MOTORCYCLE RENTAL JAPAN

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Motorcycle Rental Japan LLC (MRJ)

Here's a list of common questions we receive and answers to help you plan your trip.
Please browse through, and if you can't find what you are looking for, don't hesitate to contact us.

1 What documentation do I need to rent and ride a motorcycle in Japan?

To legally ride a motorcycle in Japan, you must present the following at pickup:

- Your original passport.
- Your home country motorcycle license.
- A valid International Driving Permit (IDP) issued under the 1949 Geneva Convention, OR an official Japanese translation (depending on your country of origin).

Note:

The IDP must explicitly have Category "A" (motorcycles) stamped/checked. IDPs issued under the 1968 Vienna Convention or any form of online digital IDPs are NOT valid in Japan.

2 I hold a license from Switzerland, Germany, France, Belgium, Monaco, or Taiwan. Do I need an IDP?

No. Drivers holding licenses from these specific countries cannot use an IDP in Japan.
Instead, you must present:

- Your original home country license.
- An Official Japanese Translation issued by the JAF (Japan Automobile Federation), your home country's embassy/consulate in Japan, or authorized official translation providers.

3 I cannot access the JAF website from outside Japan. Can you help obtain an official JAF translation?

Yes we are able to help with this and can process these requests for a reasonable processing fee.

4 I hold a license from Italy, Poland, Russia, or Slovenia. Do I need an IDP?

Yes. However, please be careful: these countries issue permits under both the 1949 and 1968 conventions.
You must ensure you obtain the 1949 Geneva Convention version.

5 Are there age or experience requirements?

- Minimum Age: Riders must be at least 20 years old.
- License Class Restrictions: Your license must cover the engine capacity (cc) or power output of the bike you intend to rent. Any restrictions on your home license must also be followed in Japan.
- Riding Experience: We require at least 1 year of experience on a similar-sized motorcycle. If you recently passed your full license test and book a large-capacity bike (e.g., F800GS), we reserve the right to decline or request that you switch to a smaller, more manageable motorcycle.

6 Is insurance included in the rental price?

Yes. Rental rates include compulsory legal liability insurance alongside a commercial policy that meets or exceeds the minimum requirements mandated by Japanese law.

7 What is covered?

Our basic insurance covers third-party liabilities:

- Third-Party Bodily Injury: Unlimited (exceeds the legal minimum of ¥80,000,000 per person).
- Third-Party Property Damage: Unlimited (exceeds the legal minimum of ¥2,000,000 per accident).
- Passenger Protection: Up to ¥5,000,000 per person.
- Fixed Support Payments: ¥5,000/day for hospital admittance; ¥2,500/day for outpatient visits.

8 What is not covered?

(Note: These exclusions reflect standard industry practice for motorcycle rentals across Japan):

- Personal Medical Expenses: ¥0 coverage for full medical treatment. You must arrange personal travel insurance to cover hospital expenses, or pay out-of-pocket.
- Physical Damage to the Rental Motorcycle: Single-vehicle damage is the renter's full responsibility unless Collision Damage Waiver (CDW) is added.
- Vehicle Theft: Theft is not covered under standard insurance; renters assume liability up to the current market value of the motorcycle.

9 What is Collision Damage Waiver (CDW) and Non-Operation Fee (NOF)?

- **CDW (Collision Damage Waiver):** Optional coverage that caps your out-of-pocket repair liability for physical damage to the rental bike to a set deductible limit (typically ¥300,000–¥500,000 depending on model).
- **NOF (Non-Operation Fee):** If a bike is damaged in an accident or spill and requires repair, a flat business-interruption fee (¥20,000 for 50cc–125cc; ¥40,000 for 126cc+) is charged to cover lost rental revenue while the bike is off the road.

10 Is two-up riding (carrying a passenger) allowed?

Yes, pillion riding is permitted in Japan provided:

- The driver has held a valid motorcycle license for at least 1 year (3 years for expressway riding).
- The motorcycle is equipped with passenger footpegs and a passenger seat.

Note:

Certain central sections of the Shutoko (Tokyo Expressway Network) strictly prohibit tandem riding.

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11 What happens if I drop the bike or crash by myself (single-vehicle accident)?

In any incident, you must notify us immediately and send photos of the damage so we can evaluate whether the bike remains safe to operate. If damage renders the vehicle unsafe, we reserve the right to terminate the rental contract without refund. If the bike is unrideable but easily repairable, we may attempt to ship replacement parts to your location, though this may cause travel delays.

NOTE:
Single-vehicle damage is not covered by standard insurance.

Because single-vehicle damage is excluded from standard insurance, repair costs are the renter's full responsibility (up to vehicle market value) unless CDW was purchased, in which case your liability is capped at the maximum deductible. For minor cosmetic spills, repair costs are billed at actual parts and labor rates. We strongly encourage travel insurance covering rental motorcycle excesses.

