve a car on the 'Car2Go' website or through a smart phone application. A prepaid petrol card is provided, but if a user does have to fill up, he or she can still use the petrol card and get twenty minutes of credited driving time.

All 'Car2Go' vehicles are two-seaters. They are easy to drive and parking is no problem at all — at only 2.5 metres long, they fit almost anywhere! They are equipped with the basics (air conditioning and radio) as well as an in-vehicle phone that connects to the company's call centre for help. The cars currently run on petrol, but the company is hoping to introduce electric-powered vehicles in 2017.

Fees are charged to the member's credit card, with each kilometre driven costing just 25 cents. Parking, fuel, maintenance and full insurance are included at no additional cost, and there are no annual or monthly fees beyond the initial \$35 registration charge. However, there is an extra charge for smoking in the car or for losing documents, or if renters arrive more than 15 minutes late to pick up or return the car.

Members can, if they prefer, pick up the car in one place and drop it off somewhere else, rather than having to return it to the original location. However, this city-to-city roaming service is currently only allowed within a single country. If you want to visit neighbouring countries, you can do so, but documentation must be presented in each country, e.g. an international driving license, a passport, a mailing address, a credit card and a mobile number.

Task One: For each item, write a short answer (not more than FOUR WORDS).

11. In which country did 'Car2Go' originate?

12. When did the service first become available to the public?
_____ (year)
13. How long does it take to process a membership application?

14. If you see a car on the street, how do you know if it is available?

15. How many passengers you can take with you in a car?

Task Two: For each item, shade in the bubble (☐) next to the correct option.

16. Payment for membership is _____.
☐ renewed every month ☐ made once only ☐ renewed every year
17. Cars are unlocked by _____.
☐ membership card ☐ PIN number ☐ credit card
18. A special feature of the cars is that they _____.
☐ have radio transmitters ☐ have electric engines ☐ are easy to park
19. If you _____, you will have to pay extra.
☐ smoke ☐ go abroad ☐ have an accident
20. The main innovation made by 'Car2Go' is that it provides _____.
☐ satellite navigation ☐ a money-back guarantee ☐ hourly renting