More Information

If you would like more details on the information in this handbook, please contact:

VicRoads Tel: 13 11 71

Latest information on road laws

Road laws change from time to time, and so do the knowledge tests. Make sure you have the most recent edition of this handbook and any update information sheets relating to motorcycles. The Road to Solo Driving has details of road laws and the VicRoads website – vicroads.vic.gov.au – also carries information on laws and any changes.

If you are in doubt, contact VicRoads (Tel: 13 11 71).

Further help in developing your riding skills

VicRoads Accredited Motorcycle Training and Assessment Service Providers (Accredited Motorcycle Trainers) can provide advice and help get you started – see page 84 for details. Most provide advanced rider training courses as well as those for beginners.

Discover Safe Riding is designed to help you to build experience and skills once you get on the road. This booklet is available from the VicRoads website - vicroads.vic.gov.au

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Using this handbook

This handbook has been produced to help you to become a competent, safe motorcycle rider. It is based on an approach called defensive riding.

Anyone going for a Victorian motorcycle learner permit or Victorian motorcycle licence will find it valuable. So will anyone who wants to be up to date with roadcraft and defensive riding – with survival. Whether you are new to motorcycling or coming back after a break, this book is for you.

The handbook is divided into sections covering different aspects of riding. You should read them all, and try the ‘Check your understanding’ questions which follow. The questions let you:

- review the information
- check your understanding
- become familiar with the style of questions in the Motorcycle Learner Permit Knowledge Test.

Road safety is important to all road users, but it is especially important to motorcyclists. In a crash you have less protection than a driver. Motorcyclists make up more than 16% of all Victorian road fatalities and serious injuries although motorcycles account for less than 1% of travel.

Please keep in mind that getting your licence, even after all the training, does not necessarily make you a competent and safe rider. Learning to ride in a safe environment, away from the road, can give you skills, but it is not the same as being out there in the real world with traffic and unpredictable road conditions.

It takes years of practice to learn all the skills and correct riding techniques. As a young or inexperienced rider, you are almost three times more likely to be involved in a crash than an experienced rider. In the meantime, this book can be a great help.
When it says ‘**must**’ in this handbook, it is telling you something that a law specifically requires you to do. When it is advice, it says ‘should’.

When it says ‘bike’, this means any motorcycle (including road, trail, motor scooter and trike). If it is talking about a specific kind of bike (say one with a sidecar) it will use more specific terms. Otherwise, it will simply say ‘bike’. When it says ‘rider’ it means any motorcycle (including road, trail, motor scooter and trike) rider.

**Special note - oral tests**

If you have trouble reading or writing, an oral test can be arranged. An Accredited Motorcycle Provider can get an interpreter for you if you have trouble with English. Tell them when you are booking your test if you need an oral test or an interpreter. The locations of Accredited Motorcycle Providers and contact details for VicRoads Customer Service Centres can be found on pages 86 and 87.

The Accredited Motorcycle Provider must obtain a clearance from VicRoads prior to you being assessed for your Motorcycle Learner Permit or Licence Assessment.

**Further information**

More information, including several other booklets, is available from VicRoads by visiting vicroads.vic.gov.au or calling 13 11 71.

Other helpful publications available include:
- *Road to Solo Driving* – handbook for new drivers/riders

More road safety information is available from:
- TAC Motorcycling – spokes.com.au
- TAC – tacsafety.com.au
Getting ready

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Getting ready

Basic things you need to know and do before getting on a bike

You may be beginning to ride a bike for the first time, or returning to riding after a break. Either way you need to know about getting a motorcycle learner permit and licence and the laws that apply to newly licensed riders. You also need to know about the hazards for riders and ways you can reduce the risks. Remember it will take time to build your skills and experience.

If you want to ride a motorcycle with a manual transmission you should train on a bike with a manual transmission.

If you pass the assessment on a bike with an automatic transmission you will be limited to riding these types of bikes for three years unless you are reassessed on a manual bike.
How do I get a Victorian motorcycle licence?

The licensing process is designed to make sure that you are a competent and safer rider by the time you get your licence. The various stages, training and assessments are designed to give you basic information and skills, but always remember that there is nothing like experience to make riding safer.

In general, your assessment must be completed on a two-wheeled bike. You may not attempt the assessment on a bike fitted with a sidecar.

