

Trailing your J24 from UK to Europe – some helpful hints and tips

With the J24 Worlds in Rive del Garda this summer, there's going to be a lot of people driving their boats down to the event from the UK, travelling through France and Germany to get to Italy.



Fig 1 - No



Fig 2 - No



Fig 3 - container, unlikely

This not an article about putting your boat on your trailer, keeping your boat on the trailer or giving up and sticking it in a container or paying someone else to deliver the boat for you - return delivery to Garda is about £2750 plus VAT (Jubbie at sailboatdeliveries.co.uk)

Legislation

Understanding the legislation per country will help ensure a safe and hassle free trip. One of the best websites for general information is the RAC, which has a selection of useful Country Guides. It's also worth having a look at www.gov.uk/towing-with-car/weight-and-width-limits; and www.uktow.com for detailed info.

The most important check is the vehicle manufacturer's recommended towing limit, which should be in the vehicle manufacturer's handbook and on the VIN (Vehicle Indication Number) plate on the chassis.

A good rule of thumb, for safety and stability, when towing, is the weight of your trailer – plus any load that it is carrying – should not exceed 85% of the kerb weight of your towing vehicle. The kerb weight is defined as the weight of the vehicle plus a full tank of petrol and 75kg (for the driver and luggage).

Police Forces use the manufacturer's recommended towing limit as their guide. Under no circumstances should the vehicle's gross train weight be exceeded.

The UKTow website lists the following Trailer Width and Length Limits:

If the towing vehicle weighs 3,500 kg or less:

- Maximum trailer width allowed: 2.55 metres
- Maximum trailer length allowed: 7 metres (excluding coupling and drawbar)

If the towing vehicle weighs more than 3,500 kg:

- Maximum trailer width allowed: 2.55 metres

- Maximum trailer length allowed: 12 metres (excluding coupling and drawbar) – must have 4 wheels
- Maximum combined length of towing vehicle and trailer: 18 metres
- Maximum overhang of load from rear of trailer: 3.05 metres

We understand at this point that you are all asking - so what is the width of a J24? Fear not.

You are allowed an overhang of 305mm on either side – which is why towing J24s in the UK is legal... see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overhanging-loads-on-vehicles> for more details. The National Towing and Trailer Association also has useful advice at <https://ntta.co.uk/safe-legal-towing/maximum-trailer-dimensions/>.

If you're unsure about your combined car and boat weights– check it out on the UK Gov or UKTow website – and if in doubt, go to www.gov.uk/find-weighbridge and find your nearest weigh bridge, and get your car and boat weighed together.

So once you have satisfied yourself about the correct weight of your vehicle, trailer and boat; there's a few more things you need to ensure you adhere to when travelling from UK to Europe.

Top Tips

J24 sailors Stuart Jardine and Andy Taylor, have provided some top tips from their experiences to help you prepared in advance and be as safe as possible during any long drives.

1. Make sure your trailer is fully serviced. Ensure the bearings are greased and dust covers in place to prevent overheating. Take spare dust covers.
2. Check tyres are legal on both vehicle and trailer. (see note specific to Germany on tyres below)
3. Check the spare wheel. If the rim is rusty, replace it as the wheel can fail at speed with slight movement of wheel bolts/nuts. This is, according to Andy's experience, much cheaper to replace in the UK rather than once broken down in France! Also note that older model trailer wheels have a different stud pattern
4. Ensure your warning lights and brake lights are working and carry spare bulbs (these are compulsory in France).
5. Take a floor jack for use if required on the trailer
6. Ensure your secondary coupling for braked trailers is attached
7. Keep to the speed limit.
8. Keep to the speed limit.
9. Shall we say it again...

One final hint from Andy includes ensuring you've got Google Translate readily available on your phone!

Country Specific Rules

When driving or towing through Europe, there's some rules specific to particular countries, and some that are generally sensible to follow where ever you are.

In general, when travelling, always ensure you have with you:

- Your full, valid driving licence
- Proof of car insurance (third party or above).
- Proof of ID (Passport).
- V5C registration certificate

In Italy, Civil liability insurance is compulsory. A Green Card is the best option, which can be arranged in advance or taken out at the Italian border.

