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Importing a car to the UK is a tricky experience but there is help available if you know where to look. This guide is intended for those **permanently** importing a car to England. However, if you are planning on bring a car to the UK temporarily some of the following information may still be useful.

This site is the result of my practical experience of having imported a Ford Explorer from Texas to the UK in 1998 and a Ford Expedition in April 2004. It has also been updated with comments and feedback from people who have used this guide and provided more information, based on [their own experiences](#).

The sections on the left take you step by step through the process and provide hints, tips and useful links.

If you have imported a car to the UK from the US then please help me keep this site useful by adding your notes to the [discussion board](#).

If you have read this site and still have questions, or if you have imported a US car to the UK, with or without the help of this site, please help us keep the information current on our [discussion board](#).

And finally - you'll need a copy of my [book](#) - the best resource to help Americans converse with us Brits!



Is it all worth it?

Should you even consider bringing a car to the UK? Or should you just buy one when you arrive?

This is the first question you should ask yourself. The main reasons that people end up deciding to go for the import option are:

- You already own a car in the US
- You like it
- You will lose a lot of money if you sell it in the US
- You cannot get that make/model in the UK

- You want to drive an unusual car in the UK
- You like a challenge!

And the reasons why you might not:

- Too much hassle
- Not cost justified
- May be liable for 17.5% tax
- May be liable for 10% duty or more
- Don't want to drive a LHD car in a RHD country
- Worried about fuel costs
- Worried about insurance costs
- Worried about the maintenance of a non standard car
- Concerned about the SVA test and requirements
- It's easier to have a company bring one in for you

These are all valid concerns. The purpose of this site is to help you draw up your own list of pros and cons so that you can make an informed decision before you commit yourself.

Let's take a look at the considerations:

Your existing US car. In my case I had owned a 2 year old Ford Explorer from new. It was in excellent condition, I liked it a lot, it was paid for and I would have lost a lot of money selling it in the US and starting again in the UK. These were the original reasons I looked at bringing it with me to the UK. The second time around I just wanted a US car that was not available in Europe and bought it new.

If your car is old, not worth much and nothing special you might consider saying a sad farewell and leaving it behind. If, like me, you have good reasons to hang onto it then consider bringing it over to the UK.

The length of time you have owned the car is also a factor. If you are bringing in a new car then you will probably be liable to 17.5% Value Added Tax (VAT) and at least 10% duty. You can avoid both of these things if you have owned the car in the US for 6 months and will keep the car for a year after arriving in the UK. If you have to pay VAT and duty then they will seriously affect the maths, by making it a much more costly exercise. By the way - the most common question here is how to avoid paying duty and VAT. The answer is unless you can show you have lived in the US and owned the car for more than 6 months - you can't! Customs are well aware of the scams and have the power to take the vehicle off you - you have been warned!

Shipping. The first thing is shipping. You need to find a shipper, choose a shipping method, price it up and add to the cost of getting the car to the shipper (or them collecting it), insurance, duty, VAT and other handling charges.

Driving on the wrong side of the car. This has proved to be a non problem for us. We have a RHD Jeep and a LHD Explorer. It did not take long to get used to driving both cars. In fact we don't even think about it any more. It probably helps that the Explorer is quite tall as we can see over most other cars on the road. The only 'problem' has been taking tickets at the entrance to car parks and paying the man on the way out. We solved that quite simply by buying one of those long arm things in Boots, intended to help disabled people pick things up. I added a small plastic pot to the top to collect the change from the car park man!! Always makes them smile!



Conversions. Now that the SVA test has been introduced across Europe, the lights conversion is a more strict affair. I have heard from one private importer that this was a nightmare - the SVA centre insisted that all sorts of things were changed at great cost. On the other hand, one private importer who followed the instructions here told me it was a doddle. You may want to use a specialist to handle this part - there are several listed later in this guide.

Insurance. Being a Brit I was relieved to get back home as Insurance is terribly expensive in the US. However, if you are an American then you may find the insurance expensive here initially, unless you can prove your 'no claims' situation. You should definitely bring proof of your 'no claims' period as some companies will accept this. They did for me. I list the insurers who have provided the best deals for me in the last 6 years. Also, be prepared to have to work harder to insure an import car - and tell each insurer you call that it is a US import before you waste too long on the phone with them!

Maintenance. General maintenance of the car once here, is something to consider. It won't be too hard to get an oil change or new plugs but anything else may need a bit more research. In the maintenance section I have listed some specialist companies that I have used to solve everything that has happened so far. Don't expect your local Halfords to be of much use!

