

Portugal (South West Europe)

Touring Tips



*For the
road ahead*

The following is additional to our [general advice for motoring in Europe](#).

Driving licence

- You must be at least 17 years old to drive a temporarily imported car or motorcycle (over 50cc) but visitors under the age of 18 may encounter problems even though they hold a valid UK licence.
- All valid UK driving licences should be accepted in Portugal including the older, all-green UK paper licence and the older Northern Ireland paper licence with photographic counterpart.
- The older (all green) paper licences may be more difficult to understand so you may wish to update your licence to a Photocard style licence before travelling or obtain an [International Driving Permit \(IDP\)](#)

Motor insurance

You must at least have third-party cover.

Fuel

- Unleaded petrol (95 and 98 octane), diesel and LPG are available.
- Leaded petrol is not available but lead replacement petrol is available as 98 octane.
- You may carry petrol in a can.
- Credit cards are accepted at most filling stations but you should check with your card issuer for use in Portugal before travel.
- A tax of €0.50 is added to credit card transactions.

Speed limits

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

- Some town centres 12 mph (20 km/h)
- Built-up areas 31 mph (50 km/h)
- Outside built-up areas 55 mph (90 km/h) or 62 mph (100 km/h)
- Motorways 74 mph (120 km/h) (minimum 31 mph (50 km/h))

If you have held your licence for less than a year you must not exceed 55 mph (90 km/h).

Seat belts

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

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Passengers/children in cars

- Children under 12 years old and less than 1.35m tall cannot travel as front seat passengers. They must travel in the rear in an appropriate child restraint, unless the vehicle has only two seats, or is not fitted with seat belts.
- You may carry a child under 3 years old in the front passenger seat as long as they are using an appropriate child restraint and the airbag is switched off if the child restraint is rear-facing.

Lights

You must use dipped headlights in poor daytime visibility and in tunnels.

Motorcycles

- It's compulsory to use dipped headlights during the day.
- Riders must wear a crash helmet.
- You must not carry a child under 7 years old.

Drinking and driving

- The legal limit is 49 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood.
- A lower limit of 19 milligrams applies to new drivers with less than 3 years' experience.
- Penalties are severe. Between 50 and 80 milligrams expect a fine and withdrawal of your licence for between 1 month and a year. Over 80 milligrams and your licence can be withdrawn between 2 months and 2 years.
- The police can also carry out testing for narcotics.

Fines

- On-the-spot fines can be imposed and must be paid in Euros.
- Most traffic police vehicles are equipped with portable ATM machines for immediate payment. You should get an official receipt showing the maximum amount of the fine.
- If you refuse to pay an on-the-spot fine you will be asked for a deposit to cover the maximum fine for the offence committed. If you refuse the police can take your driving licence, registration document or even confiscate your vehicle.
- If you park illegally your vehicle could be clamped or towed away.

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It's compulsory to carry the following in Portugal

- **Photographic proof of identity** (at all times)
- **Reflective jacket** – compulsory for residents and recommended for visitors. Reflective jackets should be carried in the passenger compartment and worn if you or your passengers exit a broken down vehicle on the carriageway of all motorways and main or busy roads.
- **Temporary Electronic Toll Device (DEM) or Pre-Paid Tolls** – A DEM or the pre-payment of tolls is required, before using many motorways in Portugal. You can purchase a three-day prepayment voucher giving unlimited travel on toll motorways for the validity of the voucher. You can also purchase return toll tickets from the Spanish border to the airports of Porto and Faro.

[The official guide](#) gives details of the different payment methods of tolls, including maps and toll charges. We understand the toll motorways to be the A4, A17, A22, A23, A24, A25, A28, A29, A41 and A42

Other rules/requirements in Portugal

It's recommended that you carry a warning triangle as you must use hazard warning lights or a warning triangle in an accident or breakdown. Vehicles registered in Portugal must carry a warning triangle.

It's forbidden to carry or use a radar detector.

It's forbidden use a dashboard camera in Portugal.

You must not use spiked tyres or winter tyres.

You may use snow chains where weather conditions require.

You must not use your horn in a built-up area during the hours of darkness except in the case of immediate danger.

Carrying bicycles

- You must not carry a bicycle(s) at the rear of a car.
- You may carry bicycles on the roof of your car as long as the total height isn't more than 4m.
- You may carry bicycles at the rear of a mobile home, camper van or caravan provided that they do not project beyond the width of the vehicle.

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