The stages of the licensing process are simple. You must be at least 18 years of age and have held your motorcycle learner permit for a continuous period of three months immediately before the motorcycle licence is granted.

You then:

- book your motorcycle licence assessment
- provide evidence of identity
- complete the assessment and if you pass, pay for the licence
- receive your motorcycle licence.

Tip

To find out more about training in your local area, see the list of Accredited Motorcycle Trainers on page 86 or phone VicRoads on 13 11 71.
How do I get a motorcycle learner permit?

You can apply for a motorcycle learner permit if you are at least 18 years old. The permit is valid for 15 months and cannot be extended. To obtain a new motorcycle learner permit you must pass the assessments. For details on the assessments visit [vicroads.vic.gov.au](http://vicroads.vic.gov.au).

- Unless you already have an Australian or New Zealand car learner permit or driver licence, you **must** also pass the Car Learner Permit Knowledge Test to check your understanding of road law. This test consists of 32 multiple choice questions based on the Road to Solo Driving handbook, to test your knowledge of road law and road safety. Overseas permit or licence holders should contact VicRoads to find out test requirements.

- You **must** also pass the Motorcycle Learner Permit Knowledge Test, based on this handbook. The test consists of 32 multiple choice questions on safe riding and on the law specific to motorcycles. The questions in the ‘Check your understanding’ sections of this handbook are similar to the actual test questions, but they are not the same.

- You **must** obtain a medical clearance by VicRoads if you have a medical condition, and successfully complete the assessments. As you will be allowed to ride on the road on your own once you have the permit, it is essential that you are medically fit and have the skills to control a motorcycle.

How do I get a motorcycle licence?

You can apply for a licence if you are at least 18 years old and have held a current Victorian or interstate motorcycle learner permit for a continuous period of three months immediately before the motorcycle licence is granted. Overseas motorcycle learner permits are not recognised. To obtain a licence:


- Unless you already have a driver licence, you **must** pass a Hazard Perception Test to see how safely you respond to traffic situations.

As the learner permit period cannot be renewed, make sure you book early for your licence assessment - at least 4 weeks before your learner permit expires.

**Fact**

*If you already hold an Australian car learner permit or driver licence which is subject to a condition such as an alcohol interlock condition, your motorcycle learner permit or licence will be issued subject to that condition. To understand your obligations, you should seek legal advice.*
The law for motorcyclists

Bike riders must obey the same road laws as drivers. The Road to Solo Driving handbook has general road law information for all road users. There are also some laws that are only for learners or newly licensed riders.

Refer to page 9.
While you are a learner rider, you must:

- display an ‘L’ plate on the rear of the motorcycle so that it is clearly visible from 20 metres
- carry your learner permit at all times when riding (or a receipt until your learner permit is received)
- only ride a bike which is approved under the Learner Approved Motorcycle Scheme (LAMS)
- not carry a pillion passenger (a motorcycle and sidecar is acceptable with a passenger)
- ride with zero blood alcohol concentration (BAC)
- not ride a bike towing a trailer
- ride with headlight on at all times
- wear a securely fitted and fastened high visibility vest or jacket whilst riding
- ride only a motorcycle fitted with an automatic transmission if you passed the ride assessment on an automatic motorcycle
- not use a hands free or hand held mobile phone, or send or read text messages
- not motorcycle lane filter.

**High visibility vest or jacket**

All motorcycle learners must wear a high visibility vest or jacket.

A high visibility vest or jacket must meet one of the standards listed below and be labelled or marked with the appropriate standard. It must also be securely fitted and fastened.

The standards for a day and night high visibility vest or jacket are:

- AS/NZS 4602.1:2011 High visibility garments
- ISO20471 High visibility - Test methods and requirements
What is the law for new licensed riders?
While you hold a restricted motorcycle licence, you must:
- ride with a zero blood alcohol concentration (BAC)
- only ride a bike which is approved under the Learner Approved Motorcycle Scheme (LAMS)
- not carry a pillion passenger (a motorcycle and sidecar is acceptable with a passenger)
- not ride a bike towing a trailer
- ride with headlight on at all times
- ride only a motorcycle fitted with an automatic transmission if you passed the ride assessment on an automatic motorcycle
- carry your licence at all times when riding (or a receipt until your licence is received)
- not use a hands free or hand held mobile phone, or send or read text messages.