Regarding insurance, it is advisable before you go to find out from your insurers:

- What, if any, insurance documentation is necessary for the countries you intend to visit
- The extent of the cover provided by your own motor insurance policies for the countries you intend to visit
- The procedure to be followed in the event of an accident in a visited country

Note that in Germany, the tyres on the trailer must not be more than 6 years old. Germany also requires a "100 km/h" sticker to be affixed on the back of the trailer.

In France, you now need a Crit'Air sticker displayed on your car when travelling to certain cities. It costs £3.60 from the official French Crit'Air website. Drivers face an on-the-spot fine of almost £120 if they don't have one. The RAC has good advice on how to apply for a sticker, and which areas it covers (around 25 cities at the moment). You'll need to know your vehicle's emission standards to apply. Go to www.rac.co.uk/drive/news/motoring-news/law-change-for-uk-drivers-in-french-cities/ for more details.

The following is a list of other requirements when towing, applicable to most of Europe.

Marker Board - You MUST have one

The requirements for indicating overhanging loads vary per country but in general these marker boards should be:

- Made out of metal (compulsory in Italy - and thats where we are going)
- square panel measuring 50cm x 50cm.
- Have reflectorized red and white diagonal stripes.



You can make your own, or purchase them from Fiamma stockists or direct from www.hgvdirect.co.uk

Number plates

If you do not have the new Euro style number plates (12 stars with GB) then you need to attach GB stickers to the rear of your vehicle before you set off.

Low emission zones

There are a number of countries that have introduced low emission zones in towns and cities, including; Germany; Italy; Denmark; Czech Republic; France; and Portugal. You can check low emission zones at <http://www.urbanaccessregulations.eu>

Breathalysers in France

If travelling through France, make sure you have a breathalyser to hand. Although it is not a legal requirement anymore we still advise you carry one. Make sure your breathalyser is NF approved.

Navigation systems

In nearly all European countries it is illegal to use a car navigation system which actively searches for mobile speed cameras or interfere with police equipment. If your navigation system warns of fixed speed cameras, you must turn this function off if travelling through France, Germany or Switzerland.

Headlights

Adapt your headlights so that you do not dazzle oncoming traffic by manually adjusting your lights or by using headlight converters. Eurolites are available from most motor accessory shops or on-line at www.travelspot.co.uk. These headlight converters come with a list of over 600 different vehicle types, with corresponding diagrams showing you how to position them. Eurolites are suitable for clear lens, projector and xenon headlights.

In certain countries it is compulsory to use your headlights at all times. Note daytime lights compulsory in Italy, recommended in France and not required in Germany.

Fire extinguishers

Fire extinguishers are not compulsory but are recommended in the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

Warning Triangles

These are compulsory – note you need two if you are towing in Croatia, Spain and Slovenia.

High Visibility Vest

This is required in Italy and France, but not in Germany. In Italy, for example, the high vis vest must be worn if involved in a breakdown or an accident, or alongside a road where stopping or parking is prohibited.

Finally, there's a useful table below showing specific requirements per country.

Country	First aid kit	High visibility vest	Warning triangle	Daytime lights
Austria	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Belgium	No	Yes	Yes	No
Croatia	Yes	Yes	Yes (2 if towing)	Yes (during winter months)
Czech Republic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Denmark	Rec	Rec	Yes	Yes
France	No	Yes	Yes	Rec
Germany	No	No	No	No
Hungary	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ireland	No	No	No	No
Italy	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Luxembourg	No	Yes	Yes	Rec
Netherlands	No	No	Rec	No
Norway	Rec	Rec	Yes	Yes

Country	First aid kit	High visibility vest	Warning triangle	Daytime lights
Portugal	No	Rec	Yes	No
Slovenia	Rec	Yes	Yes (2 if towing)	Yes
Spain	No	Yes	Yes (2 if towing)	No
Sweden	Rec	No	Rec	Yes
Switzlerland	No	No	Yes	Yes
