

For Holders of Foreign Driver's Licenses

How to Drive in Japan

■ In order to drive in Japan, drivers need to hold any one of the following driver's licenses:

1) A Japanese driver's license

2) An International Driving Permit pursuant to the 1949 Geneva Convention on Road Traffic

* In cases where International Driving Permits are issued by countries or regions that are not contracting parties to the Geneva Convention, or where countries or regions that are contracting parties to the Convention do not issue such permits in the forms prescribed in the Convention, drivers cannot drive with International Driving Permits issued by these countries or regions.

3) Foreign driver's license

Only licenses from countries or regions that do not issue International Driving Permits and are recognized as having a standard equivalent to Japan's licensing system (as of April 1, 2026: Swiss Confederation, the Federal Republic of Germany, the French Republic, the Kingdom of Belgium, the Principality of Monaco, and Taiwan) are permitted, provided they are accompanied by a Japanese translation prepared by a person designated by Cabinet Order *.

* The persons designated by Cabinet

Order to create Japanese translations are as follows.

Legally certified translators of foreign countries or regions are not included.

○ Competent administrative agencies with the authority to issue driver's licenses of foreign countries

or regions, or the consular offices of the countries or regions (agencies that issue driver's licenses of foreign countries or regions, or embassies or consulates of the countries or regions in Japan)

○ Among legal or other persons notified by administrative agencies that have jurisdiction over laws equivalent to the Road Traffic Act (limited to the part pertaining to driver licensing) of foreign countries or regions to the National Public Safety Commission as those with the capacity to prepare Japanese translations of driver's licenses of the foreign countries or regions, those who the National Public Safety Commission finds to be appropriate (the Taiwan-Japan Relations Association in cases of Taiwanese driver's licenses and Allgemeiner Deutscher

Automobil-Club e.V. in cases of German driver's licenses are recognized at the present time, as of April 1, 2026); and

- Legal persons designated by the National Public Safety Commission as those who can properly and reliably prepare Japanese translations of driver's licenses by the administrative agencies of foreign countries or regions that pertain to licenses to drive vehicles, etc.

■ Period during which you can drive in Japan

1) A Japanese driver's license

during the valid period of the Japanese driver's license indicated therein

2) International Driving Permits or foreign driver's licenses:

a period of not more than one year after the date of the driver's landing in Japan or the valid period of the International Driving Permits or foreign driver's licenses*1, whichever is shorter (however, in cases where persons registered in the Basic Resident Register departed Japan after the confirmation of departure, the granting of re-entry permission, etc., and returned to Japan within a period of not more than three months, their date of return to Japan (landing in Japan) shall not be the initial day of reckoning for the period when drivers with an International Driving Permit or foreign driver's license are allowed to drive*2).

*1 The validity period of an International Driving Permit is one year from the date of issuance

*2 Please refer to the attached figure for the period when drivers are allowed to drive with an International Driving Permit.

How to Obtain a Japanese Driver's License

Those who hold a license issued by foreign administrative agencies can apply for a Japanese license related to the vehicles they can drive with that license, through a procedure that exempts them from part of the examination.

■ Place of application

Driver's license centers, etc., of the prefectural police with jurisdiction for the domicile of the applicant in Japan

■ Procedure

Based on the application, if it is confirmed that the necessary knowledge or skills related to driving are sufficient and there are no obstacles to driving, the applicant will be exempted from part of the license examination (the written test and the driving proficiency test).

■ Notes

- 1) The applicant must have stayed in a country or region for a period of three months or longer in total after he or she was granted a driver's license of the country or region (documents that can verify the length of their stay, such as passports with the seals of verification for departure and entry, are required).
- 2) Applications by agents are not allowed. Please ensure that the applicant applies in person.
- 3) Foreigners who are not subject to the Basic Resident Registration Act cannot apply for a driver's license, except in exceptional cases specified by law.

* Cases where you can exceptionally apply for a driver's license

Those who can present an identity certificate issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (such as a diplomatic identity certificate) or documents proving identity issued by an authorized agency that are recognized by the National Public Safety Commission as equivalent to the identity certificate issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

If you fall under this exception, when applying for a driver's license, in addition to presenting the above documents, you will need to submit documents issued by a public agency that sufficiently verify your address or equivalent documents.

For more details, please contact the driver's license center of each prefectural police agency.

