Will Your Driving Licence Be Valid In The EU Post-Brexit?

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The government has announced that UK driving licences may no longer be valid in the EU post-Brexit. Here's how to prepare yourself and stay on the right side of the law.

Will My UK Licence Be Valid In The EU?

In the event of a no-deal Brexit, the mutual driving licence agreement between the UK and EU is likely to come to an end. Brits travelling to Europe will need to apply for an International Driving Permit (IDP) if they want to venture between countries.

What Is An International Driving Permit (IDP)?

If the EU concludes that British driving licences will no longer be accepted post-Brexit, holidaymakers will need to purchase an International Driving Permit (IDP) before driving abroad which will provide cover for 12 months. If you have emigrated from the UK to a European country, then after these 12 months, you'll need to retake your driving test in your new home.

So how do you get an IDP? It's actually incredibly straightforward. IDP's can only be purchased from a Post Office and will cost just £5.50. Although over 2,500 Post Offices are now selling IDP's, many are yet to begin stocking permits, which means you'll need to do a little research into where they are available. To purchase a permit to drive in the EU, you must be over the age of 18 and of course, hold a full UK driving licence.

Here is where it gets a little tricky, there are different IDP's depending on your destination, so it is imperative to make sure you are covered for the correct countries. There are three permit types available, these are:

- 1949 Convention IDP - This is valid for those travelling to Ireland, Spain, Malta, Cyprus and Iceland.
- 1968 Convention IDP - Valid for all other countries in the EU, along with Norway and Switzerland.
- 1926 Convention - Only valid in Liechtenstein.

Be aware that if you are planning a road trip between multiple countries, you may need to purchase more than one type of IDP to ensure that you are covered. For instance, if you are travelling to Spain and France, you will need both a 1949 and 1968 Convention IDP.

No IDP, What Happens?

The consequences of failing to present an IDP vary from country to country. In most cases, you will be fined a substantial sum and are likely to have your car confiscated. You will then need to pay to have your vehicle released. In the worst-case scenario, you may even be sent home, car or no car!

Will I Only Need An IDP?

Unfortunately, it is not just an IDP that you will need to venture abroad; you will also need to invest in a GB sticker for your vehicle. If the number plate on your car includes both an EU flag and GB sign, otherwise known as a Euro-plate, then you will definitely need to display a GB sticker. However, if you swap your Euro-plate for number plate with only a GB sign, then you will no longer need a sticker.

What About Insurance?

When it comes to insurance, it's no surprise that there's also going to be a few more rules post-Brexit. Around one month before you're scheduled to set off, you'll need to contact your car insurance provider to request a motor insurance green card. Your green card will mean that your policy will still cover you while abroad. In most cases, this will be valid for 90 days.

If you are travelling with a trailer or caravan, then bear in mind that you will need two motor insurance green cards - one for your car and another for your trailer/caravan. The same goes for fleet insurance;

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again, you'll need one green card per vehicle.

So, Is There Any Advice For Driving In The EU After Brexit?

Anthony Johnson, Director of driveJohnson's driving school and approved Grade A 51/51 driving instructor, gives his advice on tackling overseas driving post-Brexit:

"Taking on unfamiliar roads is always a little daunting, even more so when you're in a new country with new rules. I have many past pupils message me for advice, and my answer is always research the country and their rules of the road thoroughly.

Unless you are extremely experienced I would always recommend starting off driving in countries where the traffic is low and the junctions around the town and city are not too complex. For example, I would personally avoid driving in Paris, Madrid, Milan etc as when I'm on holiday I don't want unnecessary stress, I like to switch off and I want to keep the level of risk to my family at a minimum. Finding car parks, knowing the rules where to park and where you can stop in large cities can be complicated. Just think how much hassle it is parking in Central London, as it's going to be the same for the cities abroad I mentioned earlier too.

So, build up your experience driving abroad slowly. For example, I went to Sicily recently, I googled peoples experiences about driving in Sicily and the rules of the road, I spoke to my hotel reception and then decided to rent a car and drive in and around the small towns/beaches, avoiding the main City wherever possible. This is because when you look on google the feedback is that the drivers are crazy, road signs are poor, it's hard to park and there are congestion fees at certain times of the day for motorways and driving into the larger cities.

Lastly, always look into the safety of hiring a car abroad. Unfortunately, some countries such as Mexico, Africa and parts of Italy, target tourists and even the police can be corrupt asking for money for almost no reason, or you can be arrested for a road offence you didn't commit. So do please do your homework when considering driving abroad regarding the rules of the road, potential penalties and consider your safety!"

"The GOV.UK is there to give you all the information you'd ever need to stay within the law, so use it to your advantage. Just as you'd browse for the best local hotspots, restaurants and nightlife, research what you'll need when taking your vehicle to a new country. As they say - failing to prepare is preparing to fail - stay organised, and I promise you'll be able to enjoy your getaway, problem-free!"

Preparing For Post-Brexit

There's a whole host of changes we will experience when we leave, but it is nothing to be worried about. As advised by Anthony, doing your research will be the best way to adapt to the new laws and regulations. Nothing will stop you from exploring new destinations; you will just need to be a little more prepared!

Driving Instructor Top Tip for driving abroad:

When driving abroad, take it easy to begin with. Many people hire a car from the airport but building up your experience for the first time in a foreign country from a busy airport can be stressful. If possible get a transfer to your hotel and then hire a car once you have settled in a bit. Speak to your hotel for local advice and ask for quiet routes to locations to start building up your experience. After 30-60 minutes you will feel so much more confident with the car and the roads. You can then choose to drive into busier areas if you feel comfortable doing so.

Lee Parmenter – driving instructor in Northampton.

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