



Reading the road in Europe.

When driving abroad, whether for business or leisure, there are so many things to think about, and which side of the road to drive on is not the only difference to consider. For example, in some countries it is illegal to run out of petrol on the motorway, spare headlight bulbs and reflective safety vests can be compulsory and you can even be fined on-the-spot for speeding.

At Avis, we are committed to ensuring your safety and we want you to be able to relax and enjoy your journey wherever it takes you. To smooth the road ahead we have developed a driving guide which outlines some common tips for European travel as well as some more unusual rules of the road which may apply, depending on which country you are travelling in.

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Common tips for European travel

Most rules of the road are fairly standard across Europe, so to avoid falling foul of the law in any country, follow these useful travel tips:

Regulations

- Make sure you are driving on the correct side of the road! In Europe, the countries where you are required to drive on the left include: Cyprus, Guernsey, Ireland, Isle of Man, Jersey, Malta and the United Kingdom. Everywhere else you must drive on the right.
- Drink driving is banned across the whole of Europe but the legal limits can vary from country to country. The safest thing to do is not drink at all as you could face a hefty fine or even lose your licence if you are caught driving over the legal limit.
- Observe the local speed limits. In some countries, sizeable on-the-spot fines are issued for speeding, as well as for other offences like overtaking on certain roads and illegal parking.
- Most countries have seatbelt laws so make sure you and your passengers are safely buckled in. Car seat regulations also vary across Europe. If you hire a vehicle from Avis you can pre-book child seats in advance, unless you are taking your own.
- In most countries it is illegal to use a hand-held mobile phone, so find a safe place to pull over and take the call, or if legal and safe to do so, use a hands-free kit.
- Many countries across Europe are subject to severe weather conditions during the winter months and as a result, drivers are required to use winter tyres or carry snow chains which can be fitted to normal tyres. In some countries there are road signs signalling bays where drivers can stop and fit snow chains. If you are using snow chains you should not travel at any speed exceeding 30 mph – they should also be removed as soon as the weather conditions change to avoid damaging the road surface. If you know you are going to be travelling in severe weather conditions, you can pre-book snow chains from Avis prior to collecting your vehicle.
- If you do receive a fine whilst driving a vehicle rented from Avis, unpaid fines, plus a charge for administration, will be recovered from you by Avis.

Documentation

- Contact your insurers for advice before travelling and make sure you are covered for both the rental vehicle and personal accident insurance. You will need to get a Green Card or International Motor Insurance Certificate from your insurance company before you leave home.
- Keep the necessary documents including your car hire rental agreement (drivers licence, car registration documents, insurance certificate and passport) with you to prove that you are legally permitted to be driving in that country.
- Your driving licence will be honoured across most of Europe, but if you are travelling in a country which doesn't recognise non-local driving licences, you will need an International Driving Permit as well.

Driving etiquette

- Always keep plenty of change in your car to ensure you have money available for toll roads.
- If you are driving in London, UK, you will need to pay a congestion charge for each day you drive within the charging zone in Central London. You can pay this at self-service machines within the Congestion Charging Zone, by phone on 0845 9001234, online at www.cclondon.com or at selected shops in the city where you see the Congestion Charge sign. For more information on the congestion charge, please ask at the Avis rental desk.
- In Milan, Italy, an 'Ecopass' system is in operation. The toll applies Monday-Friday and generally from 7.30am until 7.30pm. Drivers must purchase an Ecopass before entering the restricted zone. Tariffs range from 2-10 euros according to the emissions of the vehicle.

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Emergencies

- If you have an accident or emergency situation, dial the European emergency number, 112, and call the local police if someone has been injured or killed.
- If you are driving an Avis rental vehicle, report the incident to Avis who will tell you what you need to do. Please check your Driver Information Pack for further details on who to call for advice. There are also a couple of forms inside the driver pack which Avis asks you to fill out. These are called the Incident Report Form and Vehicle Condition Report.
- Make sure you take down the vehicle details of any other cars involved in the accident. This should include registration number, make of vehicle and address of driver. Also take down the contact details of any witnesses and police officers who attended the scene of the accident.
- Don't attempt to continue to drive the vehicle unless it is safe to do so.
- Don't admit fault or give any money to anyone.

Low Emission Zones in Europe

32 cities throughout Germany and a number in Northern Italy are now, or soon will be, participating in the Low Emissions Zone (LEZ) scheme to reduce pollution.

Participating cities in Germany require all vehicles, including cars, to display a windscreen sticker confirming that the vehicle meets the necessary emission standards. The stickers come in different colours which correspond to road signs. If your vehicle does not display the right colour sticker you can be fined 40 euros on-the-spot. All Avis vehicles in Germany and Italy are provided with the relevant sticker attached to the windscreen.

Roadside assistance

- If you have hired a vehicle from Avis and you breakdown, please contact Avis Roadside Assistance, freephone 140 or +41 31 850 55 44. This line is available 24 hours.

Keeping your car secure

- To reduce the risk of car crime, when you leave your car, always remove the ignition key and lock all doors. Follow this routine all the time, even when filling up with petrol or just popping into the shop.
- Don't leave anything on display in your vehicle and take all of your personal belongings with you when you leave.
- Always remove in-car electronic devices such as sat-navs and car stereos if possible. Also, wipe away any suction marks left behind on the window from the sat nav.
- When parking, always try to avoid places that are unattended, have easy access and are concealed from public view. Always park in well lit-areas.



