

RENTING A CAR IN FRANCE

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT FINDING, BOOKING,
AND DRIVING A CAR RENTAL IN FRANCE



Renting a Car in France

A Driving & Travel Guide

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Everything you need to know about finding, booking, and driving a car rental in France

Auto Europe

www.autoeurope.com

- PDF EDITION -

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So, you want to visit France?

When it comes to renowned European vacation destinations, France certainly ranks among the top contenders. An air of romanticized splendor graces this modern nation, which offers travelers everything from the best in contemporary fashion to world-famous culinary traditions, beautiful natural areas, astounding historical monuments and everything in between. Whether you're visiting to knock a few iconic attractions off of your bucket list, take the family on a [road trip through the French countryside](#) they'll remember forever, or surprise your significant other with a romantic getaway, you and your fellow travelers will not be disappointed by the wondrous discoveries you'll make around every corner in this spectacular nation!

But if you truly want to take advantage of everything France has to offer, you'll need an efficient and affordable means of transportation. Comfortable and private wouldn't hurt, either! Fortunately, [car rentals are available](#) for pickup and drop-off all throughout France, providing a safe and reliable means of getting around, and Auto Europe is here to help you get the guaranteed lowest rate on your ideal vehicle reservation.

Not only does Auto Europe offer the best prices in the industry, we're also committed to providing our clients with the best service, too! That's why we've created this comprehensive guide to renting a car in France. We understand that planning and arranging your trip doesn't always seem so easy, but this guide will keep you up-to-speed on the ins and outs of renting a car in France. You can secure the best rate and rest easy in confidence, ready to travel France by car like a local and armed with all the knowledge you'll need!

Before You Book

Before finding and securing the lowest rate for your car rental, it's important to know what you're looking for! Consider your travel plans, driving preferences, and fellow travelers when you select the vehicle and options that are best for you.

Vehicle Size and Type

The first thing you'll want to consider is the size and type of vehicle you want to rent. Think about how you'll be spending your time in France, and consider the following:

How many passengers will you have?

Are you traveling solo, or will you be bringing the whole family along? The more passengers you have, the more worthwhile a larger car class will be. And don't forget that more passengers mean more luggage, too!

How much luggage will you have and will you have it in the car with you for most of the trip?

Are you just taking your luggage from the airport to your hotel then touring around on day trips from the same base, or will you be traveling between multiple locations with your luggage in the car? Keep in mind that only full-size and larger vehicles have a separate closed trunk while most mid-size and smaller vehicles will be hatchbacks.

How much time will you spend driving?

Will you just be using your car for shorter trips to locations within the same city, or will you be spending extended periods driving? It may make sense to squeeze into the smallest vehicle possible for the sake of efficiency on shorter trips, but you'll appreciate the added comfort of a larger vehicle on a road trip tour!

In addition, ask yourself what you're used to driving at home in the US:

Are you comfortable driving a manual transmission (stick shift)?

The majority of cars in France are manual. Automatics are available, but only at select major locations (like main airports and rail stations) and will be considerably more expensive. That being said, you can save a good deal on your rental rate by opting for a manual, but do not rent one if you don't know how to drive one! Chances are, if you can't drive manual, then you aren't

familiar with French roads, and you'll want to keep things as simple as possible when acclimating to new road rules and navigating in a foreign place.

Are you comfortable maneuvering on tight roads?

Cars in France are generally smaller than they are in the US, and for good reason! Increased fuel economy is a plus, but some French roads can also be notoriously narrow, making it difficult to maneuver larger vehicles. It is by no means impossible to drive a van or SUV in France, but if you are thinking about renting a larger vehicle be wary that certain roads, while avoidable, can be a bit cramped!

Once you have an idea of what you'll need from your rental vehicle on your trip to France, you can choose a specific class and category to look into. Unless it's specifically stated, your car rental in France will not be for a specific make and model, but rather a certain size, class, transmission, and with or without A/C. When you reserve a car, you will be guaranteed a vehicle of that class size (mini, compact, etc.), type (2-door, 4-door, SUV, etc.), transmission, and A/C. Check out this guide to help you choose the ideal rental car for you:

Mini

Fuel Efficiency: Excellent

Comparable Models: Fiat 500, Renault Twingo

Passengers: 3-4

Luggage Space: Very limited, no trunk (1-2 carry-on bags)

Going solo with a carry-on bag? Reserved for the smallest cars, this class would work for you. Unfortunately, there is not much on the road in the US that would fit into this category for comparison other than the Mini Cooper or Fiat 500.

Economy

Fuel Efficiency: Excellent

Comparable Models: Audi A1, Ford Fiesta, Toyota Yaris, VW Polo

Passengers: 4

Luggage Space: Very limited, small trunk (1 large suitcase and 1-2 carry-on bags)

This category is popular in France for travelers with little to no luggage. Cars in this category are very fuel efficient. Generally, three people with luggage don't fit comfortably in one of these cars; however, it can be done. The appeal is fuel efficiency.

Compact

Fuel Efficiency: Very Good

Comparable Models: Ford Focus, VW Golf, Renault Megane

Passengers: 4

Luggage Space: Moderate, small trunk (2 large suitcases and 1-2 carry-on bags)

Young families of three typically enjoy cars in this class. Compact cars in Italy are usually what we would consider economy class in the US. This category is generally good for groups that can

pack light. Most adults, however, will find the back seat a little cramped. This class is also available in a “wagon” category, which offers additional luggage space.

