



The Ultimate
Driving Machine

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DRIVING IN EUROPE

TAKING YOUR CAR OVERSEAS? OUR COMPLETE GUIDE TELLS YOU WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

While every care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the information given in this publication, the information and advice provided is not exhaustive and is intended to offer guidance only to car drivers. BMW UK accepts no responsibility for any injury, loss or inconvenience sustained by anyone using this Guide. Drivers are advised to check latest legislation and advice with a recognised motoring organisation such as the AA or RAC before travelling. Correct at date of publication (June 2017).



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Over three million of us take our cars across the Channel every year, while millions more hire a car when overseas.

This guide offers advice to car drivers and tells you what you need to know to drive in all the EU member states, including Croatia, which joined the Union in July 2013, as well as the non-EU states of Switzerland, Norway and Turkey.

You and the law

You might think that in this age of EU harmonisation traffic regulations would be fairly consistent throughout Europe. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Take speed limits. The top speed allowed on a French *autoroute* is 130km/h, but cross the border to Belgium and you need to slow to 120km/h or risk a fine. Yet on much of the German *autobahn* network there is no speed limit at all. Bear in mind, too, that the minimum age for driving in most of Europe is 18, not 17 as in the UK, and driving on a provisional UK licence is not permitted.

When it comes to drinking alcohol and driving abroad, the best advice is don't. By European standards, the British drink-drive limit is high at 80mg per 100ml of blood. We have listed the applicable limits in all countries in the Guide.

European cities are often congested with limited parking facilities, and many European countries enforce 'Blue Zones' where you need to display a dedicated ticket or disc to indicate your time of arrival.

Before you go

Long distances will affect your car as well as its driver, so have your car thoroughly checked and serviced before setting out.



Stelvio Pass, Italy



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FRANCE

(inc Monaco)



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:

Urban	50km/h
Open-road	90km/h
Motorway	110-130km/h ¹

Drink-drive limit	50mg alcohol/100ml blood. 20mg for drivers with less than three years' experience
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Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 10s
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On-the-spot fines	Yes
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Mandatory equipment	Warning triangle Reflective jackets for all occupants, kept in car not the boot Spare bulbs Snow chains as indicated Headlight beam deflectors Breathalyser/tester x 2
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1: Lower limit applies in wet weather and to drivers who have held their licence for less than three years



Paris

- France's *autoroute* network comprises mainly toll roads. Electronic tags are available which help to avoid queues. The speed limit on the *autoroute* is 130km/h (81mph), but in wet weather it is 110km/h. Drivers who have held their licence for less than 3yrs are limited to 110km/h.
- Police can issue on-the-spot fines for speeding. Those exceeding the limit by over 50km/h face a fine of €1,500 and may have their licence confiscated.
- Children under the age of ten are not allowed to travel on the front seats of vehicles unless there is no rear seat in the vehicle, or the rear seat is already occupied with children under ten, or there are no seat belts.
- You should carry reflective jackets for driver and occupants inside your car. It is also compulsory to carry a working certified breathalyser (marked with an NF number), although there is no legislation to enforce a fine for non-compliance.
- Radar detectors are illegal and satellite navigation systems must not indicate speed camera sites, again with a €1,500 fine for transgressors.
- One motoring rule that can catch out British drivers is *priorité à droite* or *give way to the right*. Unless there are signs to the contrary, vehicles entering from the right have right of way, even if they are joining a main road from a side street. This rule is overridden on main roads marked with the *passage protégé* sign, a yellow diamond on a white background.
- Cycling is popular in France and you must leave at least 1m of space when overtaking a cyclist (1.5m outside built-up areas).
- Driving in Paris, Lyon and Grenoble requires a 'clean air' sticker, called a *Crit'Air vignette*, a legal requirement to identify a vehicle's emission levels. The vignette costs around €4.80 and is valid for the life of the vehicle, but without one you could be liable for an on-the-spot fine. Find out more at www.certificat-air.gouv.fr/en/.



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LUXEMBOURG



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Speed limits:

Urban	50km/h
Open-road	90km/h
Motorway	110-130km/h ¹

Drink-drive limit	50mg alcohol/100ml blood. 20mg for drivers with less than three years' experience
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Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 1.5m
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On-the-spot fines	Yes
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Mandatory equipment	Warning triangle Reflective jackets for all occupants, kept in car not the boot Headlight beam deflectors Snowflake-marked tyres in winter
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Neumuenster Abbey, Luxembourg

- Many British drivers see nothing of Luxembourg except the (toll-free) *autoroute* as they speed through on their way to Germany. But the Grand Duchy is worth a stop, particularly to explore the part of the Ardennes that lies within its borders.
- Traffic signs are posted in both French and German. The motorway speed limit is reduced from 130km/h to 110km/h in wet weather. In pedestrian zones, marked *zone de rencontre*, pedestrians have priority and a 20km/h speed limit applies. Police are authorised to impose on-the-spot fines for traffic violations.
- Children under three years old must be seated in an approved restraint system. Children aged 3-18 years and/or under 1.5m must be seated in an appropriate restraint system. If their weight is over 36kg a seatbelt can be used but only on the rear seat of the vehicle. Rearward facing child restraint systems are prohibited on seats with a front airbag unless it is disabled.
- Drivers are required to flash their headlights before overtaking at night outside built-up areas.
- Carrying fuel in a can is not permitted and neither is the use of the horn in built-up areas.
- If you are travelling in winter, vehicles must have snowflake-marked winter tyres fitted to all wheels when temperatures are zero Celsius or below. Studded tyres are permitted from December until the end of March.
- Blue zone parking disc systems are in operation in urban areas. Parking meters are also used in Luxembourg City.

¹: Lower limit applies in wet weather

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BELGIUM



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:

Urban	50km/h
Open-road	90km/h
Motorway	120km/h

Drink-drive limit 50mg alcohol/100ml blood. 20mg for drivers with less than three years' experience

Children in cars Child restraint/seat for under 18yrs or 1.35m

On-the-spot fines Yes

Mandatory equipment Warning triangle
Reflective jackets for all occupants, kept in car not the boot
Snowflake-marked tyres in winter
Headlight beam deflectors
International driving permit



Brugges

- Flemish and French are spoken in different areas of Belgium, and many towns (such as Ypres/leper) have a different name in each language. It can be confusing, with signs switching from one to the other between linguistic regions.
- Drivers must give way to the right at all times except on motorways, roundabouts and roads signed with an orange diamond. Trams always have priority and you must stop if a tram or bus stops in the middle of the road to let passengers on or off.
- Fines for speeding are high (up to €2,750 for exceeding the limit by 40km/h) and can be imposed on the spot. A not always clearly marked limit of 30km/h may apply around schools. It is forbidden to use cruise control on congested motorways.
- A foreign driving licence does not entitle the holder to drive a motor vehicle in Belgium until the age of 18 years.
- Children under 18 and less than 1.35m must use a suitable child-restraint system whether seated in the front or rear seat of a vehicle. When two child restraint systems are being used on the rear seats and there isn't adequate room to place a third child restraint system, the third child may travel on the back seat protected by the adult seat belt. A child under three years old cannot be transported in a vehicle without a child seat/restraint. It is prohibited to use a rear facing child seat on a front seat with a front airbag unless it is deactivated.
- Blue zone parking disc systems operate in major towns. Look out for signs indicating that cars should park fully or partly on the pavement.
- It is illegal to leave a dog unattended in a parked car.