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Common European road signs

At Avis we realise that learning different road signs may not be top of your priority list when planning a holiday or business trip. The good news is that a number of signs are standardised across Europe.

Here are some examples of common European road signs you are likely to encounter when driving abroad:



Uneven road



Double curve



Road narrows



Slippery road



School crossing



Traffic lights ahead



Intersection



Yield



No vehicular traffic



No entry



Passing prohibited



Oncoming vehicles priority



Sound signals prohibited



Minimum safety space



Stopping and parking prohibited



No parking



Mandatory tight turn ahead



Snow chains obligatory



End of all bans (except parking/stopping)



Facilities for handicapped



No through road



Garage



Parking (colour indicates zone)



One-way street

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As a general rule, red triangles are warnings, red circles are restrictions, blue circles are requirements and diamonds indicate priority.



Warnings



Restrictions



Requirements



Priority

Country by Country

Even though the majority of road signs and driving regulations are similar across Europe, there are some more obscure ones to be aware of. To ensure that you are not caught out, we have created a guide to make you aware of some of the more unusual signs and less common driving 'rules' that you may encounter on your travels .

Austria



Lane for slow vehicles



Dead end

Useful tips:

To use the Austrian motorways you must display a motorway tax sticker (vignette), which can be valid for one year, two months or 10 days depending on your requirements. They can be purchased at petrol stations near to the border in neighbouring countries.

Carrying a first aid kit is mandatory for all vehicles travelling in Austria.

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Belgium



Motor vehicles only



No parking from the 1st to the 15th of the month

Useful tips:

The drink driving limit is 0.5 mg per ml. Anyone found driving over the limit can face extremely high fines and even a maximum penalty of six months in prison with a licence suspension of up to 5 years.

Carrying a fire extinguisher is mandatory for all vehicles travelling in Belgium.

France



Speed cameras



Turn ON your lights

Useful tips:

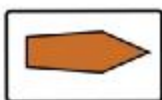
Urban speed limits begin at town or city limits, not always where the first speed limit sign appears. The limit ends when the town name sign appears with a black line through it.

Children under 10 are only allowed in the front passenger seat if there is no rear seat available.

Automatic pumps are often the only fuel stations open out of hours in rural areas (which includes between noon and 3.00pm). Credit and debit cards cannot always be used at these stations so make sure you have cash to hand.

Take care in built-up areas where the old rule giving priority to traffic coming from the right (Priorité à droite) still applies unless a yellow diamond indicates you have priority.

Germany



Alternative route



Toll road

Useful tips:

Be warned that just about every traffic offence is subject to an on-the-spot fine, even running out of petrol on the Autobahn.

Many towns across Germany are adopting France's 'priority to the right' to control speeds in built up areas. You must observe this rule, even on major roads, unless a yellow diamond indicates otherwise.

Carrying a first aid kit is mandatory for all vehicles travelling in Germany.

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Italy



Crossroads with
right of way from
the right



Tunnel

Useful tips:

As with many other European countries, visibility vests (one for each occupant) and warning triangles are compulsory for every vehicle.

Dipped headlights must be used in poor daytime visibility and in all tunnels at all times. They must also be used when on motorways, dual carriageways, and on all out of town roads.

Netherlands



Cycle track



No access for
motor vehicles

Useful tips:

All traffic offences are subject to on-the-spot fines but in some serious cases your vehicle may even be confiscated.

There are a large number of cyclists and skaters in the Netherlands and most main roads have cycle lanes; drivers should pay particular attention to cyclists who may ride two abreast.

In cities, you will need a time stamped parking disc to park in 'blue zone' areas. These discs, placed on the dashboard, can be obtained at motor club offices, tobacco shops and police stations. Parking is not available by black and white or yellow curbs.

Portugal



No turning



No overtaking

Useful tips:

Fines must be paid on-the-spot as most police officers carry credit/debit card machines. Failure to pay fines will result in document apprehension and even confiscation of your vehicle. If you have your documents taken off you, the police officer will issue you with official papers that will allow you to drive for another few days prior to collecting your documents. Make sure you understand where to pick them up from. Drivers are not allowed to carry cans of fuel, even in small quantities.

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Spain



Advisory
maximum speed
limit



Rest area

Useful tips:

Laws on the use of indicators are strictly enforced in Spain. They must be used when pulling out to overtake, and again when pulling back in to the nearside lane after overtaking.

Anyone in Spain who needs glasses when driving must carry a spare pair in the vehicle at all times.

Switzerland



Single
carriageway



Highway exit

Useful tips:

As with Spain, anyone needing glasses to drive must carry a spare pair in their vehicle at all times.

An annual motorway tax is payable in Switzerland even if you only use the motorway once a year. The 'motorway vignette' as it is known, is valid from 1st January in the year of purchase, until 31st January of the following year. Separate vignettes are required by law for trailers and caravans.

UK



Emergency
diversion



Dual carriageway
ends

Useful tips:

General speed limits are as follows:

- In a built-up area - 30mph (48km/h)
- On the outskirts of a built-up area - 40mph (64km/h)
- On a main road - 60mph (96km/h)
- On a motorway - 70mph (112km/h)

Speed limits may be lower in some places - watch out for signs!

All drivers must comply with British minimum age requirements. These are 17 years for cars and motorcycles and 18 years for medium sized vehicles.

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