

Martinique

Touring Tips



The following is additional to our [general advice for motoring in Europe](#). Martinique is a French department, so French regulations apply.

Legal age to drive

The legal driving age in France is 18 years old, and all drivers need a full and valid driving licence. If you're under 18 you're legally not allowed to drive in France, even if you have a valid licence.

Side of the road to drive

All traffic in France drives on the right-hand side of the road, not on the left like the UK. If you hire a car, the driver's seat will be on the left side of the car.

Who has priority

When driving on a main road – N roads and D roads – you'll have priority over all other traffic entering from side roads. Priority roads are marked with a yellow diamond sign.

When not on a priority road, for example if you're driving on a smaller rural road, *Priorité à Droite* generally applies – this means you must give way to traffic approaching from your right, unless indicated by road signs.

At signed roundabouts bearing the words "*Vous n'avez pas la priorité*" or "*Cédez le passage*", traffic on the roundabout has priority. When these signs are not present, traffic entering the roundabout has priority.

Make sure you always give way to vehicles with sirens and flashing lights, like ambulances.

How to overtake

Generally, as vehicles drive on the right, they should overtake on the left. However, if traffic is in lanes, motorists may overtake on the right of slower moving lanes

When overtaking a bicycle, you must leave a distance of at least 1 metre in built-up areas and 1.5 metres outside of built-up areas between your vehicle and the bicycle.

Never overtake a stationary tram when passengers are boarding or getting off.

Speed limits

All speed limits (and distances) in France are in kilometres and metres, as France uses the metric system.

- **Motorways:** 130 km/h (around 80 mph); 110 km/h (around 68 mph) in rainy conditions.
- **Dual carriageways:** 110 km/h (around 68 mph); 100 km/h (around 62 mph) in rainy conditions.
- **Main roads:** 80 km/h (around 50 mph); 70 km/h (around 43 mph) in rainy conditions.
- **Built-up areas, like towns and cities:** 50 km/h (around 31 mph), unless otherwise indicated.

Speeding fines

The standard fine for breaking the speed limit in France is €135, though this amount can vary depending on how far over the limit you were driving.

If you're caught speeding more than 50 km/h over the limit, you'll have your licence and vehicle confiscated on the spot.

Since the UK's departure from the European Union, EU countries can no longer write to or send fines to UK drivers for offences caught on camera, such as speeding. However, exceeding the speed limit could still result in an on-the-spot fine and other serious repercussions, as well as endangering your safety and the safety of others.

Speed camera detectors

All devices capable of detecting speed cameras and alerting drivers of their location are illegal in France. This includes radar detectors and satellite navigation systems warning of the presence of speed cameras or radars. If you're caught with one in your car, even if you're not using it, you could face a fine of up to €1,500.

Additionally, road signs indicating the location of fixed speed cameras are largely being removed, and additional fixed speed cameras are being installed. It's therefore even more important to pay attention to your speed and stay within the limits.

Traffic lights rules

France uses green, amber and red lights like the UK, however the meaning of the lights may differ slightly.

A red light means stop and a green light means go, however there is no amber light when transitioning from red to green.

A flashing amber light means slow down, or proceed but give way to vehicles on the right. A flashing red light means no entry, or indicates a level crossing or exit used by emergency vehicles.

If a red light is shown with a yellow arrow, then drivers may turn in the direction of the arrow but must give priority to vehicles travelling in that direction and pedestrians.

Driving through a red light in France can lead to a fine of up to €300 if you're caught.

Seat belt rules

Seat belts must always be worn at all times when driving in France, by adults and children in both the front and back seats. It's the driver's responsibility to ensure that any passengers under the age of 18 are wearing their seat belt correctly.

In certain older cars that aren't fitted with seat belts in the back seats, rear passengers may be exempt.

The standard fine for not wearing a seatbelt in France is €135.

Child seat regulations

Children below 10 years old can't travel in the front seat of a vehicle in France, unless there are no rear seats or the rear seats are already occupied by another child under 10.

Babies travelling in the front seat must be placed in an approved rear-facing baby seat with the airbag turned off.

Children under 10 must also use a suitable, approved booster seat or restraint, depending on their age and weight. Child restraints are classified in five different groups by European regulations:

- **Group 0 (under 10 kg):** Rear-facing child seat placed in front passenger seat with airbag switched off or back seat. Babies may also be placed in a carry cot on the rear seat.
- **Group 0+ (under 13 kg):** Same as seats in Group 0, but bigger versions. The same installation rules apply.
- **Group 1 (9-18 kg):** Child seat with a 5-point harness or protection tray.
- **Group 2 (15 - 25 kg):** Booster seat or cushion with an adult seat belt.
- **Group 3 (22 - 36 kg):** Booster seat or cushion with an adult seat belt.