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NETHERLANDS



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:

Urban	50km/h
Open-road	80-100km/h
Motorway	130km/h

Drink-drive limit	50mg alcohol/100ml blood. 20mg for drivers with less than five years' experience
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Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 18yrs or 1.35m
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On-the-spot fines	Yes
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Mandatory equipment	Warning triangle Headlight beam deflectors
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Amsterdam

- Traffic density in the Netherlands is the highest in Europe, so expect congestion in towns. Cycling is popular and in home zones pedestrians and cyclists coming from the right have priority, and you should drive at walking pace (10km/h).
- Give way to the right unless you are on a priority road marked with a yellow diamond sign. You must give way to buses pulling away from bus stops in built-up areas. Trams always take priority, and you must stop when a tram stops in the middle of the road to let passengers on or off.
- Drivers must be 18 or over and children up to the age of 18 and less than 1.35m cannot travel as a front or rear seat passenger unless using a suitable restraint system adapted to their size. If the vehicle is not fitted with rear seat belts children under three are not permitted to travel in the vehicle. Children under three are permitted to travel in the front seats if using a rear facing child seat with the airbag deactivated (if fitted). If the vehicle's front seats are not fitted with seat belts, only passengers measuring 1.35m or more may travel in the front seat.
- The drink-drive limit is lower than in the UK, at 50mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood, and drivers who have held their licence for less than five years must observe a lower limit of 20mg.
- Radar detectors are illegal and horns may not be used at night
- Blue zone parking disc systems operate in most towns. If parking more than 30 metres from a street lamp at night you must show parking lights. Take care when parking on main roads in Amsterdam: many allow metered parking for most of the day but cars still there when the rush hour starts will be towed. Do not park on roads marked *Stop verbod*, and do not park against the direction of traffic flow.



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GERMANY



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:

Urban	50km/h
Open-road	100km/h
Motorway	130km/h ¹

Drink-drive limit	50mg alcohol/100ml blood. Zero tolerance for drivers under 21 or who have held their licence for less than two years
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Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 12yrs or 1.5m
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On-the-spot fines	Yes
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Mandatory equipment	Warning triangle Reflective jackets for all occupants, kept in car not the boot Snowflake-marked tyres in winter Headlight beam deflectors Spare bulbs and first-aid kit recommended
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Cologne, cathedral

- German drivers have a reputation for being fast but disciplined, and parts of the *autobahn* network are among the last places in the world you can drive free from speed limits. Where speed limits are posted they are rigorously enforced.
- Running out of fuel on the *autobahn* is an offence. In heavily congested traffic – at junctions and where two lanes become one – the ‘zipper rule’, or *reissverschluss*, comes into play with cars merging one at a time.
- Children under 12 and less than 1.5m must be seated in a child seat or use a child restraint. It is prohibited to use a rear facing child seat on a front seat with a front airbag unless it is deactivated.
- It is illegal to pass a school bus when it shows flashing hazard lights to indicate it is stopping.
- If you are travelling in winter, vehicles must have M+S-marked winter tyres fitted to all wheels, and dipped headlights are mandatory in poor visibility.
- The drink-drive limit is 50mg alcohol per 100ml blood, but drivers who are under 21 or who have held their licence for less than two years are subject to a zero limit.
- Radar detectors, including sat nav systems with active camera detectors, and studded tyres are illegal.
- Berlin has a restrictive *umweltzone* or ‘environmental zone’. To enter you must purchase and display a *plakette* (vignette) on the windscreen to show your car meets the specified emissions standards. The *plakette* is available from approved garages and a €40 fine is payable for non-compliance. Further information is available by visiting www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/umwelt/index_en.shtml

1: Unless on a delimited motorway



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AUSTRIA



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:

Urban	50km/h
Open-road	100km/h
Motorway	130km/h

Drink-drive limit	50mg alcohol/100ml blood. 10mg for drivers who have held their licence for less than two years
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Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 14yrs or 1.5m
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On-the-spot fines	Yes
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Mandatory equipment	Warning triangle Reflective jackets for all occupants, kept in car not the boot First aid kit Headlight beam deflectors Snowflake-marked tyres in winter
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Innsbruck

- Due to its mountainous terrain, snow and ice is frequent in winter on Austria's roads, and some passes may become blocked. Winter tyres are mandatory on all wheels when driving in snow, slush or ice, with heavy fines for non compliance.
- Snow chains are allowed as an alternative to winter tyres but only where the road is fully covered by snow. Cars fitted with snow chains must not exceed 50km/h.
- The urban speed limit is generally 50km/h but some towns have a lower limit of 30km/h. Radar detectors are illegal.
- The drink-drive limit is lower than in the UK, at 50mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood, but drivers who have held their licence for less than two years are subject to a lower limit of 10mg.
- Before using the motorway or 'S' road network you must purchase and display a *vignette* (toll sticker) to your windscreen. *Vignettes* are available for one year, two months or ten days, and are available at border crossings and fuel stations. The vignette also allows a 15% discount on some tunnel toll fees. A minimum fine of €120 applies for non compliance.
- When congestion forms on a motorway or dual carriageway it is compulsory to form an emergency 'corridor'. Drivers must pull over to the left or right to create an open lane down the middle of the carriageway to allow access for emergency services. There are heavy fines for using this lane illegally.
- Drivers must keep a reflective jacket accessible in the car and wear it in the event of a breakdown.



