

Highway code

The Highway Code gathers regulations and laws that govern travel on road space.

Whether on roads or highways outside urban areas, streets or boulevards within urban areas, a smooth road sharing between the various road users is essential for the safety of all.

The decree instituting the first highway code dates from 1921 (see **the birth of the Highway Code** by Jean Orselli to be downloaded in French opposite).

You can find the French Highway Code in its latest update on [Legifrance](#).

In the event of a crash :

- **dial 112 for emergencies (injured people)**, using a mobile or fixed telephone (European standard for emergency calls from all Member States of the European Union)
- **dial 17** (police forces)

Travelling on French roads

Whether you are a pedestrian, cyclist, motorcyclist, motorist or truck driver, you need to know the rules for sharing public space.


In France we drive on the right!

Even on the highway, after overtaking, you do not remain in the middle lane but fall back to the outer lane on the right.

At crossings, priority is to traffic coming from the right unless you are driving on a priority lane (yellow diamond), if you are inserting on a roundabout by giving way to the left, or if the lane on the right has a give-way or a stop. So if the traffic lights at the crossroads do not work or are flashing orange, the good old priority on the right prevails. All the streets of Paris are on with priority to traffic coming from the right, except at traffic lights.

Traffic lights mark: green to pass with caution, yellow and red to stop. They are sometimes equipped with orange arrows to allow, for example,

Download(s)

 Jean Orselli-The birth of the highway code - in French

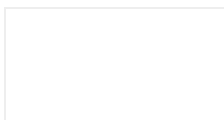
The "Going abroad" app



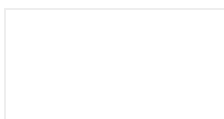
The European Union proposes an application that presents the regulations of each Member State. To be downloaded before going abroad.



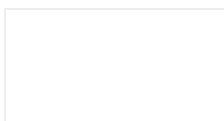
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a right-hand turn by giving way when the light is red; or equipped with signs to allow cyclists to cross the red light according to the movement indicated by the sign.



Beware of **level crossings**, trains or tramways: the single flashing orange light implies an ABSOLUTE STOP. It never turns to red.....

To **overtake a cyclist or pedestrian**, it is necessary to leave a 1 m distance in urban areas and 1.50 m outside urban areas. Outside urban areas, it is possible to overtake a cyclist by riding or crossing the continuous line, provided that the opposite traffic allows for it.

And when pedestrians express the wish to cross at a pedestrian crossing, they have priority, any vehicle must let them pass.

Travel documents

In case of a police check, you must be able to present:

- your identity card or passport
- vehicle documents (registration documents, registration certificate)
- the vehicle insurance certificate
- the roadworthiness test certificate of the vehicle if it is concerned
- in restricted traffic areas related to pollution, the Crit'Air sticker must be affixed to the vehicle (to obtain it, go to the official [Crit'Air](#) website).



Visitors ?

If you hold a driving licence issued in the European Economic Area (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, United Kingdom - **liable to change with Brexit**, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden), you can drive in France if your licence is still valid and you have the minimum legal age in

France for this type of licence (18 years old if you drive a car). You need only exchange it for a French licence if you commit offences resulting in loss of points, suspension, retention or cancellation of the driving licence.

If your driving licence has been issued outside the European Economic Area, you may drive in France for a short stay (less than 185 days) or for your studies if your licence is valid, written or translated into French (by an approved translator) or if you have an international licence. For a longer period, you will have to exchange your licence for a French one.

All information on "[Driving in France with a foreign licence](#)".

For **vehicles registered abroad**, they can travel in France for a maximum of 6 months. Beyond that, they must be registered in France and, if they are older than 4 years old, be subjected to a roadworthiness test if they do not already have a European roadworthiness test less than 6 months old. People who settle in France and declare their principal residence there must register their vehicle within one month of settling in.

Find out more about the steps to take to [register your vehicle when settling in France](#).

Risk factors

Speed, alcohol, drugs, telephone are recognized accident factors. But regulations governing them may vary according to each country.

The rules below apply to all drivers, whether they are on an electric scooter, cyclists, mopeds, motorcyclists, motorcyclists, motorists, drivers of various heavy vehicles... Sometimes more restrictive rules may apply depending on the mode of travel, see below (regulations depending on my travel mode).

In France, **speed limits** are set by the highway code depending on the road network in question and are not mentioned by signs.

	Normal traffic conditions	Rain or other precipitation	Visibility less than 50m
Motorway	130 km/h	110 km/h	50 km/h
Dual carriageway	110 km/h	100 km/h	50 km/h
Single carriageway with 2 lanes dedicated to same direction	90 km/h	80 km/h	50 km/h
Single carriageway	80 km/h	80 km/h	50 km/h
Built-up areas	50 km/h	50 km/h	50 km/h

Local authorities may decide on certain occasions to lower or raise the speed limit. Although drivers must respect speed limits, they often need to reduce their speed further according to additional difficulties encountered on their route : danger signs, bends, special traffic conditions (bad weather, traffic jams, slow vehicles, vulnerable road users, etc.). The highway code specifies that drivers must always be in control of their vehicle.

