

# Going to Europe

## Contents

Introduction	Other travel regulations
Documentation	Contingency Planning
Own Account Certificate – EU only	Hints on road travel abroad
Services operated under Waybills	Paying someone else to do the work
Waybills	Appendix 1
The EU Journey Form (Waybill)	Appendix 2
Vehicle documentation	Continental Breakdown Insurance
Driver documentation	

## Introduction

Strict regulations govern the use of minibuses (and buses and coaches) on international journeys. This leaflet describes the major regulations and factors to take into account, and where to get further advice and information.

**There are significant legal difficulties for trips abroad in community minibuses. A decision to go ahead with a trip should not be taken until the body responsible for the trip has assessed all the legal and safety risks and made arrangements accordingly.**

Under UK and EU regulations, a minibus is a vehicle constructed and adapted to carry more than eight but not more than sixteen passengers (in addition to the driver). If it is being used on journeys outside the UK to or from Europe (including the Republic of Ireland), it comes within the scope of rules governing international bus and coach journeys, which apply to all minibuses, whether private, Permit minibuses (Section 19 or S10B in Northern Ireland), Community Buses (Section 22), or PSV's.

If you have removed seats from your vehicle for any reason and you have less than 8 seats left you are nevertheless still required to observe the requirements outlined below. The DfT has confirmed that temporary reductions in seating do not alter the vehicle's status as a minibus, and will not provide a defence against prosecution on driver licensing, tachograph or other offences.

If you decide to remove seats on a permanent basis, you must inform your insurance company, the DVLA and remove any signwriting, which might indicate a higher seating capacity. You will no longer be able to operate under a minibus permit on your return to the UK. Finally, seating and seat belt requirements for such vehicles fall into a different class, and failure to meet the required (M1) standards is an offence.

## Documentation

Either a Waybill or Own Account Certificate must be carried if the vehicle has more than eight passenger seats, regardless of how many passengers are being carried and irrespective of whether it is operating for "hire or reward".

In order to ascertain which document is required there are 4 main questions:

- i. *Is the organisation a non-profit-Making body?*
- ii. *Do you own (or have on long-term lease) your own vehicle?*
- iii. *Is the journey within the EU?*

European Union:

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

- iv. *Will the journey last less than 90 days?*

If yes is answered to all these questions an Own Account Certificate should be used. If not the journey is probably an Occasional Services and a Waybill is required.

### Own Account Certificate – EU only

International journeys carried out within the EU by a non-profit making body for the transport of its members in connection with its social objectives or by a body for its own employees fall within the category of Own Account Transport Operations. Provided that the vehicle used is the property of the operator, such journeys can be carried out under an Own Account Certificate. (This can cover Local Authorities, voluntary organisations, and education establishments). These certificates are available from the International Road Freight Office, using Form GC 278. They now cost £5 in respect of each full year of validity, up to a maximum of 5 years).

An Own Account Certificate cannot be issued for a vehicle hired from a commercial self-drive hire company, nor a vehicle which has been borrowed from another organisation. In order for a community group to qualify for an Own Account Certificate they must either:

- i) Be the owner or full-time operator of the vehicle;  
Or
- ii) Be a fully paid up voting member of a not-for-profit organisation that does own the minibus, such as a community transport group, and carry a certificate to prove it. As a member of the organisation they should not be paying hire charges, so the charges made for the trip should be calculated on an actual cost basis.

- iii) The transport activity is only an ancillary activity for the undertaking body.

This requirement of the 'On Account Certificate' can easily be met by most voluntary sector organisations such as: scouts, churches, and schools. These organisations would also have to own their own vehicle, or lease it on a long-term basis, to qualify for a certificate in their own right.

However, community transport operators may have to think carefully about what their main purpose is in operating transport. If they are a registered charity then it is likely that the Memorandum and Articles of Association will determine the objects of the organisation to be "the relief of age, sickness or disability or poverty or because of the lack of availability of safe and adequate public services by the provision of transport". This then means that the operation of transport is a means to achieve the main purpose of the organisation. It is then reasonable to conclude that the transport activity is only an ancillary activity for the undertaking. The application form for Own Account Certificates can be signed on this basis.

A community transport organisation seeking to obtain an Own Account Certificate for one of its vehicles may well be required to produce proof that it is a not-for-profit organisation - Charity Registration for example.

The system of Own Account Certificates does not extend beyond the EU. Trips must not last longer than 90 days.