■ Documents, etc, necessary to apply for a driver's license

1) Application form

- * Along with the application form, the applicant needs to complete and submit the questionnaire on symptoms of diseases and other matters. If the applicant has any pertinent question answer, officials will ask him or her about said answer, such as symptoms, in detail.

2) One photo for application

- * A photo taken within six months prior to application of the applicant without a hat (except in cases where the head is covered with cloth for religious or medical reasons to the extent that the facial outline can be clearly discerned), facing forward, with no background, showing from the chest up. Size: 3.0 × 2.4 cm. A document

with the name and the date when the photo was taken written on the back.

3) A copy of the certificate of residence stating the registered domicile (or specific matters for foreigners).

* "Specific matters" refers to matters that must be recorded on the certificate of residence of foreign residents according to the Basic Resident Registration Act, such as status of residence and period of stay.

4) One document that can confirm the identity, such as an Individual Number Card or passport.

5) Foreign driver's license (an International Driving Permit alone is not allowed)

6) Japanese translation of the above license (limited to one that is prepared by persons prescribed by Cabinet Order* and specifies the type of motor vehicles, etc., which the applicant is allowed to drive under the license, the valid period of the license, and the conditions imposed on the license)

* The persons designated by Cabinet

Order to create Japanese translations are as follows.

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or regions, or the consular offices of the countries or regions (agencies that issue driver's licenses of foreign countries or regions, or embassies or consulates of the countries or regions in Japan)

○ Among legal or other persons notified by administrative agencies that have jurisdiction over laws equivalent to the Road Traffic Act (limited to the part pertaining to driver licensing) of foreign countries or regions to the National Public Safety Commission as those with the capacity to prepare Japanese translations of driver's licenses of the foreign countries or regions, those who the National Public Safety Commission finds to be appropriate (the Taiwan-Japan Relations Association in cases of Taiwanese driver's licenses and Allgemeiner Deutscher Automobil-Club e.V. in cases of German driver's licenses are recognized at the present time, as of April 1, 2026); and

○ Legal persons designated by the National Public Safety Commission as those who can properly and reliably prepare Japanese translations of driver's licenses by the administrative agencies of foreign countries or regions that pertain to licenses to drive vehicles, etc.

7) Documents that can verify that the applicant stayed in the foreign country or region

for three months or longer in total after the license was granted, including the passport with the seals of verification for departure and entry

8) Application fee

■ Other matters

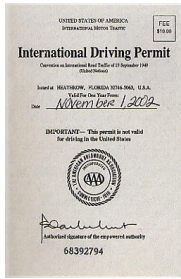
The safety driving consultation desks of the prefectural police, etc., can provide consultations on diseases, disabilities, and other matters.

Please inquire about the details of the place of application, hours for acceptance of applications, documents necessary for application, fees, and any other matters to the driver's license centers of the prefectural police where you are applying.

How to drive a car or other vehicle in Japan

Without obtaining a Japanese license

1. Driving with an International Driving Permit



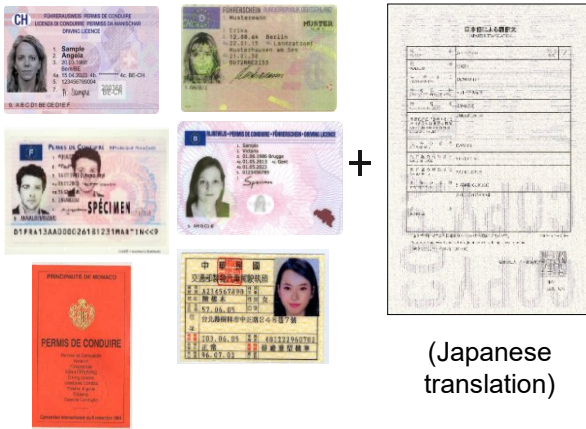
(International Driving Permit of the Geneva Convention)

○ You can drive by holding an International Driving Permit that complies with the format specified in the Geneva Convention* for one year after landing in Japan. (Article 107-2 of the Road Traffic Act)

* Geneva Convention

The Convention on Road Traffic signed in Geneva on September 19, 1949

2. Driving with a foreign driver's license with a Japanese translation attached



(Japanese translation)

○ You can drive by holding a foreign or regional driver's license * with a Japanese translation * attached for one year after landing in Japan. (Article 107-2 of the Road Traffic Act)

* Foreign or regional driver's license

Driver's licenses issued in Switzerland, Germany, France, Belgium, Monaco, and Taiwan

* Japanese translation

The translation must be created by the consular office of the country that issued the license or a corporation designated by the National Public Safety Commission.

