Created based on information from the Hokkaido Prefectural Police website and the Sapporo Driver's License Examination Center

Q I have a foreign driver's license. Can I convert it to a Japanese driver's license in Hokkaido?

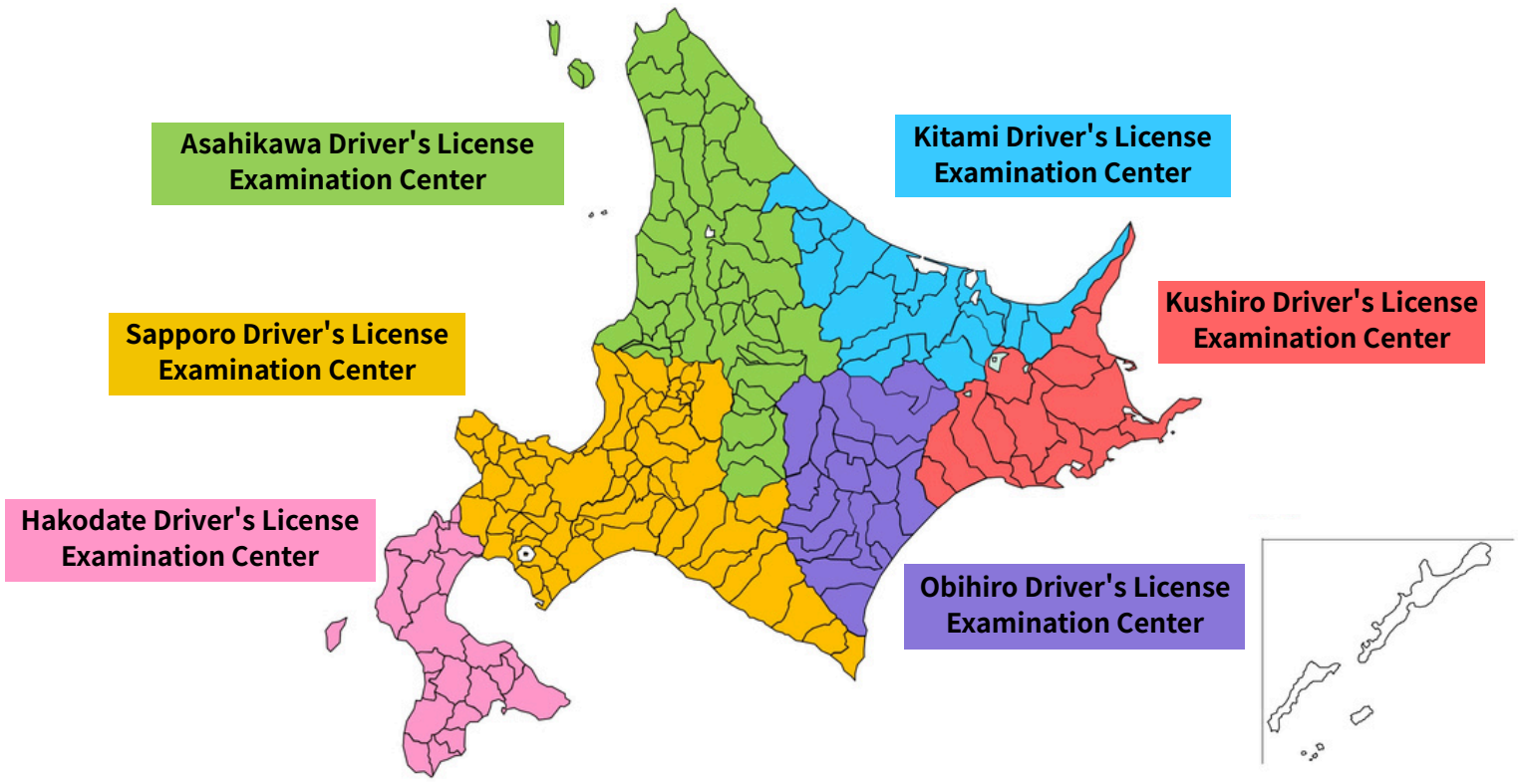
A You can convert your foreign driver's license to a Japanese driver's license in Hokkaido if you meet the following criteria.