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SWITZERLAND

(inc Liechtenstein)



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:

Urban	50km/h
Open-road	80km/h
Motorway	120km/h

Drink-drive limit	50mg alcohol/100ml blood. Zero tolerance for novice drivers
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Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 12s
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On-the-spot fines	Yes
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Mandatory equipment	Warning triangle kept in car Headlight beam deflectors Spare bulbs Spare spectacles if appropriate Snow chains as indicated in winter
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Matterhorn

- Although Switzerland and Liechtenstein are not members of the EU, drivers from the UK aged 18 or over can drive there using a British driving licence and do not need to obtain an International Driving Permit.
- Much of Switzerland is mountainous and care is needed when driving on alpine roads, particularly during the winter months. While winter tyres are not compulsory, it is advisable to fit them as vehicles which hold up traffic in snow by not being properly equipped are liable for a fine. Snow chains must be fitted to at least two driven wheels where signs indicate.
- Road signs in Switzerland may be in French, German or Italian. Buses pulling out have priority. Swiss traffic regulations are strictly enforced, with heavy penalties for speeding including jail sentences for serious offenders. Radar detectors, including sat nav systems with active camera detectors, are not permitted. A warning triangle must be kept within easy access in the cabin of the car.
- Children up to 12 and under 1.5m must be seated in a child seat or restraint approved to UN ECE regulation 44.03. This applies to hire cars too.
- The give way to the right rule applies, except on main roads marked with a yellow diamond.
- Dipped headlights are compulsory in tunnels. It is also compulsory to switch off your engine while waiting in stationary traffic.
- A *vignette* is needed to drive on motorways but unlike Austria only one type is available and this covers the 14 months from 1 December to 31 January. *Vignettes* are available at border crossings and service stations at a cost of CHF 40. If you are towing a trailer or caravan you need to purchase two.



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REPUBLIC OF IRELAND



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:

Urban	50km/h
Open-road	80/100km/h
Motorway	120km/h

Drink-drive limit	50mg alcohol/100ml blood. 20mg for novice drivers
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Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 1.5m
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On-the-spot fines	Yes (payable within 28 days)
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Mandatory equipment	None
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Dublin

- Motoring in the Republic of Ireland is easier for UK drivers than in most of Europe because traffic drives on the left. There are, however, some important differences to watch out for.
- Drink-drive limits are lower than in the UK. The limit is 50mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood, with a lower 20mg limit applied to novice drivers. The police conduct random breath-tests. UK drivers who receive a driving ban in Ireland will also be banned when they return home.
- Speeds and distances are indicated in kilometres. National routes have a 100km/h speed limit but local and regional roads are restricted to 80km/h. Road signs are in English as well as Irish, although you may see the Gaelic 'give way' sign, *Géill Slí*.
- Main highways have passing lanes, separated from the main carriageway by a broken yellow line. You are expected to use this to move over and let faster vehicles pass.
- Some motorways have tolls and don't take credit cards, so it's a good idea to have some change (in Euros) on board. There is now a barrier-free toll on the M50 motorway around Dublin. Your number plate is recorded as you pass the toll gate and the fee must be paid by 8pm the next day at any Payzone outlet.
- As when heading to other European countries you will need to take your vehicle registration document (or a letter of authority for a company or hire car). Your vehicle may not be driven by Irish residents during your visit, except by a garage employee with your written permission.



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DENMARK



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Speed limits:

Urban	50km/h
Open-road	80km/h
Motorway	110/130km/h

Drink-drive limit	50mg alcohol/100ml blood
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Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 1.35m
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On-the-spot fines	Yes
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Mandatory equipment	Warning triangle kept in car Headlight beam deflectors
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Nyhavn, Copenhagen

- Denmark's fine network of uncrowded secondary roads allows relaxed touring. Motorways are toll-free, but toll is payable on the Øresund bridge linking Denmark to Sweden and the Great Belt Connection (Storebaelt) between Zealand and Funen. Drivers need to be aged 18 or over.
- Cycling is popular in Denmark, so be prepared to give way to bicycles, and always check for cyclists on cycle lanes before making a right turn.
- Children under three must be seated in a restraint system adapted to their size. Children over three and under 1.35m must be seated in a child restraint system suitable for their height and weight. It is prohibited to use a rear facing child seat on a front seat with a front airbag unless it is deactivated. All rear seat passengers must wear a seatbelt, so it is no longer possible to transport three children if there are only two seatbelts.
- Car ferries can fill up at peak periods so it pays to book in advance. Petrol in cans is not permitted on ferries.
- It is compulsory to use dipped headlights at all times. A line of white triangles on the road means give way. Drivers must merge in turn when joining a motorway and signal whenever they change lanes.
- Studded tyres may be used between 1 November and 15 April, and must be on all four wheels.
- Parking is permitted on the right (in the direction of traffic) only. Parking is permitted with two wheels on the pavement as long as pedestrians are not inconvenienced.
- Sanctions for speeding are strict, and drivers caught exceeding the speed limit by 50km/h in a 50km/h zone will have their licence confiscated.



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SWEDEN



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:

Urban	30-70km/h
Open-road	70-100km/h
Motorway	90-120km/h

Drink-drive limit	20mg alcohol/100ml blood
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Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 15yrs/1.35m
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On-the-spot fines	Yes
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Mandatory equipment	Snowflake-marked tyres in winter, with or without studs Reflective jacket Headlight beam deflectors Warning triangle Washer additive and antifreeze Shovel in winter
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Stockholm

- Sweden has a generally high standard of driving but penalties for transgressors are strict. Speed limits are not set by the type of road, but vary according to the standard and safety of each individual stretch of road.
- The drink-drive limit is lower in Sweden than in many countries, at 20mg alcohol per 100ml blood.
- Children under 15 or under 1.35m must use an appropriate child restraint. They are permitted to travel unrestrained in the rear of a taxi if the right child restraint is not available. Children over 15 or above 1.35m may use an adult seat belt. Children under 1.35m are able to travel in the front seat only if the passenger seat airbag is deactivated (if fitted). Children weighing up to 13kg must use a restraint facing backwards.
- Dipped headlights are mandatory at all times and radar detectors are banned. Overtaking on the right as well as the left is permitted on multi-lane roads with a speed limit of up to 70km/h.
- Many country roads have wide shoulders on which it is usual to move to let following vehicles overtake. In forested areas, special care is needed due to elk and reindeer wandering on to the road. Report any such collisions to the police.
- Speed-detecting equipment is banned
- Winters are severe in Sweden. Roads can be closed during the winter months, and the use of winter tyres is compulsory from 1 December to 31 March. Carry plenty of warm clothes, provisions and a shovel in case of heavy snowfall.
- Some urban area parking is regulated by the *Datumparkering* rule. On odd days parking is not permitted on the side of the road with odd numbers. On even days, parking is not permitted on the side of the road with even numbers. A circular sign with a blue background indicates that parking is prohibited, but stopping is allowed for loading or unloading. A circular sign with a red cross on a blue background surrounded by a red border prohibits stopping and parking.