**Operators should note that the Own Account Certificate has no bearing on the driver licensing difficulties described further on.**

For further guidance about Own Account Certificates contact the International Road Freight Office (IRFO) in Cambridge on 01223 531030.

## **Services operated under Waybills**

These rules vary according to the type of "service" being operated and the international agreements applicable to countries through which it runs. A standard definition of "service" is now in use throughout Europe. The three main categories are Regular, Cabotage and Occasional:

- i) Regular Services

These are services provided for the general carriage of passengers at specified intervals along specific routes with predetermined stopping places.

- ii) Cabotage

This is where an operator temporarily establishes itself abroad to undertake local work in the country concerned.

- iii) Occasional Services

These are excursions, "closed-door tours" and private hire trips. In particular, where the service is initiated by the customer or the carrier. This is the category that is best

suited to Community Transport operators.

The Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) will sell Waybills to Section 19 Permit operators however care needs to be taken if stopped in an EU country as groups may be asked for their Community Licence (PSV 'O' Licence). Groups would need to explain that they operate under Section 19 Permit legislation in the UK and that they did not need a Community Licence.

**The rest of the information concerning Waybills will only cover the operation of Occasional Services.**

Regular or Cabotage services will almost certainly require an international Operators Licence.

The holder of a full PSV Operator's Licence in the UK, will need to apply for an international operator's licence (Community Licence) from their local Traffic Area Office in order to operate abroad. They will also require a suitably qualified International CPC holder.

[Back up](#)

## Waybills

If you do not own the vehicle (as described in Section 2), or are going outside of the EU, then you will require a document known as a Waybill (sometimes known as a Journey Form or Carnet).

The top copy of the Waybill must be retained by the operator for 12 months after the date of operation.

There are three different types of Waybill depending on which country you are going to. These are the EU Waybill, the Interbus Waybill, and the ASOR Waybill.

(i) The EU Waybill is accepted in all the countries of the European Union: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Eire, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.

Additionally, although not in the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland accept the EU Waybill.

(ii) Countries currently accepting Waybills under the Interbus Agreement (2003): Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania.

(iii) Those countries for which the CPT currently recommends using documentation under the ASOR agreement: Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldova, Russia, Turkey.\*

\*The Interbus Agreement included Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldova and Turkey but thus far the agreement has not been implemented in these countries.

(iv) If you are travelling to countries other than in the above lists, the Community Transport Association advises contacting the CPT.

## The EU Journey Form (Waybill)

Before the start of each international journey a waybill for each vehicle must be completed, in duplicate, by the person responsible for the operation of the service. A waybill must be carried if the vehicle has more than eight passenger seats, regardless of how many passengers are being carried and irrespective of whether it is operating for "hire or reward". A waybill is therefore required for a private minibus going abroad.

An international service is subject to European Union (EU) regulations, provided it both starts and finishes in an EU Member State. EU rules apply to any vehicle carrying passengers provided that:

- i) the vehicle used is registered in an EU member state;
- ii) the vehicle departs from an EU member state and the destination is in the same or another member state. On an Occasional Service the destination is the country of departure.

The EU waybill is available in books of 25 duplicate copies from the CPT, price £15.28, or £6.46 (including VAT) for a single waybill. The book is valid for five years and the waybill can be used for any vehicle operated by the person to whom the book is issued. The book is not transferable. No passenger list is required, although you need to state the number of people in the group travelling (excluding the driver). The top copy must then be detached from the book and be carried by the driver on the vehicle throughout the journey. The vehicle is then exempt from domestic operator licensing laws in other EU countries. Drivers may be required to produce a properly completed waybill at any time during the journey, but particularly at frontier crossing points. It should be noted that the international journey commences, for waybill, hours and records purposes, when the journey starts in the UK; not when it leaves UK territory.

Operating an Occasional Service without a properly completed waybill is an offence and can lead to substantial on-the-spot fines, which if you cannot pay, could mean your vehicle being impounded.

Occasional Services generally transport the same group of people to and from another EU Member Country. However, additional passengers may be picked up or dropped off 'en route', if so detailed on the waybill by prior agreement. If you are travelling abroad on an exchange visit and wish to be joined by your hosts on tours entirely within the other country, this information should be entered in advance, on the waybill and a copy of the agreement/itinerary should be available.