1. You are registered as a resident of a municipality within Hokkaido.
2. You were in the country/region of issue for a total period of at least 3 months after obtaining your driver's license abroad, and you can provide proof of this.
3. The foreign driver's license is still valid.

How to Convert a Foreign Driver's License to a Japanese Driver's License

WHERE TO APPLY

To convert to a Japanese driver's license, you must apply at the driver's license examination center that has jurisdiction over your registered address. In Hokkaido, examination centers are located in Sapporo, Hakodate, Asahikawa, Obihiro, Kushiro, and Kitami. To find out which driver's license examination center has jurisdiction over your address, please check the map below and the attached list of municipalities.





Please refer to the attached document for the list of municipalities under the jurisdiction of each driver's license examination center.

https://www.hiecc.or.jp/soudan/upload/file/newinfo/file2_en_1771982441.pdf

APPLICATION PROCESS

The procedures required to convert a foreign driver's license to a Japanese driver's license vary depending on whether the country/region of issuance is a non-exempt country/region, a country/region exempt from the practical exam only, or a country/region exempt from both written and practical exams. Please see below for details.

All procedures must be completed in person at a driver's license examination center. The number of visits and the time required (*Caution 1) will vary depending on the driver's license examination center, so please contact the relevant center directly for details.

A) Conversion process for countries/regions exempt from both written and practical exams

Countries/regions exempt from both written and practical exams:

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, United Kingdom, United States of America (Colorado, Hawaii, Maryland, Ohio, Oregon, Virginia, and Washington states only)

Document review → **Driver's license issuance procedure**

B) Conversion process for countries/regions exempt from the practical exam only

Countries/regions exempt from the practical exam:

United States of America (State of Indiana)

Document review → **Written exam** → **Driver's license issuance procedure**

C) Conversion process for non-exempt countries/regions

Document review → **Written exam** → **Practical exam** → **Driver's license issuance procedure**

*Caution 1

It may take several months from the start of the application process until your driver's license is actually issued, so be sure to apply well in advance.

Please note that the process cannot be expedited, even if your international driving permit is about to expire, etc.

DETAILS OF DOCUMENT REVIEW AND EXAMS

Document Review

You will need to submit all necessary documents to the driver's license examination center. The process is conducted in Japanese only, so if you cannot communicate in Japanese, you will need to bring along someone who can interpret. Our center may be able to interpret over the phone.

If you pass the document review, you will be able to proceed to the next step. If you do not have all the required documents on the day, you will need to make a new appointment to submit the missing documents.

The basic documents you will need to submit are listed below.

Please note that additional documents may be required depending on the country/region that issued your driver's license. Be sure to check in advance with the driver's license examination center where you plan to apply.

1. Valid foreign driver's license (+ previous expired driver's licenses, if applicable)
2. Japanese translation of your driver's license
   You can apply for a translation through the Japan Automobile Federation (JAF)
3. Passport (+ previous expired passports, if applicable)
4. Residence card
5. Certificate of Residence with information about nationality and residence status listed
6. Driving (Driver's) Record from the country/region of issue (if applicable)
7. Documents that clearly prove that you were in the issuing country/region for at least three months in total since first obtaining your foreign driver's license (*Caution 2)
   Examples:
   - Immigration records (Entry and Departure Records)
   - Passport with entry & departure stamps from the issuing country/region of your driver's license
   - Certificate of enrollment issued by a school, or certificate of employment issued by a company etc.
8. Personal seal (signature also accepted)
9. A 3.0 cm height x 2.4 cm width photo taken within the last six months (photos can also be taken at the driver's license examination center)
10. Revenue stamps for the exam fee and driver's license issuance fee (can be purchased at the driver's license examination center)

*Caution 2

If the date of your first license issuance is not shown on your current driver's license, you may also need to provide the original of the first driver's license you ever obtained, or an official document, such as a Driving Record Certificate, that states the date of first issuance.

If you are unable to provide a document showing the date of first issuance, you will need to submit a document proving that you have stayed in the issuing country/region for 3 months or more in total since the date of issue shown on your current driver's license, even if you had the license before that date.

Depending on the country/region of issue, additional documents may be required. For more information, please refer to the information on the Metropolitan Police Department's website. (Available in English and Japanese.)

