

Chapter 10

Driver's License



Saitama's Mascot Kobaton

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To be able to drive in Japan, you must have a Japanese driver's license. To obtain one, it is necessary to pass the Japanese driving test or to pass a screening for conversion of a foreign driver's license to a Japanese license. However, people with an international driver's license issued by a country that is a signatory of the Geneva Convention, or a driver's license (with a Japanese translation) from a country designated by Japanese government ordinance (France, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Taiwan, Slovenia, Monaco), are also allowed to drive.

In this case, you may drive a vehicle whose operation is permitted by the license for 1 year from the date of arrival to Japan, assuming the foreign license remains valid during that time.



Consultation and Information Contacts

Office	Telephone	Address	Hours Mon – Fri (Except National Holidays and during the New Year's Holiday Period)
Saitama Prefectural Police Department Drivers' Licensing Center	048-543-2001 Tel. & Fax Guide: 048-541-1234	405-4 Konosu, Konosu-shi Access: Take the bus from the no. 3 stand bound for “Menkyo Center” from Konosu Sta. on the Takasaki Line – get off at the last stop	Consultation on converting a foreign-issued license: 9:30 - 10:00 14:00 – 14:30 License Conversion (post-consultation only): 13:00 - 13:45

1 Converting a Foreign Driver's License

With a valid driver's license issued overseas, you can apply to convert it into a Japanese license if you resided in the country that issued the license for at least 3 months in total after obtaining it. In Saitama, this procedure can be completed at the Saitama Prefectural Police Department Drivers' Licensing Center. When you apply you need the following:

- Passport
- Residence Card, or Special Permanent Resident Card, etc.
- Resident Record (with all your details (excluding your Individual Number))
- Your driver's license issued overseas (with date of issuance)
- An official translation either by your country's embassy or consulate in Japan, or by the Japan Automobile Federation (JAF)
- Two photos (3.0cm x 2.4cm) and
- The application fee

Other information may be required, so please consult with the Saitama Prefectural Police Department Drivers' Licensing Center's Foreign License Conversion Consultation Office before applying.

2 Renewing Your Driver's License

Depending on the driver's age and accident and traffic violation history, a Japanese driver's license is valid for 3 to 5 years.

The expiry date is written on the license. You will need to renew your license during the designated renewal period (starting one month prior to your birthday in the year your license is due to expire, and ending with the expiry date). Specific details about renewing your license will be written in the renewal notification you will be sent just before the renewal period begins. Please contact the Driver's License Center if you are not sent a notification by the time the renewal period begins.

When renewing your driver's license the following is required:

- Old driver's license
- Document that certifies your status of residence, such as a Residence Card, Special Permanent Resident Certificate, or passport and
- Application fee

3 Driver's License Tests

- (1) Test Venue: Saitama Prefectural Police Department Drivers' Licensing Center.
- (2) Application Acceptance Hours: Between 8:30 and 9:15 AM, Monday - Friday (except holidays, the New Year's Holiday Period)
- (3) Bring the following (varies depending upon the type of license you apply for):
 - Residence Card, or Special Permanent Resident Certificate, etc.
 - Resident Record (with all your details (excluding your Individual Number))
 - 2-3 photos (3.0cm x 2.4cm)
 - Test fees

* License tests in English or Portuguese are available for semimediam-sized vehicle regular vehicles, 2 wheeled vehicles, mopeds, and learner's licenses.

4 What to Do When Your License Expires

If you do not renew your license before the expiration date you will be required to apply for a new license. If you take the test within a certain amount of time of your license expiring, the techniques and theory section may be waived (If your license expires, you are not

allowed to drive until a new license is issued.).

Please undergo the procedures at the Saitama Prefectural Police Department Drivers' Licensing Center.

(1) For those without a valid reason for having failed to renew their license:

- a) Within 6 months of the expiration: It is possible to obtain a new license. Your driving record will not be carried over from your old license.
- b) If it has been over 6 months, but not yet a year since expiration of your regular, heavy, medium or semimedium-sized vehicle license, you may apply for a learner's license. For all other license types, there is no such provision.

(2) For those with an unavoidable reason for failing to renew their license (such as hospitalization and living abroad, etc.):

- a) Within 6 months after expiration: It is possible to obtain a new license. Your driving record will continue from your old license without interruption.
- b) Over 6 months but not yet 3 years after expiration: You can be issued a new license if you take specified procedure within one month after the end of the unavoidable circumstances. In this case, your driving record/history will not continue from your old license.

