

WELCOME TO THE FRENCH ROAD NETWORK

If you need to drive in France for business or tourism, to make sure that you travel in safety, remember that French traffic laws are not necessarily the same as in your own country, particularly as far as speed limits are concerned. This guide provides you with a few essential rules you should familiarise yourself with before you get behind the wheel.
















Seat belts

The wearing of seat belts is compulsory for all passengers. Up to the age of 10, children must be equipped with an EU-approved car seat adapted to their age, morphology and weight.

SANCTIONS: Failure to wear seat belts is liable to a fine of €135*.

Speed limits

Driving speeds are limited throughout the French road network. The maximum authorized speed is indicated every time the speed limit changes. In case of bad weather, the authorized limits are lowered.

		NORMAL TRAFFIC CONDITIONS	IN CASE OF POOR VISIBILITY	VISIBILITY LESS THAN 50 METRES
Motorway				
Motorways and DUAL carriageway roads separated by a central island				
Other roads				
Built-up areas				

SANCTIONS: Exceeding the speed limit by less than 20 km/h (except in built-up areas) is liable to a fine of €68*.

Exceeding the speed limit by between 20 km/h and 50 km/h exposes you to a fine of €135*.

For exceeding the speed limit at 50 km/h or more, the driver is subject to a maximum fine of €1,500 and impounding or confiscation of the vehicle. It is prohibited to hold, transport and use devices for warning the driver of the location of speed cameras. Disobeying this provision is subject to a fine of €1,500.

Alcohol

Taking the wheel when inebriated has some important and immediate consequences for your driving.

SANCTIONS: If you drive with a blood alcohol concentration ≥ 0.5 g/l and < 0.8 g/l (or ≥ 0.25 mg/l and < 0.4 mg/l when breathing out), you may be fined 130 €* and may receive a three-year ban on driving on French territory. Those same sanctions apply in case of a blood alcohol concentration starting with 0.2 g/l (or 0.1 mg/l when breathing out) for inexperienced drivers, i.e. persons who have held a license for only 3 years or less.

NB: this threshold may be exceeded as of the very first alcoholic drink. If you drive with a blood alcohol concentration > 0.8 g/l (or ≥ 0.4 mg/l when breathing out) or if you refuse to submit to an alcohol test, you may be fined a maximum of 4,500 € and be prohibited from driving on French territory for three years.

Mobile phones

You may not hold a telephone in your hand while driving.

In addition, the driver of a vehicle in traffic may not wear any item in his ear that could emit sounds, except for electronic devices for combatting deafness. In particular, this rules out earphones for telephoning or listening to music.

SANCTIONS: If you use a hand-held telephone or the type of earphone equipment described above while driving you may be fined €135*.

Safety vest and triangle

All vehicles must be equipped with a fluorescent, high-visibility safety vest and a hazard warning triangle.

SANCTIONS: Not carrying this equipment in your vehicle is liable to a fine of €135*.

*This is a fixed penalty which will be reduced if payment is made immediately.

IF YOU COMMIT AN OFFENSE

If you commit a traffic offence, you are liable to a fine and, where applicable, a temporary ban from driving in France. Furthermore, in severe cases, you may be summoned before the court and face a **prison sentence**.

Non-resident drivers who violate traffic laws in France and do not pay their fines will have their **vehicle withheld**, and, where appropriate, impounded until such sums are paid.