

Riding abroad.

Apart from the obvious making sure you ride on the correct side of the road, there are many things to be aware of when you venture abroad.

Some are legal requirements, others are advisory and some just lessons learned from past experience. This is by no means a definitive document and I shall add to it as and when fellow Vultures share their wisdom.

Before Departure :-

Make sure you have any 'Call Baring' removed from your mobile phone.

Buy your currency in advance. The Ferry Rates are never too favourable.

Ensure you have no geographical restrictions on your Credit Cards.

You should carry with you:-

Passport

A European Health Insurance Card which will entitle you to free emergency medical care.

Driving Licence.

Insurance Certificate.

Your ORIGINAL V5 Registration document.

MOT Certificate if appropriate. (That'll be me then ... most of you have new bikes it seems).

Breakdown Policy & contact numbers.

Travel Insurance (not compulsory, but advisable. Carole Nash do a Biker Specific Policy as most exclude the riding of motorcycles).

It's a good idea to take 2 photo-copies of each of these documents. Leave one set at home and the other secured in a waterproof container in your luggage and not with the originals.

Up to date Tax Disc (Your insurance will be invalidated if your Tax runs out whilst you are away).

Oh! and a Passport Julie !

It is always a good idea to fill up with fuel (although technically from the Ferry Operator's point of view you shouldn't) just before boarding, so you know that you won't have to be looking for a Service Station soon after leaving the ferry.

Make sure you have your Ticket (or Booking Reference), and Passport to hand when you get to the check in. It is no easy task stopping, finding neutral, extracting documents from your pockets with gloved hands, taking back your documents plus Boarding Pass and sometimes a Lane Identifier, and moving off without causing a huge delay behind.

Spare set of keys for the bike (and a spare battery for the Alarm Fob ... LOL). Do not leave these on the bike!

Waterproofs in an accessible place, together with some latex gloves (or at worst Diesel gloves from a garage). These are invaluable when it is pouring down and you have no option but to carry on to catch a Ferry or whatever (wear inside your gloves ... which WILL leak without doubt).

Legal requirements :-

Obviously these vary from country to country even within Europe. Given that on a European trip you are likely to travel through two or more countries it is best to cover all eventualities and go with the worst case scenario. **On that basis you need:-**

To always have your 'Running Lights' on. (Most of us have no choice anyway).

By rights , headlights should dip to the Right and there are Headlight Beam Adaptors you can stick on your Headlight to convert it. I have never bothered in the past to be honest, mainly because we don't usually ride at night at Rallies. This year I have bought a kit (for a car .. so Arls can have one too), £8 from Halfords.

You should also carry a Warning Triangle, but this is really impractical on a motorcycle. You can buy fabric helmet bags which have a luminous triangle printed on them, which I think is a great idea, but I don't know where to get them.

A 'GB' sticker or one in the form of the Euro circle of stars and the letters 'GB' in gold on a blue background, incorporated within the number plate.

A spare set of light bulbs, including headlamp, indicator, brake and number plate bulbs are required. Halfords amongst others do a nice little kit including fuses in a plastic case (£11).

In Germany (only) I believe you have to carry a First Aid kit.

In Italy it is illegal to tow a trailer. (Keith can always claim the trailer is pushing his bike & no one would argue!)

In Switzerland you need a special Tax Disc to travel on the Auto Routes.

A Hi-Viz jacket. Whilst it is not compulsory to wear a Hi-Viz whilst riding, you do have to wear one when stopped on a hard shoulder in some European countries.

You no longer need to carry what was known as a Green Card as long as your Insurance Certificate bears a declaration that you are insured in the language of the country you are in. I think most Insurance Certificates have this declaration in an assortment of tongues on the reverse side.

There are regulations about the maximum number of motorcycles allowed to travel in convoy in some places, but this has never been an issue on any trip the VSOC has been on, and that often means a over 150 bikes in a pack.

The Ferry:-

It is a good idea to always have an overnight bag in an easily accessible place on the bike, to save having to pack and unpack for an overnight crossing.

Whilst most Ferry Operators supply straps or ropes to secure the bikes, these are often of dubious quality, so I always carry my own ratchet straps.

Your riding gloves are ideal for protecting the seat / bodywork from the straps.

The bike is most stable on a side stand rather than the centre stand as it can be ratcheted down to prevent being rocked off the stand. A cable tie (of the velcro type) is good for holding the front brake 'On'. The bike should be left in gear and with the motion sensor of the alarm 'Off'. (Refer to your hand book prior to boarding the ferry ! The crew do not like alarms going off continuously and you won't like a flat battery.)

Riding Abroad:-

Always know your destination. Even if you don't know the route, it is prudent to know where you need to get to if you get separated from the pack.

Collect Mobile Phone numbers of others in the group and don't forget to input them as +44

We usually do NOT 'Second Man' the route when riding on the Right Hand Side of the road. We consider it too dangerous whilst on unfamiliar road layouts. It is VITAL therefore that the pack remains together. Do NOT drop back, keep up with the pack at all times, and try not to let other vehicles split the group.

DO NOT RIDE on AUTOPILOT ! Pay attention AT ALL TIMES. Think about each junction which way is the traffic coming from? It is easy to make a mistake and even easier to blindly follow someone who has just made a mistake themselves!

Pay particular attention at roundabouts, remembering to go around it anti-clockwise and that priority is from your left. Also when turning left at T-Junctions and at crossroads remember to check traffic from the left it is all too easy to look right out of habit.

If you take a Sat Nav, have it running, even if you are not leading the ride it could be useful if a gap develops in the pack because of a traffic hold-up.

Always top up your tank at each pit stop, you never know how far until you stop again.

Make sure you have enough change available and easily accessible, for any Tolls en-route. Some are unmanned 'coin bin' type. You will also need loose change for the toilets in service areas.

Always carry a Credit Card. Some fuel stations are un-manned out of hours and on Sundays.

If other bikers make a horizontal V sign at you with their left hand, this means 'Hello', whilst a raised right leg means 'Thank You'.

Don't be put off by all this, foreign road trips are awesome !

[Vultures' Ride-Out Protocol](#)

Useful things to take :-

Mains socket adapter for charging phones, toothbrushes, Sat Navs, Intercoms, torches etc.etc.