

Driver's license

To drive an automobile

In order to drive an automobile in Japan, it is necessary to have either a Japanese driver's license, International driver's license issued according to the Geneva Convention, or a driver's license of foreign countries. (restricted to certain countries and territories) If you have a driver's license that you obtained in your country (abroad), it can be exchanged for a Japanese license if you pass some tests.

International Driver's License [*Kokusai Unten Menkyo-sho*]

Only international driver's license issued by a signatory to the Geneva Convention in conformity with the Convention's provisions are recognized as valid in Japan. The period of validity is the shorter of either 1 year from the date of landing (entry) in Japan or the expiration date of the license.

Notes:

1. When a person has an international driver's license issued by a signatory to the Geneva Convention but the license is issued according to the provisions of another convention such as the Vienna Convention, he/she is not permitted to drive in Japan.
2. If a person who has a basic resident register (*juminhyo*) exits Japan and return within 3 months, the date of landing (re-entry) cannot be regarded as the initial date of reckoning for the period permitted to drive with international license. This may cause driving without a driver's license so please inquire at the police station or department in charge of driver's license nearest to you.

Foreign Driver's License [*Gaikoku Unten Menkyo-sho*]

Currently, driver's licenses issued by the authorities of Switzerland, Germany, France, Belgium, Monaco or Taiwan are valid. A Japanese translation of the license issued by the government office which has the authority for issuance of the license, the embassy or consulate of the issuing countries, or the Japan Automobile Federation (JAF) needs to be carried with the license. The maximum period which one can drive is the shorter of either 1 year from the date of landing (entry) or the expiration date of the license.

Note 1: If a person who has a basic resident register (*juminhyo*) exits Japan and return within 3 months, the date of landing (re-entry) cannot be regarded as the initial date of reckoning for the period permitted to drive with international license. This may lead to driving without a driver's license so please inquire at the police station or department in charge of driver's license nearest to you.

Exchanging your license to a Japanese license

It is possible to apply to exchange your (foreign) license for a Japanese license. In Hyogo Prefecture, you can exchange your driver's license at Driver's License Examination Office in Akashi City. However, the applicant's foreign driver's license must be valid (expired licenses cannot be transferred). In addition, the applicant must be able to prove that he or she stayed in the issuing country for at least 3 months in total after obtaining the license.

JAF Webpage <http://www.jaf.or.jp/inter/translation/index.htm>

(1) Required items

For details on what documents are required to be presented, enquire at the Driver's License
Multilanguage Living Guide Nishinomiya Edition

Examination Center.

(2) The process involved in a regular application

(i) Make an application for exchange, (ii) Questioning and screening of the application documents, (iii) Aptitude test, (iv) Confirmation of traffic rule knowledge, (v) Driving skill test,

Note: (v) Driving skill test will be conducted on a designated day after passing all steps (i) through (iv).

The validity period of a driver's license

As a general rule, a newly obtained Japanese driver's license is valid until 1 month after your third birthday from the date you take the driving aptitude test (driver's license test). After that, renewal is every 3 – 5 years. If the validity period expires, the license becomes invalid so please remember to confirm the expiration date of your license and apply for the renewal.

If you change your address

If you change your address, it is necessary to apply to change the address on your driver's license.

Make an application by bringing your driver's license and proof of your new address (Jyuminhyo etc.) to the police station in your prefecture or Driver's License Update Center, etc.

The suspension and cancellation of a driver's license

Regarding Japanese driver's license, a point system is adopted for violation of traffic laws. Points are added for violation of traffic laws such as ignoring a traffic light or causing a car accident. When these points (accumulated points) reach certain level, your driver's license may be suspended or revoked. In particular, drunk driving, hit-and-run, driving under the influence of drugs is severely punishable. A license may be revoked for a single offense. If there are casualties as a result of an accident you have caused, you may be sent to a prison for traffic law offenders.

Enquiries Hyogo Prefectural Police Headquarters, Transportation Department, Driver's License Division

078-912-1628

(Hyogo Kenkei Honbu, Koutu-bu, Untenmenkyo-ka)

Note For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you.