

1. Driving under Japan's Road Traffic Law

We have many and various visitors from all over the world here in Tokachi district including Shintoku, Shimizu and Shikaoi over which Shintoku Police has its jurisdiction. There are also lots of travellers who drive rental cars and drive around here in Hokkaido prefecture.

But unfortunately, some of them are involved in traffic accidents and suffer from them. And some commit traffic violations and cause bodily injuries on themselves or other parties.

It is deemed that these accidents and traffic violations occur mainly for lack of their knowledge on Japan's Road Traffic Law and its relevant rules. Hence, we would like to provide you with basic rules as shown below, which you must especially understand when driving in Japan.

- Traffic rules

- Speeding

You are advised to drive in Japan after learning and understanding basic traffic rules.

In Japan, the maximum speed limit on open roads is set at 60 km/h. If you see a round sign with designated figures such as 30, 40 or 50, it is the speed limit for the certain zone (see picture 1).



Picture 1

Furthermore, the maximum speed limit on pay roads is regulated at 100 km/h and you must also follow each designated speed limit in accordance with a traffic sign even on the pay roads. There are many foreign nationals who get caught for speeding and make an excuse that they didn't know the rules.

If you see a rightwards arrow sign (picture 2) that is combined with a sign such as speed limit, it means the beginning of the effect.



Picture 2

If you find a leftwards arrow sign (picture 3) or a white and round sign with blue diagonal line on it (picture 4), it means the end of the effect.



Picture 3



Picture 4

- Stop violation

Just before intersections, you may find a white line on the roads and a red and inverted triangular sign at the corners (picture 5). These signs mean you must completely stop your car at the line and look in both directions to check for oncoming vehicles and pedestrians before proceeding into intersections. You may also find the stop line just before railroad crossings. Ignoring these signs will lead you a serious traffic accident that results in bodily injury.



Picture 5

2. Driving in winter

As you may know, Hokkaido is the coldest place in Japan. It begins to snow at the beginning of November and the snow doesn't melt completely by next April, which means almost all the roads in Hokkaido are covered with snow, ice and slush for nearly a half year. In such snowy months, you must make sure your vehicle must be equipped with studless snow tires (studded snow tires are limited their use during non-winter months to protect the roads from damages).

If you have never driven on the icy roads and don't want to get involved in a traffic accident during your happy vacation, you would be advised to avoid driving as far as you can and to ask an experienced driver to do that instead.

3. Petrol stations

There are some drivers who run out of petrol and ask us for assistance while driving in our jurisdiction, Shintoku, Shimizu or Shikaoi town in the middle of night. Unfortunately, there are no petrol stations here that

open after 8 or 9 p.m. and neither we provide it for you.

The nearest gas station that opens 24 hours a day is located on Route 38 in Memuro town, which is approximately 30 km away to east from Shintoku Police Station (Sorry that we can't guarantee you the precise information about it. Check it out by yourself by using the Internet, etc.)

Anyway, if you drive to Obihiro city, which is about 50 km away from our police station, next to Memuro, there are heaps of petrol stations running all-hours.