Midsized/Intermediate

Fuel Efficiency: Good
Comparable Models: Ford Mondeo, Citroen C4 Grand Picasso, Peugeot 5008, Renault Scenic
Passengers: 5
Luggage Space: Moderate-Good, average trunk (3 large suitcases and 1-2 carry-on bags)

This category is popular for light packing groups of four or heavy packing groups of two or three. The cars are a little larger, and they offer speed and power you won't get in smaller models. This is a very popular category for people who will be doing a decent amount of driving while on vacation in France. This class is also available in a “wagon” category, which offers additional luggage space.

Midsized Vans

Vans and wagons in this category are popular for groups of 4 adults who pack a normal amount. These vans, known as MPV's (multi-purpose vehicles), may have emergency seats in the back; however, because the make or model can't be guaranteed, it's best not to book this category if you have more than five people.

Full Size/Standard

Fuel Efficiency: Moderate
Comparable Models: Audi A4, Mercedes C-Class, Opel Insignia
Passengers: 5
Luggage Space: Good, large separate trunk (3-4 large suitcases and 1-2 carry-on bags)

Cars rented in this category generally offer slightly more leg room for both passengers and the driver. Typically, luggage room is increased in this category, while the overall driving experience is more positive because the cars are better suited for driving long distances comfortably. This class is also available in a “wagon” category, which offers additional luggage space.

Full Size Vans

There are two classes of vans in this category. The smaller of the two is capable of seating seven without luggage or generally five with luggage (typical minivans like the Ford Galaxy), and this group is good for families or close groups. These larger of the two groups can seat nine without luggage or six to seven with luggage (standard or premium vans like the Mercedes Viano or Renault Traffic). True people carriers, full size van rentals are not very fuel efficient; however, they easily get your group where it needs to be together. Groups of adults may opt for two smaller cars in order to save money, but keep in mind you'll need two drivers!

Sport Utility Vehicles (SUVs)

There are two classes of SUVs typically offered in France; intermediate and full size. Both classes comfortably seat 5 passengers and offer more ground clearance than a van, car, or wagon would. Intermediate SUVs (like a Ford Escape or similar) have trunk space for 2 large suitcases and 1-2 carry-on bags while full size SUVs (like a Volvo XC60 or similar) have trunk space for 3 large suitcases and 1-2 carry-on bags. SUVs tend to be more expensive than other vehicles with equivalent luggage and passenger capacity, so this option is only advisable if you plan to drive on dirt or uneven roads.

Equipment and Extras

After figuring out what type of car you'll need, consider any additional equipment you might want to meet your unique needs and preferences. The most commonly available accessories offered at car rental locations in France include GPS units, child seats, snow chains, ski racks, and [portable Mi-Fi devices](#), but other options may be offered in different locales. Additional equipment is usually charged on a per-day basis, and prices will range depending on the supplier you are renting from; add-ons will always cost extra, paid for at the counter and subject to VAT (value added tax), unless they are explicitly stated as *included*. Be sure to take care of the accessories you add on, too, because you will have to pay a replacement fee for any damage, loss, or theft of the items!

It is important to note that, while extra equipment is optional and you generally decide whether to include it or not, there are laws in France that require children under 10 years old to use a child seat. In addition, it is against the law for children under 10 to sit in the front passenger seat unless there are no rear seats in the car. Be sure to reserve a child seat if you will be traveling with children under 10 so you won't get fined and, most importantly, to keep your little ones safe while journeying abroad!

You will almost always have to pay extra for additional equipment, but keep an eye out for special promotions and travel deals that can help you save money on accessories. Look into signing up for an international data plan so you can access maps and resources on your smartphone or tablet, consider bringing your own GPS unit from home, or ask about [Auto Europe's free GPS promotion](#) program. You can also bring your own child seats along with you, but the hassle of carrying this bulky item in your luggage usually outweighs the cost of renting locally.

Insurance Options

A source of much unnecessary confusion, car rental insurance in France is not nearly as complicated as some may think! This is a crucial part of your rental, so you'll do well to understand the options you have and choose a plan that's right for you. A range of options for car rental insurance in France can protect you from any liability that results in death, injury to others, or any property damage that is caused while you are driving.

When renting a car in France it is required by law that drivers carry unlimited third party liability insurance, and as a result it is automatically included in the price of all car rentals. The advantage of having this car rental insurance in France is that you are protected from injury, death or property damage to others which occur while operating your rental during your trip to France. The cost of fire insurance is also included in your daily car rental rate when you book a car with Auto Europe.

Will you need to purchase additional insurance for your car rental in France?

Many drivers prefer to obtain more extensive coverage while on vacation in France. Doing so can provide travelers with peace of mind and supplemental car rental insurance in France is available from Auto Europe at a discount if booked in advance of your trip. Popular optional coverage includes **Collision Damage Waiver (CDW)** and **Theft Protection (TP)**. While the price of this coverage will vary depending upon the rental car supplier, the location of your rental and the type of car you book, if you choose to add this coverage at the pick-up counter rather than purchasing it in advance from Auto Europe you can typically expect to pay between \$10 USD and \$80 USD per day for CDW insurance and \$3 USD to \$18 USD per day for theft insurance in France.

It's important to note that purchasing these insurance options reduces the deductible you'll owe in the case of an accident or in the event your rental car is stolen in France. Over-the-counter CDW insurance purchased from your vehicle supplier typically reduces your deductible to between \$690 and \$3870 USD and the deductible for theft insurance typically ranges from \$845 to \$5808 USD. While supplemental CDW and theft insurance does reduce the amount you could be charged significantly, for many travelers the deductible is still a substantial or prohibitive sum.

