

Driving and Road Safety Abroad

Are you thinking about driving in another country? If so, know that road conditions, laws, and driving norms in other countries can be very different from those in the United States. Poor road maintenance, lack of signs, vehicle safety, and insurance coverage are just some things you should consider. And, remember to buckle up, no matter where you are.

Read about road safety in your [destination country](#) before you go and keep these things in mind when planning your trip:

- Potential hazards and dangerous road conditions
- Local roads or areas to avoid
- Availability of roadside assistance
- Need for spare tires, fuel and a map
- Local laws and driving culture -- Get information from the [country's embassy or consulates in the United States](#), foreign government tourism offices, or from a car rental company in the foreign country
- Local emergency numbers
- Vehicle safety considerations, including seat belts
- Documents to carry, including any special road permits
- Insurance and driver's license (see below)

International Driving Permits

It is illegal to drive without a valid license and insurance in most countries. You should check with the [embassy of the country you plan to visit or live in](#) to find specific driver's license requirements. Many countries do not recognize a U.S. driver's license, but most accept an [International Driving Permit](#) [↗] (IDP). IDPs may not be valid the whole time you stay abroad and may only be valid with a U.S. or local license.

You can get an IDP before you leave through these automobile associations:

- [AAA \(American Automobile Association\)](#) [↗]
- [AATA \(American Automobile Touring Alliance\)](#) [↗]

Auto Insurance

In general, your U.S. auto insurance policy does NOT cover you abroad. However, it may when you drive to Canada and Mexico. Check with your insurance company before you go.

Even if your policy is valid in a particular country, it may not meet their minimum requirements. If you are under-insured, you can usually buy additional auto insurance in the United States or in

usually buy additional auto insurance in the United States or in [your destination country](#).

Car rental companies overseas can usually provide auto insurance, but in some countries the required coverage is minimal. In that case, consider buying insurance coverage equal to what you carry at home.

Additional resources:

Road Safety and Security

The [Overseas Security Advisory Council](#) provides information about personal security and safety while traveling abroad.

- [Carjacking - Don't be a victim](#)
- [Personal Security - At Home, On the Street, While Traveling](#)

In addition, the [Association for Safe International Road Travel \(ASIRT\)](#)[↗] provides information for U.S. families and business travelers about driving overseas.

Reporting and Resources on International Road Safety

- [United Nations Road Safety Collaboration](#)[↗]
 - [Best Practices Manuals](#)[↗]
 - [Decade of Action](#)[↗]
- [U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, International Programs](#)[↗]

U.S. Government Links

- [Department of Transportation](#)[↗]
 - [Department of Transportation, National Center for Statistics and Analysis \(NCSA\)](#)[↗]
- [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration \(NHTSA\)](#)[↗]
 - [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: International Activities](#)[↗]
 - [DWI Rules in Other Countries, U.S. Department of Transportation](#)[↗]
- [Federal Highway Administration](#)[↗]
- [National Transportation Safety Board](#)[↗]
- [Research and Innovative Technology Administration \(RITA\) - Bureau of Transportation Statistics \(BTS\)](#)[↗]

Road Safety Statistics / Databases / Resources

- [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development \(OECD\)](#)[↗]
- [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe \(UNECE\) - Transport Division: Road Safety Forum](#)[↗]
- [European Commission Road Safety](#)[↗]

- [United Nations Economic Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific](#) – Road Accident Statistics and Road Safety
- [International Road Federation](#)
- [Global Road Safety Partnership](#)

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