

Pay attention! Japan's traffic signs and rules

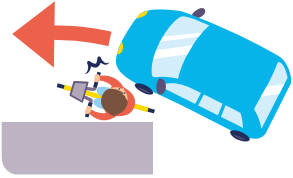
Numerous traffic accidents in Japan are caused by certain differences between countries concerning traffic signs and driving habits/awareness. Even if something is permitted in your home country, in Japan it may be considered a traffic violation or cause a serious accident. This section introduces some differences in traffic signs and rules you need to obey.

Rules at intersections



Stop when traffic lights are red! Pay particular care when turning left

In Japan, you must always stop when traffic lights are red. You cannot turn left when lights are red, so turn only when lights are green. When turning left, check that there are no bicycles or motorcycles on the left of the lane before proceeding.



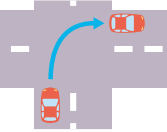
Pedestrians have right of way

Pedestrians have right of way at intersections. When turning left, ensure to stop if pedestrians are crossing. Even if you are in a hurry, you must not continue driving until all pedestrians have finished crossing.



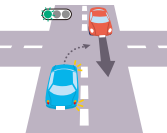
Drive on the left, even when turning right

Many accidents happen when cars accidentally cross the central line after turning right and collide head on with oncoming vehicles. Never forget that Japan drives on the left, especially when turning right!



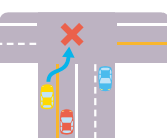
Give priority to oncoming vehicles when turning right

Even when the arrow indicating that you can turn right at traffic lights is green, wait until all oncoming traffic on the intersection has passed before proceeding. Never accelerate suddenly when turning!



Do not change lanes recklessly

Never suddenly change lanes, as this can cause a collision. You cannot change lanes at intersections if the lanes before the intersection are separated by orange lines. It is also important that you confirm your direction before reaching the intersection.



Understanding traffic lights

You can only proceed when the light is green!

Always obey traffic lights when driving in Japan. If the light turns yellow from green, this is a signal for you to stop, not accelerate and pass through.



Red light



Yellow light

*You can only proceed when lights are turning yellow if you have already gone past the stop line, or if stopping poses a danger, such as you are approaching the lights and cannot safely stop at the stop line.

At traffic lights with a green arrow

When the arrow lights up, proceed in the direction indicated by the arrow. If the arrow is not lit up, you must wait before driving, even if there are no vehicles or people in that direction. To facilitate smoother and safer right turns, some intersections introduce a system where right-turning vehicles can turn while oncoming vehicles stop at a red light. Even if you feel you are being kept waiting for a long time, wait until the light turns green and proceed calmly!



Traffic light with an arrow

Seatbelts

You are also required to wear a seatbelt in your country, right? In Japan, too, everyone in the vehicle is required to wear a seatbelt, both front and back seats. Be sure to wear a seatbelt to prevent injury in an accident. If you don't bother to wear a seatbelt, you may be ordered to pull over your car and end up getting a ticket.

Do not drink and drive

Drinking and driving is banned everywhere in the world. You will be punished severely, even if you have only had a little to drink before driving. People tend to loosen up and relax their standards while on a trip, but drinking and driving is never acceptable, as it can cause a serious accident! If you are caught drink driving, you will face a heavy fine of as much as ¥500,000 (average) or more.



Traffic sign differences



Road sections with traffic direction indicators

At intersections, you can only travel in the directions indicated by arrows. If numbers are also displayed, such as 7-8, you need to follow these directions between the hours of 7 and 8 a.m.



Stop



You must stop at intersections with this sign, even if there are no traffic lights. Failure to do so may result in an accident. Check all directions before entering the intersection.

Speed limits



Do not exceed the speed limits indicated on signs: 30 (30 km/h), 40 (40 km/h) and 50 (50 km/h). The speed limit on roads without signs is 60 km/h. Be careful not to drive too fast, as this may cause a serious accident.

No parking



You cannot park on roads with this sign. If numbers are also displayed, such as 8-20, it means you cannot park on the road between the hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., but can park there at all other times.

One-way



You can only drive in the directions indicated by the arrow on roads with this sign. You will often see these signs on narrow roads in city centers, so pay attention.

National road / prefectural road / expressway signs

Signs for national roads are an inverted triangle with a white number on a blue background. Hexagonal signs indicate prefectural roads. Expressway signs have either green letters on a white background, or white letters on a green background.

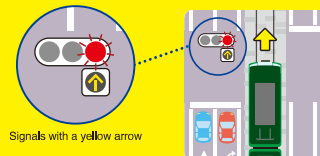


Beware of trams

In Kyushu, trams run in the following cities: Nagasaki, Kumamoto and Kagoshima. When driving in streets with tram lines, please be aware of the following three points.

Signals with a yellow arrow are for trams.

When the yellow arrow is on, automobiles are obliged to stop.



Signals with a yellow arrow

Do not drive down tram lanes.

Tram lanes are for the use of trams only. You can only cross them to turn right or make a U-turn. When doing so, exercise due caution.

Rules for stopping behind trams at tram stops

At tram stops, automobiles are obliged to stop behind the tram for the safety of passengers. However, automobiles can overtake trams if there are no passengers getting on or off. Even in these cases, you must drive slowly, leaving a distance of 1.5 m or more from the tram.

Some tram stops are in the middle of roads, so please drive with care.



In case of emergency, call the police and your car rental company's accident assistance hotline.

It is illegal to continue driving without doing so, and you will no longer be covered by insurance.