



U.S. ARMY OKINAWA

★ TORII STATION ★



LEGAL ASSISTANCE

• 652-4332 / 4742 • BUILDING 218, ROOM 220 •

Bicycle Rules on Okinawa

Adapted from the USAG Japan Regulation¹, 18th Wing SOFA Guide², MCIPACO 5560.1³, and the National Police Agency and Japan Traffic Safety Association⁴

Many people are riding bikes these days. What most people might not know are the rules for riding a bike in Japan. There are three types of regulations: on base, off base, and rules for children under 13.

Generally, a bicycle must travel on the road. However, you may ride a bike on the sidewalk under the following conditions:

- When designated explicitly by a posted sign that permits bicycle traffic;
- Where roadway vehicle traffic or construction conditions make it dangerous to ride; or
- When bicycle riders are under the age of 13, over 70, or physically impaired.

For a comprehensive list of rules, please check out the references listed below. Some rules you might not know are:

1. **Vehicle traffic rules apply on the road. If riding on the sidewalk, pedestrian rules apply.**

Riding on Roadways:

- Ride on the left side of the roadway as practicable.
- Exercise due care when passing a stationary vehicle or one proceeding in the same direction.
- Do not ride two abreast except on parts of roads set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles.
- Do not carry any article that prevents you from keeping at least one hand on the handlebars.
- Do not in any way attach yourself to any vehicle upon a roadway.
- Do not wear headphones.

Riding on Sidewalks:

- Pedestrians always have the right of way.
- Reduce speed enough to enable sudden stop.
- Stop riding if there is a risk of obstructing passing pedestrians.
- Refrain from unnecessarily ringing bicycle bells at pedestrians.
- Dismount from your bicycle if necessary.

2. Use proper Personal Protective Equipment (PEE) when riding a bicycle.

Helmets: You must wear an approved Department of Transportation or Japanese standard bicycle helmet while riding on base. Children under the age of 6 riding in a designated child's bicycle seat and under 13 must always wear a safety helmet.

Lights and Other Equipment: Use bicycle lights and wear reflective gear when riding through tunnels, during foggy weather, and at night. In addition, all bicycles must be equipped with the following:

- A white front light (not a reflector) visible from at least 150 meters (500 ft.) and a red rear reflector or light clearly visible from the rear of the bicycle from a distance of 100 meters (330 ft.);
- A spoke or wheel mounted reflectors visible from the side;
- A bell or other devices capable of giving signal from at least 100 feet away; and
- Suitable brakes that will enable you to stop abruptly on dry and wet surfaces. Racing and other poorly maintained bicycles are disallowed on regular roads/sidewalks.

3. Do not drink and ride a bicycle.

Do not drink and drive when riding a bicycle, not only because of safety but because it is against the law. Those who drive while intoxicated will be subjected to imprisonment with mandatory labor not exceeding five years or a fine not exceeding 1,000,000 yen.

If you would like to know more about bicycle rules, please contact the Torii Station Safety Office at (315) 652-5102/5104/4071.

References:

¹ USAG Japan Reg 190-5: Motor Vehicle Traffic Supervision (by USAG Japan Military Police)

² Traffic Safety & Driving in Japan (by USAF 18th Wing Safety Office):

<https://www.kadena.af.mil/Portals/40/documents/Fact%20Sheets/SOFA%20GUIDE%20May%202017.pdf?ver=2017-05-08-220433-833>

³ MCIPAC 5560.1A: Motor Vehicle Traffic Supervision/Drive Safe and Licensing (by USMC Camp Butler):

https://www.3rdmardiv.marines.mil/Portals/66/Docs/Resources/MCIPAC-MCBBO%205560.1A%20W%20CH%201%20MOTOR%20VEHICLE%20TRAFFIC%20SUPERVISION_%20ODRIVE%20SAFE%20AND%20LICENSING.pdf?ver=2018-01-18-181847-557

⁴ Traffic Safety Guidelines for Pedestrians and Cyclists (by the National Police Agency and Japan Traffic Safety Association):

https://www.npa.go.jp/koutsuu/kikaku/trafficsafety/traffic_safety_english.pdf