

# Foreign Vehicles in the UK

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Foreign registered vehicles from any country may be brought into and used in the UK on a temporary basis by persons who are not resident here for up to 6 months at a time, extensions to this period can be arranged.

This concession, negotiated under *Chapter III of the Convention on Road Traffic at Vienna on 8th November 1968*, permits non-residents, such as tourists, people visiting businesses, friends or family etc. to use their vehicle on UK Roads without the need to re-register it here providing certain conditions are complied with :-

- the vehicle's registration certificate is carried by the driver, and, if the vehicle is not registered in the name of an occupant of the vehicle, proof of the driver's right to be in possession of the vehicle must be produced,
- the registration number is displayed at the front and rear of the vehicle (motorcycles rear only),
- registration numbers must be displayed in Latin characters and Arabic numerals,
- a distinguishing sign of the country of registration is displayed on the rear of the vehicle. This sign may be incorporated into the registration plate or placed separately,
- the vehicle must be legal for road use in the country of registration.

**It is the keeper's responsibility to show they are allowed to use the vehicle in the UK without registering and taxing it.**

This concession does not apply in circumstances where the user is, or becomes, a resident in the UK although some exceptions, listed below, are allowed.

*Under UK tax laws a resident is one who resides in the UK for 185 days or more in the tax year (either in 1 block or in separate visits).*

All vehicle imports, other than temporary imports where the importer normally lives in the EU, must be notified to HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) using a Notification of Vehicle Arrivals (NOVA) form within 14 days of the import. HMRC will apply any tax or VAT due (new vehicles and vehicles imported from outside the EU) and update a database which the DVLA can check before issuing a UK registration for the vehicle.

**UK residents** (of any nationality) **are not entitled to use foreign registered vehicles on UK roads** (subject to the exceptions below) - such vehicles must be immediately registered with DVLA.

Before being registered the vehicle owner may be required to make a declaration under the Mutual Recognition Process (EU vehicles under 10 years old) or, particularly where the vehicle was manufactured for markets outside the EU, submit the vehicle for an SVA (single vehicle approval) test to ensure compliance with UK requirements (Vehicle Certification Agency) - for example a vehicle may require modification to lights or seat belts. The vehicle may be required to pass an MOT test depending on its age.

**Exceptions** apply to vehicles used by visiting forces personnel, diplomatic vehicles, persons who work in another European Union member state and use an EU-registered company vehicle temporarily in the UK and those who lease an EU-registered car and use it temporarily in the UK.

Students and temporary workers on short term contracts may apply to HMRC before or upon arrival in the UK for a customs relief form which can be presented to the police if required.

**There is no period of grace - a vehicle must be re-registered immediately. Residents do not have 6 months in which to do so nor can they 'reset' the clock by returning to the country of registration periodically.**

There is no specific offence of failing to re-register, the offence for which such a user could be prosecuted is **Using or Keeping an Unlicensed Vehicle** contrary to Section 29 Vehicle Excise and Registration Act 1994 which can attract a penalty of £1000 (level 3) or 5 times the vehicle excise duty (VED) due.

In addition if the vehicle is old enough to require a test certificate (3 years for most cars) then the offence of **No test certificate** (MOT) - Section 47(1) Road Traffic Act 1988 - £1000 fine (level 3) could also be considered.

Of course insurance is required no matter the status of registration and a foreign registered vehicle may be covered by an insurance policy issued in the country of registration. If this is an EU country then failure to re-register a vehicle does not, in the Motor Insurers Bureau view (<http://www.mib.org.uk>), invalidate the insurance. Also note that many European policies cover any driver even if not named on the documents.

Under the 6th EU Motor Insurance Directive 2009/103/EC, insurance policies in all EU countries must cover motoring throughout the EU for the period of insurance. Although the preamble to this document states "Vehicles should be registered in the country of residence of the policy holder and/or vehicle owner" the Directive itself states "... the definition of the territory in which the vehicle is normally based should refer to the territory of the State of which the vehicle bears a registration plate ..."

A prohibition of systematic checks on motor insurance applies to vehicles normally based in the territory of another Member State. Only non-systematic checks which are not discriminatory and are carried out as part of a control not aimed exclusively at insurance verification may be permitted.

Any company offering motor insurance in the UK must be a member of the Motor Insurers' Bureau. No such requirement applies however to insurers in other EU states.

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