

Driving Dos and Don'ts

- **DO** drive on the left.
- **DO** abide by traffic signs. Green Go, Yellow Slow, Red Stop. There is no “left-on-red.”
- **DO** abide by traffic laws and refrain from speeding and passing in no-pass areas.
- **DO** wear a seat belt. They are technically supposed to be worn by all vehicle occupants, but it seems like it's not actively enforced for backseat passengers.
- **DO** familiarize yourself with Japanese signs.
- **DON'T** use a cell phone and drive.
- **DON'T** drink and drive, or allow someone else to drink and drive, ever. **DO** keep a reliable “daiko” service in your phone contacts.
- **DON'T** forget your driver's license, insurance information, etc.

		Suspension					
Past Offences	30日	60日	90日	120日	150日	180日	
0回	6~8点	9~11点	12~14点	免許取消へ→			
1回		4~5点	6~7点	8~9点	免許取消へ→		
2回			2点	3点	4点		
3回				2点	3点		
4回					2点	3点	

Revocation		
1年	2年	3年
15~24点	25~34点	35点以上
10~19点	20~29点	30点以上
5~14点	15~24点	25点以上
4~9点	10~19点	20点以上

Japanese licenses operate on a point system. Too many points off your license will result in a suspension or revocation! If you lose points, you will get a special lecture at license renewal time.

Owning a vehicle

White plate or Yellow plate

Cars with white plates are generally larger with more powerful engines. They are also more expensive to own in Japan. Yellow plate cars, often called “kei cars,” are smaller and more affordable and most ALTs opt for these. You just might have to turn off your air conditioning on steep hills.

Car ownership expenses

- Shaken - vehicle inspection that must be renewed every two years and costs between ¥60,000-80,000 for kei cars and upwards of ¥100,000 for white plate cars (not including repairs).
- Compulsory Insurance - required, basic coverage, about ¥16,000 a year.
- “Voluntary/Optional” Insurance - additional coverage that everyone is essentially expected to have, prices vary, ¥3,500 - ¥10,000+/month
- Yearly tax - due yearly in April/May, about ¥30,000 and up for white plate cars, ¥7,200 for kei cars (but sometimes more).
- Maintenance - regular oil changes and repairs
- Tickets (if you get any) are rather expensive.

About your insurance

Take the time to learn the details of your insurance coverage. For example, make note of who beside yourself is allowed to drive your vehicle. There are often age restrictions (i.e. the driver must be at least 25 years old). You may also be covered (within reason) for a locksmith if you lock your keys in your vehicle, roadside assistance, even gasoline delivery if you suddenly find yourself out of gas. Your insurance fee may also get cheaper as your age increases. 26 seems to be the age you see price reduction.

Driving in Japan

“Aaaaand I just got Star Power so I'm going to pass this obaa-san.”

—All of us, at least once a week



Getting your license

Residents of most countries can drive on an International Driving Permit for one year. Before that year is over, you must get a Japanese license if you plan to continue driving in Japan.

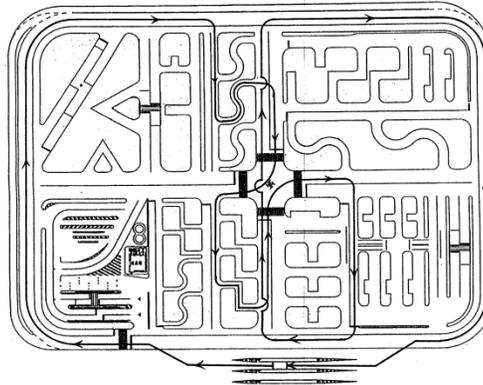
Three months before your IDP expires, you can begin the process of getting a Japanese license. Check the Kumamoto JET website for the detailed steps, but basically they are:

- 1) **Gather the required documents.** Your license, an official translation of your license, and proof that you were physically present in your country for more than three months after the license was issued. If you renewed your license less than three months before coming to Japan, you'll need an official driving record showing the date your license was first issued. Documents should all be official or they'll be rejected.
- 2) **Make an appointment with the menkyo center.** An appointment is required as they can only take 2-3 people each day. You must arrive in the morning and submit your paperwork. There's no English support, so you may need to bring help if you're not sure of yourself. If there are no problems with your paperwork, you'll be able to pay and take the super easy written test.
- 3) Depending on the country the license was issued from (check the Kumamoto JET website for a list), you will **either proceed to paperwork and a vision check, or a driving test** in the afternoon. You are allowed one attempt per day. Since your paperwork is on file, subsequent driving attempts do not require an appointment but will require the test fee each time.

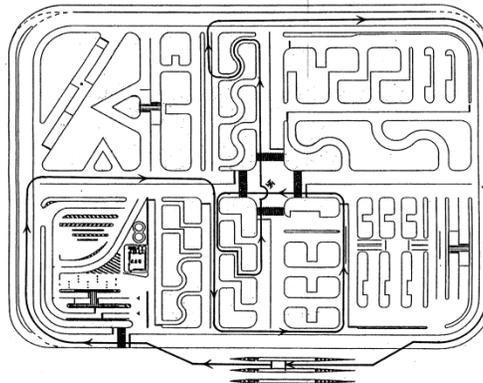
The driving course

- There are two possible courses. The course for the day will be posted in the lobby so you can review it and prepare.
- You can walk the course as much as you like during the noon hour.

外免普一， 1コース



外免普一， 2コース



- You get a short loop around the starting area to adjust to the car. It's an automatic, full-size sedan (not a kei) unless you request a manual.
- Take your time and go slow. The proctor will tell you to speed up if necessary, but if you're told to slow down, you've likely lost points.

Cont'd

- In general, keep your passenger side wheels close to the outer meridian of the road unless turning or changing lanes.
- Check your mirrors and blindspots often, especially before turns and changing lanes.
- Signal early when changing lanes and turning.
- Watch the curbs! Clipping over curb is an instant fail. During the "crank course," your wheel can touch the curb up to three times, but a fourth time or going up on it is also an instant fail.
- Stop just before the thick white line at a stop sign/light. Going past it is a big no-no.
- Try to stay calm and continue the course unless the proctor tells you to stop and return to the carport.
- It's fairly rare to pass on the first attempt. Don't put it off until your IDP is about to expire!
- There is a driving school next to the menkyo center that is good for getting practice before your test. Toyofuku Driving School: 096-388-0509, reservations required.
- Again, the Kumamoto JET website has more detailed information about driving in general, getting your license, and the driving test. <http://kumamotojet.com/shin/>

