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OBTAINING A DRIVING LICENSE IN THE NETHERLANDS

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If you find that you are confused by the Dutch laws for obtaining a driver's license, you are not alone. The system can also be confusing to those who administer it. Included in this booklet is information obtained from the brochure published by the RDW (*Rijksdienst voor het Wegverkeer*), tel.



0900 0739, 'Driving in the Netherlands with a Valid Driving License' and from 'A Guide for Americans' by James Kahan and Erik Frinking of the RAND/European-American Centre.

1. RULES FOR EVERYONE

Who must have a drivers's license?

Everyone who lives in the Netherlands and intends to drive a motor vehicle must possess a valid driver's license. 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 driver's license?

If you have a valid driver's license from certain countries you are allowed to drive on the strength of that license for a certain period of time. How long depends on which country issued the license. 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 license 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 driver's license from any of the countries listed above you may use it for ten years after the date the original was issued. If your driver's license 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 need a Dutch driver's license. For example, if your original license was issued in your home country in December 1997, it could be valid in the Netherlands for a maximum of ten years after its issue date, which means it could be valid until December 2007. If the expiration date of the original driver's license is before December 2007, you have to exchange it for a Dutch driver's license before that date.

If you have a valid driver's license 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



driver's license.

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

Trading in your license for a Dutch license

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

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

- Holders of driver's licenses issued by European Union Countries and European Economic Countries (all of which are listed above);
- Holders of driver's licenses issued by the following countries: Monaco, State of Jersey, Isle of Man, Switzerland, Aruba and Netherlands Antilles ;
- Holders of certain driver's licenses issued by the following countries:
 - Israel (holders of B, passenger car licenses);
 - Japan (holders of IB, passenger car licenses and licenses for motorcycles larger than 400 cc);
 - Singapore (holders of class two licenses, motorcycles larger than 400 cc and holders of class three licenses (passenger car));
 - Taiwan (holders of B, passenger car licenses).
- 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 driver’s license for a Dutch license.

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 driver’s license for a Dutch license

To trade in your license you need to go to your Town Hall (*Gemeentehuis*). The procedure and paperwork are as follows:

Contact your town hall and confirm whether you need to make an appointment at the town hall. Take the identification document issued to you by the foreign police or a stamped passport (showing that you are legally in the Netherlands) along with approximately € 40 (this price may vary by city). You should then receive a certificate from the city register (*uittreksel bevolkingsregister*) stating who you are and where you live. You should also receive a ‘certificate of fitness’ (*eigen verklaring*) which you need to fill out and mail to the special address which appears on the form.

Once you receive the ‘certificate of fitness’ back in the mail you can return to the Town Hall. Bring the health form with you, along with two recent passport photos; your work permit and (if you’re trading in your license based on the 30% rule) a



letter from a lawyer and/or employer (or a copy of the statement issued by the Tax Office in Heerlen) showing proof that you fall under the 30% *vergoedingsregeling*; and your foreign driver's license.

They will make copies of most of these documents, but they will keep your foreign driver's license. That means you will leave the office without any driver's license in your possession. Legally, you are not supposed to drive without a license.

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

2. FOR THOSE WHO DON'T HAVE A VALID LICENSE FROM ANOTHER COUNTRY

If you do not have a valid driver's license, for example if your licence has expired, you must take the driver's test, administered by the CBR (*Centraal Bureau Rijvaardigheidsbewijzen*). This is the test Dutch citizens must take when they first try to obtain a driver's license. The CBR test consists of a theoretical exam and a practical exam. There is a cost of € 32,45 plus euro 5,05 for a test in an other language than dutch (e.g) English). These prices are for both the moped theory test and the 'normal' theory test (for a car) and are valid since 1 January 2009. When you take the theory test in English at the CBR.

The following documentation must be submitted when taking a theory test.

Statement of registration in the town hall (*Uittreksel bevolkingsregister*).

1 Passport size photo

Valid Residents Permit or an ID card

It is very important to note that the 'accelerated test' ceased to exist from 1st January 2006.

