

Chapter 10

Driver's License



Saitama's Prefectural Mascot
Kobaton

- 1 Converting Your Overseas Driver's License
- 2 Renewing Your Driver's License
- 3 Driver's License Tests
- 4 What to Do When Your License Expires
- 5 Updating Your Personal Details
- 6 Buying and Registering a Vehicle
- 7 Automobile Insurance

You must have a Japanese driver's license to be able to drive in Japan. To obtain one, you will either need to pass the Japanese driving test or pass a review to have your overseas driver's license converted into a Japanese license.

You can also drive a vehicle permitted by your license for up to one (1) year from the date of your arrival in Japan if you have:

- an international driver's license issued by a member nation/country of the Geneva Convention; or
- a driver's license from a country or region designated by Japanese government ordinance (Switzerland, Germany, France, Belgium, Monaco, Taiwan) with a Japanese translation attached.

However, if your license expires during this one (1) year period, you will not be allowed to drive once it has expired.



Consultations and Inquiries

Office	Phone	Address	Reception Hours Mon - Fri (Excluding National Holidays and the New Year's holiday period)
Driver's License Center, Saitama Prefectural Police Department	048-543-2001 Phone & Fax Guide: 048-541-1234	405-4 Konosu, Konosu-shi Access: Take the bus from bus stop no. 3 bound for “Menkyo Center” from the east exit of Konosu Sta. on the Takasaki Line – get off at the last stop	For advance consultations about converting an overseas license: 9:30 - 10:00 For license conversion reviews (only for persons who have had an advance consultation): 13:00 - 13:45

1 Converting Your Overseas Driver's License

If you have a valid driver's license issued overseas that can be converted, 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 after obtaining it. In Saitama, you can apply for this at the Saitama Prefectural Police Driver's License Center. You will need the following documents:

- Passport
- Residence Card, or Special Permanent Resident Certificate, etc.
- Resident Record (with all your details (excluding your Individual Number))
- Your overseas driver's license
- An official Japanese translation, either by your country's embassy or consulate in Japan, or by a corporation designated by the National Public Safety Commission (The Japan Automobile Federation (JAF) or ZIPLUS only)
- Two photos (3.0cm x 2.4cm)
- Application fee

Please check the Procedures for Converting Your Overseas License to a Japanese License section of the Saitama Prefectural Police's website, as you may need to provide additional documentation.

Please consult with the Overseas License Conversion Consultation Office at the Saitama Prefectural Police Driver's License Center before applying. (Applications for license conversions will not be accepted without an advance consultation to confirm the documents you will need.)



<Saitama Prefectural Police - Converting Overseas Driver's Licenses 埼玉県警察 外国免許切替>

2 Renewing Your Driver's License

A Japanese driver's license is valid for 3 to 5 years, depending on the driver's age and driving history. The expiry date is written on the license.

You must renew your license during the renewal period (starting one month prior to your birthday directly before your license is due to expire, until the license expiry date).

Please check the renewal notification that will be sent to you just before the renewal period begins for specific details regarding where to renew your license, reception times, and application fees. If you have not received the notification by the time the renewal period begins please contact the Driver's License Center.

You will need the following to renew your driver's license:

- Driver's license
- Document that certifies your status of residence (Residence Card, Special Permanent Resident Certificate, a copy of your Resident Record that does not show your Individual Number, or passport)
- Application fee

3 Driver's License Tests

- (1) Place of application: Driver's License Center (Saitama Prefectural Police Department)
- (2) Reception hours: 8:30am - 9:15am, Monday to Friday
(Closed on national holidays, and from 29 December until 3 January of the following year)

*Provisional licenses by appointment only (You can make a booking online through the Saitama Prefectural Police website)

- (3) You will need to bring the following (documents may vary depending on the type of license test):
- 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)
- Application fee

* Written tests (except for Class Two and special small motor vehicle licenses) can be taken in the following languages.

