

TRAVELLING ON ESTONIAN ROADS AS A PEDESTRIAN



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DEAR ROAD USER

Estonia is located in the northern part of Europe, on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea. As a result of its location, the weather in Estonia is often damp and very windy, and temperatures can rise and fall very quickly. The fact that Estonia has four seasons — spring, summer, autumn and winter — is an important thing to keep in mind when using our roads.






We get a lot of dark, rainy and foggy days. Keep in mind that you may not always be visible to drivers when travelling on our roads. Our winters are snowy and high snowdrifts can form at the sides of roads and impair visibility. The sidewalk and carriageways are oftentimes slippery and cause the braking distance and therefore the stopping distance of vehicles to increase considerably (figure ↓).



The stopping distance at 50 km/h (speed in a built-up area) depending on weather conditions

As, unfortunately, a lot of accidents involving pedestrians happen in the towns and on the roads of Estonia, we have compiled some tips and advice on how to prevent such accidents. This guide gives an overview of the traffic rules in Estonia and suggestions on how to travel safely as a pedestrian. Important definitions are listed at the end of the guide in order to help you better understand the text.

Estonia is divided into counties, municipalities and cities. Tallinn is the capital of Estonia. There are a total of 15 counties and 15 cities. Estonia is very sparsely populated, which means that villages and settlements are far away from one another. We have a lot of rural roads, which connect villages, settlements and cities.

Our traffic setting is constantly changing. Traffic is different in the countryside, in cities and in smaller settlements. Pedestrians can use sidewalks in towns and overpasses and tunnels in cities. In smaller settlements and on big roads, however, you often have to walk on the side of the road.

Estonia has right-hand traffic and the traffic is regulated by the Traffic Act. The speed limit on carriageways (rural roads) is 90 km/h and in cities and built-up areas (urban roads) 50 km/h. During summertime, if the traffic and road conditions are suitable, the speed limit can be increased on certain roads.

The most important unwritten rule is:

Be considerate of yourself and those around you and do not put yourself or others at risk.

IN TRAFFIC AS A PEDESTRIAN

Travelling on foot is becoming more and more highly valued here. Walking is healthy, cheap and accessible to all. At the same time, traffic conditions are becoming more difficult for pedestrians as well as cyclists, who are the most at risk in traffic.

In Estonia, **pedestrians** are persons who use the road on foot or in a wheelchair. Pedestrians also include persons who use skateboards, roller skates, roller skis, kick scooters, kicksleds or other similar items for travelling.

When using a skateboard, roller skates, kick scooter or other similar devices for travelling, you should respect road users who move slower and not put them in danger.

Drivers of personal light electric vehicles (e.g. electric scooters) are drivers, not pedestrians, and are mostly subject to the same rules as cyclists. Drivers of personal light electric vehicles under the age of 16 have to wear a bicycle helmet.

WHERE SHOULD YOU BE ON THE ROAD?



Traffic sign (TS) Built-up area

On urban roads, a pedestrian must travel on the sidewalk (*pictured* ↓) or on the side of the road if there are no sidewalks.



A carriageway (*pictured* ↓) is for vehicles to travel on.
Estonia has **right-hand traffic**.



In calm traffic areas (*pictured* ↓) pedestrians are allowed to use the entire road but they should not obstruct drivers without valid reason.



TS Calm traffic area





TS End of built-up area

Travelling on the left side of the road when there is no sidewalk is important so the pedestrian can see approaching vehicles and more to avoid a collision if necessary.

A person pushing a bicycle, personal light electric vehicle, two-wheeled moped or motorbike by their side is a pedestrian and must travel on the right side of the road to make sure that the lights on their vehicle do not confuse other drivers.

On rural roads (*pictured* ↓) without a sidewalk, pedestrians must travel **only on the left side of the road**, facing approaching traffic.



HOW TO CROSS A ROAD

Crossing the road is the most dangerous thing for a pedestrian to do in traffic. Keep in mind that a pedestrian is a vulnerable road user and, in the case of a traffic accident, is always the victim.

The road should always be crossed at the designated spot: an overpass, underpass, pedestrian crossing, crossing or intersection. If there are no marked pedestrian crossings, the road should be crossed at a spot where the road is straight and you can see in both directions. It is important to remember that when crossing the road at these spots, the pedestrian does not have the right of way, so you must be very careful.