Before you go any further I strongly advise you to call the DVLA and ask for their 'Car Import Pack'. They will send it to you free and it includes a useful booklet and all the forms you'll need. It also has lots of useful reference info that you'll find handy as you go through the process. Their number is **0870-850-0007**.

Useful contacts

- [Britain in the USA](#) - Car Import FAQs.
- [DVLA](#) - Import Page.
- [DVLA Locations and Phone number](#)
- [Department for Transport \(DfT\)](#) - Car Import Section.
- [DfT Booklet](#) - 120K pdf file.

Shipping

There seem to be two ways to ship a car from the US to the UK; in a container or not in a container. The difference for me was \$6,600 vs \$1,200 so clearly I went with the non container method. This is normally referred to as 'roll-on, roll-off' or RORO for short. My \$1200 got the car collected from my home in Austin, put on a huge transporter lorry to Florida, through US customs, onto the ship and I collected it at Southampton. I thought this was reasonable value at the time. It excluded shipping insurance, which was 1.5% of the car's value.

I am told that most car manufacturers export cars using RORO so there should not be a

problem with this method. Some people have told me that they got a containerised shipment for a little extra. I must admit I would have paid a bit more for the container but not at the prices I was quoted. There is a risk of theft using RORO - my licence plates disappeared en-route for example!

I had several quotes for shipping. You need to look up 'freight forwarders' in the yellow pages and there are several on the web. I used Vantage International Shipping, who responded quickly by phone and email with a competitive quote (& got the job, by the way - but have since closed down, sadly). The second time I used **Allworld Removals** in Boston who were fine.

Allstates Worldwide had an impressive web site but did not even respond to their web form. One personal importer told me they did a terrible job for him, damaged his car and refused to talk to him - best avoided.

Ghedi International in Austin, TX, provided a quote, and shipped a colleagues car a few years ago.

I recently discovered **American Car Imports** based in London and Miami and talked to them about conversions. They were far too expensive but have a web site and may be useful for shipping or other matters.

When the car is ready to go, it should have a quarter of a gallon of petrol. Any less and if it runs out during transit, the shipping authorities will charge you. Any more and they can take away the excess and charge for that too. Shame really since petrol is somewhat cheaper in the US and it is tempting to fill it right up - don't!

Your shipper will need the vehicle Title or if it's new an untitled they will want the Certificate of Origin. They need originals so make copies.

If you are buying new, for immediate export then it is possible to buy the car **without** US Sales Tax. However, finding a US Dealer that understands the question is a little tough. For example in the Boston area I tried about a dozen dealers before Quirk Ford told me they could do that and had sold several cars to private exporters. The reality was a little frustrating but perseverance paid off and I got it tax free.

Bear in mind that buying new, sometimes attracts manufacturers rebates, which are available for US residents only. So if you have a US address and Social Security number, pay the tax, and Title the vehicle you could get a hefty rebate (applied as an up front discount in the Ford case). I could have got \$3000 off the Expedition. However, the Title process would have added up to 4-6 weeks and the dealer was worried that when the car hit Customs and was scanned out of the country, Ford would claw back the \$3000 from the Dealer. It sounds a reasonable concern so in the end we did it without the rebate but minus tax and they made up the difference with a bit more discount so I got the car there and then.

One surprise I had when I collected the car in Southampton, was there was an additional £40 (about \$60) handling fee for the UK agent of the shippers. They were fairly efficient and helpful but I was not expecting this charge. It covers the removal of the car from the ship, storage and handling all the paperwork. So have a bunch of spare cash to avoid embarrassing situations. In fact, you should ask your US shipper who their UK receiving agent is and call them to get their exact costs ahead of time.

The process of collecting the car was like an adventure game. I lost track of all the people we spoke to on the day, but as long as you have all the paperwork and manage to hand the relevant pieces of paper to all the people in the chain, after about 30 minutes you are driving your new baby away from the docks, with a big grin on your face (optional).

Shipping Insurance

The quotes in 1998 ranged from \$360-\$516 for shipping insurance, though in November 2001 I got a quote from **AutoXport** in Florida for only \$1200 which included insurance. The rule here is to shop around, though it will generally be provided by your shipper at about 1.5% of the car's cost. You need to make sure you are insured from where you say goodbye to your car - to when you see it again. This may be door to door or dock to dock or a combination - make sure it's covered at all times. Car's do fall into the sea!

Read the small print and exclusions in particular. Make sure you know what is included and what is not. Typically if you put anything loose inside the car then don't expect it to be there at the other end and don't expect it to be covered by the insurance. I do know people who have filled the car up with belongings that have made it to the UK - but frankly, they were lucky. I wouldn't risk it.

