

# A Family Driving Holiday in France

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Ever thought of a driving holiday through France? It can be an incredible experience that you or your family will not forget.

When going on your first driving holiday through France, traveling at your own pace, stopping in quaint villages and historic towns to experience the local French food and staying in family run guest houses or hotels can just add more excitement to the whole holiday experience.

When touring by car obviously means that you will need places to stay and there are so many different options to choose from, but this can be a great way of getting into the heart of the country and experiencing the true traditional France whilst on your driving holiday.

The roads are very well maintained, especially on the toll roads that have fantastic lay-bys and the service areas are also of excellent quality, which makes the experience when traveling through a lot easier. And even when entering the local villages, the roads are still very good quality, far better than some other countries we have been in, yet just remember that you will be driving on the right hand side of the road!

But when you are driving through France there are a few things you need to be aware of.

Did you know that the legal age to drive in France is 18 years of age and even if you have a full license from another country and you are under that age, then you are still not allowed to drive in France? And every passenger must wear a seatbelt and it is illegal for a child under the age of 10 to be in the front seat.

You must always stop at a zebra crossing, which is enforced by law and when going through a town you will find a lot of them, but you should be very careful when you are the pedestrian, as the French do not seem to obey this rule as much as they should!

Watch your speed! If you are stopped for speeding you can be fined on the spot and the fines have to be paid in cash there and then, which can be quite expensive. If you cannot pay or you are traveling more than 25km/h above the speed limit, then your car can be impounded and you could end up with a very hefty fine or even lose your license, so be careful, especially when on the toll roads, as you do not want your driving holiday to come to an abrupt end!

The motorways are 130km per hour, but this is reduced in bad weather down to 110km per hour and on dual carriageways and main roads the same rules apply where the speed limit is reduced in bad weather. A dual carriageway is 110km per hour and main roads are 90km per hour, with the periphery being 80km per hour and towns or minor roads being a maximum of 50km per hour.

The French Government do publish information on exactly where speed traps are located and this is one of the reasons why it is illegal to have a radar detector fitted to your vehicle. Also, with the amount of satellite navigation systems available such as TomTom, you will find that many have a warning system for speed cameras, but it is also illegal to have this facility on, otherwise you could end up with a hefty fine if you are caught out!

In bad weather, fog etc, even during the day, it is compulsory to use your lights but you do not have to keep your lights on during the day at any other time.

Obviously you must have deflectors fitted to your headlights if you have a right-hand drive vehicle and by law you must have a set of replacement bulbs and a warning triangle with you at all times. But it is always advisable to check the regulations prior to your holiday in France, as they do change from time to time and a good place to access this information is the AA website.

You also need to have a first aid kit and a fire extinguisher with you and because in France the law states that if you are

the first on a scene of an accident, you must stop and provide assistance, these may well be required! And in the event of an accident you would need to call the police, which is accomplished by dialing 17 and they will also dispatch an ambulance or the fire brigade if these are also needed.

You will no doubt come across the term La Priorité à Droite, which basically means that the vehicle coming onto a road has priority from the right. This is even the case when a minor road is entering a main road, so do be careful, especially when in the towns and villages as you would need to give way, even if it is you on the main road.

Officially this rule no longer applies unless clearly sign posted yet it still causes confusion and in Paris it is still widely practiced. So you could end up feeling like you are being cut up, even though this may have been how the French were taught to drive when the Priorité à Droite rule was still widely used!

Yet by generally planning your holiday prior to traveling, this will give you more peace of mind and will help you to locate all the tourist attractions that you want to visit whilst on your holiday in France. Also, when it comes to shopping, most places shut for at least two hours each day and most hypermarkets, etc are not open on a Sunday, whereas museums and other attractions are, so you can make general plans for your whole trip.

Plus if you use a route planner such as Microsoft AutoRoute, it can provide you with lots of other information as well, like being able to calculate how long it will take you to travel between one place and another, and you can also find numerous different hotels, petrol stations, restaurants and even cash points to name but a few!

The other good thing about using a route planner, is that if you do not have a sat nav system, you can get fantastically in depth maps that will take you directly to your desired destination without getting lost, and yes, getting lost can be fun, but it can also be daunting if you do not know the area.

But with these few general rules out of the way, just enjoy the experience, the beautiful scenery, the French wine and food and have a great family vacation, whilst on your driving holiday in France.

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