

Trailers and Towing

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This guide has been prepared to answer most of the questions that arise in relation to the use of trailers in Portugal. It has been prepared by researching the relevant Portuguese Laws but, as only a Court is authorised to interpret law, it is not a legally binding document.

Registration (Matriculation)

A trailer is a vehicle, as such it has to be registered and issued with its own registration number.

Trailers with a MAM (Maximum Authorised Mass) not exceeding 300 kg are exempt from this requirement (i.e. a small camping trailer), in which case it must display the registration number of the vehicle it is attached to.

MAM is not the weight of the empty trailer, nor is it the weight of the trailer plus any load its carrying. It is the maximum weight the trailer has been designed and built to carry. All trailers must have a manufacturers plate affixed showing their MAM.

Driving Licence

To tow a trailer you must have Category E attached to the relevant vehicle Category on your driving licence (i.e. B+E for cars).

Category E is not required when towing a trailer with a MAM not exceeding 750 kg provided the MAM of the towing vehicle and trailer does not exceed 3500 kg.

It is possible to tow a trailer with a MAM exceeding 750 kg without Category E only if the MAM of the trailer does not exceed 50% of the TARE weight of the

towing vehicle **and** the MAM of the combination does not exceed 3500 kg. (TARE is the unladen weight of the towing vehicle).

If you passed your driving test in the UK prior to January 1997 you will have been automatically given Category E on your UK licence.

Vehicle specifications

The specifications of the towing vehicle will indicate the ability of the vehicle to tow weights in excess of those mentioned above. These weights will only become the relevant weights for towing if the driver has Category B+E on their licence.

Example

The 2005 Range Rover Vogue TDV6 is a big heavy vehicle with a Tare weight of 2510 kg, a MAM of 3050 kg, and the capability to tow a trailer weighing up to 3500 kg.

Holders of a B+E licence can therefore load the Range Rover up to its MAM of 3050 kg and attach a loaded trailer weighing 3500 kg resulting in a combination with a total mass of 6550 kg.

Those who only hold a Category B licence are limited to trailers with a MAM of 750 kg or a larger one with a MAM not exceeding 50% of the Range Rover Tare weight. However they can't because 750 kg added to the MAM of the Range Rover gives a combined MAM of 3800 kg which exceeds the 3500 kg MAM combination limit applicable to them. Using the second part that allows trailers with a MAM not exceeding 50% of the Tare weight of the towing vehicle (1255 kg) results in a combination MAM of 4305 kg, which again exceeds the 3500 kg limit.

Deducting the MAM of the Range Rover (3050 kg) from the blanket 3500 kg MAM combination limit reveals that the biggest trailer a Category B licence holder can tow with this Rang Rover is one with a MAM not exceeding 450 kg.

The interaction of the relevant weights and definitions for Category B licence holders is such that the driver of a 2017 Renault Clio with a 900 cc petrol engine can legally tow a bigger trailer than the Range Rover, specifically one with a MAM of 750 kg and still be below the 3500 kg combination MAM limit. (Yes. I agree it is ridiculous but nevertheless it is what it is)

This comparison proves that size does matter.

Visitors

Non residents of Portugal can use their vehicles and trailers as temporary visitors (tourists) for up to 6 months in any 12 month period provided the combination complies with all laws applicable to their use in the country of origin and the driver meets the Portuguese age requirements for driving that combination.