Do you want to lower or eliminate the excess/deductible on your collision and theft insurance?

Because of the risks of a high deductible charge many Auto Europe clients planning a trip to France elect to take advantage of our fully refundable zero excess/deductible insurance option. This protects you during your trip by offering a full refund of the deductible you've paid providing you submit basic paperwork which confirms the details of the accident or theft (rental agreement, police report, damage estimates, etc.).

Will your credit card cover your car rental in France for collision and theft insurance?

As mentioned above, the good news for travelers is that liability and fire insurance on your rental car in France is included in your daily rate. Travelers have the option of adding CDW (collision) and theft insurance to their rental, but this is optional.

Some travelers will opt for supplemental coverage provided by their credit card and while this can be a good way to reduce cost it's important to read the fine print. Credit card companies often exclude some types of vehicles from their car rental insurance policies so it's important to know the details of your card's coverage so that you know whether you're covered or not. Exotic cars, [RVs or camper vans](#) and [luxury rental cars](#) valued at \$50,000 USD or more will generally not be covered by your credit card company.

Another important thing to ask about when you contact your credit card company about rental car insurance in France is the length of the rental. Many drivers planning an extended trip to France take advantage of Auto Europe's [short-term car lease](#) program from Peugeot, but rentals lasting longer than 30 days often don't qualify for full coverage from credit card companies.

One final concern which you should be aware of when renting a car in France is that while your insurance company will likely extend coverage to your rental vehicle, this coverage generally only extends to the value of your personal vehicle. You could be responsible for any damages above and beyond this amount (if your rental car is valued for more than your personal vehicle at home).

The take away from all of this information?

While you aren't required to purchase supplemental car rental insurance in France, Auto Europe recommends that you seriously consider pairing CDW and theft insurance with our zero-excess deductible insurance so that you are covered for 100% of charges which result from a car accident or the theft of your rental vehicle.

For many people a trip to France is an once-in-a-lifetime adventure and the peace of mind provided by comprehensive insurance will guarantee that you can focus on making memories and not be stuck scrambling to pay a hefty bill which could put your personal finances in the red!

International Travel and One Ways

After you've figured out what type of vehicle you'll need, any additional equipment you'd like to rent, and the best insurance policy for you, there's only one more important question to consider before beginning your hunt for the best rate:

Are you planning on traveling outside of France with your rental car?

If you're planning on dropping off your rental car in another country, then the answer here is obvious (and you can find more on one-way rentals below), but it is still important to notify your rental supplier of any international travel you plan on taking, even if you will be returning to France, and to consider the possibility of associated costs.

The good news is that traveling to any Western European country from France will rarely incur any additional cost, but countries in Eastern Europe will, and in some cases, the travel may not be allowed at all.

Do you plan on traveling to any islands?

For the most part, rental cars in France are not allowed to be taken on ferries. Those looking to travel to islands like Corsica will have to leave their rental car on the mainland in France and reserve a separate rental on the island if they wish to have a car there.

Will your rental car be a Mercedes or other comparable luxury vehicle?

If you receive a Mercedes or other luxury brand car for your rental in France, most suppliers will not allow the vehicle to travel into Italy due in large part to higher theft rates in the country. Renters are never guaranteed a specific brand vehicle and in some cases you may even receive an upgraded vehicle free of charge, so it is important to note any countries you plan on traveling to while booking so will receive a vehicle suitable for your planned travel.

Traveling to Eastern Europe

Traveling through Eastern Europe with your France car rental will have a different set of rules compared to Western Europe. Many car rental suppliers are more leery of allowing their rental vehicles to travel into the Eastern realm, which is divided into two comprehensive zones:

Zone 1: Croatia, Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

Zone 2: Belarus, Bosnia, Estonia, Greece, Herzegovina, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia and Turkey.

To travel to either zone, there is a minimum car rental time requirement. This varies between origins of departures, drop-off, specific countries you plan on traveling through, and chosen suppliers. Zone 2 also often requires you to complete a Travel East Agreement (provided by Auto Europe when you book your car rental) and purchase Eastern Travel Insurance. The Travel East Agreement acknowledges that you understand the risks and responsibility of taking a vehicle to Eastern Europe while Eastern Travel Insurance covers the costs of required documentation for crossing borders and added risks assumed by the rental car driver.

The most expedient way to answer all of your questions and make sure all the minute details of your travel are taken care of is to contact one of Auto Europe's experienced reservation agents at 1-800-223-5555. At this point in the planning process, you'll know exactly what type of vehicle and standard insurance options you'll need, and Auto Europe's agents are specially trained to assist with arranging special car rental requests like travel through Eastern Europe.

One-Way Car Rentals

One-way fees should be considered when planning where you'll pick up and drop off your rental car. If you will be dropping it off at a different French city than the pickup, there is a possibility of extra fees; if you will be dropping it off in a different country, extra fees are unavoidable.

There are two types of one-way travel with a rental car: **domestic** and **international**. One of the conditions of returning a rental vehicle to a different location is a compulsory charge known as a one-way fee, which varies in price depending on the rental car company's rate for a prearranged drop-off at a domestic or international location. Thanks to Auto Europe's continuing partnerships with suppliers, **domestic one-way fees** are generally free of charge for a trip from one city to another within France as long as a minimum rental period is met (usually 3 days). Domestic one way fees are still possible depending on rental specifics, though, especially if you are renting an automatic vehicle or picking up/dropping off at a smaller more rural location.