Before crossing a road, always STOP, LOOK, LISTEN!

Pedestrian crossings can be regulated or unregulated.

Regulated crossings (*pictured* →) feature **traffic lights** that regulate when you can cross the road.

The road may be crossed only when the light is green. Even then, it is reasonable to make sure that the motor vehicles have stopped and it is safe to cross the road.

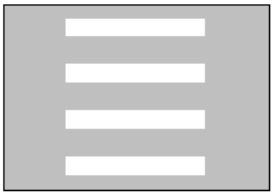
The yellow light gives more time for those who are still crossing the road and have not made it to the other side yet.

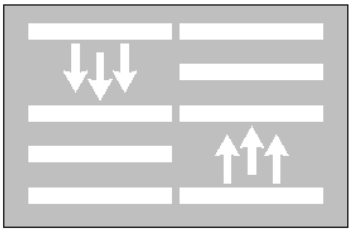
You must not step on the road when the light is yellow or red, even if there are no motor vehicles approaching.





Pedestrian crossings (← *pictured*) (also widely known as "zebra crossings") are marked with white stripes and have a blue "pedestrian crossing" traffic sign. The pedestrian crossing is unregulated if there are no traffic lights or the traffic lights are not working or are flashing.





Road markings of pedestrian crossings
These markings indicate an unregulated pedestrian crossing or a regulated pedestrian crossing where the traffic lights do not work at all times. The arrows mark the direction in which the pedestrians can travel.





TS Pedestrian crossing

Before crossing the road at an unregulated pedestrian crossing, always stop to make sure the drivers have seen you and understand what you are trying to do. You may not step on to the road before the drivers have fully stopped at the crossing. Also, keep in mind that sometimes motor vehicles drive on multiple lanes!

When crossing the road you have to make sure the cars on all lanes have come to a stop. When crossing a road, you must not waste time or stop in the middle of the road.

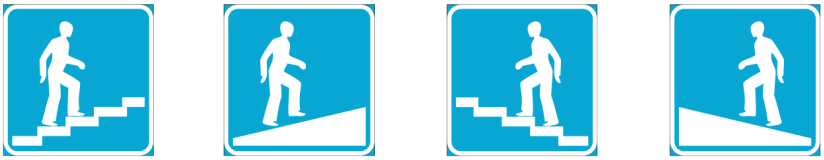


When using a skateboard, scooter or a balance bike, it is safer to get off and cross the road on foot. The road should be crossed at normal walking speed (around 3–7 km/h), i.e. running is not allowed.

It is safer to cross larger roads by using **overpasses or underpasses**. If there are traffic signs indicating an overpass or underpass, you should always use them to cross a road.



TS Underpass



TS Overpass

A crossing (↓ *pictured*) is a part of the road where pedestrians can cross the motorway. These places have been made safe by traffic management and building solutions (safety islands, lighting, speed limits, good visibility, etc.).



A crossing is different from a pedestrian crossing in that drivers do not have to give way to pedestrians crossing the road.

There are also no traffic signs or markings like there are at pedestrian crossings. Pedestrians can spot crossings by pedestrian roads (sidewalk, footpath, cycle and pedestrian track) that lead to the carriageway and continue on the other side of the road.

Although in calm traffic areas the speed limit for motor vehicles is 20 km/h, pedestrians should still be careful when travelling there. Pay attention to reversing vehicles.





TS Calm traffic area



TS End of calm traffic area

When crossing the road from behind a parked vehicle or other barriers, you should always make sure no vehicles are approaching from behind it.

PROHIBITIONS FOR PEDESTRIANS IN TRAFFIC

A pedestrian may not:

- cross the motorway at a place where there is a barrier that blocks pedestrian traffic or in a settlement on a road where there is a dividing strip outside a passenger overpass or tunnel, pedestrian crossing or crossing;
- step on the motorway from behind a standing vehicle or other obstacles without making sure that no other vehicles are approaching;
- walk on a highway;
- walk on a carriageway that has a dividing strip or along the dividing strip if there is no sidewalk.

WHY ARE DISTRACTING ACTIVITIES DANGEROUS FOR A PEDESTRIAN IN TRAFFIC?

