France and Monaco (Western Europe)

Touring Tips

Read alongside our general advice for motoring in Europe.

Driving licence

You must be at least 18 years old to drive a temporarily imported car or motorcycle (over 80cc) and at least 16 years old to ride a motorcycle up to 80cc.

Motor Insurance

You must have a minimum of third-party insurance cover.

Fuel

- Unleaded petrol (95 & 98 octane), diesel (Gazole) and LPG are available.
- Leaded petrol is not available but you may see lead replacement petrol 'Super carburant' or can buy lead substitute additive
- You may carry spare petrol in a can once in France but may not do so on ferries.
- **SP95-E10** (Sans Plomb (unleaded) 95 Octane + 10% Ethanol) is widely available but is not suitable for use in all cars so you should check with your vehicle manufacturer before using it. If you're not sure, use the standard SP95 or SP98 unleaded fuel which continues to be widely available.
- **B8 biodiesel** - you might come across diesel fuel containing 8% biodiesel. This 'B8' is not suitable for use in all cars so you should check with your vehicle manufacturer before using it.

Credit cards are accepted at most filling stations but you should check with your card issuer for usage in France & Monaco before travel. Cards issued in the UK are not always accepted at automatic pumps operated by credit/debit card.

If your card is accepted, automatic or unmanned petrol stations operate by authorising a transaction of between 100 and 150 Euros. If the amount authorised is higher than the cost of the fuel, the difference is usually refunded straight away, but in some cases this 'overpayment' stays on hold and the funds remain unavailable for up to a week.

Speed limits

Speed limits in France vary by place, vehicle and by the weather.

(Standard legal limits which may be varied by signs, for private vehicles without trailers)

- Built-up areas 31 mph (50 km/h)
- Outside built-up areas 55 mph (90 km/h)

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- Urban motorways and dual carriageways separated by a central reservation 68 mph (110 km/h)
- Motorways 80 mph (130 km/h) (lower in built-up areas. Minimum 49mph (80km/h))

Lower speed limits apply in wet weather or if you've held a driving licence for less than three years:

- Outside built-up areas 49 mph (80 km/h)
- Dual carriageways 62 mph (100 km/h)
- Motorways 68 mph (110 km/h).

Seat belts

Front and rear seat occupants must wear seat belts, if fitted.

Passengers/children in cars

- Children up to the age of 10 must travel in an approved child seat or restraint suitable for their age and size.
- Children under the age of 10 are not allowed to travel in the front seat unless there is no rear seat in the vehicle, or the rear seat is already occupied by children under 10, or there are no seat belts in the rear.
- The French Highway Code doesn't specify a minimum height for children to use an adult seat belt so we recommend that you apply the minimum height of 150cm set by the appropriate European Directive.
- Children don't have to wear restraints in a taxi, but you could be fined if a child it not correctly restrained in other vehicles.
- The driver is responsibility for making sure that all passengers under 18 are appropriately restrained.

Lights

- You must use dipped headlights in poor daytime visibility.
- The French Government recommends that all vehicles use dipped headlights day and night.

Motorcycles

- You must use your dipped headlight during the day.
- Riders on any two-wheeled vehicle must wear a crash helmet.
- All helmets must display reflective stickers on the front, rear and sides in accordance with the material requirements of Regulation 22 - a sticker of minimum surface area 18 cm2 must be visible from the front, rear, left and right and within each sticker it must be

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possible to mark either a circle of 40 mm diameter or, a rectangle at least 12.5 cm2 in surface area and at least 20 mm in width.
- Helmets worn in the UK must comply either with BS6658 or with UNECE Regulation 22. Helmets approved to Regulation 22 may be supplied with suitable stickers for you to apply.

Drinking and driving

- The French police can carry out random breath tests.
- The legal limit is 50 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood, or 20 milligrams for bus/coach drivers and new drivers with less than three years' experience.
- Penalties include a fine, imprisonment and/or confiscation of your driving licence and/or your vehicle.
- Saliva drug tests are also used with penalties for drug-driving similar to drink driving.
- If you are involved in an accident or commit a traffic offence such as speeding or not wearing a seatbelt or helmet you will have to take a drugs test.