The English language version of the theoretical exam is given 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 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 apparatus 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 should be careful and need to concentrate. You are told immediately (after around ten minutes) after the test whether or not you have passed.

Practical test

Once you have passed the theoretical test you will get 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 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 certain 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 following documentation 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 driver’s license (no international driver’s licenses),
- A copy of a government issued ID-card (passport, etc.).

The test itself concentrates on the mechanics of driving (e.g. 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 license 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 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 administrative 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.

3. TAKING 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 License A and B*, by J.F. Verstappen (translator: T.C. Warnock), published by VERJO, Sint-Michielsgestel. A book of sample test questions is *Verstappen's Examen Wegwijzer*, produced by the same publishers. This book comes in two versions, a smaller (100 sample questions) and larger (350 sample questions) edition. The English-language translation of this book and the English-language answers with explanations are pamphlets that must be purchased separately. If you have basic knowledge of Dutch, there are also theory books available in libraries.

In a 1994 report, *'Driving Dutch: A Guide for Americans'*, James Kahan and Erik Frinking, of the RAND/European-American Centre for Policy Analysis, recommend 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 is popular due to the fact that the lessons can be quite expensive, ranging from € 25 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/beginners, but some people may require much more.

Even if you have a valid driver's license and you are allowed to drive in the Netherlands, it is a good idea to take a few driving lessons. This gives a chance to learn the special rules and customs of driving in the Netherlands.

4. RULES FOR SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Drivers 60 and older

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 an other doctor than your normal family doctor.

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. Generally, persons in this

category are able to exchange a license from their home country for a Dutch license. The Protocol Department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs can provide more information, tel. (070) 348 64 86.

Moped license requirements

If you have a valid driver's license you can ride a moped. If you don't, you can still ride a moped if you obtain a moped certificate. If you have already a 'Bromfiets certificaat' you need to exchange this at your local town hall (Gemeentehuis) before 1 October 2009 for Bromfietsrijbewijs (categorie AM).



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

Motorised wheelchairs & other invalid vehicles

If you ride a motorized wheelchair, or other type of motorized vehicle for people with physical disabilities, you need a moped certificate or a driver's license. 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.



Bicycles

You do not need a license to ride a bicycle in the Netherlands, and there are no age 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 driver's licenses. In some instances, however, an international driver's license is required, namely from countries outside the European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. You should be able to show a driver's license if you are asked to do so by the police

5. SOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Organisations

Theory Tests, Road Tests
CBR Head Office
P.O. Box 5301
2280 HH Rijswijk (ZH)
(070) 372 0500

CBR Northern Region
P.O. Box 40
9400 AA Assen
(0592) 324 888

CBR Southern Region
P.O. Box 7936
5605 SH Eindhoven
(040) 250 2802

CBR west–zuid region
P.O. Box 1062
2280 CB Rijswijk (ZH)
(070) 413 0100
<http://rijbewijs.cbr.nl/index.asp?pageid=117>

Booking A Theory Test
0900 227 0227 (€0.15 pm)

BNOR
Special Driving Test Office
(070) 413 0300

General Information About Driver's Licenses, Trade-In And Registration
RDW Vehicle Technology & Information Centre
0900 0739 (€ 0.10 pm)
www.rdw.nl/eng

Driving License Information For People Holding Diplomatic Or Consular Staff Status
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Protocol Department
(070) 348-6486
Fax–(070) 348-4848
www.minbuza.nl



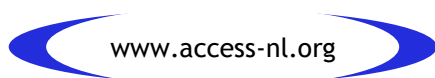
ACCESS also has information booklets covering the following topics in printed form (for purchase) or for free download from the ACCESS website:

- Banking
- Childcare and playgroups
- Food from home
- 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
- Post Office
- Public Transport
- Social Security
- Starting your own business
- Telephone, internet and television
- Vocational and higher education

ACCESS

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If you need more information about this subject, please contact the organizations listed in this information booklet or look at the websites mentioned.