

# MSA TESTS 2001

## Key Points

- \* The project was directed and managed by the ADAC (the German AA) and funded by the EuroTest consortium of motoring organisations
- \* The tests were carried out by the Swiss Gastro Consulting, Böblingen, during the Easter holidays; laboratory tests were undertaken by Synlab, Augsburg in Germany
- \* 95 sites were tested in nine European countries (see map on page 9)
- \* Each site was tested twice - with at least a 24 hour interval
- \* Overall winner - Corbières Nord (south of France)
- \* Overall loser - Gonars Nord (near Trieste, Italy)
- \* The criteria were based on a family with two children
- \* MSAs defined as “service stations which advertised themselves as such by clear signs on the motorway...”

## Overall UK results

	<b>% Score</b>	<b>Grade awarded</b>
M4 Magor First Motorway Services - J23A	77.23	<b>Acceptable</b>
M40 (N) Warwick Welcome Break - J12-13	73.52	<b>Acceptable</b>
M2 (S) Medway Compass Roadside - J4-5	71.29	<b>Acceptable</b>
M1 (S) Woolley Edge (Barnsley) Compass Roadside - J38-39	67.06	<b>Poor</b>
M74 Abington Welcome Break - J13	65.62	<b>Poor</b>
M5 (S) Michaelwood Welcome Break - J13 -14	64.01	<b>Poor</b>
M1 London Gateway Welcome Break - J2-4	62.83	<b>Poor</b>
M6 (S) Sandbach RoadChef- J16-17	61.91	<b>Poor</b>
M5 (N) Frankley Compass Roadside - J3-4	60.34	<b>Poor</b>
M6 (N) Forton (Lancaster) Compass Roadside - J32-33	57.02	<b>Poor</b>

## UK vs European ratings

	Number of <b>European</b> MSAs given this rating	Number of <b>UK</b> MSAs given this rating
<b>Very Good</b>	0	0
<b>Good</b>	19	0
<b>Acceptable</b>	42	3
<b>Poor</b>	31	7
<b>Very Poor</b>	3	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>10</b>

Inspectors completed a detailed and comprehensive checklist in the ten categories below at each service area on each visit.

<i>Traffic and Safety</i>	Access and exit roads; signposting and layout; parking; pedestrian safety.
<i>Visual impression/outdoor facilities</i>	Waste bins; picnic area; playground; overall impression.
<i>Access and indoor facilities</i>	Facilities for disabled people; menu displays; internal layout and signposting.
<i>Eating and drinking</i>	Food quality; seating; range of services offered; comfort; ambience; table clearing.
<i>Shop</i>	Test purchases.
<i>Service</i>	Staff; standard requests.
<i>Communication</i>	Telephone availability; traffic/tourism information.
<i>Environmental Protection</i>	Separated waste containers; disposable plates.
<i>Toilet and shower hygiene</i>	Cleanliness and condition of toilets, mother and baby rooms and showers; laboratory analysis of swab tests.
<i>Prices (shop and restaurant)</i>	Standard menu; test purchase.

### **The Inspector's summary of each UK site**

#### **M4 Magor (Wales) First Motorway Services - J23A "ACCEPTABLE"**

- ✓ Variety and quality of meals at the second test was better than at the first
- ✓ Signposting and layout inside and outside good
- ✓ Good wheelchair access to service area
- ✓ Telephone for disabled people available
- ✓ Leisure facilities safe
- ✓ Outside playground with a high fun factor
- ✓ Pedestrian crossings safe
- ✓ Blackboard with the day's petrol prices displayed in the service area foyer
- ✗ High prices
- ✗ Staff not very helpful except in the tourist information office
- ✗ Restaurant not very clean
- ✗ Poor toilet hygiene results in the laboratory tests
- ✗ Shower not clean
- ✗ Outside road markings faded

M40 (N) Warwick Welcome Break - J12-13 "ACCEPTABLE"

- ✓ Large selection of cold meals
- ✓ Indoor signposting and layout good
- ✓ Good wheelchair access to service area
- ✓ Telephone for disabled people available
- ✓ Wide range of goods in the shop
- ✓ Outdoor facilities well looked-after
- ✓ Good assessment in the road safety category
- ✗ High prices
- ✗ Test dish (fish) poor at the first test
- ✗ Staff neither friendly nor helpful
- ✗ Poor toilet hygiene results in the laboratory tests
- ✗ Shower very dirty and covered with mould