Every road user, including pedestrians, should do everything possible to make sure that their journey from point A to point B is safe. This means that no distracting activities are allowed in traffic.

Distracting activities are any activities that distract the road user from being safe in traffic. These may include using your phone (internet, games, calls), listening to music from headphones, a lively conversation with your friend, eating, drinking, etc. These activities are dangerous because road users may not notice or be able to respond to danger in time. For example, pedestrians who are looking at their phone screens may not see an approaching vehicle, other road users, street lights, etc. and they can put the life and health of themselves and others in danger.

Focus on the road when you are moving through traffic!

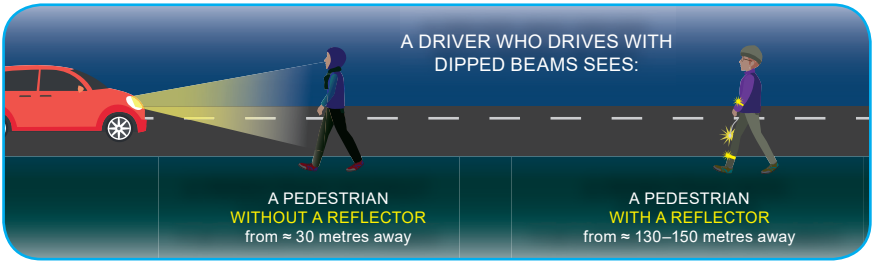
HOW TO MAKE YOURSELF MORE VISIBLE TO A DRIVER OR CYCLIST DURING DARK TIME

Accidents usually happen when it's dark outside due to drivers not being able to see the pedestrians. Pedestrians often blend into their surroundings.

This is why pedestrians are required to wear a reflector when travelling in the dark.

When it's dark, a reflector must be worn both on rural roads and in cities and smaller settlements.

A good reflector allows the pedestrian to be seen from at least 150 meters away in the light beam of the dipped headlights of a motor vehicle and from 300 m in the light beam of the main headlights of a motor vehicle, giving the driver enough time to brake.



The reflector should be attached to clothes in a way that allows it to be seen from multiple directions:

- a slap wrap may be simply put around a sleeve or lower leg;
- a hanging reflector must be attached to the clothes so that it hangs at the height of the headlights of a regular car, is attached to the side that is closest to the road, is not hidden behind the edge of a coat or jacket and must be able to hang freely. This will ensure that the reflector can be seen from as many directions as possible – from the front, behind and from the sides.

When travelling on the carriageway, it is often hard to believe that drivers are not able to see you because you can see approaching cars perfectly well.

During the dark time, the driver can only see things that are directly in the light beam of their headlights. However, if another vehicle approaches the driver at the same time, then the headlights of that vehicle will blind the driver and make it even harder to see the pedestrian.

It is especially important to make yourself visible when travelling on a carriageway, because cars drive at higher speeds and there are no road lights.

It is safest to wear two reflectors, one on each side, to make sure that drivers can see you from all directions. In addition, a flashlight or safety vest can help to make the pedestrian even more visible.





When purchasing a reflector, make sure it has a CE marking and comes with a manual (↓ *pictured*).

When washing clothes in a washing machine, you need to remove the reflectors, as washing reduces their reflectiveness. Reflectors that have been scratched or have become dull have to be replaced, because they do not reflect enough to be seen by drivers. Remember that the reflective surfaces get worn out when washed even if the reflector bands have been glued/sewn onto your clothes. The material wears out when washed and additional reflectors may have to be used.

WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN TRAVELLING WITH A CHILD

The most dangerous action for a child in traffic is crossing a road because the eyesight of children under the age of 10 is not fully developed yet. They

cannot assess the speed and distance of a vehicle as well as adults do. Keep in mind that the judgement ability of a child is also not fully developed. Even if the vehicle has stopped to let a child cross the road, the child may still need some time to make a decision. Children are shorter than adults and do not have as good of an overview of what is happening around them. Smaller school children can barely see over the hoods of parked cars. Because of their height, traffic signs, barriers and posts as well as greenery can limit their field of vision.

As a parent, make sure that your child does not have to rush to get to school as that may result in accidents. Many parents bring their children to school by car, but that can actually cause the biggest safety issues around schools, because it causes a lot of traffic and situations where children have to find their way to school through a busy parking lot.