Drink-driving laws

The maximum legal blood alcohol level for drivers in France is 0.05%, which is just over half the 0.08% limit in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

For bus and coach drivers, as well as drivers with less than three years' experience, the limit is even lower at 0.02%.

If you're caught with a blood alcohol level between 0.05% and 0.08%, you may face a fine of €135, losing your licence or having your car confiscated. If your blood alcohol level is higher than 0.08%, this is considered a criminal offence and can result in a fine of up to €4,500 and even a prison sentence of 2 years.

Breathalyser tests

Police have the power to carry out random breath tests, and tests are compulsory after an injury-causing accident or when a driver has committed a serious motoring offence.

Mobile phones and headphones

It's illegal to use a mobile phone while driving in France, however completely hands-free mobile phone units are allowed. It's also illegal to use headphones or earbuds, including bluetooth devices.

Using a hand-held mobile phone or headphones while driving can lead to a fine of €135.

Lights

It's recommended by the French government that all vehicles use dipped headlights at all times when driving in France.

Headlamp beam deflectors need to be used by UK drivers to adapt to driving on the right-hand side of the road. These stop headlights from dazzling other drivers. If you're caught driving without beam deflectors, you may face a fine.

You may also be liable to pay an on-the-spot fine if you're caught driving with a broken bulb, so it's recommended that drivers carry a spare set of bulbs in their vehicle at all times.

Tyre requirements in France

When driving in France, all vehicles must have tyres with a minimum tread depth of 1.6mm. If this depth is less than 1.6 mm – even in one place – the tyre is too smooth and must be changed.

Fines in France

If you're caught violating French traffic laws, the authorities are authorised to issue and collect fines on the spot.

Standard fines range from €11 to €750, depending on the severity of the offence. They may be reduced if payment is made within 15 days (or 3 days if paid in person) or increased if payment is not made within 45 days following the offence.

If a serious offence is committed that is likely to result in the loss of the driver's licence or a prison sentence, then visiting motorists must pay a guarantee.

Payment for on-the-spot fines can be made in euros, by cheque from a French bank or by travellers' cheques.

Parking fines

Illegally parked vehicles, including those belonging to visiting motorists from outside of France, may be towed and impounded. The vehicle's owner must then pay for the cost of impounding, which increases every 24 hours the vehicle is kept.

Illegally parked vehicles may also be clamped. If this occurs, the driver must pay a fine for illegal parking, and another fine to have the vehicle released from the wheel clamps.

Parking regulations in France

On roads with two side-by-side lanes, parking is only allowed on the right-hand side. On one-way streets, parking is allowed on both sides as long as the street is wide enough.

Continuous yellow lines on the road or kerb indicate that both stopping and parking are prohibited in this location. Broken yellow lines indicate that parking is prohibited.

If payment is required for parking, this will be indicated by road signs.

Disabled parking in France

Public parking will have spaces reserved for disabled access only, which can only be occupied by vehicles with a disabled badge. This badge allows the vehicle to park in disabled parking spaces, but doesn't usually exempt them from any parking fees.

If parking is free but controlled by time limits, disabled badge holders are generally allowed to park without time limits.

Negotiations are taking place about the recognition and use of UK Blue Badges in some European countries since Brexit. In France, it's currently undecided whether UK Blue Badges are recognised. Check with the [French Embassy](#) before travelling.

Riding a motorcycle in France

- All motorcyclists must use dipped headlights during the day and at night.
- Riders on any two-wheeled vehicle, including motorcycles, must wear a crash helmet. This also applies to any passengers.
- All helmets must display reflective stickers on the front, rear and sides in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 22. A sticker of minimum surface area 18cm² must be visible from the front, rear, left and right, and within each sticker it must be possible to mark either a circle of 40 millimetres in diameter or a rectangle at least 12.5cm² in surface area, and at least 20 millimetres in width.

- The driver and passengers of mopeds, motorcycles, motor tricycles and motor quadricycles must wear a pair of CE-certified gloves while riding. This applies all year round whatever the weather, and you could be fined for not doing so.

Driving with a caravan or trailer in France

With a standard driving licence, motorists are allowed to tow a trailer with a maximum mass of 750 kilograms, including both the trailer and its load.

It's forbidden in France to carry passengers in a moving caravan.

Speed limits for cars towing a caravan or trailer

The maximum speed limit for a car towing a caravan or trailer depends on their total weight.

- **Under 3.5t:** 130 km/h on motorways, 110 km/h on dual carriageways, 80 km/h on other roads, 50 km/h in built-up areas.
- **3.5 to 12t:** 90 km/h on motorways, 80 km/h on dual carriageways, 60 km/h on other roads, 50 km/h in built-up areas.
- **Over 12t:** 90 km/h on motorways, 80 km/h on dual carriageways, 60 km/h on other roads, 50 km/h in built-up areas.