How to convert a foreign driver's license into a Japanese driver's license
www.keishicho.metro.tokyo.lg.jp/menkyo/menkyo/kokugai/kokugai05.html



Written Exam

For the written exam, you must answer 50 questions within a 30-minute time limit. You pass if you correctly answer 45 or more of the 50 questions. In addition to Japanese, the exam can be taken in 20 languages, including English, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Burmese, Indonesian, and Spanish.

If you pass the written exam, you can move on to the next step. If you fail, you will need to retake the test on another day.

Practical Exam

If you wish to practise driving before taking the practical exam, you can do so on the course at the driver's license examination center under the guidance of an instructor from a registered driving school. Please check with the driver's license examination center to find out which registered driving schools are in your area. The fees for driving practice are charged separately, so please contact your preferred registered driving school directly for more details.

The driving exam is conducted on a course at the driver's license examination center. The exam is conducted in Japanese only, and no interpreters are permitted to accompany you. If you pass the practical test, you can move on to the driver's license issuance procedures. If you fail, you will need to re-take the exam on another day.

***Caution**

You must pass the practical exam within 6 months of passing the written exam. If you do not pass within 6 months, you will have to start over and retake the written exam. Additionally, if you fail any of the exams, you will again be charged exam fees when you apply to retake them.

FEES

When converting a foreign driver's license into a Japanese driver's license, those from a country/region exempt from both written and practical exams will be charged a driver's license issuance fee; Those from a country/region exempt from the practical exam only and those from a non-exempt country/region will be charged exam fees plus a driver's license issuance fee. The fees are paid with revenue stamps, which you can purchase in advance at a post office or at a driver's license examination center.

The fee varies depending on the type of driver's license you are applying for, so please check with the driver's license examination center when you apply. (E.g., the regular license exam fee is 2,500 yen, and the issuance fee is 2,350 yen.)

RESERVATIONS FOR EACH STEP OF THE PROCESS

To begin the application process for converting to a Japanese driver's license, you will need to make a reservation by phone at your local driver's license examination center. Please note that calls can only be made in Japanese, so if you are unable to make a reservation yourself, please ask a Japanese-speaking acquaintance to make a reservation for you, or contact the Hokkaido Foreign Resident Support Center.

Reservations need to be made in advance for each step. At the first appointment, only the document screening and aptitude test (eyesight test, physical function test, etc.) will be conducted. Reservations for exams, etc. will be arranged after you pass the document screening.

*Only once you have all the necessary documents will you be able to make your first appointment.
*Depending on how busy it is, you may not be able to make a reservation immediately.

When making a reservation, you will need to provide the information listed in sections 1) and 2) below to the driver's license examination center.

If you would like the Hokkaido Foreign Resident Support Center to make a reservation on your behalf, you will need to share the information listed in sections 1), 2), and 3).

1) Personal Information

1. Full name + katakana spelling
2. Residence status, date of expiration (period of stay)
3. Nationality
4. Date of birth
5. Gender
6. Registered address in Japan
7. Telephone number (if available)
8. Passport issue date and issuing country/region
9. Passport entry and departure stamp information
10. Date of entry into Japan

2) Driver's License Related

1. Driver's license information (issue + expiration date, issuing country/region, type, last renewal date)
2. Documents you plan to submit as proof of having stayed in the relevant country/region for at least 3 months since first obtaining your foreign driver's license
3. If you have an International Driving Permit (IDP): issue date of the IDP
4. If you have previously held a Japanese driver's license: number of times held, issue date of each license
5. Preferred language for the written test
6. Type of driver's license you wish to apply for (regular license, automatic, etc.)

3) Other

1. Copies of the documents (PDF, PNG, etc.) you have prepared
2. Japanese language ability (if you do not speak Japanese, will you bring someone to interpret for you?)
3. Desired appointment date and time (convenient days of the week, times of day, etc.)
4. Consent to provide personal information to the driver's license examination center

INQUIRIES

If you have any questions about the procedure for converting to a Japanese driver's license, please contact the driver's license examination center in your area. If you have difficulty making inquiries in Japanese, please contact our center.



This information was compiled in January 2026. The list of exempt countries/regions, procedure flow, exam content, fees, etc., may be subject to change. Please double-check the details before starting the process.

www.hiecc.or.jp/soudan www.facebook.com/hiecc.support E-MAIL: support@hiecc.or.jp TEL: 011-200-9595 FAX: 011-221-7845