An **international one way fee** is almost always required for a pickup in France and drop-off in another country, even neighboring nations. Unless stated otherwise, it is important to note that rental companies around the world charge an international one-way fee to cover the costs of getting the rental car back to the country it is registered and insured in.

Get all of your travel plans finalized and be sure to mention any international travel you plan on taking with your rental car. That way, you will avoid getting hit with unexpected fees at the rental desk and you'll be able to factor a full and accurate cost of travel arrangements into your budget.

Booking Your Rental Car

Now that you're confident you know what you want regarding your vehicle reservation, you can begin searching for a specific rate to book! As always, Auto Europe's agents are on call, 24/7 and toll-free, at **1-888-223-5555** to help with whatever you may need as you browse our rates on the web for the best deal. The first step in utilizing our online search form will be providing your desired pick-up and drop-off locations.

Choosing Locations and Times

You've got your travel itinerary planned out and you know exactly what type of car you're looking for; now it's time to consider where and when you want to pick up your vehicle.

What cities and at which offices do you want to pick up and drop off?

Airports are the most common locations for picking up a rental car, and every major airport in France hosts car rental offices, but downtown, rail station, and cruise port locations are often available, too.

Think about what you'll be doing immediately following your arrival at your destination and if you will need a rental car right away. If you are planning on touring a big city for a few days following your arrival, you may not need your own vehicle right off the bat. Public transportation makes it easy to get around center-city attractions, and parking in major hubs can be expensive in France. Consider picking up from a downtown location later in your trip if you won't need a car right away, and remember an affordable [airport transfer service](#) from Auto Europe is always an option for getting to your hotel from the airport or rail station.

What dates and time of day do you want to pick up your car?

If you need to pick up very early in the morning, late at night, or on a weekend, you may need to pick up at an airport or rail station where car rental office hours of operations will be longer. Most major airport and rail station offices will be open 24/7, but smaller city offices will have more limited hours. If you absolutely need to pick up from a location at a time that it's normally closed, Auto Europe can help you arrange for out-of-hours pickups at an additional cost (determined by rental supplier), but you can save money by picking up during normal office hours for your chosen location.

Do you need an out-of-hours pickup or drop-off?

If you need to pick up or drop off your car when a rental office will be closed and alternative plans cannot be arranged to accommodate for open office hours, an out-of-hours pickup can often be arranged for pickup, or you can utilize a drop box (where available) for drop off. Out-of-hours pickups will incur an additional fee and must be requested on an individual basis, while drop boxes are free to use and common at most rental car locations. If you will need either one of these services, please contact Auto Europe and one of our helpful agents can assist you in arranging and confirming your reservation details.

Do you plan to pick up on a holiday?

Holidays in France are, of course, different than they are in the US, and car rental offices will close for any nationally recognized celebrations. Check to be sure you aren't planning on picking up during a holiday when offices might be closed and, if you are, consider modifying your travel plans to accommodate. If you try to book a vehicle or create a quote with a pickup when your rental office will be closed for an observed holiday, Auto Europe will contact you within 48 hours and give you some possible alternatives.

Is your drop-off time later in the day than your pick-up time?

Car rental rates run on a 24-hour time clock, meaning you will be charged a daily rate beginning as soon as you pick up your vehicle. For example, if you collect your car at 12 noon and return it three days later at 1 PM, you will be charged for a four day rental, even though your drop-off is technically only 1 hour later than pickup. Plan accordingly so you will be able to drop off your vehicle at the same time or earlier in the day than you picked it up, and you'll be able to save yourself the cost of an extra day!

Securing the Lowest Rate

Once your pick up and drop off details are entered in Auto Europe's online search form, you will be presented with a matrix showing all the lowest rates available. Use the filters to hide any rates you won't be interested in based on transmission, insurance inclusions, and fuel policy, and narrow your selections based on the class of vehicle you are looking for.

Auto Europe is committed to finding you the absolute best rates available, so securing the lowest prices couldn't be easier from here. Choose the most affordable rate, which is highlighted in green, and that's it!

Did you find a lower price for a similar vehicle with the same inclusions somewhere else?

Not a problem. [Auto Europe's best rate guarantee](#) offers you the chance to quickly and easily bring us any rate you find elsewhere using our "Beat Rate" form available online. If the rate is lower than ours based on an "apples to apples" comparison, we will beat it for you!

The quoted rate represents the total amount you will owe to Auto Europe for your rental, including VAT, in USD. Once you apply payment to your voucher, your reservation will be confirmed, usually within 24 to 48 hours if not immediately, meaning your vehicle is guaranteed to be ready for pickup when you arrive or else the rental is on us!

The only costs not included will be detailed in the terms and conditions of your Auto Europe voucher. Our unique relationships with only the most trustworthy suppliers enable us to offer superior prices we bet no one else can beat! If you do think you've found a better rate, feel free to bring it to us, but be sure to check what is and isn't included, as other quotes will often hide rental fees and taxes that will make your rental with other companies more expensive after all is said and done.

Additional Fees and Taxes

When hunting for the best deal, it's important to consider what may not be included in your rental car's initial up-front quote. Use the information below to uncover hidden car rental fees so you can rest assured you won't run into any unwelcomed surprises on your trip. Remember that Auto Europe always discloses everything you'll have to pay at the pick-up desk!

