

ACCESS

Guide

Obtaining A Driving Licence In The Netherlands

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Obtaining a driving licence in the Netherlands

If you find that you are confused by the Dutch laws for obtaining a driving licence, you are not alone. The system can even be confusing to those who administer it. Included in this ACCESS Guide is information obtained from the website of the RDW (*Rijksdienst voor het Wegverkeer*), www.rdw.nl/eng

Rules for everyone

Who must have a driver's licence?

Everyone who lives in the Netherlands and intends to drive a motor vehicle must possess a valid driving licence. You are considered a resident of the Netherlands if your 'usual address' is in this country. 'Usual address' is defined as the address where you spend at least 185 days a year.

Age requirements

You must be 18 years or older to drive a car in the Netherlands. You must be at least 16 to drive a moped.

How soon do you need to obtain a Dutch driving licence?

If you have a valid driving licence from certain countries you are allowed to drive on the strength of that licence for a certain period of time. The length of this time depends on which country issued the licence. The RDW, www.rdw.nl, has further information on the length of these 'probation periods'. Your embassy can also provide you with more information. It should also be noted that every step of the process costs money.

Rules for people who have a licence from one of the following countries

European Union Countries:

Austria	Germany	Malta
Belgium	Greece	Poland
Cyprus	Hungary	Portugal
Czech Republic	Ireland	Slovakia
Denmark	Italy	Slovenia
Estonia	Latvia	Spain
Finland	Lithuania	Sweden
France	Luxembourg	United Kingdom

European Economic Area Countries:

Iceland	Liechtenstein	Norway
Switzerland		

If you have a valid driving licence from any of the countries listed above you may use it for ten years after the date the original was issued. If your driving licence is already older than nine years, you may use it for one year from the day you start living in the Netherlands, if it is still valid. After this period you must obtain a Dutch driving licence. For example, if your original licence was issued in your home country in December 1997, it could be valid in the Netherlands for a maximum of ten

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years after its issue date, which means it could be valid until December 2007. If the expiration date of the original driving licence is before December 2007, you have to exchange it for a Dutch driving licence before that date.

If you have a valid driving licence issued in a country other than those listed above, or in the Dutch Antilles or Aruba, you may use it for up to 185 days after moving to the Netherlands. Before these 185 days elapse, you must have obtained a Dutch driving licence.

There are two ways to obtain a valid Dutch driving licence: by trading in your licence issued in another country or by passing a driving test.

Trading in your licence for a Dutch licence

The best option, and the least expensive, is to simply trade your (still valid) foreign licence for a Dutch licence. However, this is not an option available to many foreign residents.

The option of trading in your licence is available only to the following:

- holders of driving licences issued by European Union Countries and European economic Countries (all of which are listed above)
- holders of driving licences issued by the following countries: Monaco, State of Jersey, Isle of Man, Switzerland, Aruba and Netherlands Antilles
- holders of certain driving licences issued by the following countries:
 - Israel (holders of B, passenger car licences)
 - Japan (holders of IB, passenger car licences and licences for motorcycles larger than 400 cc)
 - Singapore (holders of Class Two licences, motorcycles larger than 400 cc and holders of Class Three licences (passenger car))
 - Taiwan (holders of B, passenger car licences)
 - South Korea– second class ordinary licence
 - Canadian Province of Quebec– class 5
 - Andorra passenger car
 - NATO military employees
- those covered by the 30% regulation (see below)

What is the “30% rule” and who qualifies for it?

The “30% rule” actually relates to taxes. To attract foreigners with certain skills to the country, a rule was enacted which gives those who qualify the privilege of not paying taxes on the first 30% of their income. Another part of the regulation also entitles them, and their family members, to trade in their valid driving licence for a Dutch licence.

To qualify for the 30% tax regulation it is advisable to apply for approval within the first three months of residence in the Netherlands. This special tax benefit will only be granted by the Inspector of Direct Taxes in Heerlen to those who can prove that their work is of essential importance to the Dutch economy. Most of those who qualify have been recruited from abroad because they possess special expertise that is either non-existent or scarce in the Dutch labour market.