I covered the front seats with plastic sheeting that my local garage gave me for free and did the same with the steering wheel and front carpets. When I collected the car in Southampton this plan seemed to have paid off, since everything was filthy with oil. Luckily I could just throw out the protective covers and the everything underneath was spotless!

My only loss was the licence plate which had been stolen - so make sure you remove anything that is easy to take off and cover anything that big oily boots are likely to touch!

Taxes

You will need to pay 17.5% tax and customs duty of 10% unless you have owned the car for more than 6 months (and can prove it) and if you are intending keeping it for your own use for at least a year after entering the country. These days you also need to show that you have lived in the US for those 6 months too and the car has been driven, licenced and insured during that time. This is to catch all the scammers that pretend all this in order to avoid the duty and tax. I think Customs have closed the loopholes.

Useful contacts

- **Allstates Worldwide** - Shippers
Tel: 1-800-822-7447
Fax: 1-818-865-0345
Web: www.aswd.com
email: sales@aswd.com
- **Allworld Removals** - Shippers
434 Chelsea Street
East Boston
MA 02182
Tel: 1-617-569-0696 (Metro Boston)
Fax: 1-617-569-0696
Web: www.allworldremovals.com
email: allworld@shore.net
- **American Car Imports** - Shippers, Importers
57-63 Coburg Road
Wood Green
London
N22 6UB
Tel: +44-20-8889-4545
Fax: +44-20-8889-7500
Web: www.americancarimports.co.uk
email: sales@americancarimports.co.uk

- **AutoXport USA** - Shippers
111 Mill River Road
Oyster Bay
New York
Tel: 1-516-922-6415
Fax: 1-516-922-6418
Web: www.autoxportusa.com
email: inquiries@autoxportusa.com
- **Autoshippers** - Shippers
Unit D, 7A4 Business Estate
Victoria Road
Avonmouth
Bristol
BS20 7LU
UK Free Phone: 0800 389 0784
Tel: +44-117-982-8622
Fax: +44-117-982-8632
Web: www.autoshippers.co.uk
email: mail@autoshippers.co.uk
- **David Boatwright Partnership** - US Car sales, service, SVA, parts
Sherrod House
Chilford Court
Braintree
Essex
CM7 2QS
Tel: +44-1376-552399
Fax: +44-1376-552411
Web: www.boatwright.co.uk
email: sales@boatwright.co.uk
- **Ghedi International** - Shippers
8002 Burleson Road
Austin
Texas 78744
Tel: 1-512-385-3706
Fax: 1-512-385-8300
Web: www.ghediinternational.com
email: info@ghedi-intl.com
- **Import / Export Links from Autopedia**
Web: <http://autopedia.com/Export/ImportExport.html>
- **Ozark Auto Transportation** - Shippers
1110 S. Old Missouri Rd
Springdale
AR 72764
Tel: 1-800-635-6526
Tel: 1-501-927-9900
Fax: 1-501-927-9904
Web: www.movecar.com
email: info@ozark-auto.com
- **Sanko** - Shippers
631 E. Dania Beach Blvd
Dania

FL 33004
Tel: 1-800-881-5277
Tel: 1-954-925-4594
Fax: 1-954-923-5377
Web: www.sanko.com
email: info@sanko.com

- **Shipping International** - Shippers
1161 Mission Street
San Francisco
CA 94103-1514
Tel: 1-800-962-4715
Tel: 1-415-255-1892
Fax: 1-415-626-7443
Web: www.shippinginternational.com
email: info@shippinginternational.com
- **Supreme Freight** - Shippers
160 Millbrook Road East
Southampton
SO15 1JR
UK
Tel: 44-238-033-7778
Fax: 44-0238-033-7779
Web: www.supremefreight.com
email: sales@supremefreight.com

Customs

Customs clearance will be required both in the US and in the UK. It takes about a week for US customs to process the title of the vehicle. Most shipping companies will handle the customs clearance at the US end for you.

In general, this means that you must have clear title of the vehicle before you attempt to ship it. In other words - it should be fully paid for.

However, I understand from one user of this document that their bank allowed them to bring a car to the UK even though the car loan was not fully paid up. In this instance I would ensure you have documentation from the bank to prove this as you may need it for customs and/or registration.

In order to avoid duty (10% for cars) and tax (Value Added Tax - VAT - of 17.5%) you must have owned the car for 6 months or more in the US and keep it for 1 year after you arrive in the UK. The Customs and Excise website says:

To prove that you have used your vehicle outside the EC you should bring with you any papers you have, for example:

- **foreign registration papers;**
- **police certificate of registration; or**
- **insurance policy.**

You must also provide proof that you have possessed it outside the EC for at least 6 months.