M2(S) Medway Compass Roadside - J4-5 "ACCEPTABLE"

- ✓ Test dish (chicken) very tasty
- ✓ Staff very friendly and helpful
- ✓ Indoor signposting and layout good
- ✓ Good wheelchair access to service area
- ✓ Leisure facilities safe
- ✓ Pedestrian crossings safe
- ✗ Facility old, run-down and in need of refurbishment
- ✗ High prices
- ✗ Poor toilet hygiene results in the laboratory tests
- ✗ Toilets not clean
- ✗ Mother and baby room not accessible at the first test

M1(S) Woolley Edge Compass Roadside - J38-39 "POOR"

- ✓ Service area being refurbished
- ✓ Signposting and layout good
- ✓ Good wheelchair access to service area
- ✓ Good assessment in the road safety category
- ✗ High prices
- ✗ Restaurant dirty and run-down
- ✗ Poor service
- ✗ Poor toilet hygiene results in the laboratory tests
- ✗ Toilets not clean
- ✗ Shower smelly and not clean
- ✗ Outdoor facilities not well looked after

M74 Abington (Scotland) Welcome Break - J13 "POOR"

- ✓ Indoor signposting and layout good
- ✓ Good wheelchair access to service area
- ✓ Wide range of goods in the shop
- ✓ Visual impression of the outdoor facilities good
- ✓ Outdoor playground with a high fun factor
- ✗ High prices
- ✗ Poor choice and quality of meals
- ✗ Poor toilet hygiene results in the laboratory tests
- ✗ No shower

M5 (S) Michaelwood Welcome Break - J13-14 "POOR"

- ✓ Signposting and layout inside and out good
- ✓ Good wheelchair access to service area
- ✗ Restaurant not clean
- ✗ High prices
- ✗ Poor toilet hygiene results in the laboratory tests
- ✗ No shower
- ✗ Potholes in access road and road markings faded

M1 London Gateway Welcome Break - J2-4 "POOR"

- ✓ Interior refurbished
- ✓ Indoor signposting and layout good
- ✓ Good wheelchair access to service area
- ✓ Helpful advice on hotels
- ✗ High prices
- ✗ Chairs in the self-service area too low for the tables
- ✗ Poor toilet hygiene results in the laboratory tests
- ✗ Toilets not well looked after, doors and taps broken
- ✗ Outdoor facilities not well looked after
- ✗ Potholes in access road

M6 (S) Sandbach RoadChef- J16-17 "POOR"

- ✓ Interior refurbished
- ✓ Indoor signposting and layout good
- ✓ Good wheelchair access to service area
- ✓ Wide range of goods in the shop
- ✓ Garden and outdoor facilities refurbished at the second test
- ✗ High prices
- ✗ Poor toilet hygiene results in the laboratory tests
- ✗ Toilets and shower not clean
- ✗ Outdoor facilities very dirty at the first test
- ✗ Poor pedestrian crossing

M5 (N) Frankley Compass Roadside - J3-4 "POOR"

- ✓ Indoor signposting and layout good
- ✓ Good wheelchair access to service area
- ✓ Wide range of goods in the shop
- ✗ Restaurant not clean
- ✗ High prices
- ✗ Staff appeared unmotivated
- ✗ Poor toilet hygiene results in the laboratory tests
- ✗ Outdoor facilities not clean

M6 (N) Forton (Lancaster) Compass Roadside - J32-33 "POOR"

- ✓ Restaurant refurbished
- ✓ Indoor signposting and layout good
- ✓ Good wheelchair access to service area
- ✗ High prices
- ✗ Staff slow
- ✗ Poor hygiene results in the laboratory tests
- ✗ Shower difficult to find and unclean
- ✗ Visual impression of the outdoor facilities poor

### UK MSA's strengths and weaknesses

The survey is not all bad! UK MSAs did score highly in several categories, but usually failed when it came to the things that really matter to the motorist, ie the customer. The overriding problem is that there are too few MSAs to meet the enormous demands of the travelling public. But MSA operators are responding with extensive refurbishment programmes to improve existing service areas.