If you need to bring your child to school by car, we recommend finding a safe place a little bit further away from the school where the child can exit the vehicle onto a sidewalk. A short walk in fresh air helps the child to fully wake up and also helps them learn to travel on their own. Before you do this, it is wise to walk through the route together and discuss dangerous spots and situations.

Teach your child how to travel safely and set a good example. A child needs to be taught that they always have to stop, look and make sure that the driver of a car has noticed them and that it is safe to cross the road.

If the child goes to school on foot, choose the safest route, talk about possible dangerous situations and walk through the route several times.

The time when the child should leave for school should be set so they have enough time and would not put themselves in danger by rushing.

In areas with busy traffic, you should hold your child's hand. When crossing a carriageway or walking in a parking lot or calm traffic area, it is smart to hold the child by the wrist to keep them from going on the road.

You can read more about what children should be taught about traffic at www.transpordiamet.ee.

WHAT TO DO WHEN AN EMERGENCY VEHICLE APPROACHES

As a road user, you must not obstruct vehicles with working signalling lights or sirens (emergency vehicles with blue lighting) and the vehicle(s) they are escorting. Emergency vehicles include ambulances and police and rescue vehicles with relevant markings.

If you hear the siren of an approaching emergency vehicle at an intersection or pedestrian crossing, stop at the sidewalk and let the vehicle pass. Make sure to teach your child how to behave when an emergency vehicle approaches an intersection or a pedestrian crossing.

WHAT TO REMEMBER WHEN USING PUBLIC TRANSPORT

In Estonia, people can easily travel from town to town by bus. In Tallinn, trams and trolleybuses can also be used for travel. Trains can also be used to travel between many towns.

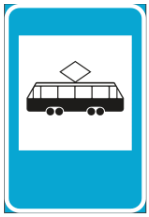
People wait for public transport vehicles at designated stops that are meant for public transport. You do not have to wave down the bus or trolleybus driver to make them stop – the vehicle will stop at every stop on its route.

When using public transport, you must always be careful because the vehicle may brake suddenly. As a passenger, you must also be careful when entering and exiting a bus or trolleybus: take your time and if possible, use the front door for entering and the back door for exiting so the driver can see you better.

To cross the road after exiting a public transport vehicle, always use the sidewalk to walk to the nearest regulated or unregulated pedestrian crossing and cross the road there. If there are no pedestrian crossings nearby, wait until the bus or trolleybus has left the stop, you have a clear view in both directions and the road is clear of any traffic. Be careful when crossing a tramway as the braking distance of trams is longer.



TS Bus or trolleybus stop



TS Tram stop



TS Taxi stop

Hitchhiking is not very common in Estonia and hitchhikers are not easily picked up, so you should not count on this when travelling.



SUMMARY OF WHAT TO REMEMBER

As a pedestrian, always stop to look and ensure your safety before crossing the road! You as a pedestrian can always stop right away on the sidewalk, however, a vehicle can never stop that fast. The higher the speed of the car, the longer the stopping distance. For example, the stopping distance of a vehicle on dry asphalt at the standard speed limit in urban areas is 30 metres.

Cross the carriageway at a safe spot. Even when the traffic light is green, take a moment to make sure all vehicles have stopped to give you way.

When crossing the road at an unregulated pedestrian crossing or zebra crossing, take a moment to make sure all vehicles have stopped to give you way. Make sure that there are no vehicles approaching from behind a stopped vehicle.

When exiting a bus or trolleybus, find the nearest regulated pedestrian crossing or zebra crossing. If there are no pedestrian crossings nearby, wait until the public transport vehicle has left the stop and you have a clear view of the road in both directions.

Make yourself visible! Wear brightly-coloured clothes in poor visibility or when it's dark and attach a reflector at knee height so that it sticks out from under your coat or jacket and is not covered by anything you are wearing.

In places where there is no sidewalk, travel on the left side of the road so you can see oncoming traffic.

Travel in a way that does not put you or other road users in danger.

Do not rush!
Make sure you have enough time to travel.

Do not be preoccupied with other things (smartphones, etc.) when in traffic — always focus on the road.

Always follow traffic rules and set an example for your children.