Fines

- On-the-spot fines or 'deposits' are severe and may be up to €750. An official receipt should be issued.
- If you don't comply with parking regulations your vehicle may be towed away and impounded.

What you must carry in France and Monaco

- **Warning triangle** (not required on motorcycles)
- **Snow chains** - you must fit snow chains when driving on snow-covered roads in accordance with local road signs. A maximum speed limit of 31 mph (50km/h) applies.
- **Reflective jackets (EN471)**
    - You must carry at least one reflective jacket within the passenger compartment of your vehicle and must put it on before you get out in an emergency or breakdown situation.
    - Since 1 January 2016 riders of motorcycles must also wear a reflective jacket in the event of an emergency or breakdown.

- **Breathalysers**
    - Drivers of all motor vehicles including motorcyclists but excluding mopeds, must carry one unused, certified (showing an 'NF' number) breathalyser in their vehicle.
    - Check that any single use breathalysers you're buying or that you used for a previous trip are still in date.

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- We recommend that you carry two single-use breathalysers so if one is used or damaged you will still have a replacement to produce.
- The fine for not carrying a breathalyser has been postponed indefinitely (an on the spot fine of €11 was due to be implemented on 1 March 2013).

Other rules/requirements in France and Monaco

You must not use headphones and headsets (any device that is attached to the ear) when driving.

- This applies to all drivers and riders for phone calls and also listening to music/radio etc.
- Bluetooth or integrated systems in a motorcycle helmet are still permitted.

We recommend that you carry a spare set of bulbs.

We recommend snow tyres (marked M&S) on roads covered with ice or snow. These must have minimum tread depth of 3.5mm.

The sign “priorité a droite” (often seen in built-up areas) means give way to traffic coming from the right.

At signed roundabouts bearing the words "Vous n'avez pas la priorité" or "Cédez le passage" traffic on the roundabout has priority; where no such sign exists traffic entering the roundabout has priority.

You must not overtake a stationary tram when passengers are boarding or getting off.

You can obtain parking discs for ‘blue zone’ parking areas from police stations, tourist offices and some shops.

When overtaking a bicycle, you must leave a distance of at least 1m in built-up areas and 1.50m outside built-up areas between your vehicle and the bicycle.

You must not use your horn in built up areas except in cases of immediate danger.

Apparatus with a screen which can distract a driver (such as television, video or DVD equipment) must be positioned so that the driver is unable to see them.
You must not touch or program any device unless parked in a safe place.

You must not carry, transport or use radar detectors and could be fined up to 1500 Euros and have your vehicle and/or the device confiscated if you’re caught doing so.

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The French highway authorities are removing road signs indicating the location of fixed speed cameras and are installing additional fixed speed cameras.

If you've got a GPS-based navigation system (Sat Nav) with maps that can show the location of fixed speed cameras you must have the 'fixed speed camera PoI (Points of Interest)' function deactivated and ideally removed. Read more here

Trailers must have two red lights, two triangular reflectors and a light illuminating the registration plate at the rear and orange reflectors on each side. If the trailer is more than 1.6m wide or is wider than the vehicle by more than 0.20m there must be two white reflectors and two white side lights at the front of the trailer.

Toll Payments

Sanef France has extended the Liber-t automated French tolls payment service to UK motorists through Sanef Tolling. Sanef Tollings telepeage tags enable you to use the automatic telepeage/tag lanes, previously reserved for French residents only.

Low Emission Zone (LEZ)

A low emission zone has been introduced in Paris, initially affecting only older (Euro 1) trucks and buses. Restrictions will be extended to all other vehicles from 1 July 2016 and tightened progressively between 2017 and 2020. You can find more information here: www.urbanaccessregulations.eu

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