How to trade in your existing driving licence for a Dutch licence

To trade in your licence you need to go to your Town Hall (*Gemeentehuis*). The procedure and

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paperwork are as follows:

Contact your town hall and confirm whether you need to make an appointment at the town hall.

You will need to bring:

- legal document of identification
- your foreign driving licence
- one photo (colour)

At the town hall you will have to fill out a form: *Eigen verklaring* or Personal Statement. This is a questionnaire concerning your state of health. If one or more answers are affirmative, you will also need a *Verklaring van Geschiktheid* (Statement of suitability), issued by a doctor (which cannot be your own GP).

If you're trading in your license based on the 30% rule, you will need a copy of the "*beschikking bewijsregel*" statement from the Tax Office in Heerlen. They will make copies of most of these documents, but they will keep your foreign driving licence. That means you will leave the office without any driving licence in your possession. Legally, you are not supposed to drive without a licence.

It may also be a good idea to bring a letter from your employer stating that you need your foreign driving licence returned to you. If you don't have such a letter, your original licence may not be returned to you. If the licensing authorities agree to return your original licence, you will get it in the mail at the same time your Dutch licence is issued.

Rules for those who don't have a valid licence from another country

If you do not have a valid driving licence, for example if your licence has expired, you must take the driving test, administered by the CBR (*Centraal Bureau Rijvaardigheidsbewijzen*). This is the test Dutch citizens must take when they first try to obtain a driving licence. The CBR test consists of a theoretical exam and a practical exam.

The costs for the theoretical exam are in 2010

Theoretical exam A, B and AM (group class)	€33,25
Additional charge: Theoretical exam A, B and AM (individual)	€36,70
Additional charge: Theoretical exam in (group class, in an other language)	€ 5,20

The prices for 2011 are available on

<http://www.cbr.nl/brochure/Tarievenlijst%20CBR%202011.pdf>

The following documents must be submitted when taking a theory test:

- Statement of registration, obtained from the town hall (*Uittreksel bevolkingsregister*), except for some expatriates working at international organisations and embassies who must submit their registration from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- 1 passport sized photo
- valid Residents Permit or ID card

The English language version of the theoretical exam is held only a few times a month; even in a city with many English speaking residents, such as The Hague, so you may have to wait several months

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before you can take it.

Theory test

The test itself lasts about 45 minutes and consists of a set of 50 questions, with ten seconds to answer each. There are three types of questions: yes/no, multiple choice (A, B or C) and open questions (typing in numbers). It is administered in a group session, and the yes/ no questions are answered by pushing the green (yes) or red (no) button on the equipment on your table. Within the 10 seconds you may change your mind (only the last button push counts), but remember that the timer on the screen may overrule that decision. You must have no more than six incorrect answers to pass. The questions are not hard, and may sometimes even be deceptively easy. To ensure that you pass, you concentrate and be careful when answering. You are told almost immediately (about ten minutes) after the test whether or not you have passed.

Practical test

Once you have passed the theoretical test you will receive a certificate stating that you can drive “in theory” but not on the road in a car. Now you may take the practical lessons and apply for the practical examination. Be sure to apply for the practical test as early as possible, as the theoretical test certificate is only valid for one year, so you will have to pass the practical test within this time period.

The driving school will assist you with the paperwork needed to take the test, which is helpful since much of it is in Dutch. They will also make certain that the test you receive will be in English. When you fill out the forms, be sure to list any dates that you are not available to take the exam. Ordinarily, if you cannot make a scheduled examination you forfeit the money for the application and have to begin all over again. However, if they schedule it for a date you listed on the application as ‘not available’, an appeal for a change of date will probably be successful.

The costs for the practical test are around € 200, but may differ, depending on the driving school. This includes the costs for the car, instructor and CBR examiner.

The CBR offers a mock exam (*tussentijdse toets*) to prepare you for the real exam. It is not compulsory, but it can make you feel more at ease during the real test. The costs are the same as for your final exam and the conditions are also equal to those in your final exam. The *tussentijdse toets* can result in exemption for special manoeuvres during your practical exam, such as parallel parking or making a turn in reverse gear.

