

Street Go-Karting in Japan

Everything you need to have your license, permit, and paperwork ready before you drive on Japan's real public roads.

You MUST bring the right documents — Japan checks these by law, not as a formality.

This guide tells you exactly what to bring, and how to get it, before your trip.

THE 3-STEP SUMMARY

1 Find out which of the two paths is yours

Most guests need the IDP (Path A); only France, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Monaco, and Taiwan use the certified translation instead (Path B).

2 Arrange that document before you fly

The IDP can only be issued in your home country, so this can't be fixed after you land.

3 Pack it with your passport

Bring your original license, your IDP or translation, and your passport to check-in.

1 Why this actually matters

This isn't a go-kart track. It's a real road.

Street go-karts in Japan (the fun, open-air "Mario Kart-style" karts you've seen in videos of Tokyo and Osaka) are legally classed as **road vehicles**. You'll be driving on real public streets, next to real traffic, under real Japanese traffic law.

That means the driver of each kart must carry the **same documents required to drive any car in Japan**. This isn't your kart operator being strict — it's the law, and it will be checked before you're allowed to drive.

THE ONE RULE TO REMEMBER

Without the correct documents, you will not be allowed to drive — no exceptions, no on-the-spot fixes. Get everything ready before you fly.

2 Your 2 possible paths

Which one applies to you depends on your home country.

MOST TRAVELERS

Path A — International Driving Permit (IDP)

- Get an IDP in your **home country before you fly**
- Must be the **1949 Geneva Convention** type
- Bring it together with your original license

A FEW COUNTRIES ONLY

Path B — Official Translation

- For France, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Monaco, Taiwan
- Use a **certified Japanese translation** of your license instead of an IDP
- Bring it together with your original license

NOT SURE WHICH APPLIES TO YOU?

If your country isn't in the Path B list above, you need Path A — the IDP. When in doubt, get the IDP; it works for almost everyone.

3 Getting your document

Pick whichever side matches your passport — you only need one.

PATH A

International Driving Permit

- Apply in home country before flying (AAA, CAA, AA/RAC, etc.)
- Must be 1949 Geneva type — not 1968 Vienna
- Valid up to 1 year in Japan, or until the permit expires

OR

PATH B

Certified Japanese Translation

- France, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Monaco, Taiwan only
- Issued by JAF — by mail before flying, or in person after landing
- Advance arrangement recommended

COMMON MISTAKE THAT GETS GUESTS TURNED AWAY

Some countries only issue IDPs under the 1968 Vienna Convention. These are not valid in Japan. If your home country only offers this type, and you're not from a Path B country, a street go-kart booking is unfortunately not possible for you.

4 Your complete packing checklist

Bring all of these, every time, no exceptions.

- ☐ **1. Your original, valid driver's license**

From your home country. Must not be expired. This is the base document — the IDP/translation cannot replace it, only supplement it.
- ☐ **2. Your IDP OR your certified Japanese translation**

These are alternates — you only need one, not both. See "Getting your document" earlier in this guide to check which applies to you.
- ☐ **3. Your passport**

Used to confirm your identity matches your license and booking.

5 Frequently asked questions

My IDP works fine in other countries — why not Japan?

Japan only recognizes IDPs issued under the 1949 Geneva Convention. Many countries issue the 1968 Vienna Convention version instead, which is not valid in Japan even though it's accepted almost everywhere else.

Is my regular license enough on its own?

No. You always need your original license PLUS either the IDP or the certified translation. The original alone is not accepted.

What if my country isn't listed anywhere in this guide?

Get the 1949 Geneva Convention IDP — it's the standard path for the vast majority of nationalities. If you're unsure your country issues this type, check with your motoring authority before booking.

This guide summarizes general documentation requirements for street go-karting experiences in Japan. Specific operators may have additional requirements. Please confirm details with your booking confirmation or the operator directly before travel.