Guided by tradition, driven by electricity: crossing Morecambe Bay in a Porsche Macan

05/05/2026 Crossing North-West England's Morecambe Bay at low tide is no ordinary drive: guided by a centuries-old role and shifting sands, the all-electric Macan meets one of the most unpredictable landscapes not only in Britain, but the world.

The official British government map states, in large red letters: 'WARNING Access land and Public Rights of Way on Morecambe Bay are dangerous. Seek local guidance.' This alone suggests that this is not a conventional drive. Crossing Morecambe Bay, in the North-West of England, is a journey shaped by history, landscape and tradition. The public right of way lies not on tarmac roads, but across open sands revealed only at low tide, where the boundary between land and sea is constantly shifting.

The King's Guide: Five centuries of knowledge

The key to making the crossing safely is the King's Guide to the Sands. The role dates back to 1548, when it was established to lead travellers safely across the bay. Today, the main responsibility rests with Michael Wilson, the 26th in an unbroken line spanning nearly five centuries. Ultimately answering to the British monarch, Wilson has to read a landscape that changes daily – identifying safe routes, avoiding quicksand and protecting the bay's abundant wildlife – while judging tides that can return "at the speed of a cantering horse".

It is a role of significant responsibility, though little financial reward. The salary was raised to £15 (approx. 17 Euros) per annum centuries ago, though it does include the use of a handsome stone-built house overlooking this stunning landscape.

"People have always crossed at low tide," Wilson explains. "It used to cut as much as three days off their journeys, and there was a scheduled stagecoach service before the railway was built. Today, the official right of way is not defined to one particular route. The Monk's Road, as it's called, is actually the whole bay – wherever the Guide deems safe.

A bay with rules – and hazards

"It can be very dangerous out there if you don't know what you're doing. There have been tragedies on the sands all through recorded history, and they sadly still happen when people venture out on their own. But I don't think anyone has ever lost their life in 500 years when the King's Guide was present."

While the principle remains unchanged, the process has evolved. "Travellers once knocked on the Guide's door to be told when to return," he says. "Now it's all done by email."

Today, much of the role is charitable. "More than £800,000 was raised for national and regional charities through guided walks and horse rides last year. Being part of that is one of the best aspects of the job."

At low tide, 310 square kilometres of sand are exposed, along with plenty of hazards. Tides return quickly, river channels shift up to 30 metres in 24 hours, and heavy rain leaves behind treacherously soft sand. Features such as the Lune Deep – a submerged channel that plunges to as much as 70 m – add further complexity. It is a landscape that demands expert local knowledge.

The seabed as a track

Today, into this setting comes the electric Macan. With Wilson leading the way on the tractor that he uses for his day-to-day work as a fisherman, the Porsche sets out across the approximately 15 km of

exposed seabed. There are no defined tracks—only subtle changes in the sand indicating where it is safe to drive. The surface varies from firm, compacted sand to softer, more unpredictable areas, requiring careful progress.

Electricity and water are not an obvious pairing, yet the Macan proves composed. Its all-wheel drive system responds instantly, distributing torque to maintain traction as conditions change. The low centre of gravity, created by the battery layout, adds stability, while the precise control systems allow for measured, confident driving. The optional off-road design package that this Macan is equipped with makes light of the trickiest sections, increasing the ground clearance and approach angle to better handle uneven terrain, while the standard off-road mode configures the all-wheel drive and control systems to improve traction on loose surfaces.

The crossing is quietly steady rather than fast. Wilson roves ahead, checking conditions and adjusting the route as needed. Channels are crossed at carefully chosen points, where the water is shallowest. Anywhere that risks disrupting the wildlife is strictly avoided.

Morecambe Bay is a vital natural habitat and invaluable work is done here by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Each winter, about 250,000 wading birds gather in the area, taking advantage of the feeding grounds exposed by the tides. Their presence underlines the bay's ecological significance and the need to approach it with utter respect.

Porsche Macan: Control on shifting terrain

The crossing highlights the Macan's versatility beyond conventional roads. It handles the shifting terrain with consistency and control. Instant and precisely metered torque delivery ensures smooth progress, while the adaptive air suspension enables the right height to be raised even further where the flow of water out from the land has cut abrupt little channels in the sand.

As the journey continues, the sense of scale grows. The shoreline fades and the fells become more distant. It almost starts to feel more like a desert than the seabed. The Macan remains quiet, allowing the sounds of the wind, water and birdlife to come through.

Timing remains critical. Areas that are dry will soon be submerged. In order to stop before an impassable bed of sinking sand and to avoid disturbing the wildlife, Wilson sticks to the plan and retraces our wheel tracks before the incoming tide erases them.

Back on dry land

Reaching dry land again marks the end of a journey that brings together tradition and modern engineering. Wilson continues a role that has existed for centuries, while the electric Macan shows how new technology can adapt to demanding environments.

In Morecambe Bay, the combination works. The landscape sets the conditions, the Guide provides the knowledge and the vehicle responds with capability, demonstrating that electric performance can extend well beyond established roads. And that maybe sometimes electricity and water can mix …

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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Consumption data

Macan 4S (WLTP)*: Electrical consumption combined: 20.5 – 17.7 kWh/100 km; CO_2 emissions combined: 0 g/km; CO_2 class: A

*Further information on the official fuel consumption and the official specific CO_2 emissions of new passenger cars can be found in the "Leitfaden über den Kraftstoffverbrauch, die CO_2-Emissionen und den Stromverbrauch neuer Personenkraftwagen" (Fuel Consumption, CO_2Emissions and Electricity Consumption Guide for New Passenger Cars), which is available free of charge at all sales outlets and from DAT (Deutsche Automobil Treuhand GmbH, Helmuth-Hirth-Str. 1, 73760 Ostfildern-Scharnhausen, www.dat.de).

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