Driving a vehicle with an blood alcohol content (BAC level) greater than 0.5 g/L is prohibited for all drivers, even cyclists and e-scooterists. The BAC level is of 0.2 g/L for drivers with a probationary licence and public transport drivers.

The consumption of recreational drugs is prohibited in France, therefore driving under the influence of illegal drugs is a crime.

Finally, it is prohibited to drive with a phone in your hand or by your ear, with headphones or earpieces.

Regulations that apply according to my travel mode

I am a **pedestrian**: I remain vigilant because I am particularly vulnerable. If there is no specific alcohol level to be respected, however, the pedestrian may be fined for "drunkenness on the public highway".

I use a classic, **non-motorized scooter**: like a pedestrian, I am on the sidewalk.

I ride an **electric scooter**, or other "personal mobility device (PMD)" (hoverboard, segway, gyropod, monowheel...): I am at least 14 years old and alone on my vehicle, limited to 25 km/h. I must respect **rules** that are mostly similar to cycling (using the road or cycle path if it exists, front and rear lighting at night, wearing a high visibility vest (CE marking) outside urban areas at night or in poor visibility) as well as the rules applicable to all drivers: give priority to pedestrians who wish to cross the road ; no phone, no earpieces, BAC level below 0.5 g/L, no illegal drugs...

I ride my **pedal-cycle**: wearing a helmet is mandatory for children under 12 years old. Children under 7 years of age are the only ones allowed on the sidewalk. I drive on roads or cycle paths if they exist, with

front and rear lighting at night, wearing a high visibility vest (CE marking) outside urban areas at night or in poor visibility. I respect the rules applicable to all drivers: give priority to pedestrians who wish to cross the road ; no phone, no earpieces, BAC level below 0.5 g/L, no illegal drugs...

I am on **powered two-wheels** (PTW)

: any bike over 25 km/h must be registered, driver and passenger must wear an approved helmet and gloves. Check all [relevant license types here](#).

- Bikes under 50 cc are clamped at 45 km/h. They can be driven from the age of 14, as can license-free cars (AM license).
- Bikes over 50 cc can be driven from the age of 16 (A1 license). A high visibility vest (CE marking) is available to be worn in case of breakdown.

On certain [dual carriageways in 21 counties](#), in the event of traffic jams and during the period of experiment, powered two-wheelers may travel between the two lanes most to the left provided they do so at a maximum speed of 50 km/h. Counties are : Alpes-Maritimes, Bouches-du-Rhône, Drôme, Essonne, Gironde, Haute-Garonne, Hauts-de-Seine, Hérault, Isère, Loire-Atlantique, Nord, Paris, Pyrénées-Orientales, Rhône, Seine-et-Marne, Seine-Saint-Denis, Val-d'Oise, Val-de-Marne, Var, Vaucluse, and Yvelines.



I am in a **vehicle with 4 or more wheels** :

- buckling your seat-belt is mandatory for all occupants at all times (except for some professionals, for whom it is highly recommended for their own safety); children up to the age of 10 need to be in an approved child seat according to their age;
- a high visibility vest (CE marking) is available and easily available from within for each occupant, in the event of a breakdown;
- the vehicle has a warning triangle (do not use on motorways), snow chains (mandatory in some areas).

License-free cars can be driven from the age of 14 (with an AM license).

Except for drivers in training in France with their supervisor, vehicles requiring a licence may not be driven

before the age of 18.

Heavy goods vehicles over 3.5 tonnes cannot be driven before 21 years old. For passenger transport vehicles, the minimum age for the driver is 21 under 16 seats or 24 otherwise, unless the driving licence was passed as part of professional driver training (CAP, Bac pro, professional title, Fimo).

Roadside checks - reciprocal partnerships with many countries

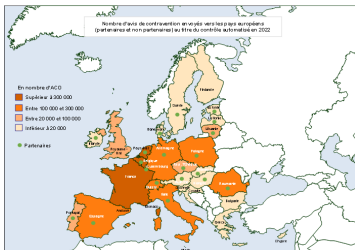
Roadchecks can be undertaken in

France :

- by police forces on the field
- by fixed or mobile radars
- by video

The offender will be :

- either intercepted directly on the road by the police, and pay a fine on the spot when a foreigner. The driving licence may be withdrawn on the spot, the vehicle immobilized if the offence requires it;
- or informed by mail at a later date of the offence and the consequences (fine to be paid, points withdrawn from the licence, transmission to the court...).



In order to guarantee the effectiveness of the sanction for offenders outside their country of origin, **European Directive 2015/413/EU of 17 March 2015**, transposed into French law in August 2015 (Law for Energy Transition and Green Growth), provides for cooperation between Member States.

In 2023, **19 countries of the European Union (EU)** are now our partners: Germany, Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden.

In addition, a bilateral agreement has been concluded with **Switzerland**.

Accueil



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