The restriction period is 3 years.
Probationary riders must also:
- display a ‘P’ plate on the rear of the bike that is clearly visible from 20 metres
- ride with a zero blood alcohol concentration (BAC)
- carry your licence at all times when riding (or a receipt until your licence is received)
- not use a hands free or hand held mobile phone, or send or read text messages.
Helmets

Riders and their passengers must wear helmets approved to Australian Standard AS 1698, AS/NZ 1698 or European Standard ECE 22.05, and these must be securely fitted and fastened on their heads.

All helmets must be marked to show that they are certified as meeting the standard. Please see VicRoads website for more information on certification marks.

Parking

Unless otherwise signed, you may legally park a bike (but not a trike) on the footpath in Victoria as long as you do not obstruct pedestrians, delivery vehicles, public transport users or parked cars.

Do not park:
- near or on service access points such as Telstra pit covers and post boxes
- too close to the building line, as this can create an obstruction to vision impaired pedestrians.

For more information visit vicroads.vic.gov.au

Hook turns

When turning right bikes must make hook turns where these are indicated, and must make them exactly as cars do. See Road to Solo Driving for a description of hook turns.

Motorcycle lane filtering

Lane filtering is when a motorcycle or scooter travels at low speeds through stopped or slow moving traffic unless otherwise signed.

Motorcycle learner permit holders are not permitted to lane filter.
Lane splitting and restricted lanes

Avoid lane splitting, which is riding between lines of moving vehicles at over 30km/h.

You **must not** ride your motorcycle in tram lanes, bus lanes, bicycle lanes or other lanes designated for special vehicles. Exceptions permitted under the road rules are when entering or leaving the road or where you otherwise have to cross the lane, or where signs indicate you may do so. See the *Road to Solo Driving* for more details.

Passenger

Only one pillion passenger may be carried if your licence is not restricted. The passenger **must** be provided with footpegs and their feet **must** reach these footpegs. The pillion passenger **must** sit astride the motor bike and behind the rider, face forward and keep both feet on the footpegs.

Children under eight years of age **must not** travel as passengers on motor bikes. However, they are still permitted to travel in a sidecar.
Travelling in a sidecar
When a sidecar is used, it must not carry more than the number of passengers for which it is designed.

Carrying animals
Animals must not be carried between the handlebars and the rider of a motor bike. However, there is an exemption for farmers travelling up to 500 metres on a road when undertaking farming activities.

Vehicle impoundment
The vehicle impoundment laws (also known as hoon laws) apply to riders of motor bikes. Your motor bike may be impounded by the police if you are detected committing an offence such as excessive speeding, improper use of a motor vehicle (for example burnouts), or driving while disqualified.

Crash management
Your responsibilities if you are involved in a crash are exactly the same as for a driver. For full details, see Road to Solo Driving. This booklet also has a lot of other information about road laws.

Check your understanding
Answers to these review questions are upside down at the bottom of this page.

1. You are riding with a pillion passenger, the pillion passenger:
   A. can sit sideways
   B. is allowed to face rearward
   C. can be 9 years old

2. Angela holds both probationary car and probationary motorcycle licences. When riding her motorcycle she:
   A. must display a ‘P’ plate on the rear of her motorcycle
   B. does not need to display a ‘P’ plate
   C. must display a ‘P’ plate on the front and rear of her motorcycle

3. Steve holds a probationary licence. He may legally ride his bike if:
   A. he has not had a drink for a while
   B. he has no alcohol in his blood, that is, his Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) is zero
   C. he has a BAC below .05

Answers: 1C 2A 3B
Beware of...

There are more hazards out on the road than a beginner can imagine, so it makes sense to try to be ready for anything. Riders returning after a break will find that the number of vehicles on the road and the speeds at which they can travel have increased significantly and motorcycles are different too.

Build up your skills gradually – by getting used to riding in daylight, for example, before tackling night riding. You are almost twice as likely to have a crash in your first 8 months on the road, and it takes some time for the odds to get much better.

In the meantime, give yourself an extra margin of safety by slowing down, giving yourself more space on the road and thinking well ahead. Ride with the right attitude – don’t be overconfident, impatient or in the wrong mood to ride, such as when you are angry or upset.

