

Kocoforre News

Issue 10: Summer 2026

"Kocoforre" is the nickname for the Kochi Consultation Center for Foreign Residents

Summer is here, and the bright sunshine reminds us that the season is in full swing. In Kocoforre News, we introduce our center's activities and useful information for foreign residents of Kochi, those who are connected with foreigners, and people interested in multiculturalism.

Topics

Switching Your Foreign Driver's License to a Japanese License (Updated for 2026)

As of October 2025, the procedures for converting a foreign driver's license to a Japanese driver's license have become stricter. These changes affect both the required application documents and the testing process. In this issue of Kocoforre, we provide an updated guide to converting your foreign driver's license, including an explanation of the latest requirements and procedures.

For those living in Kochi Prefecture, you can start the process for converting your license at the Driver's License Center in Ino Town.

First, there will be a preliminary screening (this will involve submitting certain documents, as well as an interview). A few days later, you will take an aptitude test (checking eyesight, etc.) and a written exam, followed by a practical exam.* Once you pass the practical exam, you will be able to receive your Japanese license.

*As of June 2026, there are 29 countries that do not require its citizens to take the written and practical exams. Those with licenses from the following countries only need to pass the preliminary screening and aptitude test to receive their Japanese license.

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

*Regions that only waiver the practical exam: United States (State of Indiana)

Driver's License Center
Examination Section
(200 Edagawa, Ino-cho,
Agawa-gun, Kochi Prefecture)
Tel: 088-893-1221
(Press 1 for guidance.)
Office hours: Monday-Friday,
8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.



1. Preliminary Scree (document submission and interview)

Call the Testing Manager at the License Center (088-893-1221) and **schedule** an interview. Make sure to bring the required documents to the interview. Document processing takes between 1 week to 1 month.



Required Documents for Preliminary Screening

- Foreign driver's license (must be translated; the Japan Automobile Federation (JAF), ZIPLUS, or Automobile License Assistance and Driving Documentation in Nippon (ALADDIN) can translate it for you)
- Documentation proving that you resided in the country where each license was obtained for at least three months (e.g., original copies of immigration records, credit card statements, employment certificates, pay stubs, graduation certificates from universities or other institutions, or a passport with entry and exit stamps)
- Certificate of Residence (showing all information regarding nationality and residency status)
- Residence Card
- International Driving Permit (if you have one)
- Japanese driver's license (if you've had one previously)

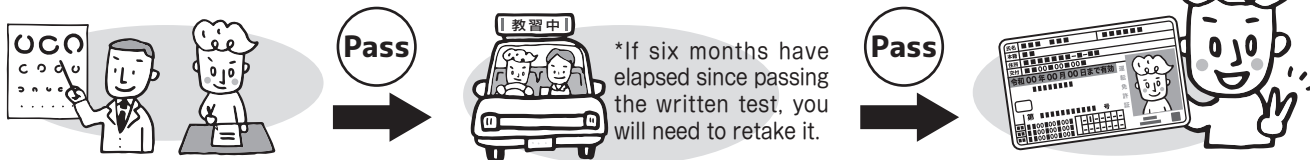
2. Aptitude Test, Written Exam and Practical Exam

After passing the preliminary screening, you will need to book another appointment for the aptitude test and written exam at the Driving License Center. Once you've passed the written exam, you can book an appointment for the practical exam.

3. Receive your driver's license

1. Take the aptitude test and written exam

2. Take the practical exam



What to bring for the Written Exam

- Eyeglasses or contact lenses (if you usually wear them)
- One ID photo, taken within the last six months, against a plain background, measuring 3 cm high by 2.4 cm wide. [make sure your face occupies approximately half of the photograph, as shown in the example on the right]. If the photograph is not suitable, you will need to have it retaken.
- Required documents
- Handling fees (Regular license: 2,500 yen, motorbike license: 2,800 yen) Moped: 1,600 yen)
- License issuance fee (2,350 yen)※For standard driver's license only.
- ※If you would like a 'My Number driver's license', please notify the staff in advance.
- (A 'My Number driver's license' is a My Number Card with your driver's license information recorded on it.)



• Example

Q&A

Q1 What is the Written Exam?

A It is a test consisting of 50 questions about Japanese traffic laws. You need to answer 45 questions correctly to pass. The time limit is 30 minutes.

Q2 Can I take the Written Exam in a foreign language?

A Yes. In addition to Japanese (with furigana), the exam is also available in English, Korean, Chinese, Spanish, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Farsi, Russian, Thai, Tagalog, Indonesian, Khmer, Nepalese, Burmese, Mongolian, Ukranian, Sinhalese, Urdu, Arabic, and Hindi.

