

Travelling in Europe

- Driving there!

If you decide to travel to Europe by car, or to hire a car whilst there, the following hints and tips might help you.



Tip: When hiring a car, do not assume that the car will have all of the required compulsory equipment as 'standard'!

Your documents

You should take with you:

- a valid full driving licence with the paper counterpart - if you have an old-style green driving licence then certain countries require you to also have an International Driving Permit
- a current motor insurance certificate - having confirmed you are covered appropriately
- the original (V5) vehicle registration document - if you do not own the vehicle (hired / borrowed / company owned) then you will also need a letter of authorisation from the owner. If this is not possible you should obtain a Vehicle on Hire certificate (VE103b)
- your passport (of course)
- your vehicle breakdown insurance certificate and instructions – this is not compulsory but is recommended

Your car

Certain actions are required before venturing to Europe. You must adjust or adapt your headlights so they will not 'blind' on-coming motorists, and certain equipment - such as a warning triangle - is compulsory across most of the EU. Other equipment is recommended or a mixture of recommended in one country and compulsory in another.

Although the items listed below are not compulsory in all countries they can be considered as good practice!

Compulsory and recommended action / equipment:

GB sticker or 'euro-plates'	Compulsory across the EU
Warning Triangle	Compulsory across most of the EU

Adjust headlights
Fire Extinguisher
Reflective Jacket*
First Aid Kit
Day-time headlights
Spare Bulbs

Compulsory across the EU
Recommended across some of the EU
Compulsory across much of the EU¹
Compulsory across some of the EU²
Compulsory across some of the EU³
Compulsory across some of the EU⁴

¹ Two required in Italy

² Austria, Croatia, Germany

³ Sweden, Croatia, Denmark, Italy, Norway

⁴ France, Spain, Italy, Austria

* Should meet BSI EN 471 1994 Class 1 or 2. AND be kept inside the passenger compartment. They cost around £7:50

A chart covering all the EU countries and other information can be found at:

www.kwik-fitinsurance.com/car/driving-abroad.html

Other issues

- Radar Detectors are illegal across all of the EU - It is not sufficient to disconnect them, they **must** be removed from the vehicle
- If you want to use the motorway in Switzerland you **MUST** first obtain a vignette (sticker) - about £20 and valid for a year. Similarly Austria - about £7 and valid for ten days (other periods are also available)
- On the spot fines are common to all EU countries - so comply with their laws, and keep to the speed limit!
- In some countries the maximum speed is reduced if it is raining. Take heed!
- Not all petrol stations take credit cards and so it is sensible to keep some cash to hand!

Tips

- Cars drive on the right in most Member States except for Cyprus, Ireland, Malta and the United Kingdom. For UK residents Driving on 'the wrong side of the road' is not a trivial undertaking (excuse the pun) but with care, thought and concentration you can be safe

Places to go?

- **The Eiffel Tower**
- **The Italian Riviera**
- **The Alps**
- **The Normandy Beaches**
- **The Greek Islands**
- **The South of France**
- **Tuscany and the Hill Towns**
- **The Swedish Lakes**
- **The Carmargue**
- **Brussels**
- **Prague**
- **Dublin**
- **Amsterdam**
- **Paris**
- **Rome**
- **Stockholm**
- **Vienna**
- **Athens**
- **and Venice**

- Drive defensively and expect the unexpected – the local driving style may be different to that of the UK
- Don't drive when you're tired and take regular breaks on long journeys
- Always wear a seat belt and make sure other passengers do too
- Don't drink and drive – the alcohol limit may be lower than in the UK and in some countries there is zero tolerance for drink driving
- Overtaking is more difficult if you are driving a right hand drive car because the driver is, in effect, in the gutter and it is more difficult to see the road ahead
- A particularly dangerous time – in terms of driving on the incorrect side of the road – is after stopping. It is good practice to always stop or park with the car on the correct side of the road facing the correct way. So don't use parking places on the left-hand side of the road, and take care when leaving petrol stations (try to use ones that are on the right hand side of the road). Take care when starting off in the morning, and when joining a main road from a very small side road or track.
- Take great care at left turns – they are the equivalent of our (dangerous) right turn!
- There are signs that you can purchase that fit in front of the driver to remind them to drive on the right, and to go around traffic islands anti-clockwise.
- It's also worth familiarising yourself with the motoring laws before driving in an unfamiliar country. For example, in France a 50km/hour limit applies in many villages, even though there may be no signs indicating this, while in Malta, like in the USA, it is illegal to overtake a stationary school bus.



**Venice?
You can drive
most places in
Europe – but
not all!**

Keep safe – don't get conned!

There are a number of common traps that tourists can fall into when travelling abroad. Many people get caught out simply because they're not aware of the cons that criminals

use in order to steal from you – **both here and overseas**. There is a need to “be aware and take care”, but this shouldn’t put you off travelling abroad! The trick is to ensure you don’t stand out, you mingle in as well as possible and are constantly aware of your surroundings. So ...

- Keep your windows and doors locked. This is extremely important at night, or when you’re stopping at traffic lights. These are prime times for criminals to try to car-jack you.
- Remove all valuables from sight.
- If your car is bumped from behind, don’t stop. Wait until you’re in a public area before you do.
- If a car behind is flashing their lights at you constantly or shouting at you that something is wrong with your car, carry on until you get to a public area. This is a common trick that gets unsuspecting visitors to stop.
- Always check around your car before you get back in when it’s been parked.

The Good Samaritan Law

European Law requires every driver to stop and assist if they encounter an accident if it is safe to do so.

Low Emission Zones (LEZs)

What are Low Emission Zones? They are areas where the most polluting vehicles are restricted from entering an area. This means that vehicles are banned, or in some cases charged, if they enter the LEZ when their emissions are over a set level.

They are often the most effective measure that cities can take to reduce air pollution problems in their area.

Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Netherlands and Sweden all currently have LEZ. More details at www.lowemissionzones.eu

‘Prorite a droite’

Finally if any motoring rule in Europe is going to catch out the non-resident it’s the French ‘Prorite a droite’ rule. Essentially, this means any adjoining traffic from the right has priority over that already on the road, even if those joining are doing so from a minor or side road. Thankfully this rule, broadly speaking, has been abandoned at roundabouts and the vast majority of major roads now have priority, and sign indicating thus, over adjoining minor ones.

It’s still prudent to exercise caution however. You are most likely to find ‘Prorite a droite’ still in effect in small towns and urban areas, particularly at unmarked junctions.

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Individuals are advised to carry out their own research, and seek legal advice where appropriate.

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