If you are travelling abroad regularly, you may be deemed to be offering "package travel", in which case you are recommended to obtain the Department of Trade and Industry's guidance to Package Travel, Package Holidays and Tours Regulations.

### The Interbus and ASOR Waybills

The Interbus Agreement was signed in 2003 creating an agreement by various

countries which would accept a new form of waybill. These countries are listed under Waybills.

There is also an old-style waybill (in operation before 1 March 1994) which still applies to non-EU countries that are party to the ASOR agreement again see list under Waybills.

Interbus and ASOR waybills cost £12.93 for a book or £6.46 for a single copy and you will also need to supply a passenger list. Please contact the CTA Advice Service for information on particular countries outside the EU.

Each vehicle operating an Occasional Service in an ASOR country must also carry a Model Control Document. This is a set of reusable translations of the instructional sheets of the book of waybills (available from the CPT, price £4.30).

[Back up](#)

## Vehicle documentation

As well as the Waybill or Own Account Certificate (and Model Control Documents if necessary), the driver should make sure the following documents are available for inspection at all times:

- ✓ Vehicle registration document
- ✓ Current MOT Certificate
- ✓ Insurance certificate
- ✓ European Accident Form (available from your insurance broker)
- ✓ GB Plate
- ✓ Green card (international motor insurance certificate)

### Vehicle Registration Document

This must be available for inspection at all times (carry the original, not a photocopy). If the vehicle is hired, you will not have this book and instead you should always carry the hire form that you signed when you collected the vehicle from the hire company.

### MOT Certificate

A copy of the current test certificate is a requirement in some countries, and recommended in others.

### Motor insurance and the Green Card

In most countries insurance against third party risks is compulsory. Domestic motor insurance policies issued in the UK automatically provide UK levels of third part cover only in EU member states. Within the EU a Green Card, although advisable, is not strictly necessary. But outside the EU a Green card should certainly be carried. Apply for a Green Card to your insurance company at least one month before departure. You should also carry your UK Insurance Certificate. If you wish to have comprehensive cover whilst abroad, this will have to be arranged in advance with your insurers.

NB. Insurance cover is dependent on the driver holding current entitlement for the vehicle.

### The European Accident Form

Like the Green card, this is not essential but is strongly recommended as a recognised form of suitable documentation in the event of an accident. Your insurer should provide the form.

### GB Plate

A national identifier, or GB plate, must be displayed when travelling abroad. The GB plate must be of the approved oval type with black letters on a white background and should be displayed at the rear left-hand side of the vehicle. However an increasing number of vehicles have the newer style Euro-plates. These have a national identifier incorporated on the left-hand side of the number plate and may be used instead of a separate and larger GB sign.

[Back up](#)

## Driver documentation

The driver should have the following documents available for inspection at all times:

- ✓ Current driving licence with appropriate entitlement
- ✓ International Driving Permit or translation of licence (for certain countries)
- ✓ Full passport
- ✓ Letter of authority to drive the vehicle
- ✓ Certificate of experience (old style driving licences only) - INTP5
- ✓ Tachograph charts

### Current Driving Licence with Appropriate Entitlement

To drive a minibus abroad drivers must hold a current driving licence, and be at least 21 years of age. However, there are specific problems for most UK drivers once they take a minibus abroad.

In the rest of the EU it is standard for all minibus drivers to take a further test to drive minibuses. This is known as a PCV (Passenger Carrying Vehicle) test. Exemptions from this test in the UK do not apply in the EU. The difficulties for drivers will depend on when the driver passed his/her test and on whether the trip is for "hire or reward".

### Drivers who took their driving test before January 1<sup>st</sup> 1997

These drivers automatically received category D1 (minibus) entitlement, but with a restriction (coded 1 or 101), that allowed them to drive a minibus, but not "for hire or reward". (Drivers with licences issued before 1990 may only have the letters A and E on their licence; A entitlement includes restricted D1, but see below.)

In the UK, there is a system of permits (Sections 19 and 22 in Great Britain; Section 10B in N Ireland) which overrides the restriction, and does in fact allow these drivers

to operate for hire and reward, providing no profit is made. **These permits have no validity outside the UK. The driver is therefore qualified purely in terms of what is on his/her licence document.**

#### Hire or Reward

"Hire or Reward" embraces **any** payment (in money or kind), which gives a person a right, or expectation, to be carried regardless of whether a profit is made or not. This payment may be a direct payment made by the person themselves, or on their behalf - such as a fare, a grant or even a donation to the operator. It may include other things in addition to the cost of travel - e.g. membership fees, grants, payments for access to specific events etc.

