

Driving in Japan

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These are some practical tips for driving in Japan! Woohoo!

Driving Etiquette

- ◆ Flash your hazard lights or honk to say thank you if someone lets you in.
- ◆ Many drivers in Japan don't turn on their headlights until it's absolutely dark, but turn yours on when you feel necessary.
- ◆ Often times people will drive with their brights on at night, especially in the country side.
- ◆ The right lane is the fast lane. Stay in the left if you're going to be driving more slowly.
- ◆ When going through a small tunnel that may only fit 1 car, stop at the entrance, honk to let others know you are there, and turn on your headlights before entering.
- ◆ Driving in the bus lane in Kumamoto City is permitted only outside of hours buses run, and when preparing to make a left turn.
- ◆ It's required by law to stop at rail road tracks before crossing over them.
- ◆ Japanese drivers often run red lights, so be cautious when passing through intersections.
- ◆ NEVER turn on red!
- ◆ When making a right turn at an intersection, pull up into the intersection until it's safe to go, and always turn into the furthestmost left lane.
- ◆ If a driver is partially blocking a lane waiting to make a right turn, it is okay to go around if there is enough space.

Getting Gas

It's not as scary as you think!

There are two types of gas stations in Japan-- full service and self serve. Self serve gas stations are designated with “セルフ”.

In most cases, you will want regular gas (レギュラー) . When pulling up to a full service station, the attendant will probably show you which pump to go to. If you want to fill up, tell them “まんたんでおねがいします” (mantan de onegaishimasu). If you want to fill up a specific amount, tell them how much followed by an “onegaishimasu” and they'll get the picture.

The gas station attendant may ask if you have any trash, have a discount card, or whether or not you will pay with cash. They may also wipe your windows, or give you a towel to wipe down your dashboard. Don't worry if you don't understand everything, they'll try to help you out as much as possible.

Self service stations are usually a couple yen per liter cheaper, and are quite easy to use.

Pull up wherever is convenient for you. You will have to push some buttons on the screen. Most likely you will first choose what form of payment you will be using. Cash is “現金” and card is “カード”. Keep in mind that generally, there will be a small fee added to the per liter cost if using a card.

If you've chosen cash, it'll ask you how much you want to fill up. You can select a specific amount, or choose “満タン” (full tank). Put your money in, fill up your tank, and don't forget your change. Sometimes you'll need to scan your receipt in a separate machine to get your change.

Driving on the IC

- ◆ Entrances to the IC are marked with green signs.
- ◆ Unless you have an ETC card, slow down and collect a ticket at your entrance lane. Make sure you don't go through the ETC lane!
- ◆ The IC is much faster than regular lanes, but it is a tollway. Speed limits are marked (usually 80 km/h), but generally ignored. Remember to drive at a safe speed.
- ◆ Exit as usual, slowing down to give the attendant your card and pay in cash.



P.S. This is a stop sign.

**For more details on getting a driver's license in Japan, obtaining a car, dealing with insurance, or other general rules on driving, please refer to the “Driving in Kumamoto” section on kumamotojet.com.