Experience will teach you to identify potential dangers, work out just how dangerous they are and how best to cope with them. Sections Staying Alive and Here’s trouble of this handbook contain more about hazards and how to detect and handle them. But there are some things that stay dangerous no matter how much experience you have.
Alcohol

The law says that road users with a full licence must have a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) below .05g/100ml. Riders holding a learner permit, a probationary licence or a restricted motorcycle licence must have a zero BAC. There is a good reason for these restrictions.

Alcohol combined with riding is dangerous because it:

- affects your judgement and reduces your ability to judge risks including distance and your own and other vehicles’ speed
- affects your sense of balance
- gives you a false sense of confidence, which may encourage you to take risks
- makes it difficult to concentrate and do more than one thing at a time – as well as possibly not being in control of your bike, you may simply not see hazards, or not react to them properly
- slows your reaction time, making you more likely to crash.

If you are a drink driving offender and have been disqualified from driving then, after completing your disqualification, it is likely that when you get your licence or permit back, you will need to have an alcohol interlock fitted to your motorcycle. An alcohol interlock prevents the motorcycle starting if the rider has been drinking alcohol.

Other drugs or medical conditions

Any kind of drug, legal or illegal, could make you drowsy, dizzy, weak or otherwise less capable of riding a motorcycle. That is why it is an offence to ride while impaired by a drug.

Check with a pharmacist or doctor to see if the drugs you are taking are likely to affect your riding. Combining drugs with alcohol or other drugs can be especially dangerous.

Cannabis is a major concern because it may reduce riding skills, cause lapses in attention and reduce your ability to process information.

Police may undertake roadside saliva testing of drivers and riders to detect the presence of speed or Ice (Methamphetamine), cannabis (THC) and ecstasy (MDMA). Driving with these drugs in the blood or saliva is an offence and penalties (including licence loss) will apply.

If you have a medical condition which might affect your ability to ride, such as diabetes or epilepsy, you must check with VicRoads whether you are eligible for a permit or licence. If you develop such a condition once you have a permit or licence you must advise VicRoads.

Tip

If in doubt about any kind of drug you’ve taken, don’t ride.
**Tiredness**

Riding a motorcycle is harder and more physically tiring than driving a car. It can tire you more quickly. Tiredness, or fatigue, makes it more difficult for you to make decisions, especially quick decisions. Being tired affects concentration, balance and vision. Riding smoothly, which is the safest way to ride, is almost impossible when you are tired.

Make your riding less tiring by:

- protecting yourself from the weather with proper clothing - heat and dehydration will tire you just as surely as cold and rain, and full protective clothing will help prevent dehydration
- avoiding alcohol and drugs
- planning regular, frequent stops into your trip
- being well rested before you start
- not riding during those times when you would normally be asleep.

**Relying on other road users for your safety**

Relying on other road users for your safety can be a major hazard. Always remember that you are responsible for your own safety. Don’t ever rely on other road users to look after you. Even if you are wearing high visibility clothing and making eye contact, do not assume that they have seen you.

**Tip**

*Motorcycling is a complex activity that constantly challenges you. You may not be able to meet the challenge if you’re not fully alert. Avoid riding when you are tired.*
Check your understanding

Answers to these review questions are upside down at the bottom of this page.

1. You are planning a trip to Adelaide, but you have a cold. You want to take medication. You should
   A. take some medicine to make you feel better
   B. ask your doctor or pharmacist whether the cold medicine will make you sleepy or drowsy
   C. try to get there as quickly as possible so that you can rest when you arrive

2. You are planning to ride to Sydney from Melbourne. It is a perfect summer’s day with the temperature around 25 degrees Celsius. You should plan to:
   A. get there in eight hours because the conditions are so good
   B. get there with only one stop because the conditions are so good
   C. make regular, frequent stops to keep yourself alert

3. Here are three types of drugs which people sometimes take: alcohol, medicines prescribed by a doctor and medicines sold by a chemist. Which drug may affect your riding?
   A. Only alcohol
   B. Only medicines given to you by your doctor
   C. All three types

ANSWERS 1B 2C 3C
On the road

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On the road

Making choices and staying in control

One of the most valuable resources you have as a beginner rider, or as someone coming back to riding, is the knowledge and experience of other motorcyclists. Use it. Ask around when you are considering buying a bike, clothing or accessories. Ask about anything you’re not sure of. But always make sure you balance advice; read up on the subject too, and ask more than one person. Don’t just collect the prejudices of others. Accredited Motorcycle Trainers can provide good advice as well as training.
What to wear

Wearing the right gear is vital to your safety and comfort – if you aren’t comfortable, you aren’t safe, either. But always remember that even the best safety equipment won’t protect you from everything. Ride just as carefully as you would if you were out there without it!

