Based on exhaustive research and interviews with driving experts and traffic officials around the globe, *Traffic* gets under the hood of the quotidian activity of driving to uncover the surprisingly complex web of physical, psychological, and technical factors that explain how traffic works, why we drive the way we do, and what our driving says about us. Finally, a fascinating sociological study that answers all of our questions about something that is a major part our everyday lives.

Did you know?

- ☆ Studies have shown that driving aggressively, which raises crash risk and increases fuel consumption, saves just a minute on a 27-mile trip.
- ☆ The top 10 most dangerous cities for pedestrians in the U.S. are all below the Mason-Dixon line. Five are in Florida.
- ☆ Driving to work is still faster for Americans than any other mode of transportation.
- ☆ Saturday at 1 p.m. has heavier traffic than weekday rush hours.
- ☆ The more money you make, the more miles you drive; the less money you make, the more likely you are to a live on a high-traffic street.
- ☆ People who live on streets with more traffic spend less time outside and have fewer friends.
- ☆ Cars spend 95% of their time parked.
- ☆ Anywhere from 10 to more than 70% of people in urban traffic are simply looking for parking.
- ☆ A driver driving at 30 mph sees an average of 1320 pieces of information every minute.
- ☆ One in five urban crashes is related to searching for parking.
- ☆ People are willing to spend longer walking to and from a parking spot in parking lots than on city streets.
- ☆ "Highway illusions" convince us the next lane is moving faster.
- ☆ Ants obey traffic rules.
- ☆ SUVs can reduce the capacity of signalized intersections by up to 20%.
- ☆ Drivers seated higher think they are driving more slowly than drivers seated lower.
- ☆ Car drivers drive closer to helmeted cyclists (and further from cyclists who appear to be women)
- ☆ Only about 15% of U.S. schoolchildren walk to school.

- Men honk more than women, and men and women honk more at women than at men. People in "nice cars" honk faster at less nice cars. Drivers in convertibles with the tops down are less likely to honk than those with the top up. Drivers honk faster at cars whose drivers are on cell phones. And drivers are more likely to honk at people from another state or country than their own.
- Drivers honk less on weekends.
- After thirty seconds of waiting, most people will begin to cross against the light. People are more likely to jaywalk when well-dressed people do it first.
- Pedestrians on cell phones take longer to cross the street, and look at traffic less often.
- That pedestrians think drivers can see them up to twice as far away as they actually can.
- More people are killed legally crossing in crosswalks than jaywalking.
- The fatality risk in the backseat of a car is 26% lower than in the front.
- U.S. statistics show that half of all fatalities happen at impact speeds of less than 35 mph.
- Most crashes happen on sunny, clear, dry days.
- 350 people die every year entering the freeway the wrong way; at least 50 are killed by cars in driveways.
- That if everyone waited to merge at the point where a highway loses a lane, rather than earlier, traffic would flow better.
- The average driver looks away from the road for .06 seconds every 3.4 seconds; drivers search for something in the car 10.8 times per hour.
- "Children at Play" signs do not reduce speeds or accidents.
- The more "Stop" signs a road has, the more likely drivers are to violate them.
- Drivers drive less closely to oncoming drivers on roads without center-line markings.
- New cars crash at a higher rate than older cars.
- Highways can handle more cars at 55 mph than 80 mph.
- Rubbernecking cuts highway capacity by more than 12% — on both sides of the highway. Looking at crashes is actually a leading cause of crashes itself.

TOM VANDERBILT

explores the perceptual limits and cognitive underpinnings that make us worse drivers than we think we are. He demonstrates why plans to protect pedestrians from cars often lead to more accidents. He shows how roundabouts, which can feel dangerous and chaotic, actually enhance the safety of a road—and reduce traffic in the bargain. He reveals who is more likely to honk at whom, and why. He explains why traffic jams form, outlines the unintended consequences of our attempts to engineer safety, and even identifies the most common mistake drivers make in parking lots.

Americans have always had a passion for cars and driving. Now *Traffic* offers us an exceptionally rich understanding of that passion. And who knows? We might even become better drivers . . .