



CANADA REMEMBERS GUIDE

Driving Tips!

I created the Canada Remembers Guide website because I wanted to help fellow Canadians find our WW1 and WW2 cemeteries and memorials in France and Belgium.

Most of the locations of WW1 cemeteries and memorials in Northern France and Belgium are in quite small, sometimes very remote locations. While there is generally ample room at the sides of the roads to park while visiting these locations, the driving itself can be a bit different than what you may be accustomed to at home so you should do a little research before arriving about traffic rules and ask the car rental agency if you have specific questions. Here are a few tips for getting around.



Unmarked Intersections

In places where there are no traffic signals or signs telling drivers who has the right-of-way, the rule in France is “priorité à droite” or priority to the right. Occasionally, towns will have small signs indicating whether you have the priority as you come around a

curve where there is a blind intersection but, if not, just be aware that a car may reach an intersection of two roads at the same time as you and, if it is unmarked, that driver has the right-of-way.



When turning onto a road, the inverted triangle with the words “Cédez le passage” means that you should check for traffic before making the turn and, if there is none, carry on without coming to a full stop. However, if there is a stop sign, you must always come to a full stop.

Roundabouts

North Americans sometimes find roundabouts intimidating but they are everywhere in Europe, especially in rural areas and small towns, so I want to convince you to love them! Roundabouts work incredibly well for slowing traffic without stopping it, at places where multiple roads converge.

The main rule of thumb is that drivers already in the roundabout have the right-of-way at most roundabouts. You will know this because the signs will say, “Cédez le passage” which means that ***you must yield*** to the others or “Vous n’avez pas la priorité” which means ***you do not have the priority***.

Upon approaching the roundabout, you should stop or at least reduce your speed to a safe crawl and check to the left to see if there is an opening, at which point you can enter.



It is polite to signal when you are exiting the roundabout. You will notice that most European drivers will signal just before exiting, which helps drivers trying to enter the roundabout see an opening for themselves.

Larger roundabouts have two lanes leading to the roundabout and within it. You will notice that drivers who plan to go all the way around the ring to the last exit will be in the leftmost of those two lanes and may even be signaling LEFT as they are waiting to enter the roundabout. This can be confusing for North American drivers because it feels like we are all making a gentle RIGHT upon entering the roundabout.

However, this is an important courtesy to let other drivers in the roundabout (and those waiting to enter it) know that *this driver will be in the inner lane until the last exit*. If the roundabout is at the convergence of several roads and those drivers take the 3rd or 4th or 5th exit, which will be three-quarters of way or more around the roundabout, then it is, in fact, a left turn; it's just done with no stoplights.

There are some other, older types of “rond-points”, especially in small towns where the famous “priorité à droite” is the rule once again. If there is no sign telling you that you have to yield (“cedez”), then just go slowly and proceed with great caution and do not be surprised if a vehicle jumps in from the right ahead of you.

Narrow Roads

Some towns use traffic-calming obstacles, which reduce roads to one lane in school areas or near shops where there are a lot of pedestrians. When approaching these areas, the speed will be greatly reduced and there will be only enough room for one car at a time. If you have the right of way, the sign that you see will have a black arrow pointing in the direction you are travelling and a red arrow coming the other way, meaning the oncoming car must yield to you. If you see a red arrow in the direction you are travelling, you must yield.

Traffic Lights

Sometimes there are only small traffic lights at the side of the intersection and not overhead, so do not go too far into the intersection or you will be past the traffic signal and you will have no idea when the lights change (been there, done it ... not good).

Driving with GPS

When you rent a car, ask the rental agency to change the GPS to the English language so that you can use both the car and your mobile phone to locate cemeteries and memorials.

You need to use the exact names and check spelling. In some cases, the names of the towns have changed; for example, Ieper used to be called Ypres so the cemeteries and memorials say “Ypres” but they are in Ieper. Other examples:

the PASSCHENDAELE NEW BRITISH CEMETERY is in Passendale,
the POELCAPELLE BRITISH CEMETERY is in Poelkapelle,
the ST. JULIEN CANADIAN MEMORIAL is in Sint-Juliaan.

Double check the spelling and the actual name: I had trouble finding CANADA CEMETERY, TILLOY-LEZ-CAMBRAI because I was mistakenly entering “Canadian” instead of “Canada” in the GPS.

And, finally, sometimes the name of the cemetery is used in multiple locations: there are three “Sunken Road” cemeteries, so ***make sure the town matches as well***. There are two “Nine Elms” but the one in France near Thélus is “***Military*** Cemetery” whereas the one in Belgium near Poperinge is “***British*** Cemetery”.

Safe travels, KW.