- For Class One, Class Two, and Provisional licenses (20 languages)

English, Portuguese, Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic, Indonesian, Ukrainian, Urdu, Korean, Khmer, Sinhala, Spanish, Thai, Tagalog, Nepali, Hindi, Persian, Burmese, Mongolian, Russian

- For moped licenses (4 languages)

English, Portuguese, Chinese, Vietnamese

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. However, if you take the driver's license test within a certain period of time after the expiration date, it is possible to obtain a license with measures that exempt you from taking part of the test (the written and practical sections). (If your license expires, you cannot drive until a new license has been issued.)

Procedures can be completed at the Driver's License Center, Saitama Prefectural Police Department.

(1) If you failed to renew your license without a valid reason:

- a) If it has been less than 6 months after expiration: Although it is possible to obtain a new license without taking the written and practical sections of the test, your driving history will not be carried over from your old license.
- b) If it has been more than 6 months, but less than 1 year after expiration: For large, mid-sized, semi-mid-sized or standard vehicle licenses, you can obtain for a provisional license without taking the written and practical sections of the test. For all other license types (vehicle types without provisional licenses, such as special large motor vehicles and motorcycles), there is no such exemption.

(2) If you failed to renew your license due to unavoidable circumstances (such as hospitalization, living abroad, etc.):

- a) If it has been less than 6 months after expiration: Through certain procedures, it is possible to obtain a new license without taking the written and practical sections of the test. In this instance, your driving record will be carried over from your previous license.
- b) If it has been more than 6 months, but less than 3 years after expiration: You can obtain a new license without taking the written and practical sections of the test if procedures are completed within one month after the unavoidable circumstances have subsided. In this instance, your driving record will be carried over from your previous license.

(3) Important Information

- a) Reception times
13:00 - 13:45, Monday to Friday (Closed on national holidays, and from 29 December until 3 January of the following year)
- b) Required documents
 - 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 are applying for a provisional license)
 - ⑤ Renewal Notification Postcard (it is still possible to apply without this)
 - ⑥ Documentary evidence (medical certificate, passport, etc.) to prove you were unable to renew your license due to unavoidable circumstances
 - ⑦ Application fee

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5 Updating Your Personal Details

When personal details such as your address or name change, you are required to register these changes on your driver's license. Please do this as soon as possible at your nearest police station (excluding the Konosu Police Station) or the Driver's License Center. You will need to bring the following documents with you:

- Driver's License
- A document that bears your name and shows your new address (Residence Record, Tax Notice, water or telephone bill, etc.)
- A document that shows your status of residence (Residence Card, Special Permanent Resident Certificate, a copy of your Resident Record without your Individual Number, or passport)

*When you change your legal domicile, name, or date of birth, please submit a copy of your Resident Record (without your Individual Number) which shows your nationality, status of residence, and period of stay.

6 Buying and Registering a Vehicle

When you buy or deregister a vehicle, or change the owner's name or address on record, you must register these changes with the relevant institution below:

Vehicle Type	Location
Standard vehicles, and motorcycles over 125cc	Saitama Transport Branch of the Kanto District Transport Bureau, or Vehicle Inspection and Registration offices
Light vehicles (660cc or less)	Saitama Branch of the Association of Light Vehicle Inspection, or other local branch offices
Motorcycles (125cc or less)	The tax division of your local municipal or ward offices

When purchasing and registering standard vehicles, you will need the following (to change the registered name):

- Transfer certificate (stamped with the registered seal of the former owner)
- Seals of both new and former owners (registered seals) or a power of attorney stamped with their registered seal (for proxy applications)
- Seal registration certificates from both the new and former owner (issued within the last 3 months)
- Parking space verification (issued within the past 40 days)

*This document can be omitted if the address of new owner is the same as the former owner.

- Vehicle inspection certificate (must be within the period of validity)

*When you change your car's license plate number, you will need to bring your car in addition to the documents listed above.

A Guide to Living in Saitama

*If details such as the address and name of the owner listed on the vehicle inspection certificate are different from the seal registration certificate, a document such as a Resident Record certifying the change is required.

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

- Resident record (issued within the last 3 months)

*An official copy of your Resident Record showing all addresses from that listed on your vehicle inspection certificate until your current address.

- Parking space verification (issued within the past 40 days)
- Power of attorney (for proxy applications)

*If the vehicle owner and vehicle user differ, an application for each person is necessary.

