

OUR SAY

Our specialist answers your travel questions

FAQ

We'd like to tour France by car, but haven't rules of the road on the other side of the Channel changed lately?

A DAVID WILLIAMS, below, is a specialist in motoring. He replies:

There have indeed been some changes in recent years, and many motorists are not up to speed. A recent AA survey found a third didn't know they now needed a reflective jacket when driving in France; over half didn't know they needed a disposable breathalyser.

One reason for the lack of awareness is that many laws were updated in 2007 when France set new targets to cut road deaths and only recently have these "sleeper" laws been enforced. Here is what you need to know.

Breathalysers It's now compulsory for motorists to carry a disposable breathalyser, although drivers are not fined if they don't. Disposable ones cost around £2 (search online) and must be "NF approved". Motoring organisations advise against drinking and driving altogether; the blood-alcohol limit in France is just 0.05 per cent compared with 0.08 per cent in Britain. If caught you might spend a night in prison, have your car confiscated and be banned from driving in France in addition to a heavy fine.

Speed cameras The number of speed cameras – including new "super traps" resembling lamps or street furniture – has risen sharply since 2012. Ministers also ordered the gradual removal of camera warning signs, making cameras harder to spot. The French increasingly use



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Caught on film: not being aware of the new laws on speed cameras and detectors in France could be costly

cameras that measure your speed over many miles.

Speed camera detectors France recently outlawed speed camera detectors; you can be fined €1,500 (£1,200) if found in possession and that includes satnavs warning of likely camera locations. The AA advises motorists to disable this function on satnavs or update them on manufacturers' websites, first ensuring that this removes any camera-warning function.

Helmet stickers Motorcyclists' helmets must now bear reflective stickers. Manufacturers supply stickers with new helmets; if you've lost yours, contact the maker for replacements or buy online for around £3.50.

Jackets You must carry a high-visibility jacket inside the car (not in the boot) and put it on before getting out of the car in the event of a breakdown (not compulsory for motorcyclists).

Fines Britain opted out of new EU laws

allowing motoring fines to "follow" drivers home if caught on camera, but you could still be caught in the act and fined, or stopped on re-entry to France and told to pay for previous offences. If you're in a hire car and snapped by a speed camera, the hire firm is notified. It passes on your details, enabling authorities to pursue the fines.

Dos and don'ts Check your car insurance covers you overseas and don't forget European Breakdown Cover, which also ensures your car is recovered in the event of a crash. Remember, British motorists can now pay Autoroute tolls with a windscreen "tag" to avoid fumbling with currency; more at saneftolling.co.uk.

● For a full list of motoring rules, visit bit.ly/1l8ZrkV

ASK OUR EXPERTS

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