VAT Car Rental Tax

Appears on car rental contracts as:

VAT Tax, Value Added Tax

Typically Costs:

20% (in France as of 2015)

What you need to know: VAT (or *Value Added Tax*) is a standard European sales tax that varies among different nations in Europe. The minimum allowed VAT rate is 15%, but individual countries can set their rates higher, and some will charge up to 27%. VAT will always be included on your rental rate in all Auto Europe quotes, but you will have to pay the tax separately for any extra equipment or local fees you are charged for at the rental desk. Unlike VAT tax paid on goods, clothing, and souvenirs, which can be reclaimed at the airport upon your departure, you cannot reclaim any VAT taxes you pay on a car rental.

Local Rental Car Taxes

Appears on car rental contracts as:

Road Tax, Road Fee, Vehicle License Fee

Typically Costs:

€3.00 to €3.50 per day

What you need to know: Local rental car taxes may apply to your rental depending on the type of vehicle you rent, the location you rent it in, and which supplier you choose to rent from. While typically not very expensive, local taxes are often overlooked and have become prime suspects in the realm of dastardly "hidden" fees. They are not always included and rarely mentioned in your average rental quote, but you can almost count on having to pay a few extra Euros at the pick-up desk on any car rental for various location-specific taxes. Just be wary that these legitimate fees do exist and will always be clearly listed on your Auto Europe quote!

Rental Car Location Surcharges

Appears on car rental contracts as:

Airport Surcharge, Rail Station Surcharge, Premium Location Surcharge, Parking Fees, Out of Hours Fees, Late Return Fees

Typically Costs:

€40

What you need to know: Location surcharges are typically applied when picking up your rental car at major transportation hubs throughout Italy, such as airports, rail stations, and cruise ports. The standard additional charge for picking a car up at one of these locations is €40, but the fee can vary from €20 to €80 in some cases. Depending on the locale, additional location-related charges may be applied, such as "parking fees" for areas where parking space is very limited.

Be sure to pay attention to the hours of operation for the offices where you plan on picking up and dropping off the vehicle, as well as the specific times you've arranged your rental for. Dropping off your car later than the agreed-upon time on your reservation can cost you a "late return fee" and, depending on the time of day you originally picked up the car, can also add an additional day onto your total rental rate.

Picking up your rental downtown as opposed to at an airport or rail station will often be cheaper because you can avoid any location surcharges. Be wary, however, that you will have to pay for a cab or navigate public transportation to get to a downtown office from your arrival point. For those landing at an airport or coming in by train, the additional location surcharges are often worth the convenience of picking up your car right after you get off your plane or train rather than hauling your luggage to a downtown office. Airport and rail station car rental locations also have longer operating hours, so you won't have to pay an "out of hours fee" if you plan on

picking up very late at night or very early in the morning. As always, review your car rental contract or quote thoroughly to see what additional fees apply to your rental so you can make a proper plan of action to avoid them where possible.

Car Rental Fuel Policy

Appears on car rental contracts as:

Full to Full, Full to Empty

Typically Costs:

Local price of fuel

What you need to know: Your car rental fuel policy will determine how you will pay for any existing fuel your rental car comes with when you pick it up. With a *full to full* policy, you will pay nothing up front but will be expected to return the vehicle with the same amount of fuel your car had when you picked it up (usually a full tank); you will be charged for any fuel missing when the vehicle is returned. If your rental includes a *full to empty* fuel policy, you will pre-pay a given amount for a full tank of fuel and can return the vehicle as close to empty as possible without incurring any additional fuel costs.

Optional fuel policies are generally a matter of preference, but be aware that all rental companies will charge a premium for any type of fuel, usually based on the highest price per liter available in the area. To save on fuel charges, opt for a *full to full* policy when available, fill up the rental car right before you return it, and retain a copy of the receipt for your records. It may be a bit less convenient to have to make a fuel stop just before dropping off, but that little bit of extra work can save you some money on the premium rates you will have to pay for a tank of gas through a *full to empty* policy.

Limited/Unlimited Mileage Car Rentals

Appears on car rental contracts as:

Limited Kilometers

Typically Costs:

€0.50 to €2 per additional kilometer

What you need to know: If your car rental includes *unlimited mileage/kilometers*, then you have no worries; you can cover as much ground as you'd like in your rental car without incurring any extra fees!

Some rental rates, however, may be specified as *limited kilometers*, in which case you will be charged extra if you drive the car farther than an allotted distance. Limited kilometer rentals

usually come with 100 to 300 kilometers per day, after which you will have to pay an extra fee per additional kilometer driven.

Most Auto Europe rates offered in France include unlimited kilometers, and it will be clearly stated if they do not. Limited kilometer rentals are, for the most part, cheaper than unlimited kilometer rentals, so there is an opportunity to save some cash if you don't plan on driving long distances. But be careful if you choose a limited kilometer rental because additional kilometers can accumulate quickly and result in considerable extra fees if you aren't careful!

Driver Fees

Appears on car rental contracts as:

Additional Driver Fee, Young Driver Surcharge, Senior Driver Fee

Typically Costs:

€8 to €40 per day

What you need to know: Driver fees may be added on to your rental depending on the age and number of drivers you wish to have registered to drive the rental car. Typically, if you want to register extra people to drive your rental car, an *additional driver fee* will be assessed on a per-day basis. In some cases, a free additional driver will be included in a given quote; if this is the case, it is always clearly stated along with the rest of your rental details.

The age of a prospective driver can also potentially incur extra fees on your rental in Italy. If you're a driver under 25 years old, there's a good chance you will be charged an extra €25 to €40 per day as a *young driver surcharge* to recoup the additional insurance risks posed by younger drivers. Young driver surcharges are very expensive in France so check with individual suppliers to see how much they will charge you if you are under 25.