Beware that the duty is based on 10% of the 'landed value' of the vehicle. This means what you

paid, plus the shipping costs including insurance. And they will ask for evidence. The VAT is 17.5% of the sum of the same costs plus the duty paid, which I think is a bit steep! And you'll need paperwork to prove each cost.

Before you say goodbye to your car at the US end it is advisable to complete all the customs forms for the UK end. It's easier and more relaxed this way - though it is possible to complete them when the car arrives in the UK.

You will need **form C104A** which enables you to clear UK customs.

Next, customs will ask you to complete a form **C&E386** or **C&E388** plus the Dept of Transport (DOT) Notice PI1 and leaflet V277 which sets out the legal requirements that you must satisfy before you register the vehicle.

Although all this sounds complicated, I found UK customs very easy to deal with and very helpful. They do suggest you make an appointment but that was easy and done at short notice, when I knew the car had arrived.

With my second import, the shippers and their receiving agents handled the paperwork for me for a small fee so I didn't even need to do these forms myself.

Whether you are doing the legwork yourself or getting help from the agent you'll need to 'book in' with the shipping line to collect your car. You'll need to have your customs, duty and VAT sorted first, then on production of the customs forms and some ID you'll be handed the keys to your car and off you go!

Useful contacts

- **Customs forms orderline**
Tel: +44-118-964-4355
- **HM Customs and Excise**
Vehicle Appraisal Unit
PO Box 242
Dover
Kent
CT17 9GP
Tel: +44-1304-224372
Fax: +44-1304-215786
- **Customs**
Web: www.hmce.gov.uk
- **Duty and VAT**
Web: www.hmce.gov.uk/forms/notices/3.htm
- Online copy of form **C104A**
- And a **C104A form** I downloaded earlier!
- **RAC** for temporary insurance
Web: www.rac.co.uk
- **AA** for temporary insurance
Web: www.theaa.com

- **Wainwright Brothers** - Shipping agents that handled both my imports.
Web: www.wainwrightbros.com

Insurance

I found insurance expensive in the US, though that may have been because I was an 'alien'. One thing I did find useful was taking a letter from my UK insurer confirming my 6 years of no claims and the same when I returned. It's important to make sure you find an insurer who will accept this kind of proof of status or you will end up back at the beginning.

UK insurance works on a basic price that is reduced depending on years of 'no claims'. This is called your 'no claims bonus'. The maximum NCB is around 60% which gives you 60% off the basic price of the insurance policy, so you can see it is important to get right!

The other thing about UK insurance is that it is an annual policy, not just 6 months as I was shocked to discover it was in the US (only because it was already double the price before I found out it was 6 months - four times the price I was used to in a full year!).

There are two basic forms of car insurance here in the UK; Third party, fire and theft, or fully comprehensive. The first basically covers your requirements for other parties and the latter provides for all risks. My examples will be for fully comprehensive cover.

First of all you need to shop around for insurance. The quotes I have had have ranged from £400 to £1000 this year for the same thing. Mention that the car is imported from the US early in the calls since many companies will tell you they cannot insure imports and you save 10 minutes each time. There is nothing more frustrating than giving every detail only to be told they cannot help you!

Below I list the companies I have used each year since I have had the car in the UK. Recommendations of American Car insurers from other people who have contacted me are listed in my [Import Links](#) page.

Remember you will need insurance cover **before** you can drive your car away from the port so do it early. My insurer sorted it out 2 hours before I went down to collect my latest import, but I already knew them and would suggest you do it once you know the collection date of your car. You can insure an unregistered car based on the VIN number alone, as long as you update the registration details when you have them (usually they'll give you up to 30 days).

Insurers I have used to date

- **Mills & Wood Ltd**
23a New Rd
Chippenham
Wiltshire
SW15 1RX
Tel: +44-1249-653531
Fax: +44-1249-443857
- **Stuart Collins & Co**
114 Walter Road
Swansea
SA1 5QQ
Tel: +44-1792-655562/642382
Fax: +44-1792-651126
Web: www.stuartcollins.com
email: stuart@collinsurance.demon.co.uk

- **Adrian Flux (Car Insurance)**
London Road
Kings Lynn
Norfolk
PE30 5ES
Tel: +44-8700-777888
Fax: +44-1553-762119
Web: www.adrianflux.co.uk
- **Hill House Hammond** - best deal for the last 4 years!
Specialist Vehicle Unit
11-13 Broadway
Peterborough
Cambs
PE1 1SQ
Tel: +44-1733-310899
Fax: +44-1733-893626
Web: www.hhh.co.uk

Modifications

There has always been a requirement to modify vehicles brought into the UK to ensure that they are roadworthy under UK law. This is tested every year for cars over three years old using the Ministry of Transport (MOT) test, which is inspected when you buy your vehicle registration. For new vehicles there was little testing to ensure that lights were correct etc during the first three years.

