



WHEELS-ALIVE!

www.wheels-alive.co.uk

Travelling in Europe by car is unfamiliar for more than half of British motorists, according to a Motor Ombudsman poll

Published: June 17, 2025

Author:

Online version:

<https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/travelling-in-europe-by-car-is-unfamiliar-for-more-than-half-of-british-motorists-according-to-a-motor-ombudsman-poll/>



WHEELS-ALIVE!

www.wheels-alive.co.uk



WHEELS-ALIVE!

www.wheels-alive.co.uk



Driving in Europe; do you know what's required?

The Motor Ombudsman tells us...

(All words and images from The Motor Ombudsman).

• **The Ombudsman for the automotive sector is urging motorists to be prepared and familiar with**

the 'rules of the road' when taking their car on a holiday to mainland Europe this summer, to

stay safe, legal, and to help avoid incurring fines



- A Motor Ombudsman survey of 1,000 UK drivers has found that more than half (56%) of

respondents would not have any experience driving on the right-hand side of the road if they

were to head across the Channel or the North Sea

- Only around four in 10 respondents (41%) knew that mandatory emergency equipment needs

to be carried in the car when on the continent

- The research also revealed that seven in ten respondents had either a vague idea or were

completely unaware of the requirement to purchase windscreen stickers in advance of their

holiday to be able to travel through low emission zones in cities in mainland Europe

- The Motor Ombudsman has unveiled the new Drive Europe resource

(TheMotorOmbudsman.org/DriveEurope) on its website, highlighting key considerations when

driving in mainland Europe, as well as some handy phrases for 'car conversation starters'



WHEELS-ALIVE!

www.wheels-alive.co.uk



London, 17 June 2025 With the official start of summer just around the corner, this is a season when

millions of people head abroad for a well-earned break to enjoy the scenic countryside, cities and beaches

that mainland Europe has to offer. Taking their own car on a trip across the water, often gives motorists

the added convenience and freedom of being able to set off from home and carry more



luggage, as well

as the comfort of being behind the wheel of what they know best.

There may only be a short stretch separating the UK from the shores of the neighbouring continent, but

crossing the Channel or the North Sea brings a whole different set of 'road rules' and legal obligations.

A Censuswide poll of 1,000 UK drivers commissioned by The Motor Ombudsman about journeying in

Europe for leisure or a holiday, has found that more than half of respondents (56%) would have no prior

experience of driving on the right on the continent, with female road users (61%) and Gen Zers (67%)

emerging as the least likely to have ever embarked on such a voyage.

However, encouragingly, nearly two-thirds (61%) of these 'debutants' surveyed explained they would feel

up to the prospect of driving on the other side of the road. 'Zoomers' (i.e. 17 to 28-year-olds) are seen as

being the most confident age group (68%) when taking on the new task of venturing into what is ultimately

unfamiliar territory, with Millennials (Gen Y) close behind at 66%.



There has been a long-standing requirement for visitors from the UK to carry accident and emergency

equipment in their own car when travelling in Europe, which includes items, such as a high-viz jacket and

a warning triangle. According to the latest survey, only about four in 10 (41%) of all the drivers polled said

that they were aware of what has to be packed to stay legal, whilst 44% had some kind of inclination, but

were still unsure as to the necessary items. In fact, not adhering to the rules as to what needs to be

stowed in a vehicle can risk a fine of up to €750 in France, for example.

Reassuringly, for those who were in the dark on this aspect of travelling abroad, 67% admitted that they

would spend time doing thorough research before setting off on their journey, with those aged 55 and over

being the most studious (78%). Furthermore, overall, about a fifth (21%) of respondents said they would

be more laid back and leave it to some last-minute swotting up online before taking to the road.

Similarly, in the event of something going wrong whilst holidaying in Europe, over three-quarters of those



surveyed (82%) would brush up on their linguistic skills to learn terminology for key vehicle components,

such as a tyre, engine, or battery, or indeed, to help explain any faults or repairs that were needed. A

similar proportion would equally plan in advance and be conversant with some handy phrases to be able

to find out things like the location of the closest petrol station or electric vehicle (EV) charging point (85%).

On this subject, Gen Zers would be the most keen to learn useful terms in the language of their

destination country, and those they are passing through, rather than relying on English to get by with

natives (93%).

