

DRIVING

The Brits drive on the left side of the road, in right-hand-drive cars. In actual fact a surprising amount of the rest of the world drives on the other side of the road – 34% by population, and 28% by length of road system. The notable right-hand drive areas are the U.K., Japan, India, parts of Africa, bits of the Caribbean, some chunks of South East Asia and all of Australasia. The only RHD country with a large number of LHD borders (all of them, in fact) is Thailand. The only way to get out of Thailand in a car is via a complex system of jump ramps with clearly posted minimum and maximum approach speeds.

Although horror stories abound, driving in the U.K. just requires a bit of concentration rather than a vast change of mindset. Especially for the first ten minutes. I've tried to separate the following sections by importance – if you are driving whilst reading this, the first one will suffice.

Very Important Things

Drive on the left. When in busy traffic this is remarkably easy to remember, but you also have to do it whilst exiting quiet side roads, or inside a supermarket car park.

Turn left onto roundabouts. British roundabouts work the same as the small number of them that exist in the U.S. (priority is given to those on the roundabout), but they go clockwise. Usually there are big blue arrows to remind you.

Never turn on red, even if there's nobody anywhere near. In Europe, turning on red isn't any different to just blowing a red light.

Cars and pedestrians never have a "go" signal at the same time. Cars behind you will not be expecting you to stop for pedestrians whilst turning right.

Do stop for people at pedestrian crossings, which are lines across the road much like U.S. pedestrian crossings. I say "much like," but actually they're probably identical. Perhaps the American ones are wider to better accommodate a fuller-figured population.

Quite Important Things

On multi-lane roads, the right lanes really are passing lanes in the U.K. If you are caught passing someone on the left it's a "dangerous driving" conviction. Even if there's nobody behind you, you should stay over in the left lane. There are no carpool lanes. There are bus lanes – some of them are full-time; some of them have signs saying when they're operational. Some buses have cameras attached to them to catch you driving in their lanes.



Speed camera

The Brits have speed cameras. They catch you after you've gone past, so as you're coming up on them they just look like a big box on a stick. Speed cameras in England are painted orange – this was because of an unfortunate legal case where the police claimed they weren't simply revenue generators, and were actually placed at accident black-spots in order to slow motorists down to a safer speed. If that were so, went the court case, then they should make them more obvious.

Make sure your passenger is well-trained in looking out for speed cameras, and that you have an established system of screaming and waving when one is sighted. If you are caught by a speed camera you will see two bright flashes half a second or so apart – the system is entirely automatic and so a citation will appear through the mail in due time. If you're driving a rental car, it will appear on the doorstep of your rental company who normally have a well-oiled system for ensuring its successful delivery to your home address. It is the responsibility of the car owner to name the driver who was in the car at

the time – this at least allows you the luxury of spreading the accrued penalty points throughout your immediate family or employees.

The cameras pointing towards you are for the traffic coming the other way, and can't catch you, even if they flash.

Etiquette

In the U.K., flashing your headlights always means "go ahead," and people do it a great deal. If you're letting someone into your lane they may not actually move until you flash the lights. Likewise for letting attractive women out at junctions, merging onto motorways, et cetera.

The fact that everyone is supposed to stay in the slow lane all the time serves to make merging something of a lottery. If you're coming in from an on-ramp, people don't tend to make a lot of room for you and sometimes you actually find yourself having to stop at the end of the ramp.

If you're pulling into a two-lane road from a side road, Brits tend to wait for both lanes to be clear, rather than just the closest one (bear in mind that everyone will generally be in that lane).

Drink-Driving

Drink-driving is not as common in the U.K. as it is in the U.S., and people are pulled over more often. The police don't need to have any reason to pull you over, so they will often just pick up random vehicles and breathalyse the drivers (field sobriety tests are not used in the U.K.). As in most places, the further you get into the country the more likely you are to get away with drink driving.

Speeding



30mph Speed Limit

narrow that they can only permit places" to allow passing. Driving whilst you may not be breaking the too fast for the conditions." In caught speeding in heavily from speeding fines do not go into they tend not to be quite so devious

There are some 40 or 50 mph limits around the place but they're clearly signed. Most of the speed cameras are in 30 mph or 40 mph areas but there are a couple on the nice fast 60 mph roads. There are currently none on motorways, but there are a lot more police cars on motorways so it's best not to go much above 85 mph.

The Brits measure in miles - the speed limit is 30 mph in town (the sort of places where there would be a 25/35 limit in the U.S.), 60 mph on single-carriageway roads and 70 mph on dual-carriageway roads. Normally the speed limits are denoted by round red-rimmed signs with numbers in them, but most of the 70 mph limits are instead denoted by a "national speed limit applies" sign, which is a white circle with a black line through it. This was presumably done in order to make the motorway limit an easy one to change, although in reality it's never changed since its inception in 1965.

The speed limit on single carriageway roads without lighting (most country roads) is 60 mph. For some roads this seems very fast indeed, and the limit technically applies even to roads so one car down them at a time and have "passing down these roads at 60 mph is great fun, but speed limit you may still be collared for "driving reality, though, you are much more likely to get populated areas or motorways. Funds collecting regional county coffers in the U.K., and as such about finding offenders.



"National Speed Limit Applies"

Cheap Fuel

After some driving around the place you're eventually going to have to fill up with fuel. At this point you've probably been in the U.K. for a day or two, and therefore have heard Brits whimpering on and on about how expensive petrol is. You may be surprised, therefore, to note as you pull into the petrol station that fuel appears to be significantly cheaper than it is in the U.S. Goddamned Brits. All they do is moan about things constantly. And why does it rain all the time? You should have listened to your boss and gone to Italy after all. At least they have edible food. As you squeeze the pump handle and watch the numbers fly, you will quickly realise that in the U.K. fuel is priced by the litre, and not by the gallon at all. There are roughly four litres in a U.S. gallon.