



*A guide to driving in*

# PORTUGAL

## VISITOR INFORMATION AT A GLANCE

- Portugal is situated on the western side of the Iberian peninsula, in the extreme south-west of Europe.
- Cape St Vincent, in southern Portugal, is the south-western-most point of mainland Europe.
- Portugal shares a 1,214 km-long international border with Spain
- There are more than 2,600 km of motorway and freeway in Portugal.
- The Portuguese word for motorway is 'Auto-estrada'.
- Regional road signs are portrayed in white, with black lettering.
- Toll payments on Portuguese motorways are done electronically using the *Via Verde* system, which has won international accolade for the speed and efficiency of its use.
- The international driving identification code for Portugal is P

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*Please see next page for comprehensive information on specific road rules and TISPOL's advice on safer driving.*

**TISPOL** ■■■■  
European Traffic Police Network



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## Driving facts

The minimum age for driving depends on the vehicle.

- Age 14: a moped capable of no more than 45 km/h
- Age 18: car.
- A recently passed law in Portugal permits holders of 'B' licences (car) to ride motorcycles not exceeding 125 cc.
- Drivers who have held a licence for less than one year are restricted to a maximum speed of 90 km/h (or any lower speed limit).

## Drink-drive limit:

- The limit is 0.5 BAC. Severe penalties are in place for drivers caught above this limit.
- Frequent roadside police alcohol checks are carried out.

## Annual road deaths

- In the last decade, Portugal has cut the number of annual road deaths by half.
- In 1998, Portugal reported 1,865 fatalities on its roads.
- By 2009, this figure had dropped to 874.

## Speed limits

- The motorway speed limit is 120 km/h for cars and motorcyclists. There is also a minimum speed limit of 50 km/h on motorways.
- 90/100 km/h for all cars out of town.
- 50 km/h for all cars in built-up areas

*In Portugal, passengers must exit a vehicle using a nearside door, so as not to step into traffic.*

## Enforcement

- Most traffic fines have to be paid on the spot. Most Police vehicles have a portable credit/debit card machine.
- Failure to pay on the spot will result in document apprehension and eventually the vehicle.
- In case of documents apprehension, the Police Officer will issue an official document stating that your documents are apprehended and allowing you to drive for a few days. In this case, make sure you understand the address where you will pick up your documents and that you are given two documents: the apprehension document and the traffic ticket.

and towns, depending on the area.

## Motorcycles

- The number of motorcycles and mopeds has increased in recent years.
- Since 2004/5, guard rails on all new roads must be fitted with devices to avoid motorcyclists colliding directly with the metal posts.
- The wearing of crash helmets and the use of dipped headlight in daylight are compulsory in Portugal.

## Pedestrians

- It is a rule in Portugal that pedestrians must adapt to the road situation and not jeopardise normal traffic flow.
- If you are stopping to let a passenger out of a car, they must exit through a door on the right of the vehicle, therefore not running the risk of stepping into traffic.

## Pedal cycles

- It is obligatory by law for cyclists to use lights and reflectors in the dark.
- Riding side by side is not allowed, except on special tracks and providing there is no hazard to other traffic.

## Trucks

- Portugal forbids trucks (or other vehicles) from overtaking on the crest of a hill, at pedestrian crossings and where visibility is inadequate.
- Fines for traffic violations are substantial and usually must be paid on the spot.



## Useful phrases

- Call the police!  
**Chame a polícia!**
- How do you say that in English?  
**Como se diz isso em inglês?**
- The car has broken down.  
**O carro está avariado.**
- I have run out of fuel.  
**Estou sem gasolina.**
- I am lost.  
**Estou perdido/perdida.**
- Thank you (very much).  
**(Muito) obrigado/obrigada**

## Emergency contacts

In an emergency, call 112.  
Police website: [www.gnr.pt](http://www.gnr.pt)

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## Useful regulations and advice

### What documents must I be able to produce if requested by the police?

Identification document, Driving licence, Car papers, Car insurance.

### Do I need to carry a reflective jacket in my car? If so, how many?

Yes. The car you drive must have a reflective vest.

### Do I need to carry spare bulbs for the lights on my vehicle? If so, for which lights?

No.

### Do I need to carry spare spectacles if I wear them for driving? Do others in the vehicle with me also need to carry spare spectacles if they wear them for driving?

No.

### Do I need to carry a fire extinguisher?

You are not obliged to.

### Any other requirements I should be aware of regarding the equipment or paperwork I need for a journey in or through your country?

No.

## Winter driving

### What items are required or recommended for journeys made in winter?

If you drive in areas where it's usual to have snow or ice it is strongly recommended to carry snow chains. This is not mandatory.

## Passengers

### Is there a minimum age or height for a passenger to ride in the front seat?

Yes, there is a minimum age of 12 years old.

### What specific regulations are in place for carrying babies and children?

Every passenger under 12 years old or 1.50 m high must be transported using an adequate restraint device. In case of using a baby chair in the passenger front seat, you must install the device facing backwards and turn off the airbag.

### Do you have any specific rules regarding the carriage of dogs and other pets?

No. However it is strongly recommend-

ed to use restraint devices for big dogs and special containers for all the others including cats or other domestic animals.

## Breakdown and collision advice

### Please give brief advice on what I should do if my vehicle breaks down, on the motorway and on other roads.

If your car breaks down, you must park it the safest way you can. Put on your reflective vest and put the car sign at least 30 m before your car and visible at least from a distance of 100 metres away. Place yourself in a safe position far away from the road and the traffic. Call for assistance. The national emergency number is 112.

### Please give clear advice on what I am required to do if I am involved in a collision.

If you are involved in a collision see if there are any injured people, place yourself in a safe position far away from the road and the traffic. Call for immediate assistance. The national

emergency number is 112.

### In what circumstances must I call the police after a collision?

Police must be present after a collision if there are injured people. If not, try to solve things using the appropriate insurance papers and procedure. If you're not able to do it, then call the police. We will help you.

## Local knowledge

### Are there dangers to road users from wildlife? If so, in which parts of your country?

No.

### Which roads do you suggest should be avoided by visitors (because they are very busy at certain times, or they have a high collision rate)?

Try to avoid some of the roads around Lisbon and Porto (major cities in Portugal), at rush hours. There are no special roads to avoid due to the collision rates.

## And finally...

"Portugal's extreme south-western position at the tip of Europe provides this small and unexplored country with many attractive features for those looking for the perfect destination for their holiday. This is your in-depth travel guide to one of Europe's most fantastic destinations.

With nearly 2,000 km of coastline, Portugal's culture, gastronomy, lifestyle and people have always had a close relationship with the sea. Most of the main cities can be found close to the river mouth bathed by the Atlantic Ocean. This provides most of these cities, namely Lisbon and Porto, with breathtaking views over blue waters and particular characteristics you are bound never to forget.

The endless, unexploited beaches, provide ideal spots for a summer holiday. You may lay under the warm sun and refresh at the cool waters of the sea. Try out some water sports like surfing, windsurfing or kite-surfing and end your evening with a cool drink at one of the fantastic beach bars carefully built along the coast.

The most famous location for its beaches is Portugal's most southern region; the Algarve.

Visit the cities in the Alentejo, Portugal's biggest wine region. Take a tour around the vineyards and get to know some of the world's most famous wineries. Cheeses and smoked hams accompany most of the wine tasting and you'll understand the reason for their fame once you try some.

We wish you a wonderful visit to our country, and we ask that you go safe on our roads."



Gabriel Mendes  
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