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NORWAY



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:

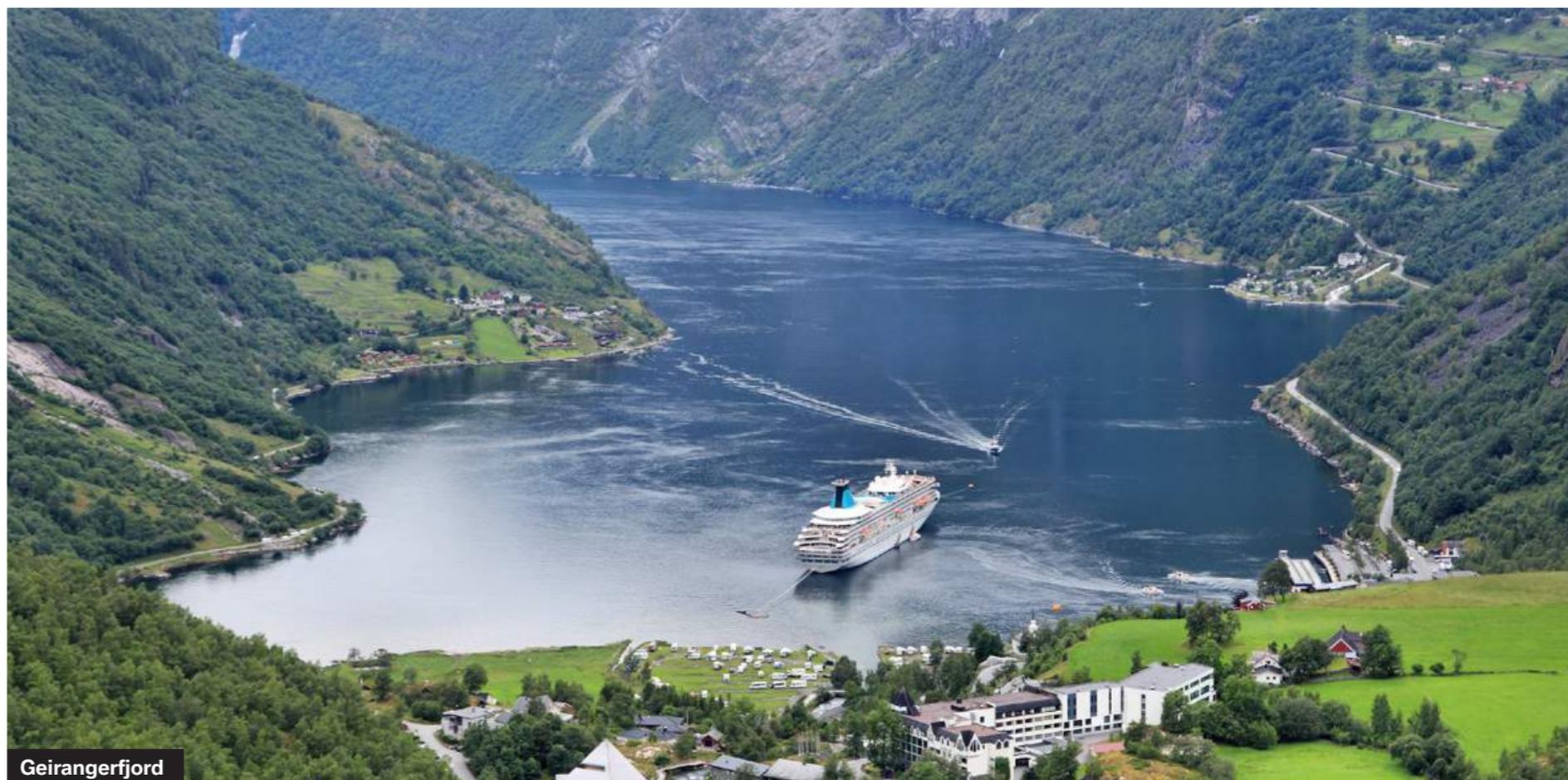
Urban	50km/h
Open-road	80km/h
Motorway	90/100km/h

Drink-drive limit	20mg alcohol/100ml blood
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Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 1.35m
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On-the-spot fines	Yes
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Mandatory equipment	Snowflake-marked tyres in winter (3mm minimum tread depth) Headlight beam deflectors Reflective jacket Warning triangle
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Geirangerfjord

- Although Norway is not a member of the EU, drivers from the UK can drive there on a UK licence and do not need to obtain an International Driving Permit. City tolls must be paid before entering Bergen, Oslo, Stavanger and Trondheim.
- Roads can be narrow and winding, and average speeds low. Narrow roads have *Møteplass* or 'meeting points' at the side of the road; when the space is on your side you are obliged to stop and give way to oncoming traffic. Numerous road tunnels and bridges have tolls.
- The drink-drive limit, at 20mg alcohol per 100ml of blood, is lower than in many countries and there are frequent roadside checks for drink-driving.
- Speed limits are low and strictly enforced, with severe fines (or even jail sentences). Radar detectors are illegal.
- Fuel may be carried in a can but this is forbidden aboard ferries.
- In winter many highways are closed and the authorities concentrate on keeping a limited number of major routes free of snow. If in doubt, ask local advice before setting out and go well prepared with emergency clothing and provisions. Winter tyres or snow chains are mandatory whenever there is snow or ice covering the road.
- Children under three must be seated in a restraint system adapted to their size. Children over three and under 1.35m must be seated in a child restraint system suitable for their height and weight. It is prohibited to use a rear facing child seat on a front seat with a front airbag unless it is deactivated. All rear seat passengers must wear a seatbelt, so it is no longer possible to transport three children if there are only two seatbelts.
- Drivers must use dipped headlights at all times and give way to the right except on roads marked with a yellow diamond.



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FINLAND



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:

Urban	50km/h
Open-road	80-100km/h
Motorway	120km/h

Drink-drive limit	50mg alcohol/100ml blood
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Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 1.35m
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On-the-spot fines	Yes (payable within two weeks)
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Mandatory equipment	Snowflake-marked tyres in winter (3mm minimum tread depth) Reflective jackets for all occupants Headlight beam deflectors Reflective jacket Warning triangle
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Helsinki

- Finland has a well-maintained main road system including a small toll-free motorway network. Traffic is generally light outside the main towns. Winter conditions are harsh and winter tyres are compulsory from December to February.
- Care should be taken on gravel roads, common in less populated areas, which can be in poor condition after the winter. Temporary reduced speed limits may be enforced locally on some roads during the winter months.
- Children under 1.35m must be seated in a child seat or restraint, except in a taxi. Where a child restraint/seat is not available, a child three years and over must travel in the rear seat of the vehicle using a seat belt or other safety device. It is the responsibility of the driver to ensure that all children under 15 are safely restrained.
- Dipped headlights are compulsory at all times. Give way to the right at intersections, and always give priority to trams and buses pulling out. It is prohibited to sound the horn in built-up areas except in an emergency. Police can impose fines, but not collect them on the spot: the fines must be paid at a bank within two weeks.
- Elk and reindeer commonly wander on to the road where they pose a serious hazard to motorists. Any collision must be reported to the police.
- Fuel can be significantly more expensive in the north and filling stations few and far between. It is permitted to carry up to ten litres of fuel in a can.
- Be careful when parking overnight in towns where streets must be kept clear for street cleaning. Cars that obstruct cleaning vehicles will be removed.