(Foreign driver's license)

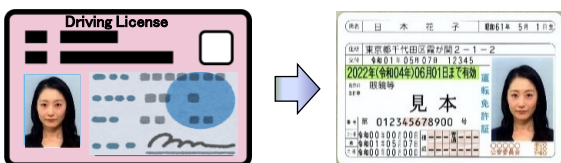
If you want to obtain a Japanese driver's license

1. Obtain through the regular license test (for those without a foreign driver's license)



○ Those without a foreign driver's license must take the regular driving license test to obtain a Japanese driving license.

2. Obtain by switching from a foreign driver's license (for those with a foreign driver's license)



(Foreign driver's license)

○ Those who have the necessary knowledge and skills to drive a car, etc., and have no obstacles to driving can switch to a Japanese license.

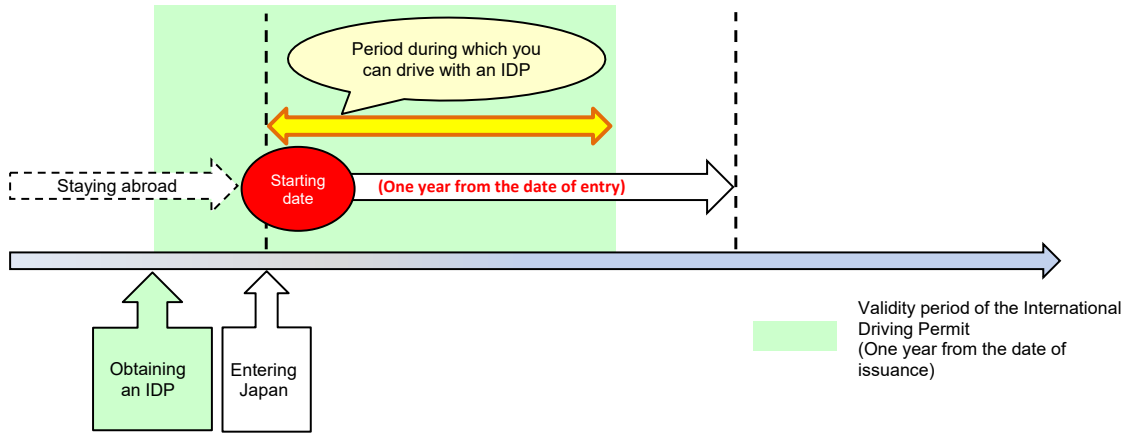
○ However, the ability to switch is available on condition that the applicant has stayed in that country for a total of more than three months after obtaining a foreign driver's license.

Attached figure

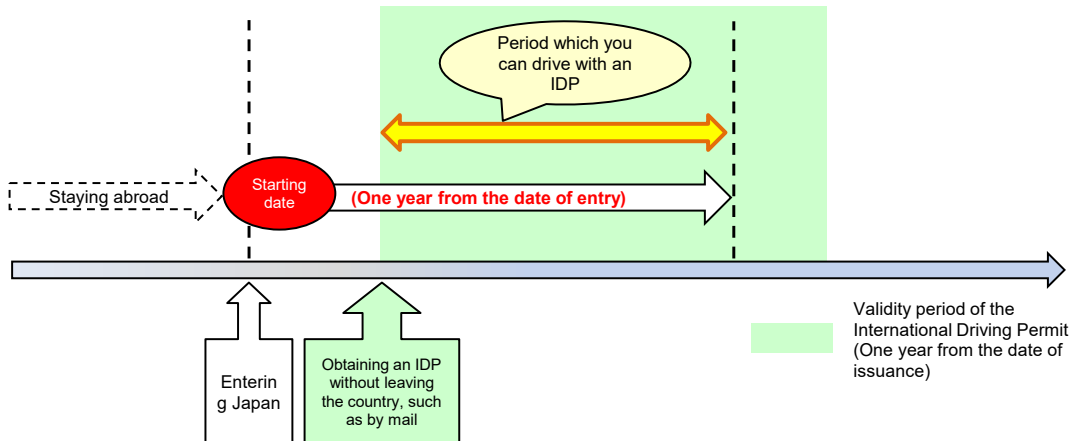
Period during which you can drive with an International Driving Permit (IDP)

1. When a person not registered in the Basic Resident Register enters Japan

(1) When entering in Japan for the first time after obtaining an International Driving Permit

