

# Why in Britain, Do We Drive on the Left?

Submitted by Tim Burston

About a quarter of the world drives on the left, and the countries that do are mostly old British colonies.

Japan also drives on the left.

This strange quirk perplexes the rest of the world; however, there is a perfectly good reason.

Up to the late 1700's, everybody travelled on the left side of the road because it's the sensible option for feudal, violent societies of mostly right-handed people.

Jousting knights with their lances under their right arm naturally passed on each other's right, and if you passed a stranger on the road you walked on the left to ensure that your protective sword arm was between yourself and him.

Revolutionary France, however, overturned this practice as part of its sweeping social rethink. A change was carried out all over continental Europe by Napoleon. The reason it changed under Napoleon was because he was left handed his armies had to march on the right so he could keep his sword arm between him and any opponent.

From then on, any part of the world which was at some time part of the British Empire was thus left hand and any part colonized by the French was right hand.

In America, the French colonized the southern states (Louisiana for instance) and the Canadian east coast (Quebec)

The Dutch colonized New York (or New Amsterdam).

The Spanish and Portugese colonized the southern Americas. So The British were a minority in shaping the 'traffic'.

The drive-on-the-right policy was adopted by the USA, which was anxious to cast off all remaining links with its British colonial past.

Once America drove on the right, left-side driving was ultimately doomed.

If you wanted a good reliable vehicle, you bought American, for a period they only manufactured right-hand-drive cars.

From then on many countries changed out of necessity. Today, the EC would like Britain to fall into line with the rest of Europe, but this is no longer possible. It would cost billions of pounds to change everything round.

The last European country to convert to driving on the right was Sweden in 1967. While everyone was getting used to the new system, they paid more attention and took more care, resulting in a reduction of the number of road accident casualties.

Since September 2009 Samoa drives on the left instead of the right.

The main reason for this is that they want to use right-hand-drive cars, for instance from Japan and New Zealand, which both drive on the left.

## Countries that drive on the **LEFT** include:-

Anguilla	Channel Islands	Jamaica	Pakistan	Tanzania
Antigua & Barbuda	Cyprus	<a href="#">Japan</a>	Papua New Guinea	Thailand
Australia	Dominica	Kenya	Samoa	Tonga
Bahamas	Eire-Ireland	Lesotho	Seychelles	Trinidad and Tobago
Bangladesh	England	Macau	Scotland	Turks and Caicos Islands
Barbados	Falkland Islands	Malawi	Singapore	Uganda
Bermuda	Fiji	Malaysia	Solomon Islands	US Virgin Islands
Bhutan	Grenada	Malta	South Africa	Zambia
Botswana	Guyana	Mauritius	Sri Lanka	Zimbabwe
British Virgin Islands	Hong Kong	Montserrat	St Kitts & Nevis	St. Vincent & Grenadines
Brunei	India	Mozambique	St. Helena	Wales
Cayman Islands	Indonesia	Namibia	St. Lucia	
	Isle of Man	Nepal	Surinam	
		New Zealand	Swaziland	
		Northern Ireland		

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