12 What happens if the bike is stolen?

IMPORTANT:
Please always use the disc/ wheel lock when parked.

Vehicle theft in Japan is rare and typically limited to organized commercial theft or bikes left unattended in high-risk areas for extended periods. However, theft is not covered under baseline insurance. The renter remains responsible for replacement costs based on market value, unless CDW has been purchased (which caps liability at the deductible limit). We supply a heavy-duty disc/wheel lock with every rental—please ensure you use it whenever the bike is parked.

13 What happens if the bike breaks down or I get a puncture?

MECHANICAL BREAKDOWNS

Mechanical Breakdowns: Our insurance coverage includes national breakdown recovery so if there is an can help. Please get in touch via the business WhatsApp with a google map location. MRJ will then arrange the truck to come out to you, at first try to repair the bike there, if unrepairable MRJ will find a repair shop that will accept you and you and the bike will be taken there. Case by case but the recovery truck may not allow you to ride with them so you may have to arrange your own transport. These costs are also claimable so please keep the receipts for our claim. In rural and remote areas the recovery truck usually allows you to ride with them. Unfortunately this may delay you and you may need to rearrange hotel bookings etc. If the bike is completely un-repairable then MRJ will supply another bike. This again is done on a case by case basis and we will do our best to come out to you and swap the bikes, however depending on time and distance limitations you may be required to return to the shop location to pick up a new bike. According to the Terms and Conditions, MRJ is not liable for any transport costs in that situation, however please keep the receipts as in some cases we may be able to claim this from our insurance.

PUNCTURES

Punctures: Punctures are the responsibility of the renter in all cases. We try to equip all our tubed bikes with tubeless kits so that punctures can be repaired by the renter with the puncture repair kit supplied with the rental equipment. This is a temporary fix that will keep you on the road until the end of your rental however we are unable to rent the bike out to the next customer if the tyre has been repaired so has to be replaced on return. made depending on the remaining life of the tyre. If the puncture is unrepairable then we will use the same process above of calling out the recovery truck. For punctures they charge a flat ¥20,000 call out fee that we will cover if you have purchased CDW. In rural areas most shops do not keep stock of larger bike tyres so if there is no shop with stock of the tyre you need within a reasonable distance then we will arrange the repair with a suitable shop and send out a tyre from our stock. This can also cause a delay in some cases so please be prepared to change your plans if need be.

14 What happens if I get stopped by the police?

POLICE STOPS

Police stops are rare and usually straightforward. Officers will inspect your three primary documents (Passport, Driver's License, and IDP or official translation), along with your Rental Agreement and Vehicle Registration papers (Shaken). Provided you are riding legally, minor warnings are common for small unintentional infringements.

NOTE: Always carry your documents and ride within Japanese laws for a smooth and enjoyable experience.

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01 What happens if I receive a traffic or parking ticket?

If you receive a parking citation, notify us immediately with a photo of the ticket. The simplest and cheapest method is to pay the fine directly at a local police station before returning the bike. If left unpaid, the municipality mails the violation notice to MRJ; processing the fine on your behalf incurs administrative double-billing (e.g., a ¥7,000 fine becomes ¥14,000).

02 Which side of the road do I drive on in Japan?

Japan drives on the left side of the road.

03 Is it challenging to ride in Japan?

If you are from the UK, Australia, or New Zealand, driving on the left will feel familiar. Unlike those countries, Japan features very few roundabouts and significantly more traffic signals and stop intersections. As long as you observe posted limits and ride defensively, navigation is straightforward. Be sure to review our pre-ride safety video before setting off!

04 What daily distances should I plan for?

When traveling via scenic mountain passes and non-expressway routes, progress is relaxed. We recommend planning for approximately 200 km per day. While 200 km sounds short, frequent scenic stops, village navigation, and winding roads make this a full day's journey. Covering 250 km+ per day is possible, but leaves minimal time for sightseeing.

05 Where are the best places to ride in Japan?

Our shop location provides direct access to the Kii Peninsula, as well as western Honshu, the Sea of Japan coast, Kyushu, and Shikoku Island. Shikoku is widely cited by returning customers as one of the finest touring regions in Japan due to low traffic density, elevated mountain passes, and coastal routes. We are happy to provide route ideas and recommendations upon pickup.

06 Are there any areas I should avoid?

We recommend bypassing major metropolitan centers (such as central Nagoya and urban Tokyo) via expressways unless you have specific destinations within them. Heavy city traffic and frequent traffic signals significantly slow down touring momentum. Similarly, the urban coastal corridor between Tokyo and Nagoya features heavy commercial traffic; taking inland mountain alternatives provides a much better riding experience.

07 How do highway tolls work in Japan?

Japanese expressways are toll roads. Payment can be made using cash or major credit cards at manually operated toll gates (marked "General" / 一般).

