International Driving Permit While In a Foreign Country

Many countries do not recognize a United States (U.S.) driver’s license. Some, however, will accept an international driver’s permit. It is nevertheless a good idea to qualify for a local driver’s license as soon as possible, since international driver’s permits are not always valid for the length of a stay abroad, and often are only valid if presented in conjunction with a valid U.S. or local license. To renew a U.S. driver’s license, contact the Department of Motor Vehicles in your home state. Before departure, you can obtain an IDP at a local office of one of the two Automobile Association’s authorized by the U.S. Department of State:

* [AAA (American Automobile Association)](http://www.aaa.com/)
* [National Auto Club](http://www.thenac.com/)

**Requirements**

Applicants for an IDP must:

* be 18 or older,
* have a recognized driver's license,
* submit two passport-type photos, and
* make their application on an official form provided by the issuing authority.

An IDP cannot be post-dated, extended, or renewed, and is valid for only one year from the date of issue. Each time a new IDP is required, the driver must repeat the entire application procedure. The IDP must be applied for in the country of origin and cannot be used there in place of a regular driver's license.

The cost of an IDP from these U.S. State Department-authorized organizations is less than $35.00.

It is illegal to drive without a valid driver’s license and insurance in many countries. You should check with the Embassy of the country where you plan to visit, to find out more about driver’s license requirements. A listing of foreign embassies and consulates in the United States is available on the Department of State’s website at <http://www.state.gov/s/cpr/rls/dpl/32122.htm>. Foreign embassy and consulate contact information can also be found on the Country Specific Information for each country.

Essentially, an International Driving Permit (IDP) is proof that you hold a valid driver's license in your own country. And it provides a translation into almost a dozen languages, mainly so that police and other authorities in other countries can read your license in their own language. It may not be absolutely necessary to have it, since many countries recognize each other's licenses, but traveling with an IDP has many advantages.

The permit is intended to overcome the difficulties drivers might have while traveling in other countries that may have widely varying licensing requirements. The IDP is a special license for tourists authorized by United Nations conventions on road safety in 1923, 1943, 1949, and 1968. Nearly 180 countries are signatories.