Helmet

By law, every rider and passenger, including pillion and sidecar passengers, must wear a helmet that is certified to meet Australian Standard AS1698, AS/NZ 1698 or European Standard ECE 22.05. The helmet must be securely fitted and fastened on your head. Don’t underrate this. A helmet will reduce the chance of serious head injury if you crash, and may well keep you alive.

Your helmet must be marked to show that it complies with the AS 1698, AS/NZS 1698 standard or European standard ECE 22.05. A face shield or visor must meet the Australian Standard AS 1609 or meet appropriate European standard. For helmets manufactured or imported from 1 July 2012, the helmet must be marked with the symbol of a body accredited by the Joint Accreditation System of Australia and New Zealand (JAS-ANZ), certifying compliance with the relevant standard. For more information on the certification marks visit vicroads.vic.gov.au. Details of current accredited bodies can be found at jas-anz.org. Look for this marking when you buy a helmet and do not remove it. If your helmet does not have the sticker, you could be fined.
Buy a new helmet that fits snugly and securely when done up. Helmet interiors are designed to mould to one head shape; anyone else wearing that helmet will have limited protection. Although it may not be noticeable, used helmets may also be damaged.

Even the best helmets are designed to take only one impact. You will not necessarily be able to see damage, so buy a new helmet.

Even dropping a helmet on the ground can damage it. Helmets deteriorate with use and even in storage. Look for wear such as loose or compressed padding and exposed metal, and damage like cracks and frayed straps. A new helmet only costs money, whereas an old one could result in brain damage.

Get a helmet that can be easily seen. If other road users can see you, even in poor light or bad weather, they can avoid you. But don’t ever rely on others seeing you! The responsibility for staying out of trouble is yours.

**Tip**

Clean your helmet with mild soap and water. Don’t use solvents like petrol or methylated spirits, because these can attack the material of the helmet. For the same reason, avoid painting your helmet or applying stickers.

---

**Checklist**

Your helmet **must**:
- show that it is certified to meet the AS 1698, AS/NZ 1698 or ECE 22.05 standard
- fit snugly and securely when done up.

Your helmet **should**:
- be bought new
- be in good condition
- be checked regularly
- be easily seen
- be cleaned according to the manufacturer’s instructions
- be replaced if it has received a hard knock.
Eye and face protection
Your face and especially your eyes need protection from the wind, dust, rain, insects and stones. Visors or goggles (worn with some helmets like the ones used for dirt bikes) give this protection. If you wear sunglasses instead, make sure that they really do protect your eyes and that they are impact resistant. Tinted eye protection must not be worn at night because it makes it difficult for you to see properly. Scratches on the surface of any eye protection can blur and distort light at night and should be replaced.

Clothing
For the legal requirements for high visibility vests or jackets refer to page 9.
Motorcycle clothing is designed to protect you from injury, and should help you to be seen. It should also be comfortable and keep you warm.
Being seen is an obvious aid to safety. To protect you from injury, motorcycle clothing will have padding and be made of special abrasion-resistant material. Leather probably still offers the best abrasion protection, but may not be suitable in hot, wet or cold conditions. Synthetic textile-based jackets and pants are now available and many of them are highly effective.
Good gear will be designed to stay comfortable even after some time on the bike, and will not balloon out or flap. Wet weather gear will keep you dry, and should also be brightly coloured because visibility may be poor when you are wearing it.
Proper motorcycle clothing will also be warm or offer ventilation, depending on the season. All of these things are important because discomfort, heat and cold will reduce your concentration, slow your reflexes and make you less able to control your bike properly. Several manufacturers now offer well-vented clothing for summer.
For all of these reasons it is worth buying proper motorcycle clothing. Use your information sources – talk to experienced riders, read up on different items of clothing and ask questions in bike shops.