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SPAIN



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:

Urban	50km/h
Open-road	90-100km/h
Motorway	120km/h

Drink-drive limit	50mg alcohol/100ml blood. 30mg for drivers who have held their licence for less than two years
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Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 12yrs or 1.35m
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On-the-spot fines	Yes
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Mandatory equipment	Two warning triangles Reflective jackets for all occupants Spare spectacles if appropriate
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Barcelona

- Roads in Spain are generally well-maintained with light traffic, and Spain has a fine *autopista* (motorway) network, though many are toll roads.
- When turning left across oncoming traffic it is usually necessary to circle off the road to the right and stop before crossing both carriageways once the road is clear. Do not turn left across an unbroken white line down the centre of the road – drive on until you reach a turning place.
- Cars in Spain must by law carry two warning triangles. If you break down or are involved in an accident, place one triangle in front of and one behind the car. A reflective jacket must also be carried, and worn in the event of a breakdown on a motorway or main road. It is also compulsory to carry a spare pair of glasses if you need to wear them to drive.
- Radar detectors are banned.
- Children up to the age of 12, or under 1.35m, must be seated in a child restraint system adapted to their size and weight, except when travelling in a taxi in an urban area. Children over 1.35m may use an adult seatbelt.
- In urban areas sounding the horn is prohibited except in an emergency – flash your lights instead. The use of full headlights in built-up areas is prohibited; use sidelights or dipped headlights depending on how well lit the roads are. Dipped headlights must be used in tunnels. If carrying bicycles on the rear of your car, you need to fit a reflective square panel.
- Be alert for ‘contrived incidents’ where robbers indicate a problem with your car while an accomplice reaches inside and grabs valuables. Look out too for thieves who pose as plain-clothes police officers; if in doubt phone the civil guard on **062** or police on **112** and ask them to confirm that the vehicle registration corresponds to an official police vehicle.



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ITALY



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:

Urban	50km/h
Open-road	90km/h
Motorway	130km/h

Drink-drive limit	50mg alcohol/100ml blood. Zero tolerance for drivers who have held their licence for less than three years
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Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 12yrs or 1.35m
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On-the-spot fines	Yes
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Mandatory equipment	Snowflake-marked tyres in winter Reflective jacket Headlight beam deflectors Warning triangle
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Milan

- Italy's impressive *autostrada* (motorway) network allows rapid progress, but expect to cover much less ground on local roads. Most motorways are toll roads.
- Theft is a problem in some Italian towns and cities, particularly Naples and Rome, where moped riders snatch bags from stationary cars at traffic lights. Keep your windows closed and doors locked in town, and never leave valuables, bags or clothes on display. Cars at motorway service stations are also targeted by robbers. Be wary of accepting help with a flat tyre, which may have been punctured deliberately.
- Children travelling in a UK registered vehicle must be secured according to UK legislation.
- In the winter fog can be a hazard on roads in the north, and in the Italian Alps it is compulsory to carry snow chains from 15 October to 15 April.
- Dipped headlights are mandatory at all times outside built-up areas, as well as in tunnels and during poor visibility.
- Radar detectors are banned.
- When two opposing cars are both turning across the road at a crossroads, they must turn in front of each other, not behind as is usual in the UK.
- If you have an overhanging load, such as a bicycle strapped to the rear of the car, you must fit a reflective square panel to it.
- Cars need a pass to enter the historic centres of many Italian cities, indicated by signs with the letters *ZTL*. If you enter without obtaining a pass your number plate will be recorded on camera and a fine sent to your home address. Milan operates a congestion charge and you must buy an eco-pass to enter its restricted zone.



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PORTUGAL



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:

Urban	50km/h
Open-road	90km/h
Motorway	120km/h ¹

Drink-drive limit	50mg alcohol/100ml blood. 20mg for drivers who have held their licence for less than two years
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Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 12yrs or 1.5m
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On-the-spot fines	Yes
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Mandatory equipment	Photographic proof of identity Toll tag Headlight beam deflectors Spare bulbs Warning triangle and reflective jacket, kept inside the car
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¹: 90km/hr for drivers who have held their licence for less than one year



Rossio Square, Lisbon

- Motorways, or *auto-estradas*, are the best way to cover distances quickly and safely in Portugal, although most are toll roads. Tolls are collected electronically and you need to register with the Easytoll system at main border crossings.
- Portugal has a poor road safety record, with 7.4 road deaths per 100,000 of population in 2014, compared with 3.0 in the UK. Take care when driving, especially on busy coastal roads.
- Be prepared to give way to the right even if you appear to be on a main road. Trams have right of way. Carrying bicycles on the back of a car is not permitted and nor is a spare petrol can.
- Children under 12, or under 1.5m, cannot travel as front seat passengers. They must travel in the rear in a restraint system adapted to their size, unless the vehicle has only two seats or is not fitted with seat belts. Children under three can be seated in the front passenger seat if using a suitable child restraint but the airbag must be switched off if using a rear-facing child restraint system.
- It is permissible to take your car to Portugal for a maximum of 183 days in any 12-month period for tourist purposes only, but you must not lend it to anyone while you are there. Drivers who have held their licence for less than a year must not exceed 90km/h and must display a yellow '90' disc at the rear.
- Blue-zone parking operates in Lisbon, and elsewhere parking meters are common. In major towns, unemployed persons commonly wave drivers to a parking space in return for a small tip. The police are authorised to impose on-the-spot fines and have portable machines to enable fines to be paid.
- Foreign-registered cars can be targeted by thieves, so avoid leaving valuables unattended.