**This definition covers the majority of trips by schools, colleges, community and sports groups. In such cases, therefore, the driver(s) will need to take a second driving test on a minibus, known as a PCV or Passenger Carrying Vehicle test, in order to remove the restriction on their D1 entitlement.** The cost of PCV tests can be in excess of £900, and since two drivers may be required, trip organisers may have to consider a number of alternatives:

- Using one or more vehicles with less than 9 passenger seats (excluding the driver)
- Finding existing PCV drivers to participate on the trip
- Using public transport in the country (-ies) concerned
- Cancelling the trip

#### Drivers who took their driving test after December 31<sup>st</sup> 1996

On the January 1<sup>st</sup> 1997 new driver licensing rules came into force. Drivers who have passed their first test from that date no longer automatically receive minibus Category D1 (restricted) on their licence. Exemptions that exist in this country to allow these new drivers to drive minibuses in limited circumstances do not apply outside the UK. **To drive a minibus abroad "new" drivers must sit a PCV test for either Category D (vehicles having *more* than 16 passengers seats, excluding the driver) or D1 (vehicles having *no more* than 16 passenger seats, excluding the driver).**

#### Photocard licences

Photocard licences are being introduced for all new drivers. Existing drivers can expect to be issued this type of licence, on change of name, address or licence details.

#### Minibuses not operating for hire or reward

If the minibus is genuinely not being used for hire or reward, your D1 (restricted) licence category should continue to be accepted at face value during temporary visits to other EU/EEA\* countries.

However, this will only apply in a limited number of situations, for example:

- School trips where the school carries the costs of the whole trip (except for fee-paying schools or colleges)
- Family journeys where no money changes hands
- Local authority (or other public body) trips where the authority carries all of the costs of the visit
- Employee transport, if the costs are not charged to the employees, the customer(s) or a third party

It could be argued that informal groups, which share the total cost of the journey between all the passengers including the driver, are also not for "hire or reward". Ultimately, this will be subject to the decision of local courts in Europe, which may have trouble in interpreting a concept defined in British law (Section 1 of the Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981). If in any doubt, you are advised to take legal advice.

\*EEA (European Economic Area) countries are the EU states plus Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

### International Driving Permit (IDP)

Your UK driving licence is valid for driving in EU/EEA countries. However in some countries (Belarus, Bulgaria, Ukraine and the Russian Federation) you will need, in addition to a valid UK licence, an International Driving Permit (IDP), which is valid for one year. If you hold an old-style green UK licence, an IDP may be required for travel, and in some countries an old style green licence is accepted only if it is accompanied by an identity document bearing a photograph, e.g. Passport. IDP's can be obtained from the RAC, AA, RSAC and NBRC. To obtain an IDP, a driver must show a full licence (or prove that one is held), provide a passport-style photograph, and pay a fee. If in doubt as to whether your UK licence will be valid abroad, contact the relevant Embassy or Tourist Office.

### Full Passport

This must be a "full" valid passport which will not expire whilst the journey is being undertaken. Some countries will require a passport with at least 3 months validity.

### Permission to Drive

The driver needs permission to drive the vehicle, when the name and address on the vehicle registration document is not their own. A letter, on the organisation's letterhead, is required which gives the driver permission to drive the vehicle. The AA and RAC can provide *A Vehicle on Hire Certificate* (VE103) if you plan to take a hired or leased vehicle abroad.

### Certificate of Experience

As well as being 21 years old or over, drivers intending to visit other EU countries should have at least one year's experience of driving a minibus, as required by EU Regulation 3820/85. Drivers in possession of a driving licence issued before 1 June 1990 (old style green or pink licence) should obtain a certificate INTP 5 from their local Traffic Area Office to certify this (see paragraph 9 D). Alternatively if the driver does not have a year's experience of driving minibuses, a year's experience of

driving a goods vehicle over 3.5 tonnes is acceptable.

## Tachographs

All drivers of Occasional Services are required to use a tachograph (a device which records vehicle speed and distance against time) outside the UK. The tachograph must be used from the start of the journey in the UK. EU regulations require a tachograph to be installed for international journeys wholly within member states on all minibuses or coaches with nine or more passenger seats overall.