Understanding Your Quote/Voucher

Getting Familiar with Your Auto Europe Car Rental Voucher

After you have reserved your rental car with Auto Europe, either over the phone or online, you are e-mailed a voucher that contains relevant information about your rental including: pick-up dates and times, the supplier you are renting from, car category, and your scheduled pickup location. Clients are asked to print out the voucher before leaving and to double check all of the information on the voucher to ensure that it is accurate. If you have any questions regarding

your voucher, please do not hesitate to contact us at any time of the day or night. Auto Europe will be there for you before, during, and after your trip!

What Else Is on Your Car Rental Voucher?

Upon further inspection of your voucher, you will find the terms and conditions of your rental. It is in your best interest to go over these thoroughly because there is information listed regarding your rental insurance that you will need to know. Pricing information regarding any mandatory location surcharges and/or taxes is also listed in this section. Each fee that is paid locally is listed in the terms and conditions when the booking process is completed. It also states if there is a charge for additional drivers, young drivers, or other equipment. In most cases, mileage restrictions will not be a problem, but if that is an issue, it will be stated on your voucher as well.

Making Changes to or Cancelling Your Reservation

Changes

When you book with Auto Europe, you're always free to make any changes you need to your reservation without additional charges or penalty fees as long as the changes are made before the commencement of the rental. It is important to note, however, that changing the dates, vehicle, or locations may subject you to current rates as they are at the time the changes are made.

Extensions

Reservations may always be extended during your rental without penalty by contacting Auto Europe (see *Contacting Auto Europe from France* section), but please be aware that you must do so *before* the expiration of the rental period. Failing to return your vehicle at the contracted drop off time without notice will result in penalty fees incurred by the car rental supplier you are contracted with!

Cancellations

You may cancel your booking with Auto Europe for a full refund anytime up to 48 hours before the start of the reservation; cancellations made within 48 hours of your pick up date and time will incur a \$75.00 cancellation fee. If you need to cancel your booking for any reason, please contact us (24/7 and toll-free at 1-888-223-5555, or see *Contacting Auto Europe from France* section below) before your designated pick-up date and time! No refund will be possible if you do not notify Auto Europe of a cancellation until after your rental commences.

During Your Trip

Picking Up Your Vehicle

The address and location of the pick-up desk for your vehicle will be listed on your Auto Europe voucher. Follow these guidelines for picking up at major transportation hubs:

Airports

Most major car rental companies will have an office in the arrival terminal of any given airport. All major airports in France will have clear signage directing you to the car rental desks, all of which will usually be in the same area. In some cases, you may need to take a shuttle bus to a location near the airport to pick up your vehicle; further instructions on where the shuttle bus can be accessed will be listed on your Auto Europe voucher.

Rail Stations

As with airports, car rental desks at rail stations will typically be located in the same area, and there should be signs to direct you from the platforms to the rental desks. If you do find yourself confused as to where to go, stop by one of the information kiosks that are common in French rail stations to ask for directions; attendants will always speak English here.

IMPORTANT: Auto Europe is a broker that books you with trusted car rental companies throughout France. Your reservation through Auto Europe will be with a specific rental company, as listed in your voucher details. When arriving to pick up your car, you should look for the desk of the company you are booked with; they will be the party providing you the actual car, *not* Auto Europe!

When arriving at your designated pick-up location, be sure you have these things with you:

Auto Europe voucher with supplier confirmation number present

A printed copy of your valid, confirmed Auto Europe voucher is required. Our vouchers show confirmation of your reservation and contain specific information about your rental car, rental rate, and other important details needed by our overseas affiliates.

Valid credit card in primary driver's name

The primary driver listed on your voucher will need to be present at pick up with a valid credit card in their name. The car rental company you are booked with will put a hold on the credit card, usually equal to the amount of your deductible, to be released once the vehicle is returned in the same condition it was rented according to the terms and conditions of the rental contract.

NOTE: This does *not* need to be the same card you used to pay Auto Europe for your reservation.

Valid driver's license in primary driver's name

The primary driver listed on your voucher **MUST** be present with their valid driver's license. In France, a valid driver's license is defined as one written in the Roman alphabet that has been held for at least one year.

Before you take your car off the lot

Be sure to thoroughly inspect your rental vehicle for any existing damages before driving away. Make sure any existing damage is documented in your rental contract, and take pictures to keep for your own records in case of any dispute. If you have a full-to-full fuel policy, check that the car's tank is indeed full before driving it.

If, for any reason, you receive a vehicle you do not feel is safe to drive due to existing damages, do not accept it and insist on getting another car. Remember that Auto Europe is always available to assist you with any issues you have in dealing with local car rental suppliers, so feel free to contact us at any time (see *Contacting Auto Europe from France* section below).

Being thorough with your inspection of the rental vehicle and documenting any existing damages will ensure you can enjoy the rest of your vacation without worrying about being held liable for damages you didn't cause!

Driving in France

Thinking about driving in a new country can be stressful and even intimidating at first, but knowledge is power; the more you know about the rules of the road in France, the better prepared you'll be. Follow these driving tips, and your time behind the wheel in France will become a stress-free, enjoyable experience.

Eyes on the Road

While this may seem like common sense (after all, it's a driving tip which applies everywhere), keeping your eyes on the road is especially important during a trip to France. You'll likely be less familiar with road signs and the driving style of locals when you hit the road in Europe, so making an effort to pay close attention to the city streets and nearby drivers is especially important. Be vigilant and you'll be able to steer clear of troublesome situations.