However, in the last few years the Single Vehicle Approval (SVA) test has been introduced to test that cars up to 10 years old, when imported to the UK, meet the requirements. The general view of those that have been through the test (I brought my car here before the test was introduced) is that whilst the theory is sensible, the test seems to be too picky at silly little details, can be costly and fairly painful.

In general, the test is looking to make sure:

- Rear indicators are separate to the brake lights and the right colour (this is different to US cars)
- Front indicators are the right colour and have repeaters on the side of the vehicle. This may require small indicators added to the side of the car and holes drilled in the wing as appropriate to accommodate them.
- A red rear fog light is fitted - US cars often don't have these.
- The correct white parking lights are present.
- Headlights are pointing the right way - check before you bring the car in that this does not mean a costly set of new headlights!
- Tyres match the advertised top speed of the vehicle. Tyres have a code (R, S or T rating) on them which matches a theoretical top speed. If the rating is lower than the manufacturer's advertised top speed - you'll need new tyres (for the SVA anyway!)
- The speedometer has Kilometer as well as Mile readings.
- The right brake fluid level indicator is present on the dashboard or else the reservoir is clear.
- The number plate meets UK standards (correct size, shape, lettering)
- Protrusion standards are met (ie removing long exhaust pipes, bull bars, mascots etc)

My advice is to talk to an SVA aware garage that can handle the conversions for you **before** you bring the vehicle in. I used a place called **Mildenhall Auto Centre** who specialise in this

kind of work and did a good job for me in 1998. In 2001 I spoke to them again to get the latest advice on what to do.

Using a Ford Expedition as an example they quoted me £200 for all the light conversions and confirmed that the speedo was already correct and that I should look to buy the vehicle with the right tyres in the US rather than have to replace them in the UK. They informed me that the SVA test costs £150 and that for £80 they would handle the conversions and take the car to the Norwich test centre and take it through the test for me.

Given that the test centres have a reputation of being a bit picky and that the Mildenhall chaps work closely with the Norwich test centre, this seems like good value for money as the chances of them getting this all sorted first time, seem pretty good.

It does mean leaving the car with them for a couple of days but with a bit of planning and a list of local Bed and Breakfasts (which they faxed me!!) you can make this a nice little trip to the East of England!!

On my second import - the chaps at Mildenhall did the conversion again for me and handled the SVA. It passed first time. They had to adjust the headlights a little, add parking lights (by drilling small holes in the rear of the headlamp unit and inserting small bulbs), change the reverse lights into orange indicators and add a rear fog light and reverse light. This avoided making any nasty holes anywhere and looks neat and tidy. It also means that the existing switches work fine inside so I don't get a nasty switch added to the dash. I didn't need side repeaters as they already exist and the rest just went through as-is.

Note you are allowed to drive the car to the place of conversion/testing according to the DVLA paperwork, even though the car may have no licence plate, is untaxed and unregistered. However I'd avoid drawing attention to yourself as it's also technically illegal to drive an unregistered and untaxed vehicle around here! The theory is that as long as you do all this in a timely manner after the car arrives you'll have a believable story. Otherwise it's down to your negotiation skills with the copper and his or her mood!

Useful contacts

- **American Ford Imports** - Imports, modifications, servicing.
Unit One
Kings Road
Charfleets Industrial Estate
Canvey Island
Essex
SS8 0QY
Tel: +44-1268 515102
Web: www.americanfordimports.co.uk
- **Mildenhall Auto Centre** - Modifications, Servicing, Parts
9 Chiswick Avenue
Mildenhall
Suffolk
IP28 7AP
Tel: +44-1638-713962
Fax: +44-1638-718465
Web: www.mildenhallautocentre.co.uk
email: customer.service@MildenhallAutoCentre.co.uk
- **North American Motors** - American Car Servicers
12 Fleet Rd
Fleet

Hampshire
GU13 8QQ
Tel: +44-1252-812252

- **Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency**
Web: www.dvla.gov.uk
- **DVLA Import/Export Information**
Web: www.dvla.gov.uk/vehicles/exptimpt.htm
- **Single Vehicle Approval (SVA)**
Web: www.via.gov.uk/vehicle_testing/sva/sva.htm
- **Vehicle Inspectorate Agency**
Web: www.via.gov.uk

Registration

When you arrive in the UK, and after you leave customs, you are required to register your car 'as soon as possible after it arrives in the country'. The application for registration should be made using a V55/5 form, available at your nearest (see list below). I had one sent to me in advance, which is advisable. However, one of the requirements for registration is that the vehicle has passed the SVA test (see [modifications](#)).

The DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency) website states:

A vehicle which is permanently imported for use in Great Britain must be registered and licensed as soon as possible after it arrives in this country. After arrival you are only entitled to drive the vehicle on foreign registration plates from the port of entry to your home address, place of destination or to a pre-arranged test. Thereafter the vehicle must be kept off the road until the registration formalities have taken place. Application for registration should be made to your nearest. N.B. Generally it is not possible to offer an "over the counter service".

You will need to provide the Vehicle Registration Office (VRO) with:

- The US registration documents.
- The US bill of sale to prove it is your car. Probably the Title would suffice, but if you bought it from a dealer then the sales documentation would probably be a good idea too. As mentioned earlier - some private importers have had permission from their US bank to bring a vehicle to the UK which is still being paid for. I suggest a letter from the bank confirming this would be useful at this stage.
- A copy of the customs form that you will receive on entry (either C&E386 or C&E388)
- Proof of UK insurance (I think a cover note will do but get the real thing in advance just to be on the safe side). Either way, you will need to contact a UK insurer before you can collect the car. Apparently the RAC and the AA can arrange temporary insurance at the port if you haven't.
- The MOT certificate if over three years old (the car - not you!). This means that between the port and the VRO part of getting there as 'soon as possible' includes a small diversion to the MOT test centre for cars over three years old or to the garage for light conversions and the SVA centre for testing! In practice there seems to be a little flexibility here - after all the chances of the police stopping you for driving on foreign plates during your first few days here is pretty slim. Even if they did they would probably not be familiar with the import rules and anyway, as long as you have a plan to do the conversions and SVA quickly then you do need to get the car from one to the other so you have a legitimate excuse. I would recommend that you plan these jobs for as soon as practically possible

after you arrive though!

- £165 (about \$280) for one year's registration!
- The VRO will ask you to complete a V55/5 form, which you can do on the spot but the Reading office mailed me one in advance.
- Proof of passing the Single Vehicle Approval test (see [modifications](#)).

In exchange you should receive a tax disk for your windscreen and a registration number for your number plate. Then you need to go and buy a number plate. If you are American, the way you get a number plate (licence plate) is different in the UK. Rather than having one made by prisoners and needing to go and order and collect it from the public department of safety, you buy it in a car parts shop while you wait. The interesting thing is that British number plates are long and thin and American ones are shorter and squat so you may need to get one that normally goes on a motorcycle.

By the way, although it is cheap and easy to buy a personalised number plate in the US, it is more complicated and dull in the UK.

It is expensive and explained on the DVLA Web site: www.dvla-som.co.uk.

I found the registration a fairly painless process, except we went on the last day of the month which had two disadvantages. First you end up paying for the whole month's worth of tax even though you only get about 6 hours worth (that annoyed me) and second there was a queue about 100 people long that took an hour or so to get to the front of.

By the way, on the front of my Explorer I managed to get Ford to supply me a UK style number plate mounting, so I could put a UK number plate on properly. For the rear number plate there is no room in the bumper indent for a UK style one but I discovered that the Mildenhall folks can get US sized number plates with the UK numbers on. I got one from them for just £8.50 and it looks great.

Useful contacts

- **DVLA Vehicles Helpdesk**
DVLC Swansea
SA99 1BL
Tel: +44-870-2400010 (0800-2030 Mon-Fri, 0800-1730 Sat)
Fax: +44-1792-782793
email: vehicles.dvla@gtnet.gov.uk
- **DVLA Driver Helpdesk**
DVLC Swansea
SA6 7JL
Tel: +44-870-2400009 (0800-2030 Mon-Fri, 0800-1730 Sat)
Fax: +44-1792-783071
email: drivers.dvla@gtnet.gov.uk
- **DVLA Import Page**
- **SVA Helpdesk**
Tel: +44-117-951-5151
- **HM Customs and Excise Duty and Tax Helpline**
Tel: +44-845-010-9000
- **Personal number plates**
Web: www.dvla-som.co.uk

- **DVLA Registration info**
Web: www.dvla.gov.uk/vehicles/vehicle.htm
- **DVLA Licensing info**
Web: www.dvla.gov.uk/vehicles/vehlicnc.htm

List of Vehicle Registration offices

Bangor

Penrhos Road,
Penrhosgarnedd,
Bangor,
LL57 2JF
Tel: 0870-850-0007

Beverley

Crosskill House,
Mill Lane,
Beverley,
HU17 9JB
Tel: 0870-850-0007

Birmingham

2nd Floor,
Edward House,
Edward Street,
Birmingham,
B1 2RF
Tel: 0870-850-0007

Bournemouth

Ground Floor
Bourne Gate,
25 Bourne Valley Road,
Poole,
BH12 1DX
Tel: 0870-850-0007

