

Guide to driving abroad

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Driver guide



Essential driver support



GE imagination at work

driving abroad

The aim of this guide is to make sure that taking your vehicle abroad isn't daunting. We've covered all the basics for taking a company car abroad and a few of the finer points to continental motoring. Drive safely and we hope you have a pleasant journey.

Driving in other countries - before you go

As a visitor to another country you will need your Great Britain (GB) driving licence. An International Driving Permit (IDP) is also required in certain countries (see below).

Before you go make sure you have in your possession:

- A spare set of keys.
- A set of headlamp converters and a GB sticker. Vehicles fitted with the Europlate no longer need to display a separate GB sticker when visiting the EU countries. If a car doesn't have Europlates then the sticker must be fitted as close to the rear number plate as possible.
- A fire extinguisher, first aid kit, tool kit, spare bulbs and warning triangle.
- Registration document (see page 4 for details).
- Valid full driving licence and passport. Check whether you need to take an International Driving Permit with you.
- Your UK motor insurance certificate, Green Card (if issued), and details of any breakdown and travel insurance, together with any emergency helpline numbers.
- **New for 2012** – Always check the latest rules before you go. In 2012, there are a number of significant changes that could affect you if you're planning to drive in **France** (see page 6).

Driving Licences

Visiting another country

You may use your GB licence for driving in other European Community/European Economic Area [EC/EEA] member states. The member states are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden.

Non-EC/EEA Countries

Check with a motoring organisation if you want to drive in a non-EC/EEA country. They will advise you whether you need an International Driving Permit (IDP). An IDP is a formal document issued to visitors to another country which translates details of a driving licence into several languages, enabling foreign authorities to interpret the driving entitlements held, their validity periods and the identity of the holder. To get an IDP, you must be resident in GB, have passed a driving test and be over 18 years of age. The fee for a permit, which is valid for one year, is £5.50.

A scenic view of a coastal town, likely in Croatia, featuring a winding road, a silver car, and a backdrop of a steep cliff and the sea. The road is paved and has a white crosswalk. A silver car is driving away from the viewer. To the left, there is a white building with a balcony. To the right, there are green trees and a stone wall. In the background, a steep cliff rises from the sea, with a small town built on top. The sea is blue and calm.

All UK car insurance policies automatically provide, at no extra cost, the minimum cover required by law in all European Union (EU) countries.

Taking a vehicle out of the UK

on a temporary basis

If you are taking your vehicle or a hired vehicle on a temporary basis (i.e. for less than 12 months), you must take the appropriate documentation with you.

Private Vehicles

Before you go make sure you have in your possession:

- **Your registration document (V5) or certificate (V5C).** If you do not have one, you should apply to a DVLA local office on form V62, available from Post Office® branches or download a form on the Directgov website (www.direct.gov.uk/motoring). The registration certificate may take up to 14 days to arrive. There is a fee of £25 for this service.
- **UK car insurance policies.** All UK car insurance policies automatically provide, at no extra cost, the minimum cover required by law in all European Union (EU) countries. The minimum required is cover for your liability to third parties. If you have an accident, you may not be covered for medical or hospital expenses. Consult your insurance company or a motoring organisation before leaving the UK to make sure that you are fully insured.

Company Vehicles

If you are taking a vehicle abroad that is company owned, hired or borrowed you will need a letter of authorisation from the registered keeper.

How to obtain the VE103 (For vehicles provided by GE Capital)

The VE103 form can be obtained from GE Capital's Fleet Services team by calling the Driver Helpline, available 7 days a week 24 hours a day and quoting your customer number featured on your driver helpline card. The form will be completed over the phone. You will be asked to provide the following information:-

- Exact dates the car will be out of the country
- Countries to be visited
- Any additional drivers

Upon completion, we will send you the relevant documentation in the post. To make sure you receive this in time for your trip, please allow two weeks notice.

Top 10 Tips on Staying Safe

1. **Research the roads you'll take.** You'll especially want to know if you'll be travelling through areas of major road construction. Ensure the maps or the satnav system you're using is up-to-date. Check the roads before you go and always think right!
2. **Check your car's tyre pressures, oil level and other fluids.** If you're going on a winter trip make sure you have the correct screen wash that won't freeze. Most UK screen wash isn't formulated for much below -12°C. However, Continental winter temperatures can easily fall below this. If you have a known problem don't wait until the last minute to get it fixed, it may take time to get an appointment and parts may need to be ordered. You also want some time to drive around town and make sure that whatever they fixed stays fixed.
3. **Adjust headlights to accommodate for driving on the right.** One of the most common reasons for Brits falling foul of the police in Europe is dazzling other road users. Xenon and modern halogen headlights often need to be adjusted by a garage to prevent dazzling, otherwise deflector strips can be used.
4. **Carry a warning triangle, reflective jacket, fire extinguisher and a first aid kit** - this should comply with most European laws. In more and more countries now, a reflective jacket is required not just for the driver, but for all occupants. It would make sense to keep these inside the car rather than in the boot as in some countries it is an offence to get out of the vehicle on faster roads without wearing one. For country specific requirements see page 6.
5. **Don't leave handbags or other valuable items** on view at any time, even when you are in the car.
6. **Almost all European countries have a lower blood-alcohol limit than the UK's 0.08;** while the limit in Gibraltar, Hungary and Poland, among others, is zero. The best advice, if you're driving, don't drink any alcohol. And remember there could still be alcohol in your blood the morning after you've been drinking.
7. **Front and rear seat belts are obligatory everywhere.**
8. **Check the condition of your wiper blades,** the operation of your turn signals, brake lights as well as the tread on your tyres.
9. **Make sure your car is prepared for the weather it will encounter on your trip.** Some parts of Europe have seasonal regulations for winter tyres or snow chains. It is also important to consider if your vehicle will cope with much higher than average temperatures.
10. **Check your plates, registration and insurance information to make sure they are all valid.** Be sure to place your insurance company's emergency contact number, and breakdown provider's details, in your car.