Checklist
Your face shield or visor must meet Australian Standard AS 1609 or appropriate European standard. There is no Australian Standard for goggles or sunglasses specific to motorcycle use, but any eye protection you use should:
- be free of scratches
- be impact resistant
- not restrict your vision to either side
- be fastened securely so that it does not rattle or blow off
On the road

Warm weather riding gear comes in a range of styles. It includes pants such as these with plenty of protection, but that look the same as jeans.

Choose the right full protective gear to suit the weather conditions.

Wet weather riding gear includes jackets and pants that have interlocking zippers to prevent leakage.
Checklist

Jackets and pants (or one-piece suits) should:

- be equipped with protectors at elbows and knees, and preferably spine, hips, shoulders and chest as well
- cover your arms and legs completely, even in hot weather
- fit snugly at neck, wrists, ankles and waist when you are riding
- keep you comfortable
- be brightly coloured
- be securely fastened.

Leather riding suit.
**Checklist**

**Gloves or gauntlets** should:
- be designed for motorcycle riding, with fingers that allow you to use the bike’s controls easily and give you a good, comfortable grip
- be made of strong leather or a high-quality synthetic material
- fit snugly and securely (especially around the wrists) to prevent them coming off in a crash.

**Checklist**

**Boots should**:
- be designed for motorcycle riding and be made of strong leather or a strong synthetic material with reinforcements
- cover your ankles, preferably with some kind of reinforcement
- have strong non-slip soles
- not have rings, laces, other bits sticking out or elastic sides - they could slip off or catch on the motorcycle and be pulled off in a crash, leaving your feet unprotected.
What to ride

Choosing a motorcycle is one of the most enjoyable things a rider does, and it can have a major impact on how much you enjoy your riding and how safe you are. If you use your information sources – talk to experienced riders, read up on different bikes and ask questions in bike shops – you’re most likely to end up with the best choice for you. One of the best sources of information is your Accredited Motorcycle Trainer.

Also consider the various safety technology now available such as Motorcycle Stability Control (MSC) system when choosing a new motorcycle.
Types of bikes

Road bikes and trikes are designed to travel on sealed surfaces and have appropriate road tyres.

Motor scooters are small two-wheelers, usually with a lot of bodywork and the engine mounted at the back on the swingarm.

Road/trail bikes range from small and light machines right up to huge, heavy adventure tourers.

Tip

There are also off-road bikes that are designed for recreational riding, such as motocross and track racing. Others in this class are ag (agricultural) bikes, intended for farm use, and recreational four-wheelers. Usually none of them can be registered for on-road use.
Which bike is right for you?

You must only ride a bike which is approved under the Learner Approved Motorcycle Scheme (LAMS) whilst you hold a motorcycle learner permit and a restricted motorcycle licence.

You should feel comfortable and in control while handling the bike, which means it should not be too tall or too heavy for you.

Riding someone else’s bike

It can be risky to ride a borrowed or rented bike. You will be unfamiliar with its controls and responses, and even if it is the same model as your own, it may not be in good mechanical condition. Ideally you should get as much experience on your own bike, before attempting to ride a borrowed or rented bike. If in doubt, don’t ride an unfamiliar bike. However, if riding an unfamiliar bike you should:

- familiarise yourself with the controls
- make all the same safety checks you would make with your own bike
- ride more cautiously than you would on your own bike.

Riding off-road

If you go riding off-road (often called dirt riding) in places such as State Forests, State Parks and National Parks there are some things you need to remember.

- Your bike must be registered (full or recreation registration) and roadworthy, and you must hold an appropriate permit or licence.
- Your learner permit and licence conditions still apply.
- You must wear an approved helmet, and you should wear protective clothing. Bike shops stock this as ‘enduro’ or ‘motocross’ (MX) gear.
- In Victoria, bikes with recreation registration may only be ridden on local roads outside built-up areas. Built-up areas are defined by speed zones of less than 100 km/h. They must not be ridden on freeways and arterial roads as specified in the Road Management Act 2004.
- If you are riding a bike with recreation registration, you must not carry any load (including panniers) or a pillion passenger.
- If you go off the beaten track, you should advise someone reliable where you are going and when you expect to return.