### **Exemption UK & Eire:**

Under an agreement between the UK and Eire, tachographs are **not** required on minibuses operating between these two states. This exemption covers all minibuses, whether operating for hire or reward or not. This exemption **does not** extend to driver licensing. Drivers of minibuses operating for hire or reward will still require unrestricted (PCV) D1 entitlement.

If the driver has never used a tachograph, they are strongly advised to practice using one before they go abroad. Familiarisation routines should include switching it to the correct position, understanding the symbols and how to complete the tachograph chart, what to do if you make a mistake, and what to do if more than one person is driving.

It is the responsibility of both drivers and employers to ensure that they comply with the drivers' hours and tachograph rules. Records for European driving must be kept for 2 years. These rules are fully explained in booklet PSV 375 Drivers' Hours and Tachograph Rules for Road Passenger Vehicles in the UK and Europe, available from the CTA, your local Traffic Area Office, or [here](#).

The regulations are laid down in EU law (EC 3820/85 and 3821/85). For drivers of Occasional Services of a vehicle with more than eight passenger seats overall, the EU regulations are enforced on international journeys wholly within the EU Member States.

## Driving and Rest Limits, and Penalties for Non-compliance

The following is a summary of the driving and rest limits:

- i) Daily driving: maximum 9 hours, 10 hours twice a week;
- ii) Fortnightly driving: maximum 90 hours in a fortnight; a weekly rest period must be taken after not more than 6 daily driving periods;
- iii) Maximum period of driving: 4.5 hours;
- iv) Breaks from driving: minimum 45 minutes, after 4.5 hours driving, unless a rest period is begun; can split the 45 minutes into breaks which must be a minimum of 15 minutes, and taken during the driving period so that they add up to 45 minutes;
- v) Daily rest: minimum 11 consecutive hours, reducible to 9 hours not more than three times a week - compensation must be given before the end of following week; alternatively, 12 hours if split into 2 or 3 periods (one of which must provide at least 8 hours of continuous rest);
- vi) Weekly rest: minimum of 45 hours reducible to 36 hours at base or 24 hours

elsewhere; reductions must be compensated by an equivalent period of rest taken before the end of the third week following the week concerned and attached to a daily or weekly rest period.

There are severe fines for drivers' hours and records offences. This applies both to the driver and to anyone whose orders the driver was following. In the case of hours' offences, the law protects from conviction a driver who has broken the rules through unavoidable delay in the completion of a journey arising out of unforeseeable circumstances, provided these are recorded on the tachograph chart at the time. These rules are usually interpreted strictly.

#### Other documentation

Everyone, including the driver, will need:

- ✓ Passport;
- ✓ The E111 system was replaced in 2006 by the EHIC (European Health Insurance Card). All E111 forms issued before 19/08/04 are no longer valid. The new form is available from Post Offices in the UK, or [here](#). On the new application, a request can be made to automatically send the EHIC when it comes into force.

[Back up](#)

## Other travel regulations

### Speed Limits

A summary of speed limits governing minibuses on roads throughout Europe is in Appendix 1. It is important to note that the limit on many foreign motorways is lower than in Britain. Towing a trailer will reduce the maximum speed limit in most countries.

### Lights

Left-dipping headlights are not permitted abroad. There are a variety of adaptors you can use: headlamp-beam deflectors may do the job adequately or you may need to change the bulbs of the headlamp units.

In Sweden, Finland outside towns, and Norway it is a legal requirement to keep dipped lights on throughout the day.

Sidelights at night or during bad daytime visibility are not regarded as sufficient in several countries.

### First Aid Kit

A First Aid Kit is required in Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland Turkey and Ukraine. A British standard one is acceptable.

## **Warning Triangle**

A Warning Triangle is compulsory. In Spain, 2 triangles must be carried.

## **Tyres**

The minimum depth of tread is 1.6 mm in Austria, Greece, Switzerland and Portugal (for light vehicles). The CTA recommends that a minibus should not leave the UK with a tread depth of less than 2mm.

## **Seat Belts**

Seat belts must be worn by front seat passengers, and should be worn elsewhere in the vehicle where fitted.

## **Snow Chains**

Snow chains must be carried during winter months in Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Switzerland, Norway (vehicles over 3.5t GVW), Sweden, Finland and Turkey. They may also be required under certain conditions in France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain.

## **Children in Front Seats**

Regulations vary between countries, but most do not permit children under 12 to sit in the front passenger seats.