The following documents must be submitted when taking the driving test:

- proof of valid residential status in the Netherlands
- a completed ‘*eigen verklaring*’ form which can be obtained at the CBR, municipalities or driving schools
- a copy of your foreign-issued driving licence (not an international driving licence)
- a copy of a government issued ID-card (eg passport).

The test itself concentrates on the mechanics of driving (including parallel parking, driving in reverse, smooth performance) as well as adherence to the rules of the road. There are also a few technical things that you may be tested on. For example, you have to be able to read licence plates from 25 metres away.

You can fail the test even though you obey all the laws and can perform all of the required tasks, but

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don't drive smoothly enough. You are told immediately after the test whether or not you have passed. If you fail, you can have another chance after 10 weeks, some more lessons, and more administration fees. If you fail four times (or more!) within five years, then you have the right to take the "easier" version of the test through the BNOR (*Bureau Nader Onderzoek Rijvaardigheid*). This exam is supposedly not easier than the CBR version, but there is more time available to put candidates at their ease. Also, the BNOR exam is taken in quieter locations.

Driving lessons

When you are taking the test it is generally recommended that you enrol in a driving school. For one thing, you cannot take the exam in your personal car. You have to take it in a driving school vehicle, so most people make an application through a driving school.

There are many driving schools throughout the Netherlands. You can consult the telephone directory, contact ACCESS for a list of schools, or rely on word of mouth to find one.

In addition to the driving lessons, you are well advised to obtain a book on driving rules in the Netherlands (available in English) and a set of practice theoretical questions (typically in Dutch, but with an accompanying translation and set of correct answers with explanations available in English).

The standard instruction book is: *Traffic Manual, Driving Licence B*, by J.F. Verstappen (translator: T.C. Warnock), published by VERJO, Sint-Michielsgestel. A book of sample test questions is *Pre-examtest, 535 questions* produced by the same publishers. If you have basic knowledge of Dutch, there are also theory books available in libraries.

The 1994 report, '*Driving Dutch: A Guide for Americans*' by James Kahan and Erik Frinking, of the RAND/European-American Centre for Policy Analysis, recommends that foreigners take the driving lessons. They say it depends on the amount of driving experience you have, but for everyone they "recommend, as an absolute minimum, between two and five lessons, and more if you have any doubts about passing the examination."

The report by Kahan and Frinking goes into some detail about the driving school lessons: "The nature of the lessons vary considerably with the driving instructor and the student. As a student, you should demand that the instructor give you thorough feedback on your performance and that he or she run you through test conditions. You should also take the initiative to discuss driving rules with the instructor if he or she does not talk enough about them."

Some people report having communication problems with their instructor due to a strong accent or a lack of English skills. Be sure that you can understand your instructor properly or your lessons will not go smoothly and you may have to take more lessons than you had planned.

The question of how many lessons to take is difficult. Most people want to keep the number of lessons to a minimum as lessons can be quite expensive, ranging from €30 to €50 per hour. The number of lessons a candidate may need varies from person to person. A minimum of 35 lessons is considered normal for learner drivers and beginners, but some people may require much more.

Even if you have a valid driving licence and you are allowed to drive in the Netherlands, it is a good

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idea to take a few driving lessons. This gives you a chance to learn the special rules and customs of driving in the Netherlands.

Rules for special situations

Drivers aged 60 and over

Some drivers aged 60 to 70 may be required to provide a certificate of fitness. All drivers over 70 are required to have a medical examination in order to prove they are fit to drive. The medical examination must be conducted by a doctor other than your normal family doctor/GP.

Diplomatic and consular staff

Different rules apply to those living in the Netherlands who have been accorded diplomatic or consular staff status, and their families as well as staff from some International Organisations. Generally, persons in this category are able to exchange a licence from their home country for a Dutch licence. The Protocol Department, specifically the Host Nation Division of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs can provide more information, telephone (070) 348 6138 or (070) 348 6490.

