

Riding a Motorbike in Europe - Rules in France (and most of Mainland Europe)

Apart from the obvious ride on the RIGHT, the main message is beware that the "Priorite a Droit" rule still applies at unmarked junctions on minor roads, and don't go mad - or the rozzers will give you stick!

Unfortunately many well intentioned websites tend to draft advice solely for their mostly car driving audience, and cause confusion when they fail to mention that some stuff does not apply to motorcycles/riders. So the following list has been prepared to identify the basics for UK based motor-bikers. So you will need to have with you:

- Driving licence both bits (*if you still hold the old green paper version they will ask to see your matching passport to confirm your identity*), and vehicle registration document(V5C),
- MOT and insurance documents - required. (*keep copies at home - but have originals with you.*)
- UK sticker, - required.
- First aid kit - required but not defined - (*a single Elastoplast seems to be enough?*)
- Spare bulbs - theoretically one of each type used on the bike - required (*can be useful!*)
- Spare set of spectacles/or contact lenses (*if required for correct vision*) - required.
- Headlamp re-alignment or corrective stickers - required.
(*Not needed if your bike has a flat headlamp beam pattern*)
- Fastened Helmet of an approved type - required - (*what else you choose to wear is seemingly up to you*).
- Super Dark Helmet Visors - not allowed ... (*visor must meet same light transmission limits stipulated in the UK - the French rarely if ever enforce this*).
- Hi Vis dots on helmets - PROBABLY not required. Check the E marking inside your helmet or on chin strap. Provided it is not E2 then the reflective dots requirement does not apply to your helmet. (*The rule only applies to French type approved helmets which will carry the E2 label*).
- Motorbike gloves must be worn whilst riding (CE Approved)
- Warning triangle is not required. - only cars!
- CE Hi Vis Jacket - required in cars and motorbikes. **NB** Bikers only required to wear during a breakdown, so can be stowed. Gendarmes may check to see them.
- Hi Vis arm Bands - not required.
- Ethylotest (breathalyser kit) - "effectively" not required - (*It's a classic French don't want to admit they got it wrong solution - hence they left it on the statute book but removed the enforcement powers - making it the equivalent of the UK law which still requires licensed taxis to carry a bale of hay... Do comply if you want - virtually no one in France is*).
- The permitted Alcohol limit is lower in most of Europe @ 50 milligrams compared with 80 milligrams of alcohol for every 100 millilitres of blood in your body in the UK
- Minimum motorbike tyre tread depth is 1.6mm (2mm in Germany) compared with 1.0mm in UK
- Filtering between lanes - officially not allowed at present. *An official report has gone forward formally advocating that filtering be permitted ONLY between the outermost (fast) lanes and at a speed differential not exceeding 40kph above the adjacent traffic. Note police in Paris routinely apply fines to motorbikes caught filtering! Elsewhere it is pretty much the accepted norm. Just don't go mad!*
- Watch out for separate speed limit signs posted by exit slip roads (some junctions tighten alarmingly - and will often be enforced by a camera where vehicles have previously overturned)
- Speed Cameras - some but not all have a warning panel a few hundred yards ahead - if so, check your speed as there WILL be a camera, others are now preceded by a digital "your speed is xxx" display - again expect a speed camera further down the road. Some have no prior warning at all.
- From 2013 a diverse fleet of unmarked police interceptors (mostly Renault Clio & Megane estates) with on-board radar have started patrolling major routes to tackle some of the more insane speeding. On the spot fines get really steep if you are more than 20kph over a speed limit. Your licence will be immediately withdrawn if you exceed double the limit, and the vehicle impounded.
- GPS units with detailed camera location databases for France are illegal and can result in a fine, loss of points and your GPS confiscated! Its legal to install the Gov approved speed awareness zones which alert for all permanent sites but also include lots of false alerts which I find too distracting (always going off) to be worth enabling. From Tomtom home choose - "update" - "add traffic voices.." - "points of interest" - "pack Basic des zones de danger TomTomMax"
- New speed cameras are rear facing, some check average speed - especially through roadworks.
- Laser/Radar detectors, scanners, jammers are banned. Will be seized attract big fines and points.