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Generally good traffic management and outdoor layouts.	Inconsistent hygiene quality and general service.
Good indoor facilities and access.	All sites failed the laboratory test for hygiene in toilets.
Good variety of merchandise and food in shops.	Food quality, appearance and taste, often poor.
Twenty-four hour access to all facilities.	Prices very high compared to those in the high street.
Twenty-four hour availability of hot food.	Playgrounds, where provided, were often neglected and sometime unsafe.
Good access for disabled people.	Too crowded for achievement of consistently high standards.

### **Overall European results – distribution by country**

	France	Germany	Austria	Spain	Switzerland	Italy	UK	Belgium	Netherlands
<b>Very Good</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Good</b>	10	5	1	3	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Acceptable</b>	2	9	9	4	3	3	3	8	1
<b>Poor</b>	1	1	0	3	3	4	7	11	1
<b>Very Poor</b>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>3</b>

### **Average score (%) by country**

	France	Germany	Austria	Spain	Switzerland	Italy	UK	Belgium	Netherlands
<b>Average Score (%)</b>	80.61	75.93	75.01	74.49	67.83	66.24	66.08	65.43	62.52

**France** (13 sites - average score 80.61)

- ✓ The overall winner this year is Corbières North, between Narbonne and Toulouse, near Carcassonne
- ✓ 60 per cent of the top 15 European sites were French
- ✓ The standard of food and drink were almost uniformly good
- ✓ Very good pedestrian safety
- ✓ Cleanliness and hygiene were good

**Germany** (15 sites – average score 75.93)

- ✓ Service areas comfortably above the European average
- ✓ Road safety around the outdoor facilities generally acceptable
- ✓ With the exception of one site all had good catering facilities
- ✓ Environmental awareness was good, and waste separation, which has not caught on throughout the rest of Europe, is becoming more common in Germany
- ✗ Levels of hygiene have fallen since the 2000 inspections
- ✗ General levels of service need to be improved
- ✗ Although prices were generally below the European average, six sites were very expensive

**Austria** (10 sites - average score 75.01)

- ✓ The quality of service and cuisine was better than in previous tests
- ✓ Food was generally of a high standard
- ✓ Road safety around the sites was acceptable and most of the car parks were monitored by video cameras
- ✗ Shops and kiosks were poorly stocked
- ✗ Prices very high in most of the sites tested

**Spain** (10 sites - average score 74.49)

- ✓ The visual impression of the outdoor facilities was superficially good but did not bear close inspection
- ✓ The quality of food was generally good
- ✓ Small supermarkets were often a feature of Spanish sites and choice of produce available was good
- ✓ Standards of service from staff were good
- ✗ Sign posting around the sites was poor
- ✗ Pedestrian safety was perceived to be poor
- ✗ Hygiene was a particular problem and none of the sites achieved good results in this category

**Switzerland** (6 sites - average score 67.83)

- ✓ In general sites were clean and tidy
- ✓ All sites had well-stocked shops
- ✓ Toilet facilities were well equipped but not always completely clean
- ✗ Disabled access was not uniformly good
- ✗ The standard of food was disappointing by Swiss standards
- ✗ The high prices charges were striking, each site tested rated "very poor"
- ✗ Swiss results were very poor compared with previous years with 50 per cent of sites only managing an overall rating of "poor" and the other half only managing "acceptable"
- ✗ Too little attention paid to safety of outdoor facilities

**Italy** (8 sites - average score 66.24)

- ✓ Shops were generally well stocked and offered a good range of products
- ✗ Sites lost points for poor food quality and restricted opening hours
- ✗ Hygiene levels were generally poor
- ✗ Some outdoor facilities were found to be unsafe
- ✗ Poor pedestrian safety

**Belgium** (20 sites - average score 65.43)

- ✗ Belgium sites were generally found to be poor
- ✗ Outdoor facilities and pedestrian safety were very poor
- ✗ The availability of telephones and traffic information for drivers was poor
- ✗ Hygiene and cleanliness were poor

(Note: the Touring Club de Belgique (TCB) provided additional funding to allow inspection of nearly all Belgium's MSAs)

**The Netherlands** (3 sites - average score 62.52)

- ✗ The Dutch sites did badly overall
- ✗ Poor road safety around sites
- ✗ Shops and kiosks sold a poor range of produce
- ✗ Poor levels of hygiene
- ✗ Poor food choice, with a lack of health food, such as fruit and vegetarian dishes