Brighton

4th Floor
Mocatta House
Trafalgar Place
Brighton,
BN1 4UE
Tel: 0870-850-0007

Bristol

Northleigh House,
Lime Kiln Close,
Stoke Gifford,
Bristol,
BS34 8SR
Tel: 0870-850-0007

Cardiff

Archway House,
77 Ty Glas Avenue,
Llanishen,
Cardiff,
CF14 5DX
Tel: 0870-850-0007

Carlisle

Ground Floor,
3 Merchants Drive,
Parkhouse,
Carlisle,
CA3 0JW
Tel: 0870-850-0007

Chelmsford

2nd Floor,
Parkway House,
49 Baddow Road,
Chelmsford,
CM2 0XJ
Tel: 0870-850-0007

Chester

Norroy House,
Nuns Road,
Chester,
CH1 2ND
Tel: 0870-850-0007

CR Enforcement Centre

Alhambra House
45 Waterloo Street
Glasgow
G2 6HE
Tel: 0870-850-0007

Dundee

Caledonian House,
Greenmarket,
Dundee,
DD1 4QP
Tel: 0870-850-0007

Edinburgh

Department of
Transport
Saughton House,
Broomhouse Drive,
Edinburgh,
EH11 3XE
Tel: 0870-850-0007

Exeter

Hanover House
Manaton Close
Matford Business Park,
Marsh Barton,
Exeter,
EX2 8EF
Tel: 0870-850-0007