## **Alcohol and Tobacco**

Permissible levels of alcohol in the driver's bloodstream vary throughout Europe. Several countries - Norway, Finland, Greece, Portugal - have a limit of 0.5 ml, lower than Britain's 0.8 ml. In Sweden the limit is lower still, at 0.2ml, and in Turkey it is banned entirely. In Norway drivers may not smoke and drive.

## **Fire Extinguishers**

Fire extinguishers are required in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey and Ukraine (and are mandatory in the UK).

## **Mud-flaps**

Mud-flaps are useful, especially in Norway and Sweden.

## Contingency Planning

But perhaps the most important consideration if you are taking a minibus abroad is to ask yourself what you would do if the vehicle was stranded abroad? There are two dimensions to the problem:

- i) Getting the passengers back - if they are all young, active and without too much luggage, then it is possibly going to add to the fun, but if they are not fully mobile...
- ii) Getting the vehicle back - getting the repairs done, sorting out a legal dispute, going to collect the vehicle later - all takes time and extra energy. What happens to the people who are booked in to use your minibus when it was first due back?

Of course, there are specialised insurance packages from the major motoring and breakdown organisations which offer a comprehensive overseas motoring service providing emergency assistance, travel insurance and emergency credit facilities. These can certainly take quite a lot of the pain and the strain - and in particular they can cover the potential extra costs. Emergency assistance can cover breakdowns and accidents, towing, storage, and recovery of the immobile vehicle to your home, a chauffeur if the driver is ill, location and despatch of spare parts, and other services (see appendix 2)

Nevertheless they cannot magic up a replacement minibus to replace yours if it is out of action so you could still face very considerable inconvenience. In all cases, it is wise to make sure that your cover is extended beyond the projected return date in case of delay. If your vehicle is still under warranty, check whether the breakdown cover that often accompanies such warranties applies abroad. The vehicle manufacturer may also be able to supply a directory of relevant garages or service agents in the countries to which you are travelling.

Contact back at base

If you decide to go ahead, make sure that someone back home knows all the details of the journey, the passengers, the vehicle, and so on, and that the driver and trip organiser has their work and home telephone numbers (and fax number, if possible) in case there are problems.

[Back up](#)

## Hints on road travel abroad

Cash payments

Tolls are common on the European mainland on motorways and bridges, and you must have the relevant currency available.

Austria	see below
Croatia	tolls on motorways ( <a href="#">link</a> )
Czech Republic	disc for most motorways and dual carriageways
France	tolls on most motorways ( <a href="#">link</a> )

Greece	tolls on motorways
Hungary	tolls on motorways ( <a href="#">link</a> )
Italy	tolls on motorways & frontier tunnels ( <a href="#">link</a> )
Norway	tolls on some roads
Portugal	tolls on some motorways ( <a href="#">link</a> )
Slovakia	disc for motorways required
Slovenia	tolls on some motorways ( <a href="#">link</a> )
Spain	tolls on motorways ( <a href="#">link</a> )
Switzerland	"heavy vehicle fee" payable at border, includes motorways

A [GO-Box](#) must be displayed on all vehicles using certain motorways in Austria.

Croatia, Denmark and Germany charge coaches VAT at their borders based on the kilometres travelled.

Vehicles entering Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Poland, Romania, Slovakia will have to pay a charge at the border. This may involve the display of a vignette (disc) in the windscreen.

On-the-spot fines have to be paid for motoring offences (such as speeding or breach of waybill regulations) in most European countries. These fines can be quite substantial – a minibus travelling to, from or through Spain without the appropriate authorisation may be fined up to €2400.

### Driving is different abroad!

It is important for the driver(s) to understand the different driving rules of the countries being visited. Apart from the obvious (driving on the right), less obvious differences abound, including altered priority at roundabouts, giving way to trams and buses, priority to the right unless a junction is marked with a yellow diamond sign, compulsory requirements in the event of a breakdown or accident, and so on. It is worth making an effort to find out about these from guidebooks. Tourist offices in the UK should be able to assist.

### Public Holidays

On public holidays, roads can be crowded, and garages and shops can be shut. It is worth checking out the dates in advance. The Tourist Offices in London can tell you the dates of national holidays for subsequent years.