Q3 Can I bring an interpreter with me?

A You may be accompanied by an interpreter during the interview and the aptitude test, but not during the Written Exam and practical exams.



Preparing for the License Exams



Unless you are from a country exempt from the written and practical exam, converting a foreign driver's license in Japan requires passing a written exam. The written exam consists of 50 questions, and you must answer at least 45 correctly to pass. You cannot take the practical driving exam until you have passed the written exam.

The practical driving exam is also now evaluated more strictly than in the past. Read the tips below to help you prepare for the exam.

◆Written Exam

- Study guides for the written exam can be borrowed from the library or purchased at a bookstore.
- Practice on your smartphone with apps that cover the material you need to pass the license conversion exam, including mock exams.

◆Practical Exam

- If you plan to drive in Japan using an International Driving Permit or a foreign driver's license with an official Japanese translation, consider taking a "paper driver" refresher course at a driving school. These lessons are designed to help drivers become familiar with driving in Japan.
- Learn about the differences between Japan's traffic rules and those in your home country.
- Be aware of driving behaviors that are now more strictly enforced, such as yielding to pedestrians at crosswalks and stopping to look both ways before crossing railroad tracks.

Announcements from Kocoforre

Company Visits

Kocoforre organizes workplace visits for foreign employees at companies in Kochi Prefecture. During each visit, we give a brief introduction to Kochi Prefecture (15 minutes) and provide information about living in Kochi as a foreign resident (15 minutes). Afterwards, we hold a social gathering with interpreting support, giving participants the opportunity to ask questions about life in Japan in a relaxed setting. If you are interested, please scan the QR code on the right for more information.



Upcoming Career Fair

A Career Fair for Foreign Job Seekers will be held on Friday, October 23, for people interested in working in Kochi Prefecture. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet local employers looking to hire international talent. More details will be announced on Kocoforre's website and social media channels.

For more information, please scan the QR code to visit the Commerce and Industry Policy Division's website.



Free Legal Consultations For Foreign Residents

Kocoforre will hold six Free Legal Consultation sessions for foreign residents during this fiscal year. The schedule is shown in the table below. These consultations are open to foreign residents as well as Japanese people who interact with them. Participants can speak with a lawyer from the Kochi Bar Association free of charge about legal questions or concerns. The lawyer will listen carefully to your situation and provide advice and possible solutions based on Japanese law. (Criminal matters are not covered.)

We're looking for Kocoforre Supporters!

Kocoforre is looking for volunteers to support foreign residents living in Kochi. Primary duties include assistance with paperwork and interpreting at municipal offices and other related institutions. You don't have to speak a foreign language to apply. Please contact Kocoforre if you are interested! *Registered volunteers (as of June 2026): 141

Kocoforre Events & Consultation Sessions with Specialists *Details will be posted on Kocoforre's website and social media.

Date	Name	Location	Description
(Sat.) July 25, 2026	Konan City Consultation Event and 0 Yen Bazaar	Noichi Fureai Center 1st and 2nd Fureai Room (534-1 Nishino, Noichi-cho, Konan City)	Staff from the Immigration Bureau will be available for consultations, providing detailed information about status of residence. Kocoforre counselors will also be available to answer questions about daily life and other issues not related to status of residence.
(Fri.) December 18, 2026	Sukumo City Consultation Event	Sukumo City Office (Address: 1 Kibogaoka, Sukumo City)	
(Sun.) February 7, 2027	Tosa City Consultation Event and Wakusei Tosa Collab	Tosa City Cultural Complex (Address: 3451-1 Takaoka-cho Otsu, Tosa City)	
(Tue.) May 19, 2026 (Wed.) July 22, 2026 (Wed.) September 16, 2026 (Wed.) November 18, 2026 (Wed.) January 20, 2027 (Wed.) February 17, 2027 *All starting from 1:30pm	Free Legal Consultation Week for Foreigners	Kocoforre (Address: 1st Floor, 4-1-37 Honmachi, Kochi City)	Consultations will be provided by a lawyer. These consultations are free of charge regardless of income or financial circumstances. (Organizations and businesses are not eligible.) For details and reservations, please scan the QR code.
(Sun.) August 30, 2026	Education Guidance for Foreign Residents	Kochi International Association (Address: 4-1-37 Honmachi, Kochi City)	Kocoforre will hold an information session on the Japanese education system for families with ties to other countries.



■Homepage



Available in Japanese, English, Chinese, Korean, Indonesian, and Vietnamese.

■Instagram



Useful information on living in Japan is posted in simple Japanese and foreign languages.

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