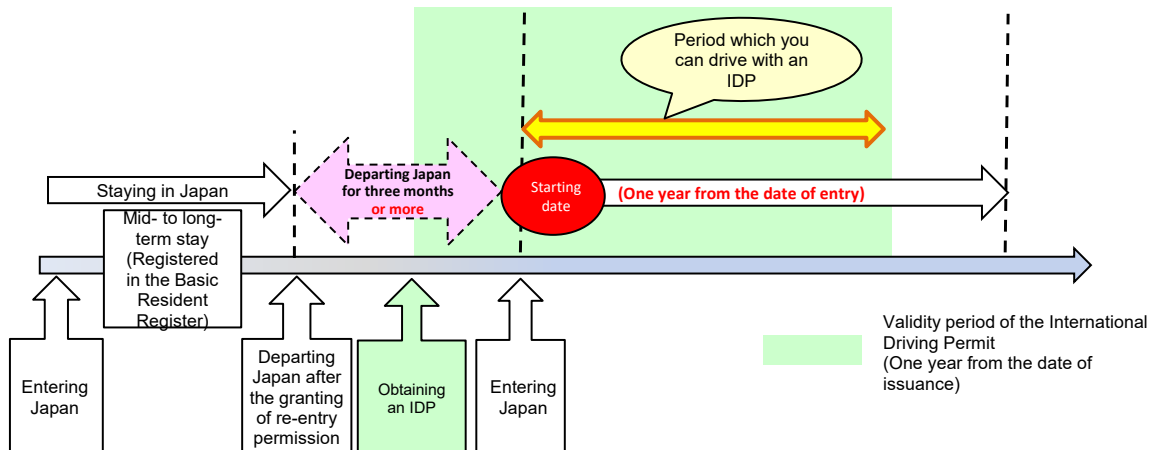


(2) When obtaining an International Driving Permit after the entering Japan for the first time

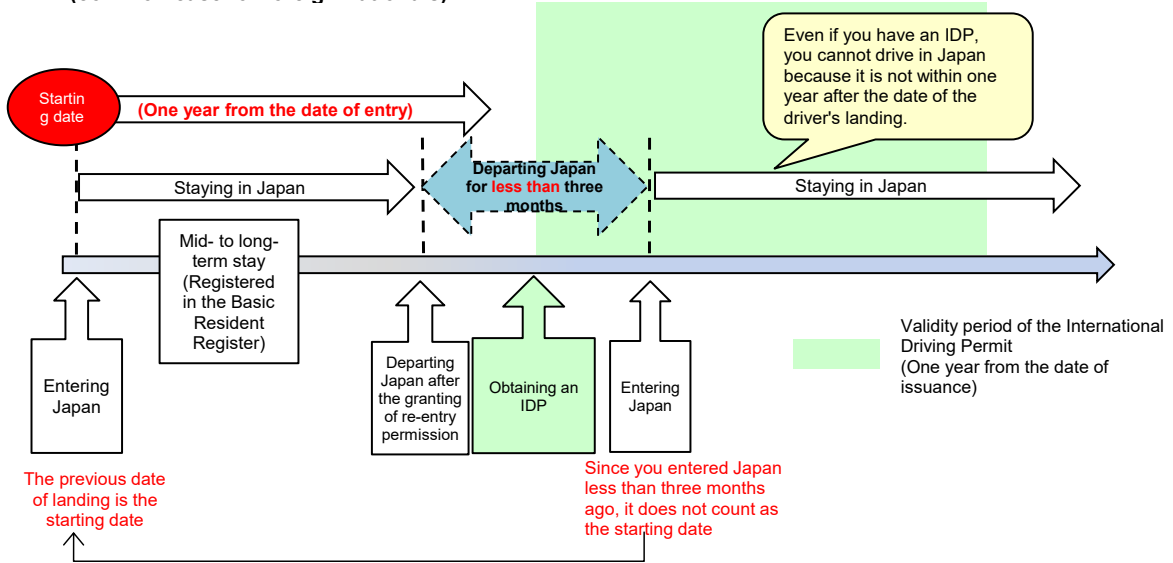


2. When a person registered in the Basic Resident Register departs and re-enters in Japan

(1) When re-entering Japan after staying abroad for three months or more



(2) When re-entering Japan after staying abroad for less than three months
(common case for foreign nationals)



(3) When re-entering in Japan after staying abroad for less than three months
(common case for Japanese national)