### Spares

Spares are not always easy to come by (and can be expensive), so it is worth taking a supply of the more obvious spares with you, such as (and where applicable):

- ✓ pair of windscreen wipers
- ✓ a length of electrical cable
- ✓ an inner tube
- ✓ a tin of gasket-sealing compound

- ✓ a roll of insulating tape or other adhesive tape
- ✓ a car compass
- ✓ an emergency lamp (flasher unit -compulsory in Austria)
- ✓ a tin of radiator-sealing compound
- ✓ a tyre pressure gauge
- ✓ a hose
- ✓ a fan belt
- ✓ bulbs (compulsory in Austria)
- ✓ fuses
- ✓ a distributor cap
- ✓ fuel-pump kit.

[Back up](#)

## Paying someone else to do the work

When all is said and done, you may decide that doing it in your own minibus is not worth the work - and the potential work - that is involved. There are two obvious alternatives:

- a) Self-drive car hire from a continental town could work out simpler and cheaper than taking a British minibus overseas, especially in the peak season when ferry charges are high. Most travel agents or international hire companies like Hertz or Europcar can give you quotations.
- b) Other coach operators already operate in the EU, and it could well be worth checking the prices. Many major coach operators either have private hire facilities or operate tailor-made excursions.

Take care to select a coach company that has the professional back-up and experience to deal with problems which may occur abroad. Take out insurance cover protecting the group from any failure on the part of the coach company to fulfil its contract.

"Getting Around by Bus and Coach: A Guide for People with Disabilities", a guidebook detailing companies which offer vehicles made accessible for people with disabilities, is available free from the CPT. Most direct scheduled services depart from London's Victoria Coach Station, which is itself connected to a domestic network of over 1500 destinations throughout the UK.

[Back up](#)

## **Further information & useful addresses**

Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) [CPT](#)

Imperial House

15 – 19 Kingsway

LONDON

WC2B 6UN

Tel: 020 7240 3131

Fax: 020 7240 6565

Note: the CPT was previously known as the Bus and Coach Council.

International Road Freight Office (IRFO)

VOSA Eastern Area Traffic Office

1st Floor City House

126–130 Hills Road

Cambridge CB2 1NP

Tel: 01223 531030

Fax: 01223 309684

Driving licence information:

Customer Enquiries (Drivers)

DVLA

Swansea

SA6 7JL

Tel: 0870 240 0009

Fax: 01792 783071

Email: [drivers.dvla@gtnet.gov.uk](mailto:drivers.dvla@gtnet.gov.uk)

Traffic Area Offices, DFT

Eastern 0870 606 0440

01223 309 684 (Fax)

North 0870 606 0440

Eastern & 0113 249 8142 (Fax)

North

Western

South 0870 606 0440

Eastern & 01323 726679 (Fax)

London

Wales 0870 606 0440

0121 456 4250 (Fax)

Midland 0870 606 0440

0121 456 4250 (Fax)

**Western** 0870 606 0440

0117 929 8352(Fax)

Scottish 0870 606 0440

0137 229 0682 (Fax)

[Back up](#)

## Appendix 1

### Speed limits governing minibuses on roads throughout Europe

COUNTRY	SPEED (KILOMETRES PER HOUR)			
	Built-up Areas	Other Roads	Dual-carriageway	Motorway
Andorra	50	90	90	-
Austria	50	80	80	100
Belarus	50	75	90	90
Belgium	50	75	90	90
Bulgaria	50	80	80	100
Croatia	50	80	100	130
Czech Republic	50	90	90	130
Denmark	50	80	80	80
Estonia	50	90	90	90
Finland	50	80	80	80
France	50	90	90	90/80/50 <sup>1</sup>
Germany	50/30 <sup>2</sup>	80/50 <sup>1</sup>	80/50 <sup>1</sup>	80/50 <sup>1</sup>
Greece	50	80	90	90
Hungary	50	70	70	80
Ireland	50	80	80	90
Italy	50	80	80	100
Latvia	50	90	90	90
Lithuania	50	70	70	90
Luxembourg	50	75	75	90
Netherlands	50	80	80	80
Norway	50	80	80	80
Poland	60	70	80	80
Portugal	50	70	90	90
Romania	50	80	90	110
Russian Federation	60	90	90	90

<sup>1</sup> France – speed reduced to 80 kph in wet weather and 50 kph in poor visibility (less than 50 metres).

<sup>2</sup> Germany – 30 kph in local residential areas (sign – blue square with children shown playing ball).

