

Do's and don'ts:

Driving abroad

Motor off in confidence overseas with an expert steer from **John Malathronas**

DO check your licence

You've packed your licence, but are you really ready to hit the road? There are some countries, notably in the Americas and the Gulf, that along with your photocard licence require an additional International Driving Permit (IDP), available from the AA (theaaa.com), the RAC (rac.co.uk) and the Post Office, from £5.50. Several others, including Australia, strongly advise them. If you hold an old British paper licence without a photo, the IDP is required even in places closer to home such as the Czech Republic, Bulgaria or Turkey. Check well ahead of travel whether your planned destination requires an IDP at theaa.com.

DON'T forget the right car kit

Driving your own vehicle? Find out what kit your destination deems compulsory — or face fines. With a GB sticker, fire extinguisher, warning triangle, reflective jacket and first-aid kit, you'll pass muster in most countries, but beware the odd national quirk. Much has been made of a French requirement for drivers to carry breathalysers, yet fines were waived indefinitely in 2013. However, it is true that in Sweden you must carry a shovel in winter, and, in Spain, if your driving licence states that you need to wear glasses, always carry a spare pair. Some items are banned from your car, such as speed-camera detectors (almost everywhere) and alcohol containers with a broken seal in much of North America. Check the guides on driving in Europe at theaa.com; for Australia, see aaa.asn.au, and for the US, go to usa.gov.

DO learn the local road rules

The easiest countries for Brits to drive in, thanks to similar rules and driving culture, are Ireland, the Netherlands and Malta. Beyond that, do some research. Almost all European countries insist on

dipped headlights in poor visibility or in tunnels, while in Poland, Canada and Scandinavia they're compulsory all day long. In the USA and Canada, priority in a four-way intersection depends on the order in which cars have come to a stop at the junction. In many states — but not in New York City — you can turn right on a red light when it is safe to do so. Parking against the direction of the traffic is mostly illegal in the US, and while on a family holiday in Australia, keep in mind that there are regulations about where and how children can sit in the car. Also note that alcohol limits abroad can be lower than Britain's, and in some cases (Czech Republic included), they're zero.

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weeks before travel, on average, is when airfares are at their cheapest. But according to a study by Skyscanner, you should book eight weeks ahead for Hong Kong, six for Sydney and three for Bangkok to snag the best deals

DON'T ignore any mishaps

If you get pulled over, being polite and obviously foreign often gets you out of trouble. But if you do get a ticket, don't try to avoid it: last year, the DVLA provided details of 39,511 UK-registered car drivers to European authorities chasing fines. An infraction overseas won't put points on your licence, unless you're caught in the Irish Republic, where driving disqualifications automatically apply in Britain. You should also let your insurer know of an incident, even if you were driving a rental car. Insurance contracts stipulate that if you don't disclose 'material' facts, you risk having your policy voided. Ouch!



CHINESE FLASHCARDS

£12.95

When it comes to learning a foreign language, Chinese is about as tricky as it gets. But this set of 60 colourful flashcards, which turn the most common characters into easy-to-remember illustrations, will have you ready for that trip to Shanghai in no time. **Verdict: 4/5**

Want a pleasant flight, not just a cheap one? Check out booking website routehappy.com, which compares flights on 'happiness' factors, such as roomier seats, entertainment quality and plane size, as well as price.