Glasgow

46 West Campbell Street,
Glasgow,
G2 6TT
Tel: 0870-850-0007

Inverness

Longman House,
28 Longman Road,
Inverness,
IV1 1SF

Ipswich

Podium Level,
St Clare House,
Greyfriars,
Ipswich,

Leeds

1st Floor
42 Eastgate,
Leeds,
LS2 7DQ

Tel: 0870-850-0007

Lincoln

Firth Court
Firth Road,
Lincoln,
LN5 7WD

Tel: 0870-850-0007

Manchester

Trafford House,
Chester Road,
Manchester,
M32 0SL

Tel: 0870-850-0007

Norwich

11 Prince of Wales
Road,
Norwich,
NR1 1UP

Tel: 0870-850-0007

Peterborough

88 Lincoln Road,
Peterborough,
PE1 2ST

Tel: 0870-850-0007

Reading

77 - 81 Basingstoke
Road,
Reading,
RG2 0ER

Tel: 0870-850-0007

Sidcup

12/18 Station Road,
Sidcup,
DA15 7EQ

Tel: 0870-850-0007

Swansea

Heol Pentre Felen,

IP1 1UT

Tel: 0870-850-0007

Luton

2 Dunstable Road,
Luton,
LU1 1EB

Tel: 0870-850-0007

Newcastle Upon Tyne

Eagle Star House,
Regent Farm Road,
Newcastle Upon Tyne,
NE3 3QF

Tel: 0870-850-0007

Nottingham

5 Nottingham Business
Park
Orchard Place
Nottingham

NG8 6PX

Tel: 0870-850-0007

Portsmouth

5th Floor,
The Connect Centre,
Kingston Crescent,
North End,
Portsmouth

PO2 8AH

Tel: 0870-850-0007

Sheffield

Cedar House,
Hallamshire Court,
63 Napier Street,
Sheffield,

S11 8HA

Tel: 0870-850-0007

Stanmore

Government Building,
Canon Park,
Honeypot Lane,
Stanmore,

Middlesex,

HA7 1BD

Tel: 0870-850-0007

Truro

Pydar House,

Tel: 0870-850-0007

Maidstone

Coronet House,
11 Queen Anne Road,
Maidstone,
ME14 1XB

Tel: 0870-850-0007

Northampton

Ground Floor,
Riverside House,
Riverside Way,
Bedford Road,
Northampton

NN1 5PE

Tel: 0870-850-0007

Oxford

Ground Floor,
3 Cambridge Terrace,
Oxford,
OX1 1RW

Tel: 0870-850-0007

Preston

Fulwood Park,
Caxton Road,
Fulwood,
Preston,

PR2 9NZ

Tel: 0870-850-0007

Shrewsbury

Whitehall,
Monkmoor Road,
Shrewsbury,
SY2 5DR

Tel: 0870-850-0007

Stockton

St Marks House
St Marks Court
Thornaby

Stockton on Tees

TS17 6QR

Tel: 0870-850-0007

Wimbledon

Ground Floor

Swansea,
SA6 7HG
Tel: 0870-850-0007

Pydar Street,
Truro,
TR1 2TG
Tel: 0870-850-0007

Connect House,
133-137 Alexandra Road,
Wimbledon,
SW19 7JY
Tel: 0870-850-0007

Worcester

Clerkenleap Barn,
Broomhall,
Worcester,
WR5 3HR
Tel: 0870-850-0007

Maintenance

General maintenance in terms of oil changes, plugs and servicing have proved to be fairly straight forward. There are inconveniences of course - I get frustrated with my local **Lex Autocentre** who do a reasonable service, because they ALWAYS forget to order the air filter in advance and then take up to 2-3 weeks to get it in after the service, (despite my helpful reminders beforehand!). That said, they provide a reasonable service for a reasonable price.

In general you will find that garages either freak out at the prospect of a non UK vehicle or they just take it in their stride.

I have settled on a combination of specialists and general places like **Lex** and I have found my local **National Tyres** location to be very helpful.

There is a place in Fleet, Hampshire called **North American Motors** that specialises in American cars. They have been useful for servicing and more specialist work that requires parts. They have access to an importer that gets them US car parts on a weekly basis.

When I smashed the rear bumper I found **Finton Ellis** - a young guy in Odiham, who enthuses about American Cars and does a fantastic job of bodywork. He is also linked into the American import network and has no problem with foreign cars. He did an excellent job of fixing the back end of my Explorer. The only problem was with my insurer who wanted me to go to my local bodyshop - who had no clue how to start - let alone get parts. A little persuasion on my part got the insurer to see sense and we all ended up happy.

For wheel balancing, all the normal specialists I went to could not handle a US vehicle, but **Merrows** in Farnham have the latest computer equipment which lists all cars on the planet it seems and they had no difficulty in sorting my Explorer out.

I have heard good things about **Philip Eldon**, but never met him myself. He is a travelling mechanic who works on import cars. Private importers who have got his details from here tell me he is good. He covers the south of England.

Another place in Fleet called **North Hants Tyres** has been able to get me some parts which they import. They specialise in tyres, though I have not bought tyres from them to date.

I also bought the US maintenance manual for the car, which has been helpful for my own use, for listing parts and for lending to garages from time to time when they needed a bit more info.

The other top tip is to write down all the useful codes when you DO find the right plugs/filters etc so that your local garage can get them again next time - don't expect them to remember.

Finally, I have had a couple of recall notices from Ford US. The local UK Ford dealers have been useless and it was only recently that I discovered that my old chums at **Mildenhall** are registered to do free recall work by Ford US and other US manufacturers. They even offered to get the parts and instructions to my local Ford dealer with instructions to bill the labour back to Mildenhall who would handle all the paperwork. All at no cost to me!

Useful contacts

- **American Auto Club** - Site for US car owners in the UK.
- **American Auto Club** - Essex Branch.
- **Association of American Car Clubs UK** - British Car Club for American Cars
PO Box 2222
Braintree
Essex
CM7 9TW
Tel/Fax: +44-1376-552478
Web: www.motorvatinusa.org.uk
email: info@motorvatinusa.org.uk
- **F. H. Ellis** - bodywork
Unit 2, Stapely Manor
Long Lane
Odiham
Hampshire
RG29 1JE
Tel: +44-1256-861004
Web: www.fhellis.com
email: mail@fhellis.com
- **Ford Parts Network** - Genuine parts shipped world-wide
Web: www.fordpartsnetwork.com
email: sales@fordpartsnetwork.com
- **Merrows Tyre Alignment Centre**
Unit 7, Riverside Park Industrial Estate
Dogfluid Way
Farnham
Surrey
GU9 7UG
Tel: +44-1252-724209
Fax: +44-1252-734399
- **Mildenhall Auto Centre** - Conversions, servicing
9 Chiswick Avenue
Mildenhall
Suffolk
IP28 7AP
Tel: +44-1638-713962
Fax: +44-1638-718465
Web: www.mildenhallautocentre.co.uk
email: customer.service@MildenhallAutoCentre.co.uk
- **Nationwide Autocentres** - MOT and Servicing.

- **Norfolk American Auto Club** - Another club for US car owners.
- **North American Motors** - Service, maintenance, parts
12 Fleet Rd
Fleet
Hampshire
GU13 8QQ
Tel: +44-1252-812252
- **North Hants Tyres** - Parts
12-30 Fleet Rd
Fleet
Hampshire
Tel: +44-1252-613261
Fax: +44-1252-812225
Web: www.northhantstyre.co.uk
Email: sales@northhantstyre.co.uk
- **Philip Eldon** - Mobile maintenance in the South
Tel: +44-1734-774029
Mobile: +44-468-205353