

Fact Sheet

Driving in the UK



General information

Full details of the rules and regulations governing foreign drivers in the UK can be found on the Public Services website www.direct.gov.uk/en/Motoring/DriverLicensing/index.htm or in leaflet D100 and D1, available at UK Post Offices, but the main details are outlined below.

Drivers from the European Community (EC) / European Economic Area (EEA)

If you hold a full valid driving licence issued in any EC/EEA country, you need not exchange it for a UK licence. You may drive here until the licence expires or until you reach the age at which UK renewal becomes necessary (currently 70 years of age). If you wish, you can apply to exchange your licence for a UK licence at any time.

If your EC/EEA licence was issued in exchange for one from a non EC / EEA country, your licence will only be valid in the UK for 12 months and you will be unable to exchange it for a UK licence.

Drivers from designated countries

If you hold a full valid driving licence from a designated country (below) you can exchange it for a UK licence. Your existing licence is valid for one year. To ensure you can carry on driving, a UK licence must be obtained before this one year period expires

Australia	Gibraltar	Singapore
Barbados	Hong Kong	South Africa
British Virgin Islands	Japan	Switzerland
Canada	Monaco	Zimbabwe
Falkland Islands	New Zealand	
Faroe Islands	Republic of Korea	

Drivers from non-European Community or designated countries

You cannot exchange licences other than from EC/EEA or designated countries. You can drive here using your current full foreign licence or international driving permit for up to one year provided it remains valid throughout this period. To ensure you can continue to drive you must pass a UK driving test and apply for a full UK driving licence within the year.

Taking a UK driving test

Before you can take your UK driving test you must obtain a "provisional" driving licence. You can obtain an application form from your local Post Office in the UK or on the Public Services website www.direct.gov.uk/en/Motoring/DriverLicensing/index.htm.

Once you have your provisional driving licence you need to contact a driving school in your local area and they will set up a driving lesson to demonstrate the areas you will be tested on during a driving test. When you and the instructor are happy that you can pass a driving test, the driving school will arrange for you to take the written theory exam. If you pass the written exam you may then take a practical driving test.

Passing your UK driving test can take time, so we recommend that if you need to take a test, you start the process as soon as possible after your arrival in the UK.

If you do not pass in your first year you may only drive as a 'learner'. As a learner you must be supervised at all times while driving by a qualified driver who must be at least 21 years old, hold a full, valid licence and have held that licence for three years or more.

Once you have passed both the written and the practical test, you can apply for a full UK driving licence.

Highway Code

The Highway Code is a publication that details the rules and regulations for the use of the roads in the UK. It must be studied to pass the written theory test. An on-line version of this book can be found on-line at:

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/Highwaycode/index.htm?cids=GooglePPC&cre=Highway_Code

Driving Schools

If you need driving lessons there are a huge number of driving schools from which to choose throughout the UK, each of varying quality. Two of the most well established companies that operate nationally are:

The AA (Automobile Association) <http://www.theaa.com/drivingschool/index.html>
BSM (British School of Motoring) <http://www.bsm.co.uk/>

Drink and Drugs

It is a criminal offence to drive in the UK while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. If you are convicted of driving under the influence of drink or drugs you may be liable for disqualification from driving, have to pay a heavy fine and in extreme cases, sentenced to a term in prison.

Speeding

Driving over the designated speed limit is a criminal offence. Speed cameras are very common on British roads, and If you are caught speeding, you are liable to receive points on your driving licence, ranging from three to twelve. If you receive 12 points on your driving licence you will be automatically disqualified from driving.

Car insurance

Why do I need Car Insurance?

It is illegal to drive without valid insurance, road tax or a valid driving licence. The penalty for doing this may be a fine, a ban or imprisonment.

The law in UK requires all motorists to have valid insurance that provides them or anyone they permit to use the vehicle with insurance cover for the vehicle that they are driving. There are 3 different types of insurance policies:

- Comprehensive (the fullest cover);
- Third Party, Fire and Theft; or
- Third Party only (the minimum cover).

If borrowing a car or other vehicle, always check that they have insurance which allows you to drive it. If the car you are going to drive does not belong to you, then even if there is an insurance policy in force, it may not cover you to drive unless you are a named driver or it is an 'any driver' policy. However, even 'any driver' policies may not cover learner drivers, or people driving on foreign licences.

NB. It is the driver's responsibility to make sure that she or he is insured to drive the vehicle that they are driving. It is no defence (in law) to say that you believed (wrongly) that you were insured. Always check before driving.

Where can I buy insurance and how much does it cost?

The cost of motor insurance cover will vary according such things as your age, how long you have been driving, where you are living, the age and value of your car and the type of car you have. Costs may vary widely between insurance companies for the same cover. It is advisable to research the market to get the best price. A useful starting point is to look at the many comparison websites available, such as:

- www.confused.com
- www.moneysupermarket.com/car-insurance
- www.comparethemarket.com
- www.carinsurancecomparisonsites.com
- www.tescocompare.com
- www.gocompare.com

Top tip – If you have no claims on your existing European insurance please bring with you official written confirmation of this from your insurer. Your UK insurer may then allow you to transfer your no claims history on to your new policy.