Countryside Cruising

Keeping your eyes on the road is even more important if you're planning to drive through rural areas of France. In small towns it's not uncommon to find cars parked in the middle of the road. As with rural sections of the US, neighbors have close ties in rural France and many old friends pause by the roadside to visit or catch up on local news. Livestock, carts and small wagons in roadways are also things you may encounter while cruising the French countryside. In most

cases a gentle honk of your horn and a polite wave will be sufficient to clear the path so you can continue on your way.

Don't Stress About Tailgating

While tailgating isn't as common while driving in France as it is in other European locations, it's important to keep your cool and focus on the road ahead if you do feel that other drivers are riding too close to your car. Don't try to accelerate to put some distance between you and the other vehicle and do not slam on your brakes to try to "send a message." Most impatient drivers will look for an opportunity to pass - give them plenty of room and keep your focus where it should be: on enjoying your trip!

Pull Over to Use Your Phone

Depending upon where you're from you may be used to legislation which makes it illegal to use your phone while behind the wheel. Whatever you're used to back home, while driving in France it's illegal to use your mobile device. If you are caught using your phone while driving you'll be promptly served an on-the-spot fine of €130 - enough to put a damper on any vacation. Play it safe and if it's an emergency we recommend that you pull over before you dial.

Skip the Wine When Driving in France

It comes as a surprise to most foreign drivers, but French motorway service areas serve wine with meals. Can you imagine ordering wine at an American rest stop? France is known for some of the best vintages in the world and you may plan to imbibe some fabulous wine during your trip. If you do, remember that the legal blood alcohol limit in France is 0.05% - quite a bit lower than it is in the UK or US - so while you shouldn't ever drink and drive it's especially important while driving in France. The driving laws here are strict and there is zero tolerance for driving under the influence of alcohol in France.

Speed Cameras in France

Drivers in France should be aware that there are over 2,000 stationary speed cameras monitoring France's roadways and motorways. While many of these are marked with warnings, some cameras are unmarked. Combine stationary speed cameras with mobile radars in unmarked gendarmerie patrol cars and you have all the reason you need to obey posted speed limits.

Generally police are reasonable and offer some slight flexibility on speed, but if you are caught driving 50km/hr or more over the speed limit you could suffer an instant ban and the impounding of your vehicle!

The most common place to find speed cameras in France is near the edge of villages - areas where drivers often forget to slow down. Many villages in France won't have a specific speed posted, but locals will tell you that the name board at the entrance to a village or town in France (typically dark blue letters on an off-white background) is an automatic indication that the village is designated a "built-up area" and that the limit is 50km/hr unless otherwise indicated.

The normal speed limits for driving in France are:

- French Motorways: 130km/hr (slightly above 80mph), reduced to 110 km/hr in rain
- Dual Carriageways: (divided highways): 110km/hr
- Main Roads: (outside of built-up areas): 90km/hr
- Built-Up Areas: 50km/hr

Use Signals but Don't Count on Others to Do the Same

In certain parts of France the use of traffic signals can often feel like an afterthought. We recommend that you always use your signals when turning, but be alert when driving - brake lights may be the only signal you'll receive when the driver in front of you is planning to turn. This is especially true in rural parts of France where drivers may not be accustomed to seeing many cars on the road.

Use Caution on Roundabouts

When driving in France, entering a busy roundabout can feel intimidating - especially if you aren't quite sure where you're headed. A good rule of thumb is to be cautious, use your turn signals and to stay in the middle lane until you have identified your exit. This way traffic won't be cutting in and out in front of you.

Pay close attention to signs when approaching an unfamiliar roundabout in France. Signs which read: "Vous n'avez pas la priorite" or "Cédez le passage" indicate that traffic currently circling the roundabout has the right of way. If these signs aren't present the opposite is true: vehicles entering the roundabout have the right of way.

Tips for Parking in France

If you're planning a road trip through the French countryside you can use common sense when parking your rental car, but for those spending time in France's major towns and cities there are a few general rules which you should follow.

In France's cities, often the numbers on a street will dictate which side of the street drivers are allowed to park on. This can change in different neighborhoods and on different days. If you see a sign stating "Cote du Stationnement - Jours Pairs" you should park on the side of the street with even numbers. If, on the other hand, you see a sign stating: "Cote du Stationnement - Jours Impairs" then you should park on the side of the street with odd numbers. In major cities and in particular while driving in Paris, you should be on the lookout for French road signs which forbid parking during specific time periods (which is common as it allows street-cleaning crews to perform their duties).

In France, if parking is illegal there will often be clear signage - even if you do not speak or read French fluently. "Stationnement interdit" means that parking is forbidden. Typically this parking sign will be accompanied by another sign featuring the letter "P" with a line drawn through it. Tow-away zones are marked "Stationnement genant" with a picture of a tow-truck lifting a car. Avoid parking in these areas, in front of private garages, taxi pick-up and drop-off areas or on

any roadway with a curb marked in yellow. Following these simple tips will help you avoid having your vehicle towed while parking in France.

While driving in Paris it is illegal to leave your car in the same spot on a public road for more than 24 hours. While parking in France you should also be on the lookout for fire hydrants - it's illegal to park in front of them.

Worth Noting: as long as you move your car once during each 24 hour period you can continue to park on the same street.

City Parking in France

Blue Zones ("zone bleue") are located in most major French cities and drivers can park their cars for free for up to one hour Monday through Saturday between the hours of 09:00 and 12:00 and from 14:00 until 19:00. Parking in France is also free without limitations in these areas on Sundays and during public holidays.