In an emergency 112 is the European emergency call number you can dial anywhere in the European Union in case of accident or in any other distress situation.

Your A-Z to European Travel

Driving abroad: essential information for drivers and fleet operators.

	SPEED LIMITS (KM/HR)			DRINK LIMITS	EQUIPMENT						OTHER	
	* Urban	Open Road	M'way	(% alcohol in blood)	First aid kit	Warning triangle	Spare bulbs	Fire ext'sher	High-viz reflective jacket	Breathalyzer kit	Hands free mobile phone use	Day Running Lights Required
Austria	50	100	130	0.049%	●	●	○	○	●		●	○
Belgium	50	90	120	0.049%	○	●	○	○	●		●	○
Denmark	50	80/90	110/130	0.049%	○	●	○	○	○		●	Yes (dipped)
Finland	50	80	120	0.049%	○	●	○	○	●		●	Yes (dipped)
France	50	80	120	0.049%	○	●	○	○	●	●	●	Yes (dipped)
Germany	50	100	130	0.049%	●	●	○	○	●		●	○
Greece	50	90	130	0.049%	●	●	○	●	○		●	○
Italy	50	90	130	0.05%	○	●	○	○	●		●	Yes (dipped)
Luxembourg	50	90	130	0.049%	○	●	○	○	●		●	○
Netherlands	50	80	120	0.049%	○	●	○	○	○		●	○
Norway	50	80	90	0.02%	○	●	○	○	●		●	Yes (dipped)
Poland	50/60	90	130	0.02%	○	●	○	○	○		●	Yes (dipped)
Portugal	50	90	120	0.049%	○	○	○	○	●		●	Yes (dipped)
Spain	50	90	120	0.049%	○	● (2)	●	○	●		●	○
Sweden	30	70	90	0.02%	○	○	○	○	○		●	Yes (dipped)
Switzerland	50	80	120	0.049%	○	●	○	○	○		●	○

● = obligatory ○ = recommended

*Unless otherwise indicated – the town name often signifies the start of the speed limit, and the name with a line across it is the end of 'urban limit'.

At a glance

Since January 2012 **FRENCH LAWS** have prohibited drivers from carrying any device capable of detecting speed cameras. This includes SatNavs or GPS systems showing speed camera sites as points of interest.

From July 2012, it is a requirement for all drivers travelling to or through **FRANCE** to carry a breathalyzer kit in their vehicles. This is an attempt to reduce high alcohol-related accident rates.

IN FRANCE when it rains the higher speed limits automatically reduce by 10kph.

WINTER TYRES must be fitted in **AUSTRIA, GERMANY, LUXEMBOURG & NORWAY, FINLAND, SWEDEN, ITALY & SWITZERLAND**.

IN GERMANY it is illegal to run out of petrol on the autobahn.

AMBER filter signs at town traffic lights in **FRANCE** allow you to turn right against red lights.

IN SPAIN, it is an offence if you do not have a spare pair of spectacles with you if you need to wear them!

IN ESTONIA, speed limits vary on certain roads from summer to winter, headlights must be used at all times and winter tyres must be fitted from October to April.

IN PORTUGAL the pre-payment of tolls is required before using many motorways.

TO DRIVE on the motorway in **AUSTRIA, SWITZERLAND**, the **CZECH REPUBLIC** and the **SLOVAK REPUBLIC**, it's necessary first to purchase a 'vignette', or motorway tax disc and display it on the windscreen.

IN LUXEMBOURG, for example, flashing your headlights before overtaking is compulsory, in **CYPRUS** using your horn at night is illegal, and in **DENMARK** you must indicate before changing lanes on the motorway.

ANOTHER OLD DANGER, but one which continues to catch out numerous drivers each year, is the translation of diesel. It is often referred to as "gasoil" or "gazole", not to be confused with gasoline.

CRUISE CONTROL is banned on busy motorways in **BELGIUM**.

RESIDENT ONLY ZONES in **ITALY** known as 'Zone a Traffico Limitato' or ZTL's can incur fines if you aren't a resident.

RADAR SPEED TRAP detector use is banned in many countries and in **FRANCE** possession of a detector is illegal too.

The police are empowered to confiscate the number plates of illegally parked vehicles throughout **GREECE**.



GE Driver Toolbox. Your online tool for essential driver support

Whether you manage your company's fleet or are a driver, Toolbox by GE Capital's Fleet Services division is packed with essential information, latest guides and tips for the journey ahead.

Simply visit gedrivertoolbox.co.uk to find out more.

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