Knowing the speed limit is also crucial when driving abroad, as this can vary during different weather

conditions and when crossing borders. When asked whether they would know what the maximum pace

would be for the countries they were passing through, and that of their destination, 69% of respondents

said they would make sure they had done their homework before setting off, whereas about a fifth (21%)



of those polled would leave it in the hands of their satellite navigation systems, or merely get a steer from

keeping an eye out for road signs.

Nearly a third of those who responded in the study (30%) also stated that they were unfamiliar with the

fact that speed camera detection devices had to be turned off when on the move. Being caught with a

radar jamming system risks a penalty of up to €6,000 in Spain, with motorists liable for a €1,500 fine as

well as the potential confiscation of the vehicle itself in neighbouring France should such a system be

found.

With the environment and reducing emissions never too far away from the headlines, many cities across

Europe have dedicated low emission zones. In fact, a combined seven in ten (70%) drivers questioned in

the research had either a vague idea (32%) or were completely unaware (38%) that there is a requirement

to purchase windscreen stickers in advance of setting off to avoid incurring costly fines. Inadvertently

driving through these areas without the pre-paid documentation can amount to €80 in



Germany, (around

four times the original cost of buying the label), or a €135 penalty – a 2,600% difference compared to

buying the Crit'Air sticker for a trip to France (around €5), for instance.

Bill Fennell, Chief Ombudsman and Managing Director at The Motor Ombudsman, said:
“Going on a

summer holiday is an exciting time, and is one of the most eagerly anticipated highlights of the year for

many. However, when venturing beyond the more familiar road network and driving laws of the UK, it is

essential to spend the time doing your research, to be prepared, and to know the road traffic laws in the

destination countries to stay safe and legal at all times. Not doing so can prove costly, and deliver

unwanted interruptions on a well-earned break.”

Bill added: “It is equally paramount that the vehicle’s documentation, as well as passports and driving

licences, are all up to date, that insurance and breakdown policies offer all-important coverage beyond the

UK, and that a vehicle is in a roadworthy condition, with fluids and tyres topped up to their recommended



WHEELS-ALIVE!

www.wheels-alive.co.uk

levels.”

To help motorists be more familiar with the ‘rules of the road’ when heading abroad, The Motor

Ombudsman has added a new area to its website called Drive Europe

([**TheMotorOmbudsman.org/DriveEurope**](http://TheMotorOmbudsman.org/DriveEurope)) highlighting key considerations when taking a car to Europe.



10 Key Considerations Taking your car to mainland Europe



1

Cost of going
abroad e.g. travel,
accommodation,
roaming

Valid personal
documentation e.g.
passport / driving
licence

2



3

A safe and
roadworthy vehicle

Up-to-date vehicle
documentation e.g.
MOT / road tax

4



5

Valid insurance and
breakdown cover
inclusive of Europe

Emergency
breakdown
equipment as per
requirement of
country(ies)

6



7

Windscreen pass(es)
to enter low
emission zones

A UK sticker /
number plate
identifier on
the vehicle

8



9

No speed
camera
detection
devices

Taking regular
breaks when
behind the wheel
to avoid fatigue

10





Notes:

Generational age group ranges

1. 2. 3. 4. 'Gen Z' / 'Zoomers' refers to those aged between 17 and 28.

'Gen Y' / 'Millennials' refers to those aged between 29 and 44.

'Gen X' refers to those aged between 45 and 60.

'Baby Boomers' / 'Boomers' refers to those aged between 61 and 79.

Research methodology

The research was conducted by Censuswide, among a sample of 1,001 UK driving licence holders (17+) who would

consider driving from the UK to Europe for leisure / a holiday in their own car or one they are a named driver on. The

data was collected between 28.05.25 - 30.05.25. Censuswide abides by and employs members of the Market

Research Society and follows the MRS code of conduct and ESOMAR principles.

Censuswide is also a member of

the British Polling Council.

Motor Ombudsman resources

The Motor Ombudsman provides a comprehensive library of **impartial and reliable motoring resources** for



WHEELS-ALIVE!

www.wheels-alive.co.uk

consumers embarking on the car buying and ownership journey... Please go to: [useful-information/motoring-advice](#)