If you need to park in a blue zone prior to 12:00 or after 14:00 then you must obtain a small parking disc ("disque de controle/stationnement") and display it in your car's windshield. These discs are available for free (or for a very small fee) from garages, travel agencies, tourist offices and police stations. When you use one of these discs to park for free in a blue zone you should record your arrival time in the left box and remember the time displayed in the right box - if you overstay your free time you could be fined.

Ticket Machines and Parking Meters in France

Ticket machines have replaced traditional parking meters in most French cities, which can take some getting used to for drivers visiting France for the first time. Parking signs with the words "Horodateur" or "Stationnement payant" give an indication that drivers must obtain a ticket from a nearby machine when they park in this area.

In most cities in France parking must be paid for between 09:00 and 19:00 with the exception of 12:00 and 14:00 (when it is free). Travelers can expect to pay up to 1 Euro per hour and more if they park at transit hubs like rail stations. After you've purchased your ticket you should place it behind your windshield where it can be easily seen by a parking warden and lock your rental car before heading off to explore the city. If you are parking in a new neighborhood Auto Europe recommends that you make a note of the street you've parked on so you are sure to easily find your way back to your car.

What You Need to Know about Parking Fines in France

In France, as in most parts of the world, if you park illegally you can expect to receive a fine. The amount of the fine will depend upon the severity of your parking offence. Drivers can expect to be fined approximately 11 Euro if they do not pay for parking or if they overstay the period which they have paid for. This amount will triple if the traveler does not pay the fine within three months.

Fines for illegal parking vary based on where and how you park illegally in France but typically these fines start at €35 and can increase to as much as €135. As with other traffic and parking fines in France if you do not pay the fine within 3 months you can expect the amount you owe to increase three-fold.

International Driver's Permits

IDP's are not required in France so long as you have a US driver's license held for at least 1 year. An IDP is essentially a copy of your driver's license translated into the language of the country you will be visiting, so it's never a bad idea to have one even though it is not required by law. IDP's are quite cheap and easy to acquire so it is recommended that you get one before departing from the US to any international location. You can get an IDP from your local AAA office, and they will typically cost \$10.00-20.00.

Dropping Off Your Vehicle

Dropping off your vehicle in France should be a quick and easy task. A representative from your rental car supplier will look over the vehicle to verify that no damages were caused during the course of your rental, and you will be asked to sign the final rental agreement.

If you are dropping off at an airport, signs will direct you towards corresponding car rental lots as you approach the premises. If you are dropping off downtown or at a rail station, your Auto Europe voucher will list the address of the drop off parking lot.

Drop Boxes

Drop boxes are located at designated locations where you can leave your rental car and drop the keys in a locked box after normal office operating hours. If the office you plan on dropping off at will be closed, please contact Auto Europe to ensure a drop box will be available for you to use.

Contacting Auto Europe from France

Auto Europe is always available to take your call 24/7 and toll-free from the US at **1-888-223-5555**, but we also have toll free numbers you can use from abroad, too!

If you need to reach us while in Italy, simply call **00-800-223-5555-5** (toll-free). Our agents are standing by to help you with whatever you may need on your trip. Auto Europe is dedicated to providing you with a smooth rental experience, and our experienced travel experts are always just a phone call away!

After Your Trip

Contacting Customer Service

It is our sincerest hope that your car rental experience will be both cost effective and hassle-free; however, unexpected hiccups can and do occur. Should you encounter difficulties with your rental, the most effective course of action is to contact us immediately so we may remedy the situation. We understand that this is sometimes easier said than done. If you have questions when you return from your trip, please contact our customer service department at your earliest convenience. Our dedicated staff is here to assist you in sorting out any confusion and addressing any issues that you may have. We act on your behalf and contact the local supplier, if necessary, for further clarification and to clear up any misunderstandings.

Things You Can Do to Avoid Being Over Charged

Mandatory rental car location pick-up and drop-off fees, one-way travel, equipment costs, or daily road taxes are often the culprit when inquiries are made into charges that have been authorized on your credit card. You may reference your car rental voucher in regards to confirming these fees as they will be noted there. When overcharges do occur, it is typically due to one of two things: refueling fees or the costs applicable to accidents that may have occurred during the rental period. To avoid these pitfalls, keep all receipts for gas or paperwork and correspondence that pertain to any vehicle damage. A digital camera can be an invaluable tool. Upon receiving the rental vehicle, take pictures of any dents or scrapes that may already be present and any damage in the event of an accident. You can also photograph the fuel gauge at the conclusion of your rental.

Contacting Auto Europe's Award-Winning Customer Service Team

Be sure to save all documentation that you acquire during your time abroad including:

- Rental agreements
- Receipts
- Payment vouchers
- Bills and any other paperwork regarding your car rental

If your car was paid in advance through Auto Europe and you received a bill in the mail for additional charges that you have questions about, please don't hesitate to contact a customer service representative at 1-888-223-5555 at any point before or after your car rental.

Helpful Additional Resources

[Car Rental in France with Auto Europe](#)

- [Luxury/Sports Car Rentals](#)
- [Van Rentals](#)
- [Chauffeur Services](#)

[Auto Europe France Road Trip Planners](#)

[Auto Europe Travel Blog](#)

[Auto Europe France Travel Guide](#)

[Auto Europe Travel Tips](#)

- [Car Rental Fees Information](#)
- [Car Rental Under 25](#)
- [Long-Term Rentals](#)
- [International Driver's Permits](#)
- [Universal Packing List](#)

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