A BUILT-UP AREA *is a developed area that has entry and exit roads equipped with road signs establishing the road traffic rules applicable in the built-up area.*

A CALM TRAFFIC AREA *is an area designed for the common traffic of pedestrians and vehicles where the speed of vehicles is reduced by structural or other means and where entry and exit roads are signposted as such.*

A CARRIAGEWAY *is a part of the road for vehicles to travel on.*

A CROSSING *is a part of a road that is designated for pedestrians to cross the carriageway, cycle track or tramway track and marked as such, where the pedestrians have no right of way towards drivers of vehicles, unless the pedestrian uses the crossing on a carriageway onto which the driver of the vehicle is turning.*

A CYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN TRACK *is a separate road or part of a road designated for bicycles, personal light electric vehicles, light mopeds, self-driving delivery robots and pedestrians and signposted as such.*

A DRIVER *is a person who is operating a vehicle, e.g. a bicycle, personal light electric vehicle, motorcycle.*

A FOOTPATH *is a separate road designated for pedestrians, self-driving delivery robots and personal light electric vehicles, which may be signposted as such.*

A LIGHT MOPED *is a vehicle that has at least two wheels and a seat and whose capacity in the case of an internal combustion engine or whose maximum continuous rated power in the case of an electric motor does not exceed 1 kW and whose design speed does not exceed 25 km/h.*

A PASSENGER *is a person who is using a vehicle for travelling, but is not the driver.*

A PEDESTRIAN *is a road user who travels on foot, in a wheelchair or in another vehicle designated for use solely by a person with reduced mobility.*

A PEDESTRIAN CROSSING *is a part of a road that is designated for pedestrians to cross the carriageway, cycle track or tramway track, is marked with a relevant traffic control device and where drivers are required to give way to pedestrians. A pedestrian crossing is regulated if the sequence of traffic is determined by pedestrian traffic light signals or signals given by a traffic controller. Pedestrian crossings are unregulated in all other cases.*

A PERSONAL LIGHT ELECTRIC VEHICLE *is a seatless battery-driven vehicle designed for carrying one individual that is not a bicycle and whose design speed does not exceed 25 km/h. Personal light electric vehicles include electric scooters, monowheels, electric skateboards and self-balancing vehicles.*

A PUBLIC TRANSPORT VEHICLE *is a bus, trolleybus or tram providing the public transport service or an automobile intended to provide the public transport service.*

A REFLECTOR *is a means for increasing the visibility of a person or another object in darkness by reflecting light back towards the light source, visible in the illumination of dipped-beam headlamps at a distance of at least 150 metres and of main-beam headlamps at a distance of at least 300 metres.*

A ROAD *is a structure opened for traffic for pedestrians and vehicles. A road also comprises shoulders, dividing strips and green area strips. Roads may be paved roads, gravel roads or dirt roads depending on the upper layer.*

A ROAD USER *is a pedestrian or driver participating in traffic.*

A SELF-DRIVING DELIVERY ROBOT *is a partially or fully automated or remotely controlled vehicle that moves on wheels or another chassis that is in contact with the ground, uses sensors, cameras or other equipment for obtaining information on the surrounding environment and based on the obtained information is able to move partially or fully without being controlled by a driver.*

A SIDEWALK *is a separate road designated for pedestrians, self-driving delivery robots and personal light electric vehicles, which may be signposted as such.*

A ZEBRA CROSSING *is a part of a carriageway designated for crossing the road.*

A TRAM *is a rail vehicle for carrying passengers, with or without a rail-borne trailer, that runs on a track and is connected to an overhead electric wire.*

A TROLLEYBUS *is a motor vehicle for carrying passengers that is connected to an overhead electric wire and has more than eight seats in addition to the driver's seat.*

A VEHICLE *is a mobile machine powered by an engine or some other way.*

DARK TIME *is the period of time between nightfall and dawn when visibility is less than 300 metres due to the lack of natural light.*

LOW VISIBILITY *is a temporary situation caused by weather or another phenomenon (fog, rain, snow, blizzard, twilight, smoke, dust, water and mud splashes, sun glare) in which objects on the road are indistinguishable from their background at more than 300 meters.*

THE RIGHT OF WAY *is a road user's right to move before another road user.*

TRAFFIC LIGHTS *are electric devices used on roads to regulate traffic by using light signals.*

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