



Top Tips for Travelling in Europe

This is an abridged version if you need further advice please contact us as things change over time.

First and foremost, please check your vehicle is **Taxed, MOT and Insured for the duration of your holiday**. We would also **check tyres and tyre pressure**. **Check your weight**, if you are caught towing a caravan that is too heavy, you may have to ditch some weighty items. Both France and Spain have shops that stock everything, "Gluten Free" and Salt Free foods are actually cheaper abroad than at home.

Pack carefully. Make sure you have the **correct number plates and comply with European standards**.

If the combined **length of your towcar and caravan is over 12 metres**, you need to fit "long vehicle" marker boards on the rear of your caravan in Italy and Spain. The Spanish regulations require either a single centrally mounted board 130cm x 25cm or two 50cm x 25cm boards mounted symmetrically with respect to the centre of the vehicle and as close as possible to the edge. In both cases the plates must be mounted between 50cm and 150cm above the ground. The Spanish authorities will accept the appropriate equivalent ECE70 standard marker boards (a single 113cm x 20cm or two 56.5cm x 20cm boards) These can be purchased from HGV Direct call 0845 686 0008 or visit www.hgvdirect.co.uk

Towing mirrors are a must, and you should use E-marked extension mirrors when towing on the Continent.

Environmental Zones There has been a lot of publicity of new rules for driving in France regarding "Green" stickers. Drivers face a fine of 130.00€ if they fail to display a car sticker giving the vehicle's emissions. This is now in force for Paris, Lyon and Grenoble. Other towns and cities including Lille, Cannes, and Dunkirk are under review to start in the future to cut down on harmful exhaust fumes. The stickers, which can only be bought from the official French government website www.certificat-air.gouv.fr cost €4.80 each - including postage to the UK. It is cheaper than paying a fine.

1. **Check your caravan insurance**. Some companies insist that you have a fire extinguisher. Failure to have one could invalidate your insurance. Consider overseas breakdown and recovery "Red Pennant Insurance" from the Caravan and Motorhome Club.
2. Home Insurance, check your policy if you take an extended break over 30 days.
3. Ensure your Car Insurance company is aware that you are abroad and towing a vehicle.
- 4.. Gas - ensure you carry enough gas for the duration of your holiday. Continental gas bottles are not compatible with UK ones.
- 5.. Make a note of the height of your vehicle, especially if you have a roof box. Most SUV's with roofboxes are too tall to get into underground and barriered car parks.
6. Photocopy all important travel documents and/or photograph all documents on your phone as back up.
7. EHIC - don't forget your European Health Insurance Card. This gives you access to free medical treatment in the EU.
8. If you are heading South the weather can get very hot during the summer, pack a fan or portable air conditioning unit. Fitted A/C units are more expensive and heavy.

9. Medical Prescriptions keep a copy mainly to prove that the medication you carry are actually prescribed to you, and secondly should you run short or get delayed and you need to obtain more.

10. Driving Laws vary from country to country, but be prepared you may need to carry the following:

- Alcohol breath-testing device
- Spare vehicle bulbs
- Fire Extinguisher
- First aid kit
- Fluorescent jackets/vests - in the car not the boot.
- Spare pair of prescription glasses
- Headlight beam deflectors

11. Tyres, you should carry a spare tyre, or a puncture repair system. Any spare should be the same type of tyre as the existing ones, as you are required to have the same tyres on the same axle.

12. Speed Limits - check the towing speed limit of any country you are going to visit and all types of roads you may use:

France towing caravan under 3.500kg - Urban 50km Single Carriageway 90-110km M'way 130km
towing caravan over 3500kg's - Urban 50km Single Carriageway 80-90km M'way 90km

Spain towing caravan under 3.500kg - Urban 50km Single Carriageway 70-80km M'way 80km
towing caravan over 3500kg's - Urban 50km Single Carriageway 70-80km M'way 80km

Devices that warn of speed camera locations are illegal in France and Spain.

13. Plan your route carefully.

14. SAT NAV is good, but a good map is also essential. Before departure, check you have a map for where you are heading. We recommend the Michelin spiral bound Atlas Routier. This lists all the services, fuel stops, Aires, etc. on the motorways, and the distance between each one. If you can't locate one in the UK most of the motorway service areas stock them. We also recommend buying Caravan Europe from the Caravan and Motorhome Club, for the Countries you are planning to visit These lists 1000's of sites for an overnight stop not far from your chosen route, and the reports are written by members NOT by the advertisers.

WE do not recommend stopping overnight in an Aire, but if circumstances necessitate this, DO NOT leave your vehicle/caravan unattended, and lock away all valuable goods out of sight. Do not carry excess amount of cash and be observant at all times. Do not be fooled by any car that pulls up alongside with an occupant making frantic gestures and telling you to pull over. He may not be the Good Samaritan they seem.

15. It may be prudent to carry a couple of replacement fuses, we would recommend carrying a jack and always carry a basic tool kit with screwdrivers, and spanners.

16. Etc **Ant powder** just take a moment when you stop to see if there is a problem and if so put it down as soon as possible, making sure you mark the wheels and steadies.

Finally a small recap on Spanish Traffic Laws:

On the grounds that 'ignorance of the law is no excuse', all drivers in Spain are advised immediately to familiarise themselves with the detail of the new traffic laws which came into effect on 9 May 2014 (Ley 6/2014 modificando la Ley sobre Tráfico, Circulación de Vehículos a Motor y Seguridad Vial 339/1990); a mere 21 pages!

Among the new provisions are the following:

1. Speeding fines apply for exceeding the limit by just 1kph! On some motorways, the speed limit is being increased from 120kph to 130kph, but in many towns, the speed limit is being reduced from 30kph to 20kph.
2. If the Guardia Civil observe a motoring offence and note the vehicle registration number this provides sufficient evidence to prosecute - no need for them to stop vehicles.
3. A minimum fine of 1,000 Euros will be payable by drivers caught driving whilst double the drink drive limit or above; or in all cases for reoffending drink drivers; and drivers under the influence of drugs.
4. The Guardia Civil can seize any vehicle carrying children without legally compliant child seats.
5. The very specific rules as to where children must sit in the vehicle (according to age/ height) must be observed, otherwise drivers face heavy fines
6. Cyclists under 16 years of age must wear helmets.
7. Drivers have much higher duties to ensure the safety of cyclists of all ages.
8. Speed camera/ radar detectors are prohibited.
9. An EU Directive is to be implemented so that driving offences committed in one EU country are reported to the EU country of registration of the vehicle in question.
10. Much stricter rules are being implemented for the Spanish registration of foreign registered vehicles kept in Spain.

The above is by no means exhaustive. As can be seen, the new rules are far reaching. Knowledge of the details and observation of the requirements in practice is of fundamental importance. It is clear from the increased powers to prosecute and fine drivers, that the Spanish Authorities 'mean business' with these important legal changes.

Please SHARE this with your friends and contacts who drive in Spain, to help them to be lawful (and to avoid fines!).

Added to that Mobile Phones - are forbidden for the driver to use while driving.