

HOW LONG CAN I DRIVE in the UK on a FOREIGN LICENCE?

The UK's authority for everything to do with driving is the DVLA (Driver Vehicle Licensing Authority). Its contact details are:

DVLA, Longview Road, Swansea SA6 7JL

Tel: 01792 782341

Website: www.dvla.gov.uk

A key site is

www.direct.gov.uk/en/Motoring/DriverLicensing/DrivingInGbOnAForeignLicence/DG_4022562

APPROVED EUROPEAN (EU/EEA) LICENCES:

If your licence is from one of the countries listed below, then you can use it in the same way in the UK as you would do at home. The licence must be valid for the type of vehicle you drive.

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Republic of Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden.

VISITORS and RESIDENTS:

Visiting drivers have no complications. But, if you become a resident, the situation changes.

Car and motorcycle driving licence holders (ordinary driving licence) can drive on a European licence until aged 70 or for three years after becoming resident, whichever is the longer period.

Lorry, minibus and bus driving licence holders (vocational driving licence) can drive:

- until aged 45 or for five years after becoming resident, whichever is the longer period
- if you are aged over 45 (but under 65) until your 66th birthday or for five years after becoming resident, whichever is the shorter period
- if you are aged 65 or over for 12 months after becoming resident

At such points the driver will, anyway, need a medical check.

In order to continue driving after these periods, you must get a UK driving licence. When you get a UK driving licence as an exchange, your foreign licence will be returned to the issuing authority (your own country). Ordinarily licence exchange, when you ask for a UK licence, is free of charge.

APPLYING for the EXCHANGE of YOUR FOREIGN DRIVING LICENCE:

If you want or need to change your driving licence for a UK driving licence, you must complete the DVLA form D1. Like any other DVLA form, it is available at the Post Office and online at

www.dft.gov.uk/dvla/onlineservices/order_forms.aspx?ext=dg

You will need to enclose original documentation confirming your identity and passport-style colour photographs (45mm x 35mm). Send your completed application to the DVLA.

REGISTER of VOCATIONAL LICENCE HOLDERS:

Holders of vocational licences (people who drive for a living) who live in the UK must register their details with the DVLA. For further information you can use the special helpline on 0870 240 0009.

REGISTERING as an ORDINARY DRIVING LICENCE HOLDER:

Drivers on ordinary licences who choose to register (you don't have to) will get their original European licence back with a UK licence too. The advantage of registering is that it lets you use the fixed penalty system, and avoid going to court, if you break most motoring laws.

HEALTH CHECKS:

If the licence being exchanged is vocational, and the original was issued in Jersey, Guernsey or the Isle of Man, you must also provide a D4 medical report form completed by a doctor.

If your vocational licence was issued in Europe and you are over 45, you need a medical report even if your vocational licence is still current.

You must tell the DVLA about any illness or disability which affects your ability to drive. Higher standards apply for vocational drivers.

TAKING a UK DRIVING TEST:

Normally you must have been resident in the UK for 185 days in the last 12 months before you can apply for a driving test and get a full licence.

To take a UK driving test you will need to either:

- apply for a UK counterpart licence (D58/2) by completing a form D9 (available from embassies or the DVLA) and enclose your European driving licence - which will be returned to you. The provisional licence document is issued free of charge. However, the appropriate fee must be paid and your European licence surrendered in exchange for a UK licence when claiming the full entitlement
- exchange your European licence for the UK equivalent and request the appropriate provisional entitlement

VEHICLES WHICH EUROPEAN LICENCE HOLDERS MAY ALSO DRIVE in the UK:

European licence holders with category B entitlement can also drive:

- non-commercial minibuses driven on a voluntary basis
- permit minibuses
- large vehicles such as agricultural motor vehicles and road construction vehicles.

Further details about these vehicles and the conditions that apply to them can be found in the DVLA factsheet 'Special Licensing Arrangements for Drivers of Large Vehicles'.

EUROPEAN LICENCES ISSUED in EXCHANGE for LICENCES from ELSEWHERE:

As a general rule, if you have obtained a European licence by any means you will be able to drive on it for up to 12 months. After that you should consult the DVLA as the situation is complex.