

Driving in France 2017

(Updated July 1st 2017)



Legal Requirements:

Driving Licence - both paper and photocard parts.

The minimum age for driving in France is 18, so drivers under 18 cannot drive in France even if they have a licence in their own country.

You must also have with you the **Vehicle Registration Document** and **Certificate of Insurance**

Breathalyser

It's obligatory for all vehicles (including motorbikes) to carry a breathalyser, available at about 1€ each from garages, chemists and supermarkets. In January 2013 it was announced that the sanction of an 11€ fine for not carrying a breathalyser was **postponed indefinitely**, so technically you should still carry one but they can't fine you for non-compliance. The limit in France is 0.5mg per ml, significantly lower than the UK at 0.8mg. Note that in July 2015 the limit was reduced for drivers with less than 3 years experience to 0.2mg per ml.

Headlamp beam deflector

Depending on your car, you will either need deflector patches or have to adjust the beam manually. In the UK, headlamps dip to the left, which is a big problem when driving at night on the continent, as that means they dip into the path of oncoming traffic. Beam deflectors (often just a bit of opaque tape to stick on a part of the headlamp) correct this.

High-Viz Jacket

There must be one for every occupant and they must be **inside** the car, not in the boot, so that they can be slipped on immediately if anyone needs to get out of the vehicle, notably on a motorway or main road. 135€ fine for non-compliance.

GB Sticker - unless you have Europlates (number plates with circle of 12 stars on a blue background).

Spare Bulbs - A full kit of spare bulbs for your car/motorbike is required to avoid an €80 fine.

Warning Triangle - Excluding motorcyclists. €135 fine if you don't have one.

Children under 10 cannot travel in the front unless in a specially adapted rear-facing seat, or unless there are no rear seats, or the rear seats are already occupied by children under 10.

Spectacles - If you wear prescription glasses to drive it is a legal requirement in France to carry a spare pair.

Speed Camera Detectors

It is illegal to use an alert system which warns drivers of upcoming speed traps. This applies both to Smartphones and to SAT NAV or GPS navigation systems which have radar traps programmed into their software and, if you have this feature on your SAT NAV, it should be disabled before your trip. There are over 2000 radar speed traps in France and you can now be stopped by police and required to pay a hefty on-the-spot fine of up to €1500. In cash, French cheque or Traveller's Cheques only.

Miscellaneous fines

Drivers caught using a mobile phone while on the road in France are liable to an on-the-spot fine of 135€. Drivers are also prohibited from using headphones and headsets (any device attached to the ear) when driving. This regulation applies to all drivers and riders and covers devices used for phone calls as well as for listening to music/radio etc. Bluetooth or integrated systems in a motorcycle helmet are still permitted.

From July 1st 2017 those caught eating at the wheel, looking in the glove box, or putting on make-up, even when in stationary traffic, will be subject to €75 fines and a loss of three licence points. Watching a screen, a mobile or a DVD will set the driver back €1,500 and three license points. But don't worry, looking at the GPS system or the rear view guiding camera will still be legal! Playing music too loudly can result in a €75 fine and smoking in the presence of a child can see the driver hit with a €68 fine.

Useful Phone numbers

15 - This is the national emergency number for medical aid, use this to call an ambulance.

17 - Police or Gendarmerie (automatically redirected to the nearest station).

18 - This is the general emergency number, like 999 in the UK, use this if no-one's hurt.

112 - This is the standard European emergency number, you're more likely to find someone that speaks English on this one.

In the event of a road accident in France

If you are involved in any accident involving two or more vehicles, you will be asked to fill in a "constat amiable" (an amiable declaration) by the driver of a French vehicle involved. This is standard practice, not obligatory but makes for an easier process with insurance companies.

If you are involved in an accident involving any sort of injury, even if it's not your fault, you **MUST** remain until the police have arrived.

If your car is immobilised on or partly on the road due to a breakdown or an accident, you must set up your red warning triangle at a suitable distance behind the vehicle, to alert approaching traffic to the hazard, whilst wearing your hi-viz jacket of course.....

SPECIFIC TO MOTORBIKES

Rules and regulations are getting ever more comprehensive for the motorcyclist.....check out this bikers [website](#) for more detail.

- Firstly, helmets for driver and passenger are compulsory.
- Secondly, France is the only country in the entire world that requires reflective stickers on all helmets; front, back and both sides.
- Carrying breathalysers is compulsory as above, but warning triangles are not necessary for bikes you'll be pleased to hear!
- You must have the original registration document and insurance certificate, the MOT and driving licence, and GB sticker or Europlates.
- If the bike's not yours, you must have a letter of permission from the registered keeper.
- Use of dipped headlights during the day is now compulsory for all bikes over 125cc.
- Filtering through slow-moving or stationary traffic is illegal.
- It is compulsory for all motorcyclists (two or three wheels) to carry reflective jackets and wear them in the event of an emergency/breakdown, the fine for not actually having one is €11 but they'll charge you €135 if you're caught at the side of the road and not wearing one.

This advice is given in good faith but responsibly for all legal matters are strictly that of the individual.