

Advice for driving in Portugal

In an emergency

Emergency telephones linked to an SOS network are installed at 2km intervals along motorways and IP (itinerários principais) and IC (itinerários complementares).

112 - Here's a really important bit of knowledge; you can dial 112 from anywhere in Europe and an operator will connect you to an emergency service in the country you're visiting.

Operators can answer your call in their native language, English or French.

Driving licence laws

Visitors must be aged 18 or over and hold a full, valid driving licence to legally drive in Portugal. Riders of motorcycles up to 125cc must be aged 16 or over, as must those riding a moped (not exceeding 50cc).

Driving licences issued in EU and EEA countries are accepted. [International driving permits](#) are recognised, but not required.

Things to take when driving in Portugal

Documents for driving in Portugal

Visitors who benefit from temporary importation facilities may import a vehicle registered abroad for 6 months per year, whether consecutive or not. Vehicles registered in a temporary series can stay in Portugal for 90 days maximum.

In order to stay on the right side of the law, the following documents should always be carried:

- Full, valid UK driving licence
- Proof of ID (passport)
- Motor insurance certificate
- V5 registration document

Do I need a GB or UK sticker for driving in Portugal?

Since 28th September 2021, the distinguishing mark (or national identifier) displayed on vehicles registered in the United Kingdom that are driven abroad has changed from GB to UK.

This means that vehicles registered in the UK must display the letters “UK” when driven in Portugal.

The identifier can be incorporated in vehicle number plates (along with the Union Flag) or as a separate sticker. Note that vehicles featuring the letters GB together with the Council of Europe golden stars are no longer valid for driving abroad.

If your vehicle does not have the UK identifier within the number plate, you will require a UK sticker when driving in Portugal. GB stickers will no longer be valid from the end of September.

Do I need an insurance green card?

From 2nd August 2021, drivers no longer require an insurance green card for taking their vehicles to Portugal.

ETIAS – 2026

[ETIAS](#) stands for the European Travel Information and Authorisation System. It is a visa program for visitors who don't need a Schengen visa, who want to travel to the European Union and a few other European countries.

Visitors who purchase an ETIAS will be able to enter the 26 member states of the Schengen Zone as well as Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, and Romania.

This will be launching in 2026. [Learn more about ETIAS here.](#)

Driving in Portugal packing checklist

In addition to required documents, motorists are also required by law to carry the following items when driving to avoid fines:

- Reflective jackets (mandatory to carry in your vehicle and wear if you need to get out the vehicle on the carriageway)
- Warning triangle (not compulsory for foreign-registered vehicles from countries where warning triangles are not compulsory)
- Headlamp beam deflectors (depending on your car, you will either need deflector stickers or have to adjust the beam manually)
- Crash helmets are compulsory for riders and passengers of mopeds and motorcycles

Is there anything that I shouldn't take with me?

Be aware that you cannot take the following with you into Portugal:

- meat or products containing meat
- milk or dairy products

You cannot take the following unless you pay to have them inspected before you leave and get a ‘phytosanitary certificate’:

- fresh fruit (apart from bananas, coconuts, dates, pineapples and durians)
- vegetables
- plants
- plant products

Rules of the road in Portugal

Overtaking and passing

In Portugal, motorists drive on the right and overtake on the left. When being overtaken, motorists should keep as far right as possible and not accelerate.

You are permitted to pass a stationary tram only if there’s an island for passengers boarding and alighting.

In narrow streets, the vehicle nearest a passing place should pull into it, reversing if necessary. If two vehicles are at an equal distance from a passing place, the lighter vehicle should pull in or reverse.

On a hill, the vehicle travelling uphill should give way to the one going down. In all circumstances, however, motor vehicles have priority over other vehicles.

Who has priority?

As a general rule, priority must be given to vehicles coming from the right unless indicated.

Emergency vehicles and military vehicles have priority over other road users.

Vehicles must not enter an intersection – even if they have right of way – if it’s likely they will be unable to leave it without obstructing other traffic.

Warning of approach

Horns should be used in moderation.

In urban areas, sounding the horn is not allowed during the hours of darkness, except in an emergency. If you need to give a warning, flash your lights instead.

In rural areas, horns should be used whenever required for road safety, where visibility is compromised, or before overtaking another road user.

Towing

Camper vans and cars with caravans are not allowed to exceed 18.75 metres in length, 4 metres in height and 2.55 metres in width.

Seat belts

It's compulsory to wear seat belts in the front and rear seats of cars equipped with belts.

The fine for failing to wear a seat belt is set between €120 and €600.

Traffic lights

The international three-colour traffic light system is used in Portugal. There is no amber signal after the red, and a flashing amber light indicates “caution”.

A flashing or constant red light indicates “stop” and is used near level crossings and to give warning of an obstacle.

Speed limits in Portugal

Portugal uses the metric system for all road signs, meaning speed limits and other road signs including distance are indicated using kilometres and metres. These are the general speed limits for private cars:

In built-up areas	50km/h (unless other indicated by local signs)
Outside built-up areas	90km/h – 100km/h (unless other indicated by local signs)
Motorways	120km/h

Special speed restrictions apply to certain classes of vehicle, including mopeds, motorhomes and vehicles with trailers so check before travel.

On the 25 de Abril bridge over the River Tagus, drivers must keep to a speed between 40km/h and 60km/h.

Speeding fines in Portugal

Speeding fines in Portugal range from €60 to €2,500 depending on the speed at which offenders are caught, and the road on which they're driving.

Speed camera detectors

Any device that actively searches for mobile speed cameras or interferes with police transmissions is prohibited by law. Fines for use can reach €2,500.

Travelling with children in Portugal

All children under 12 years of age and measuring under 1.35m, travelling in a car fitted with seatbelts, must travel in the back seats in a special child restraint system adapted to their size and weight, except:

- if the car has only two seats or is not fitted with seatbelts.
- for a child under three, who can travel on the front seat equipped with a rear-facing child restraint system. In this case, the airbag must be deactivated.

Bike helmet law

Bike helmets are not compulsory in Portugal unless riding an electric bike. Children who are passengers on bicycles must also wear a helmet.

All bikes must have a reflectorised registration plate.