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GREECE



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:

Urban	50km/h
Open-road	90/110km/h
Motorway	130km/h

Drink-drive limit	50mg alcohol/100ml blood. 20mg for drivers who have held their licence for less than two years
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Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 12yrs or 1.35m
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On-the-spot fines	Yes
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Mandatory equipment	Warning triangle Headlight beam deflectors First aid kit Fire extinguisher
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1: 90km/hr for drivers who have held their licence for less than one year



Acropolis, Athens

- Driving in mainland Greece can be a hectic experience, but the pace is more relaxed on the Greek islands. In particular, look out for weaving motorbikes and scooters in cities and resorts.
- Highways often have a white line along the nearside and slower traffic is expected to pull across it to allow overtaking. Off the main highway, roads can be narrow and winding with precipitous drops. Be ready to pull in for local traffic, including buses and coaches which you'll encounter on the unlikeliest roads.
- Horn use is frequent in Greece but you can be fined for using a horn in built-up areas except in an emergency. Using main-beam headlights in town is also strictly forbidden.
- Children under three must be placed in a suitable child restraint. Children between three and 11 under 1.35m must be seated in an appropriate child restraint for their size. From the age of 12, children measuring over 1.35m can wear an adult seat belt. It is prohibited to use a rear facing child seat on a front seat with a front airbag unless it is deactivated.
- It may be necessary to drive on unmade roads to get to your villa or local beaches, so if hiring a car, check that your insurance covers you, and also that you are covered if you plan to take your car on an inter-island ferry.
- In rural areas filling stations may close at evenings and weekends, so fill up in advance. It is not permitted to carry spare fuel in cans.
- Police can impose fines for traffic infringements but do not collect them on the spot; instead you are given ten days to pay at a public treasury office. Illegally parked vehicles may have their number plates confiscated.



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MALTA



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:

Urban	50km/h
Open-road	80km/h
Motorway	None

Drink-drive limit	80mg alcohol/100ml blood
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Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 10yrs or 1.5m
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On-the-spot fines	No
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Mandatory equipment	Warning triangle and reflective jacket, kept inside the car Headlight beam deflectors
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Valletta

- Its British history means that the Maltese drive on the left, but their exuberant driving style owes more to Mediterranean influences (locals joke that they don't drive on the left or right, but in the shade).
- As a small island with plenty of cars, roads can get congested. Parking in the capital, Valletta, is limited and there is a charge to enter the city, so use the park and ride facilities instead.
- In tunnels you must switch on your headlights and stay in lane. When giving way on narrow roads, the driver nearest to the wider section of road must reverse to give way.
- On a hill vehicles going up have priority over those coming down.
- If an accident occurs you must call the police and not move any of the vehicles until they have arrived.



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CYPRUS



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:

Urban	50km/h
Open-road	80km/h
Motorway	100km/h (65km/h minimum)

Drink-drive limit	20mg alcohol/100ml blood
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Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 10yrs
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On-the-spot fines	Yes (can be imposed but not collected)
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Mandatory equipment	Two warning triangles Headlight beam deflectors
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Ruins of Kourion

- The Republic of Cyprus drives on the left. Number plates on hire cars start with a 'Z', which can make them a target for thieves, and although they can be taken from south to north Cyprus for the day, check first that your insurance is valid.
- Major roads, including motorways, are well surfaced but minor roads can be rough and potholed. On entering a built-up area the speed limit automatically drops to 50km/h, and this is indicated by the sign marked *Katikomi Periokhi*. Don't eat or drink while driving, or smoke in a car with a child in it.
- Children under five cannot travel as a front seat passenger. Children over five and under ten must use a suitable child restraint system
- The maximum legal level of alcohol in the blood is 20mg alcohol per 100ml blood. Persons suspected of driving under the influence of alcohol may be subjected to a blood test.
- Radar detectors, including sat nav systems with active camera detectors, are not permitted.



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POLAND



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:	
Urban	60km/h
Open-road	90km/h
Motorway	140km/h
Drink-drive limit	20mg alcohol/100ml blood
Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 12yrs or 1.5m
On-the-spot fines	Yes
Mandatory equipment	Warning triangle Reflective jacket, kept inside the car Headlight beam deflectors



- Roads in Poland can be poorly surfaced and hazardous, with fatality rates nearly four times higher than in the UK. Be wary of local drivers jumping red traffic lights.
- Traffic is often heavy on main roads, and look out for slow-moving and horse-drawn vehicles, especially on poorly lit roads at night. Some motorways and major roads are toll routes.
- Dipped headlights are mandatory and there is strict enforcement of drink-driving laws. The police can impose on-the-spot cash fines in the local currency. Car crime is prevalent so leave your car in a guarded car park wherever possible.



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CROATIA



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:

Urban 50km/h
 Open-road 90km/h
 Motorway 130km/h

Drink-drive limit 50mg alcohol/100ml blood. Zero tolerance for drivers under 24 years old

Children in cars Appropriate child restraint is compulsory

On-the-spot fines Yes (payable within 8 days)

Mandatory equipment Warning triangle
 Spare bulbs
 Reflective jacket, kept inside the car
 Headlight beam deflectors
 First aid kit
 Shovel
 Snow chains in winter



Dubrovnik

- Roads in Croatia are generally well maintained but they can become congested at busy periods, and queues can form at border crossings. Traffic information in English is available on 98.5FM during the tourist season.
- Some motorways, bridges and tunnels have tolls. It is illegal to overtake military convoys.
- If entering Croatia with a damaged car you should obtain a certificate for the damage at the border. For emergency help in English call **(3851) 1987**.
- Winter conditions in the mountains can be severe and winter tyres or snow chains may be required. You must drive with dipped headlights at all times from the last weekend in October until the last weekend in March.



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CZECH REPUBLIC



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:	
Urban	50km/h
Open-road	90km/h
Motorway	130km/h
Drink-drive limit	Nil alcohol/100ml blood
Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 1.5m/36kg
On-the-spot fines	Yes
Mandatory equipment	Warning triangle Headlight beam deflectors Spare bulbs Spare fuses First aid kit Reflective jacket Winter tyres



Charles Bridge, Prague

- To use the motorway network you must display a vignette which can be purchased at the border, post offices or filling stations.
- Dipped headlights are required at all times. Give way to buses and trams. Take care at level crossings, which often have no barriers, and keep to 30km/h when approaching them.
- Accidents causing injury or more than minor damage must be reported to the police, who are empowered to collect on-the-spot fines.
- Rules on drink-driving are particularly strict, with a zero-tolerance policy in force and a hefty fine and licence confiscation for offenders.



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HUNGARY



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:	
Urban	50km/h
Open-road	90/100km/h
Motorway	130km/h
Drink-drive limit	Nil alcohol/100ml blood
Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 1.35m
On-the-spot fines	Yes
Mandatory equipment	Warning triangle Headlight beam deflectors First aid kit Reflective jacket Snow chains in winter



St Stephen's Basilica, Budapest

- A vignette is required to drive on Hungarian motorways; this may be purchased at the border, fuel station or on-line. Dipped headlights must be used at all times outside built-up areas.
- Main beam should not be used when driving in town, and the horn is not permitted in town except in an emergency.
- If your car sustains bodywork damage you must obtain a certificate from the police, and accidents involving Hungarian citizens should be reported to the Association of Hungarian Insurance Companies.
- When motorway congestion forms, drivers must form an emergency corridor.
- Like the Czech Republic, a zero tolerance policy is in force for drink driving.