- Vehicle inspection certificate

*When you change your car's license plate number, you will need to bring your car in addition to the documents listed above.

For more information, contact the offices listed below.



Consultations and Inquiries

Office	Phone	Address	Reception Hours
Saitama Transport Branch Office, Kanto District Transport Bureau	050-5540-2026 Service code: 037	2154-2 Nakakugi, Nishi-ku, Saitama-shi	Mon - Fri (Excluding National Holidays and the New Year's holiday period) 8:45 - 11:45 13:00 - 16:00
Kumagaya Automobile Inspection & Registration Office	050-5540-2027 Service code: 037	701-4 Shimobayashi, Miizugahara, Kumagaya-shi	
Tokorozawa Automobile Inspection & Registration Office	050-5540-2029 Service code: 037	688-1 Shimoharakotsu, Ushinuma, Tokorozawa-shi	
Kasukabe Automobile Inspection & Registration Office	050-5540-2028 Service code: 037	723-1 Mashito, Kasukabe-shi	

Saitama Transport Branch Office website:

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

A Guide to Living in Saitama

For a light vehicle (*keijidousha*), you will need the following (to change the registered name):

- Resident Record of the new user (issued within the last 3 months)
- Vehicle inspection certificate
- Written application (for proxy applications)

*For license plate number changes, you will also need your license plate in addition to the documents listed above.

*If the names of the vehicle owner and user are different from what is listed on the vehicle inspection certificate, please contact the owner (the car dealership, loan company, etc.) in advance.

*For more information, contact:



Consultations and Inquiries

Office	Telephone	Address	Reception Hours
Light Motor Vehicle Inspection Organization	050-3816-3110	505-1 Mae, Hirakataryoryoke, Ageo-shi	Mon - Fri (Excluding holidays and the New Year's holiday period) 8:45 - 11:45 13:00 - 16:00
Light Motor Vehicle Inspection Organization, Tokorozawa Branch Office	050-3816-3111	360-3 Kitanagai, Miyoshi-machi, Iruma-gun	
Light Motor Vehicle Inspection Organization, Kumagaya Branch Office	050-3816-3112	960-2 Kitahara, Niibori, Kumagaya-shi	
Light Motor Vehicle Inspection Organization, Kasukabe Branch Office	050-3816-3113	115-1 Higashi-kochi, Shimoomashi Shinden, Kasukabe-shi	

For inquiries about purchasing and registering motorcycles (125cc or less), please contact your local municipal office.

7 Automobile Insurance

There is insurance for automobiles in case you get into a motor vehicle accident. There are two types of automobile insurance: mandatory liability insurance and voluntary insurance. It is recommended that you enroll in voluntary insurance that covers damages, in addition to mandatory insurance.

(1) Mandatory Liability Insurance (mandatory insurance)

When you purchase a vehicle or have it inspected, you must enroll in mandatory liability insurance (*jibaiseki hoken*). This is insurance that provides coverage if you cause injury or death to another person with your vehicle. As there is a limit on the amount of coverage, amounts in excess of this limit will not be covered by mandatory liability insurance. Usually, you enroll in this insurance at general insurance company agents such as car dealerships or mechanic's shops.

(2) Voluntary Insurance (automobile insurance)

Voluntary insurance (*nin'i hoken*) provides coverage for damage to other people's property, your own vehicle, and injuries that are not covered by mandatory liability insurance, including amounts in excess of the mandatory liability insurance limit. Usually, you apply for voluntary insurance at general insurance company agents.

Consultations and Inquiries

Name	Phone	Reception Hours
The General Insurance Association of Japan Counseling and ADR Center	Navi Dial (nationwide, call charges apply) 0570-022808 Direct contact number (Sonpo ADR Center Tokyo) 03-4332-5241	Mon - Fri (Excluding National Holidays, holidays and December 30 to January 4) 9:15 - 17:00 * Available only in Japanese. * You cannot apply for automobile insurance through this phone service. To apply for automobile insurance, please contact a general insurance company. Link to contact information of general insurance companies: https://www.sonpo.or.jp/soudan/reference.html

* Website for visitors and foreign residents of Japan: "Information on Staying Safe in Japan"



<https://living-and-ins.jp/ja/>