

Driving in Ireland

Motorists drive on the left side of the road in Ireland. Everyone in a car must use a seatbelt – both front and back. The speed limit is usually 50 kilometres per hour (50 kph) in cities, towns, villages and other built up areas unless otherwise stated. Speed limits on roads outside built up areas are generally 80 kph, 100 kph or 120 kph (for motorways). Main roads are patrolled by marked and unmarked police cars, which do speed checks. Drivers caught speeding must pay a fine and receive penalty points on their driving licence (12 penalty points means you lose your licence). It is illegal to drive with a blood alcohol level of over 80 milligrams per ml in Ireland. There is no “safe” amount which you can drink – some people may be under the limit with one drink, others are not. It is also illegal to use a mobile phone while driving. Detailed information on driving rules, road signs, etc. can be found in the book “Rules of the Road”, available in libraries and bookshops. Before you drive in Ireland, both you and your vehicle must meet specific requirements. Firstly, you must have a valid driving licence, which is always with you when driving. Your vehicle must be adequately insured, taxed and roadworthy.

Driving Licence

If you already have a driving licence, which was issued in a EU country, or Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein, you can drive in Ireland for as long as it is valid. You may apply to exchange it for an Irish licence within one year of arrival, but this is not obligatory. If you have a licence from any other country, you may drive in Ireland for up to 12 months. However, if you plan to stay longer than 12 months you should apply for an Irish driving licence. Drivers with a licence from Australia, South Africa, Japan, Switzerland, South Korea, Jersey, Isle of Man or Gibraltar can exchange for an Irish licence within one year of arrival, with no need to sit the driving test.

How to Apply

The first step is to apply for a provisional driving licence, which is usually valid for 2 years. Applicants must first pass a driving theory test (a written test on rules of the road etc). Once you have a provisional licence you can start learning to drive.

However, while on your first provisional licence, you must always drive under the supervision of someone with a full driving licence. When you are a competent driver the next step is to apply for a full driving licence. To do so you must pass an oral test and a practical driving test. Full driving licences must be renewed every 10 years.

Insurance

Motor vehicle insurance is compulsory in Ireland. You cannot drive a vehicle for which you are not insured and all vehicles should display an insurance disc on their windscreen. Costs can vary greatly between different insurance companies so it’s advisable to check prices with several companies. Some companies will accept a no-claims bonus from abroad. However, you will need to provide written evidence of your insurance record and each case is assessed individually.

Motor Tax

Drivers must also pay motor tax for their vehicle. The rate of tax varies depending on the engine size – the bigger the engine, the higher the tax. Motor tax discs (like insurance discs) must be displayed on the front window of your car at all times. Further information and application forms can be obtained from the Motor Taxation/Drivers Licence's Office (see contact details below).

National Car Test & NCT

To ensure they are roadworthy, all vehicles which are four years old or more must pass the National Car Test. Cars that pass the test are issued with a NCT disc that must also be displayed on the front windscreen. The disc is valid for 2 years, when the car must be retested. Vehicles that fail the test cannot be driven on a public road. NCT tests in Cork city take place in NCT Centre, Euro Business Park, Little Island, Cork.

Parking

Parking is available on the street and in 'off-street' surface and multi-storey car parks. Parking charges normally apply by the hour. If parking 'on-street' make sure that parking is allowed. Parking is never allowed on roads with double yellow lines, in disabled driver spaces, on footpaths and within 5 metres of a junction. Streets with single yellow lines forbid parking at certain times. These times will be shown on a sign nearby (usually 8.30am – 6.30pm, Monday - Saturday). Cars parked illegally may be towed away or clamped.

The city centre operates a disc parking system. Cars parked in a disc parking area (indicated by street parking signs) must display a valid parking disc. The parking limit in each area is also indicated on the sign – either 1 or 2 hours. Cars which overstay their disc may get a parking ticket or be clamped. Parking discs can be bought at newsagents, garages and convenience stores. Scratch off the panels to indicate the time and date you parked and display the disc in the window next to the kerb.

A 'Park-by-Phone' (Park Magic) system for pay parking is also available. Users must be registered. For details see: <http://www.parkmagic.net/pmui/ui/homepm8.htm>

Further Information

Motor Taxation / Drivers Licence's Office
Farranlea Road, Cork
www.corkcoco.ie
www.drivingtest.ie

National Car Testing Service (NCTS) Ltd Customer Service,
CityWest Business Campus
Lakedrive 3026 Naas Road
Dublin 24

Tel: 1890 200670
e-mail: info@ncts.ie

www.ncts.ie