Slovakia	60	90	110	110
Slovenia	50	80	100	100
Spain	50	80	90	100
Sweden	50	70	90	90
Switzerland	50	80	80	100
Turkey	50	90	90	90
Ukraine	60	70	70	90

[Back up](#)

## **Appendix 2**

### **Continental Breakdown Insurance**

Continental breakdown is available from 2 major sources:

- From motoring and breakdown associations and services
- As an inclusive part of your existing minibus policy.

Quotes from motoring and breakdown associations are usually given on an individual basis and are dependent on the age and type of vehicle, number of passengers, duration and destination of travel. However the range and scope of services and benefits available can differ from policy to policy. The following list, though not exhaustive, highlights some of the key points to consider.

#### **1. Insuring your vehicle**

- Is my vehicle too old – some policies have a maximum limit
- Are there any weight, height, width, and length limits imposed?
- How many passengers can I carry?
- How long will the cover allow me to stay abroad?
- Will the cover be valid for all the countries I pass through/visit?

#### **2. What benefits are included/excluded**

- Roadside assistance & emergency repairs
- Towing to a garage for repairs
- Parts and labour costs
- Dispatch of spares from UK
- Maximum time/labour costs – Is there a limit?

#### **3. Recovery to the UK**

- Are there any weight, height, width, and length limits imposed?
- Will all the passengers and the driver be repatriated?
- If not what is the cost of full passenger insurance?
- Will vehicle be recovered to its home base?

#### **4. Cost of onward/return travel**

- Is the cost of onward/return travel included?
- Does this include ferry fares?
- Are emergency accommodation charges included?
- Are there limits to emergency accommodation charges – per person/per day/in total?

#### **5. Legal/Accident/Emergency Protection**

- Is legal protection/advice/assistance included?

- What level (£000) does this cover extend to?
- Does it include public and personal liability?
- In the event of an accident/emergency – is there 24-hour English-speaking assistance available?

### **Insurance via existing policies**

Some UK policies automatically include cover for EU countries. Groups, who wish to travel out with the EU, will have to ensure they have the relevant cover for that part of the journey.

#### **Discounts**

The AA and RAC offer discounts to members. Green Flag offers ferry discounts, as do some of the major insurance groups.

### **Contact Phone Numbers**

#### Motoring/Breakdown Associations:

[AA](#) 0800 085 2721

[RAC](#) 0800 731 7090

[Green Flag](#) 0845 246 1557

[Back up](#)

## About the Community Transport Association

The CTA is a rapidly growing national charity giving voice and providing leadership, learning and enterprise support to member organisations, which are delivering innovative transport solutions to achieve social change. CTA UK promotes excellence through providing training, publications, advice and information on voluntary, accessible and community transport.

Voluntary and community transport exists to meet the travel and social needs of people to whom these would otherwise be denied, providing accessible and affordable transport to achieve social inclusion.

Membership of the Community Transport Association is open to individuals, community and other voluntary groups, local authorities and other statutory bodies. Full details available on the CTA website.

The CTA provides training on many subjects, either as pre-booked training days, or tailor-made to suit your organisation. CTA organises MiDAS Training, which includes Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme, Passenger Assistant Training and Car & MPV Driver Training. CTA has introduced CommunityDriver - The minibus driving test solution for non-professional drivers, i.e. teachers & youth workers, who needs to undertake their PCV D1 driving entitlement.

If you would like any addition information, please contact us at:

Community Transport Association  
Highbank, Halton Street, Hyde, SK14 2NY  
Phone: 0161 351 1475  
Fax: 0161 351 7221  
Email: [info@ctauk.org](mailto:info@ctauk.org)

## About the Community Transport Association's Advice Service

The CTA's Advice & Information Service is funded by the Department for Transport, the Department for Regional Development (Northern Ireland), the National Assembly for Wales and the Scottish Government. The Service offers information and support on any aspect of non-profit transport operations.

## CTA Advice & Information Service Contact numbers

UK Advice Line  
Phone: 0845 1306195  
Email: [AdviceUK@ctauk.org](mailto:AdviceUK@ctauk.org)

Northern Ireland Advice Line  
Phone: 028 9094 1661  
Email: [AdviceNI@ctauk.org](mailto:AdviceNI@ctauk.org)

Web page: [www.ctauk.org](http://www.ctauk.org)

### Disclaimer

The Community Transport Association has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this leaflet, but it should be noted that this is only a guide, and should be treated as such.

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