Moped licence requirements

If you have a valid driving licence you can ride a moped (*bromfiets*). If you don't, you can still ride a moped if you obtain a moped certificate.

You need to be 18 to obtain a driving licence in the Netherlands, but the age requirement for a moped certificate is only 16. The moped licence isn't necessary if you already hold an A (motorbike) or B (motorcar) licence. The moped theory test is now available in the English language. From 1 January 2010 you also need to take a practical exam as well to obtain a moped licence. In this case the examiner follows you on a moped to observe your driving skills.

The cost for a moped practical exam is in 2010 €95 and in 2011 €95.70 plus driving school costs.

Motorised wheelchairs and other invalid vehicles

If you ride in a motorized wheelchair, or any other type of motorized vehicle for people with physical disabilities, you need a moped certificate or a driving licence.

An example is the so-called "*brommobiel*", a small car with a maximum speed of 45 km/h. These cars are often used by people with physical disabilities.

There are also no age restrictions, provided the motorized device is not capable of speeds greater than 10km/h. If it is, you need to be at least 16 years old.

From March 2010 you need to pass a practical exam to obtain a driving licence for the "*brommobiel*". The cost is in 2010 €95 and in 2011 €95.70 plus driving school costs.

Bicycles

You do not need a licence to ride a bicycle in the Netherlands, and there are no age or insurance restrictions.

Driving in the Netherlands for non-residents

Drivers considered to be international road traffic (tourists and business visitors, for instance) can generally use their own driving licences. In some instances, however, an international driving

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licence is required, namely from countries outside the European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. You should be able to show a driving licence on the spot if you are asked to do so by the police, so always carry it with you when driving.

Sources for additional information

Organisations

Theory tests and road tests:

CBR (Centraal Bureau Rijvaardigheidsbewijzen) Head Office

Postbus 5301

2280 HH Rijswijk (ZH)

(070) 372 0500

0900 227 0227 (€0.15 p/m)

www.cbr.nl (website in English)

On <http://www.cbr.nl/location.pp?option=map&ExamenTypeID=4> you can find the locations where you can take the examination.

RDW (Rijksdienst voor het wegverkeer)

Europaweg 205

2711 ER Zoetermeer

The RDW is an organisation responsible for the registration of vehicles and driving licences.

General information about driving licences, trade-in and registration.

RDW Vehicle Technology & Information Centre

0900 0739 (€ 0.10 p/m)

www.rdw.nl/eng

BNOR (*Bureau Nader Onderzoek Rijvaardigheid*)-Special Driving Test Office

Lange Kleiweg 30

Postbus 3206

2280 GE Rijswijk (ZH)

(070) 413 03 00

Driving licence information for people holding diplomatic or consular staff status

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Protocol Department / Host Nation Division

Tel. (070) 348 6138 or (070) 348 6490

www.minbuza.nl/en/You_and_The_Netherlands/Staff_of_Foreign_Missions_and_International_Organisations/Contact_the_Protocol_Department

Tax Office Heerlen (*Belastingdienst/Limburg/kantoor Buitenland Heerlen*, for 30% rule information)

Postbus 2865, 6401 DJ Heerlen.

Tel. (055) 538 5385

Books

Driving Dutch: A guide for Americans

James P. Kahan and Erik J. Frinking

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RAND/European-American Centre for Policy Analysis, 1994

Traffic Manual: Driving Licence B

J.F. Verstappen (translated by: T.C. Warnock)

Verjo (Publisher), 2010

Pre-examtest, 535 questions

J.F. Verstappen (translated by: T.C. Warnock)

Verjo (Publisher), 2009

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ACCESS guides available for downloading, free of charge, from the ACCESS website:

- Banking
- Childcare and playgroups
- Food from home
- Having a baby in the Netherlands
- Health care
- Housing and accommodation
- Inheritance and wills
- International primary and secondary education
- Learning the Dutch language
- Marriage , registered partnership, cohabitation and ending a relationship
- Obtaining a driving license in the Netherlands
- Post Office
- Public Transport
- Social Security
- Starting your own business
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