08 Can I rent an ETC (Electronic Toll Collection) card with my motorcycle?

Not at this time. MRJ motorcycles are not currently fitted with active ETC transponder units. Expressways must be paid via credit card or cash at standard toll gates upon exit.

09 How do I navigate in Japan?

Smartphone navigation (such as Google Maps) works exceptionally well. All MRJ motorcycles come equipped with USB charging ports and Quad Lock vibration-damped mounts. Because heat and direct sunlight can cause smartphones to thermal-throttle during long summer rides, dedicated CarPlay/Android Auto displays (e.g., Chigee AIO-5, Spedal, Carpuride) plugged into the USB port are also popular options. Hardwiring third-party accessories directly into the motorcycle's electrical wiring harness is strictly prohibited.

10 Are there any road hazards to watch out for?

- **Mountain Passes & Debris: Narrow single-lane mountain passes (Rindō) can accumulate center-lane moss, loose gravel, and fallen wet leaves. Reduced cornering speed is strongly recommended.**
- **Rural Wildlife: Keep an eye out for deer, wild boars (inoshishi), and raccoon dogs (tanuki)—particularly around dawn and dusk in forested regions. Bear warning signs are common in mountain zones; remain alert and avoid leaving food unattended.**
- **Blind Intersections: Rural farm roads and narrow urban alleys often feature hidden stop signs or concealed mirrors.**

10 Can I bring my own tank bag or soft luggage?

- **Tank Bags: Tank bags are strictly prohibited. Fine grit trapped beneath magnetic or strap-on tank bags causes severe paint abrasion over multi-day rentals.**
- **Soft Luggage / Panniers: Unsecured throw-over bags can scratch bodywork and exhaust shields. If using soft luggage or rear dry bags, you must ensure proper mounting that prevents contact with painted panels. Dry bags strapped to the rear passenger seat in front of the top box are fully acceptable. Please observe the 7–8 kg weight capacity on rear top box racks to prevent subframe stress.**

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01

Can I ride off-road on gravel roads?

Riding on legally designated public gravel roads visible on Google Maps is permitted. Unmapped trails, single-track forestry paths, or private off-road logging tracks are prohibited under our rental agreement, as standard breakdown recovery vehicles cannot access non-demarcated locations.

02

Can I rent riding gear (helmet, jacket, gloves)?

Helmets can be reserved in advance through our online booking system. We maintain a limited complimentary stock of jackets, gloves, and rain gear on-site. Because sizes and availability vary, we recommend bringing your own fitted protective gear where possible.

03

What is the fuel policy?

Vehicles are provided with a full tank of fuel and must be returned full. Motorcycles require High-Octane Gasoline (mostly marked via yellow pump handles at Japanese service stations).

04

Can I store my personal travel luggage at the rental shop?

Yes. We offer complimentary luggage storage at our facility for the duration of your rental.

05

What is the weather like throughout the year?

- Peak Season (March–June & September–December): Ideal riding conditions with mild temperatures and clear skies.
- Summer (July–August): High heat (35°C–40°C) and heavy humidity.
- Rainy Season (Mid-June through July): Regular rainfall requiring quality wet-weather gear.
- Typhoons (August–September): Occasional tropical storms may interrupt coastal travel for 24–48 hours; flexible scheduling is advised.
- Winter (January–mid March): Rental operations pause during peak winter due to sub-zero temperatures and mountain black ice.

06

How is parking a bike in Japan?

In rural areas there are usually no problems at all. Most accommodation has plenty of space, there are many big shops, viewpoints, road stations (michi no eki). However, this can be challenging in city centers like Hiroshima, Osaka etc. There are specific motorcycle parking lots but can be far from your accommodation. You can search for bike parking (バイクパーキング) on google maps or use this website, you`ll have to translate it into English but it works well. Specific bike parking .If staying at an Air BnB or similar, please double check with the owner if you can park a bike there as telling the difference between private and public property can sometimes be difficult, and beware if you park on somebody else`s property it can cause trouble you yourself and the accommodation owner (and us!). With hotels it is best to ask before you arrive as many do not allow bikes to park in car spaces. If there is no choice, just turn up and park in the hotel car park and walk in without saying anything.

07

Do I need to pre-book hotels and accommodation in advance?

Except Golden Week, we recommend not, most of our customers book on a day to day basis as accommodation is plentiful and usually not too far to go. Booking everything in advance locks you in very tightly and most people end up not being able to get there in time due to stopping so much to enjoy the scenery. Golden Week is usually the first week in May so double check your travel plans.

07

Can you assist with Japanese language support during our tour?

Yes of course, that is part of the service! We are bilingual so we are ready to help with any bookings that are phone only like hotels or ferry bookings.

07

Got a question you don’t see answered above?

Contact our team and we will be happy to assist!