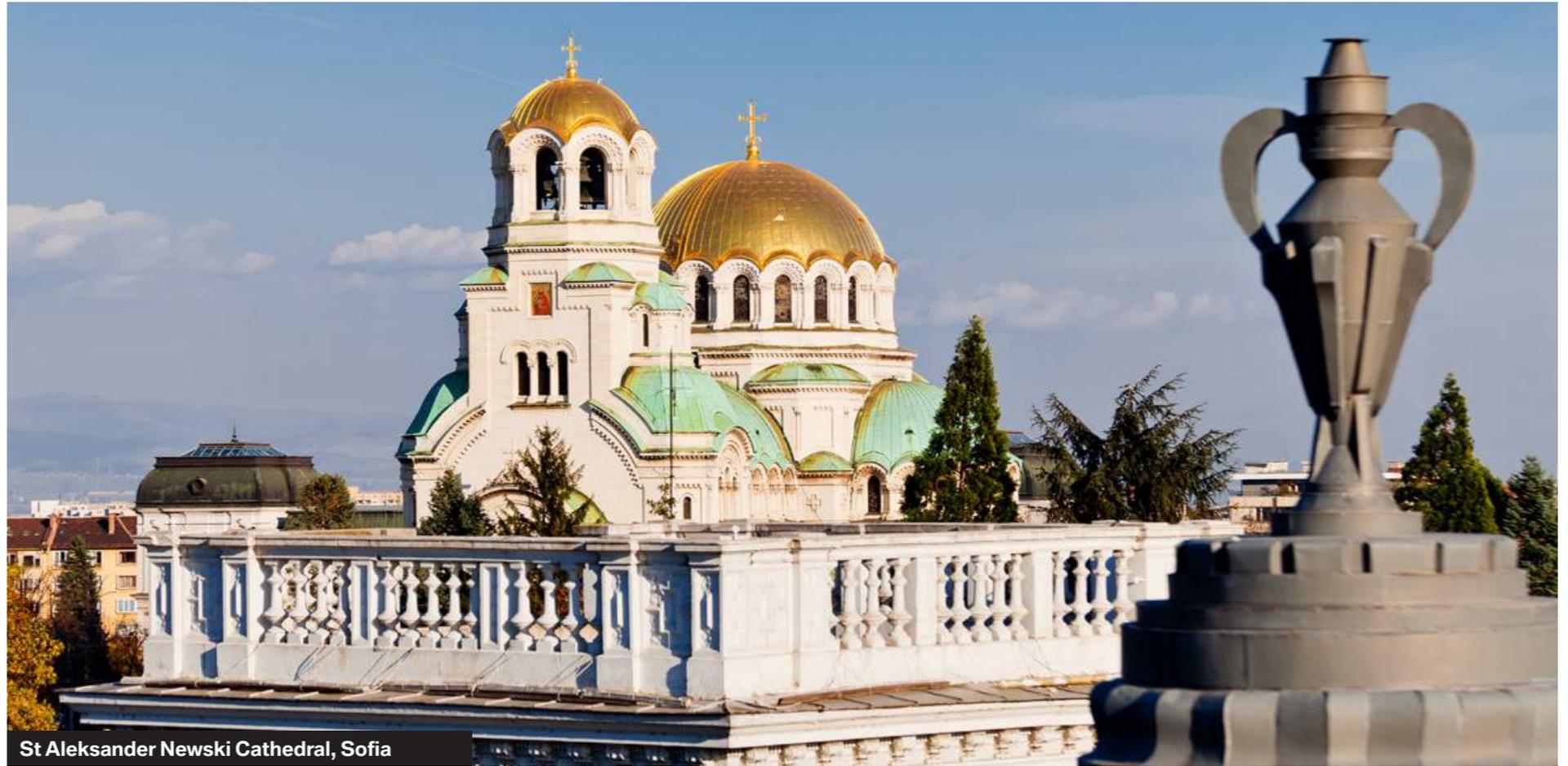
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BULGARIA



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:	
Urban	50km/h
Open-road	90km/h
Motorway	130km/h
Drink-drive limit	50mg alcohol/100ml blood
Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 1.5m
On-the-spot fines	Yes
Mandatory equipment	Warning triangle Headlight beam deflectors First aid kit Winter tyres Fire extinguisher Reflective jacket for all occupants Snow chains



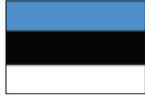
St Aleksander Newski Cathedral, Sofia

- You need to buy a vignette to drive in Bulgaria, available at the border or from post offices or fuel stations.
- Tolls are charged on motorways and main roads. Secondary roads can be in poor condition, driving standards erratic, while unlit farm carts and animals are a hazard at night.
- The use of dipped headlights is compulsory at all times and car crime is rife, with thieves posing as police or deliberately puncturing tyres to steal while the driver is distracted.
- Accidents must be reported to the police. Road signs are in Roman as well as Cyrillic alphabets. Parking is on the left only in one-way streets.



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ESTONIA



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:	
Urban	50km/h
Open-road	90-110km/h ¹
Motorway	None
Drink-drive limit	20mg alcohol/100ml blood
Children in cars	Appropriate child restraint is compulsory
On-the-spot fines	Yes
Mandatory equipment	Two warning triangles Headlight beam deflectors First aid kit Winter tyres Fire extinguisher Two wheel chocks

¹: 90km/hr for drivers who have held their licence for less than two years



Old Town, Tallinn

- Driving in Estonia is easier than in some eastern european countries, but take all possible security measures as car crime is an issue.
- Dipped headlights must be used at all times.
- Do not overtake a tram which has stopped for passengers.
- Speed limits are increased on certain roads from 90km/h to 110km/h during the summer months, but drivers who have held their licence for less than two years must keep below 90km/h at all times.
- Winters are severe: winter tyres must by law be fitted by law from December to March but are also required in winter weather outside this period.



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LATVIA



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:	
Urban	60km/h
Open-road	90km/h
Motorway	90-110km/h
Drink-drive limit	50mg alcohol/100ml blood. 20mg for drivers who have held their licence for less than two years
Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 1.5m
On-the-spot fines	Yes (can impose but not collect)
Mandatory equipment	Two warning triangles Headlight beam deflectors Reflective jacket First aid kit Winter tyres Fire extinguisher Two wheel chocks



City Market, Riga old town

- Main roads are generally well maintained and traffic light, but signposting can be poor.
- Some rural roads are unsurfaced and need extra care. Car crime is an issue so do not leave valuables unattended.
- Dipped headlights are compulsory, and the drink-drive limit is 50mg alcohol per 100ml blood, but drivers who have held their licence for less than two years face a lower 20mg limit.
- Winters can be severe, and winter tyres are required from December until the end of February.
- If your car is involved in an accident do not move it, even if it is blocking the road, until the police give permission.



