

IDP FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions)

How will I benefit by carrying an International Driving Permit on my next overseas trip?

The International Driving Permit (IDP) is a document that provides important information from your driver's license in eleven different languages, including English. This document came into existence by virtue of a treaty signed in 1949 by the United States and other foreign countries. As an official document, the IDP is recognized in over 150 countries today. Carried in conjunction with a valid U.S. driver's license, the IDP can help break down language barriers when traveling in non-English speaking countries. In addition, the IDP provides an additional source of identification. The \$15 charge for an IDP is a small price to pay for such peace of mind.

I am on active duty in the military and my U.S. license has or is due to expire. Can I apply for an IDP?

Each state has its own provisions for extending the validity of state driving licenses for active duty military. Though valid in a home state, an expired U.S. license may not be valid or acceptable in a foreign country per that country's driving requirements. See www.DMV.org for state information on renewals, keeping in mind that an IDP is only a translation of the license, not a license to drive. Military applicants must understand the conditions under which an IDP is valid if insisting upon issuance of a permit against an expired U.S. license that may be considered valid in their home state until discharged from active duty.

My client is traveling to South America, so which permit should I issue?

The International Driving Permit is valid for South America, EXCEPT Brazil and Uruguay. The Inter-American Driving Permit (IADP) must be issued for those two countries.

Am I required to have an IDP in foreign countries?

There are some countries that do not recognize a driver's license from the United States, but officially recognize an IDP (e.g. Hungary). There are other countries that honor a valid United States driver's license, but require a local language translation (e.g. Spain). The IDP can satisfy these types of situations. Keep in mind, however, that while a certain country's government may not require an IDP, car rental companies located in that country, such as Hertz, may require an IDP to rent a car. Purchasing an IDP prior to departure can save a lot of potential hassles.

What happens if I am stopped and given a citation against my IDP?

The IDP does not hold any powers of its own apart from your valid U.S. driver's license, and therefore, you do not have a separate driving permit with an IDP. The IDP is valid only when carried in conjunction with and acts as a translation of a valid U.S. driver's license. If you are traveling in a foreign country and were to be stopped by a law enforcement officer, your U.S. driver's license and IDP should be presented to the officer. If a citation is issued to you, it will be reflected on the driving record that is with your driver's license.

What if the country I'm visiting is not listed on the back of the application?

There are some countries that are not on the list because they did not ratify the treaty that brought the IDP into existence. China is the country asked about most frequently. However, the IDP does include a Chinese translation and may be helpful as identification.

Since Hong Kong was transferred from Great Britain to China, do I still need an IDP to drive there?

The United Nations recently provided official notification to the U.S. State Department indicating that the treaty which applies to Hong Kong at present will continue to apply to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the name given to the territory by China. Such notification should not be misconstrued to mean that China now recognizes IDPs, as the People's Republic of China has never become a party to the treaty.

Can I use a scanned/digital photograph?

Scanned photographs are still not acceptable, however digital photographs are. They must be of a certain quality. Please read http://travel.state.gov/passport/pptphotos/digital_photography.html for guidelines. Polaroid type photographs are still acceptable. Photographs can be either color or black and white. Photocopies are not acceptable.

If someone visits the United States from a foreign country and discovers that they need an IDP, can they purchase one from AAA?

An IDP must be issued in the same country that issued the driver's license of the traveler. Therefore, if someone from the United Kingdom has a U.K. drivers license, their IDP must also be issued in the United Kingdom.

I have a U.S. driver's license, but I am a citizen of another country. Where should I obtain an IDP?

The IDP must be issued in the same country that issued the driver's license. In the case of a driver's license being issued in the United States, the IDP must also be issued in the United States. Contact your nearest AAA office to obtain an IDP.

If someone has a driver's license from a U.S. territory such as Guam, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands, how would an IDP work for them?

Since their driver's license was issued by a U.S. possession, their IDP would also be issued in the United States. Contact a AAA office in the United States, and the IDP can be issued and mailed.

What do I need to obtain an IDP?

You need to complete a brief application form (available through this Internet web site, or your nearest AAA office), provide 2 passport-sized photographs with your signature on the back of them, a photocopy of your valid U.S. issued drivers license, and a check or money order for \$15 in U.S. funds. If transacting by mail, these items would need to be mailed to a AAA office in the United States. Otherwise, everything can be handled in a single office visit.

Can I use the IDP as a primary form of identification?

No. There have been instances of travelers being denied aircraft boarding when the IDP was the only form of identification offered.

What languages are used in the IDP?

Information in the IDP is covered in 11 languages: English, French, Italian, Swedish, German, Chinese, Arabic, Spanish, Japanese, Russian, and Portuguese.