(3) Test procedures

- a) Test times
Monday - Friday, 13:00 - 13:45 (Closed over the New Year's Holiday Period)
- b) To apply you'll need
 - ① Your expired license
 - ② Your Residence Card or Special Permanent Resident Certificate, etc.
 - ③ Resident Record (with all your details (excluding your Individual Number))
 - ④ One photograph (3.0cm x 2.4cm)(Three photographs if you have a learner's license)
 - ⑤ Renewal Notification Postcard (it is possible to apply even without this)
 - ⑥ If there was an unavoidable reason why you were unable to renew your license in time you'll need to state the reason and provide documentary evidence (medical certificate, passport, etc.) and
 - ⑦ Application fee

5 Procedures for When You Move

When you move, you are required to register your change of address on your driver's license. Please do this as soon as possible at your nearest police station (excluding the Konosu Police Station) or your nearest driver's licensing center. Please bring the following documents with you:

- Driver's License
- Document that bears your name and shows your new address (Residence Record, Tax Notice, water or telephone bill, etc.)
- Document that certifies your status of residence such as a Residence Card, Special Permanent Resident Certificate, or passport

6 Buying and Registering a Car

When you buy or scrap a vehicle or change the name or address, you must register that transaction/change at the following locations.

Type	Location
Regular sized vehicles, and motorcycles over 125cc	Kanto Transport Bureau's Saitama Transport Branch or each Vehicle Inspection and Registration Office
Small cars (660cc or less)	Association of Light Vehicle Inspection, Saitama Branch or other local branch offices
Motorcycles (125cc or less)	The tax division of your local municipal or ward offices

When you purchase and register ordinary vehicles, you need the following:

- Transfer certificate (with a registered seal of the former owner)
- Seals of both new and former owners (registered seals) or a letter of attorney (in the case of a representative acting for the new or former owner)
- Certification of the seals for both new and former owners (issued within the last 3 months)
- Parking space verification (issued within the past month)
- Vehicle inspection certificate

When you move (change your address), you need following:

- Certificate of residence (issued within the last 3 months)
- * An official copy of your certificate of residence showing your new and previous addresses is necessary.

- Parking space verification (issued within the past month)
- Seal of the vehicle owner (an unregistered seal is acceptable)
- Vehicle inspection certificate

* For details, refer to following contacts:



Consultation and Information Contacts

Office	Telephone	Address	Hours
Saitama Transportation Branch, Kanto Transport Bureau	050-5540-2026	2154-2, Nakakugi, Nishi-ku, Saitama-shi	Mon – Fri (Excluding holidays and New Year's holiday period) 8:45–11:45 13:00–16:00
Kumagaya Automobile Inspection & Registration Office	050-5540-2027	701-4, Miizugahara, Kumagaya-shi	
Tokorozawa Automobile Inspection & Registration Office	050-5540-2029	688-1, Ushinuma, Tokorozawa-shi	
Kasukabe Automobile Inspection & Registration Office	050-5540-2028	723-1, Mashito, Kasukabe-shi	

Saitama Transport Branch Office website:

https://www.tb.mlit.go.jp/kanto/s_saitama/index.html

When registering a light vehicle (kei-car), you need the following:

- Seals of both new user(s) and the new owner (unregistered seals are acceptable if the seal shows an individual person's name) or a letter of attorney (in the case of a representative acting for the new user(s) or new owner)
- Seal of the former owner (unregistered seals are acceptable if the seal shows an individual person's name) or a letter of attorney (in the case of a representative acting for the former owner)
- Certificate of residence (issued within the last 3 months)
- Vehicle inspection certificate

* For details, refer to the following contacts:



Consultation and Information Contacts

Office	Telephone	Address	Hours
Light Motor Vehicle Inspection Organisation	050-3816-3110	505-1, Hirakata ryoryoke, Ageo-shi	Mon – Fri Excluding holidays and New Year's holiday) 8:45~11:45 13:00~16:00
Kumagaya Branch Office, Light Motor Vehicle Inspection Organisation	050-3861-3112	960-2, Niibori , Aza Kitahara, Kumagaya-shi	
Tokorozawa Branch Office, Light Motor Vehicle Inspection Organisation	050-3861-3111	360-3, Kita-nagai, Miyoshi-machi	
Kasukabe Branch Office, Light Motor Vehicle Inspection Organisation	050-3861-3113	115-1, Higashi-kochi, Shimo-oomashi-shinden, Kasukabe-shi	

When purchasing and registering a motorcycle (125cc or less), contact your local municipal office.

7 Automobile Insurance

A combination of insurance plans is recommended to protect you and others in the event of a traffic accident.

(1) Compulsory Insurance

When you purchase a vehicle or renew its inspection certificate, you must obtain compulsory liability insurance. You can obtain this insurance at the car insurance agency, car dealership, or mechanic's shop.

(2) Private Insurance

Private insurance provides compensation for any damage to the vehicle or injury to passengers that is not covered by compulsory insurance. The insurance agency will represent you during compensation negotiations. You can apply for this type of insurance at private insurance agencies.



Consultation and Information Contacts

Name	Telephone	Hours
The General Insurance Association of Japan General Insurance Counseling and ADR Center, Tokyo Branch	NaviDial(chargeable) 0570-022808 (IP phone) 03-4332-5241	Mon – Fri (Except National Holidays and during the New Year's Holiday Period) 9:15 - 17:00 * Consultation is provided in Japanese. * You cannot apply for car insurance through this phone consultation. To apply for car insurance, please contact a nonlife insurance company. Weblink to inquiry counters of nonlife insurance companies: http://www.sonpo.or.jp/useful/soudan/each/