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LITHUANIA



IN BRIEF

Speed limits	
urban	50km/h
open-road	90km/h ¹
motorway	110-130km/h
Drink-drive limit	40mg alcohol/100ml blood. 20mg for drivers who have held their licence for less than two years
Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 12yrs or 1.5m
On-the-spot fines	Yes
Mandatory equipment	Warning triangle Headlight beam deflectors First aid kit Winter tyres Fire extinguisher Reflective jacket

¹: 70km/hr for drivers who have held their licence for less than two years



Trakai Castle

- Car crime is a serious problem in Lithuania; in larger towns and cities you should use guarded car parks, especially when leaving your car overnight.
- Dipped headlights must be used at all times. Winter conditions are severe so equip your car accordingly; winter tyres are compulsory from 10 November to 1 April.
- In summer some motorway speed limits are raised from 110 to 130km/h. Lower speed and drink-drive limits apply to drivers who have held their licence for less than two years.
- Police are authorised to impose on-the-spot fines and it is compulsory to call the police to the scene of an accident.



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ROMANIA



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:	
Urban	50km/h
Open-road	90km/h
Motorway	130km/h ¹
Drink-drive limit	Nil alcohol/100ml blood
Children in cars	Must be in rear seat if under 12yrs
On-the-spot fines	Yes (payable at post offices or the border)
Mandatory equipment	Warning triangle Headlight beam deflectors First aid kit Winter tyres Fire extinguisher Reflective jacket for all occupants

¹: 20km/hr lower for drivers who have held their licence for less than one year



Peles Castle, Sinaia

- When driving in Romania, you need to pay a tax (the *rovignette*) which can be purchased at border points and fuel stations, or on-line.
- Driving standards and road conditions can be poor. Be alert for horse-drawn carts, livestock and stray dogs.
- Drink-drive rules are strict with a zero-tolerance policy. It is also against the law to drive a dirty car.
- If your vehicle has damage when you arrive in Romania, you should ask a customs or police officer to write a report on it – you will need this to avoid problems when leaving. If damage occurs inside the country, obtain a report at the scene of the accident.



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SLOVAK REPUBLIC



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:	
Urban	50km/h
Open-road	90km/h
Motorway	130km/h
Drink-drive limit	Nil alcohol/100ml blood
Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 12yrs or 1.5m
On-the-spot fines	Yes
Mandatory equipment	Warning triangle Headlight beam deflectors First aid kit Winter tyres Reflective jacket



Bratislava

- Driving standards can be poor in the Slovak Republic so be on guard for aggressive overtaking.
- A *vignette (nálepka)*, available at border crossings and fuel stations, is needed to drive on motorways and major highways. There is zero tolerance of drink-driving and use dipped headlights at all times.
- Do not exceed 30km/h when approaching or crossing a level crossing and always give way to trams.
- Visitors heading for Slovakia's Tatra mountains should prepare for alpine driving conditions, and winter tyres must be fitted in wintry weather.
- Remove all valuables from your car when it is parked and beware of criminals targeting foreign cars at the border by puncturing tyres then giving bogus offers of help.



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SLOVENIA



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:

Urban 50km/h
Open-road 90km/h
Motorway 130km/h

Drink-drive limit 50mg alcohol/100ml blood. Zero tolerance for drivers under 21 and those who have held their licence for less than two years

Children in cars Child restraint/seat for under 1.5m

On-the-spot fines Yes

Mandatory equipment Warning triangle
 Headlight beam deflectors
 First aid kit
 Winter tyres
 Snow chains
 Reflective jacket



Lake Bled

- Traffic can be heavy in Slovenia and driving standards poor.
- Dipped headlights are compulsory, and overtaking a stationary school bus is forbidden.
- To use the motorway network drivers must purchase a *vignette*, which is available at fuel stations.
- Hazard warning lights should be used when reversing, and if you have an accident, obtain a written report from the police.
- In alpine areas gradients are steep and winter weather severe. Between 15 November and 15 March your car must either be equipped with winter tyres, or you must carry snow chains.



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TURKEY



IN BRIEF

Speed limits:	
Urban	50km/h
Open-road	90km/h
Motorway	120km/h
Drink-drive limit	50mg alcohol/100ml blood
Children in cars	Child restraint/seat for under 1.5m
On-the-spot fines	Yes
Mandatory equipment	Two warning triangles, carried inside the car First aid kit Fire extinguisher International Driving Permit



Hagia Sophia, Istanbul

- As Turkey is not in the EU, UK drivers require an International Driving Permit.
- Driving there is not for the faint-hearted. Speeds are high, caution low and overtaking manoeuvres performed at the narrowest opportunity.
- Avoid driving at night as local traffic may be poorly lit, and avoid the major cities, especially Istanbul and Ankara, where traffic is at its most chaotic.
- If you are involved in an accident it is illegal to move any of the vehicles involved before the police arrive.
- You must carry two warning triangles, one to place in front of an immobilised vehicle and one behind it.
- Police can impose on-the-spot fines, and will confiscate the licence of anyone found drink-driving.



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BEFORE YOU GO



What to take

Make sure you have the following essentials on any trip to mainland Europe:

- **Your full driving licence.**
- **Registration document** – the original vehicle registration document (V5c) for your car, not a copy. In the case of a lease car, a Vehicle on Hire certificate (VE103b) is an acceptable alternative. Company cars need a letter from the registered keeper stating that you are authorised to use the vehicle overseas, and a current MoT certificate, if applicable.
- **Vehicle insurance** – all UK policies provide the minimum third party cover to drive in other EU countries, but check with your insurer that you will be properly covered with fully comprehensive insurance, and confirm what cover applies to any personal possessions you leave in the car.
- **Breakdown and repatriation cover** – getting an unroadworthy car and passengers back to the UK could cost thousands of pounds so make sure you are covered.
- **Europlate or GB sticker** – if your car does not have a Euro number plate, you will need a GB sticker, with an additional sticker if towing.
- **Vehicle adaptation** – your car's headlights may need adjusting for driving on the right. Most European countries have rules requiring that certain items of equipment must be carried in the car, such as a warning triangle, and many require drivers to carry a spare set of bulbs, a first aid kit and a fire extinguisher.
- **Reflective jacket and breathalyser** – many countries require drivers to carry a reflective jacket (conforming to EU Standard BS EN471) for each occupant's use when exiting the car on a motorway or main road. The driver's should be kept in the cabin of the car, not in the boot, for immediate access.
- **In an emergency** there is now a Europe-wide call number, **112**, that you can dial anywhere in the EU if you require assistance.