



## DRIVING IN SAN DIEGO & THE DMV

### **CALIFORNIA DRIVERS LICENSE**

The State of California's Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) requires a California Driver's License if you are a **California resident** - even if you have an international license (although an international license is valid for one year in California).

- You are considered to be a California resident (for driving purposes only) if you have rented an apartment, are being paid any money and will be paying income tax, or are going to school in California.
- You must be at least 16 years old to apply for a license.

For information about procedure, test, international license, & location, please go to the DMV website at:

<http://www.dmv.ca.gov/>

### **ID FOR NON-DRIVERS**

The DMV can also issue a non-driver's I.D. card.

- This is a very convenient form of identification, as a passport is not always recognized for local transactions such as cashing checks or for proof of age when purchasing alcoholic beverages.

### **SEAT BELT LAW**

Since January 1986, drivers and all passengers are **required** to wear seat belts.

- A fine will apply if you do not comply with this law.
- Children under 40 pounds are required to be in a safety car seat.

### **MOTORCYCLE HELMET LAW**

Motorcyclists and their passengers *must* wear an appropriate helmet at all times, on all roads & highways.

### **TICKETS**

If you get a "ticket" (citation) for a moving violation (speeding, not stopping at a stop sign, etc.,) you must pay the fine.

- If it is your first ticket, you may be able to avoid having the "ticket" appear on the DMV computer and an increase in your car insurance rates by going to a driver's education class. Information on this alternative is available from the DMV.
- Remember that if you get a ticket while driving a rental car, you are still responsible for it.

### **DRIVING TO MEXICO**

If you are driving your car to Mexico, be sure to buy Mexican car insurance.

- If you are in an accident and have no Mexican insurance, it will be assumed that you are at fault, and the police may take you to jail. It is therefore advised that you purchase the insurance.
- You will see places to buy insurance on the side of the road just before the Mexican border.

### **CAR THEFT**

San Diego has one of the highest levels of automobile theft in the United States. It makes good sense here to observe basic precaution with your car:

- Always close and lock your car, no matter how briefly you will be away. Don't leave the key in the ignition.
- When you park your car at night, always try to park in a well-lighted area.

There are also many different security devices for sale, such as car alarms and the "Club," that will provide greater protection for your car. The purchase of some of these devices may make your insurance rates lower; ask your insurance company about this.

## **CAR INSURANCE**

Insurance coverage is **required** for all automobile drivers in California.

- Some insurance carriers will require an official copy of your driving record from your home country.
- Automobile insurance coverage and premiums can vary considerably between firms. You may want to consider coverage that includes road service and provides detailed maps. Ask for complete, specific, and comparative quotes.
- If you buy a car from an automobile dealer, note that you do not have to accept the insurance coverage that they offer. Go online and search for "car insurance". When you find a car insurance company, get a free price quote and look for a listing of insurance agents in San Diego.

## **RENTING A CAR**

To rent a car, you will need:

- a major credit card and
- a driver's license (either an International License or one from any U.S. state).

Also, it is better to call several companies because price and availability vary from one another.

The car rental company closest to UCSD is Enterprise Rentacar ([enterprise.com](http://enterprise.com)). Offered to drivers 21 years old and over, they have reasonable daily/ weekly/ monthly rates. If you call them to make a reservation, they will pick you up and drop you to their nearest location.

## **BRINGING A CAR TO THE U.S.**

(e.g., by ship, or by driving here from Mexico or Canada): The car must meet the U. S. standards for smog control (including the more restrictive standards in California). Permission must be obtained in advance from the U. S. authorities in order to import a vehicle. Contact DMV.

## **BUYING A USED CAR**

There are disadvantages and advantages in buying a used automobile.

- The advantage is the price if a good choice is made.
- The disadvantage is that the risk factor is high because it is difficult to predict the performance of a used car. It may become a very costly item.
- To minimize the risks, spend time shopping around, and in researching the market place. Also, ask for advice from someone who has purchased a used car.

Find out which models are the most trouble-free. The [Kelley Blue-Book](#) is a free online reference for knowing approximately the value of a car.

Consult advertisements in the local newspapers for sales by private individuals. You can bargain for a better price from a private person. *Beware* of dealers who pose as private parties.

Advertisements appear each week in the "San Diego Union Tribune", "La Jolla Light", "Reader", and "Los Angeles Times". The "Auto Trader" is a catalog of used cars for sale. It is sold at 7/11 stores. Get a reputable mechanic report.

You should refer to the DMV Drivers Handbook for specific requirements to transfer ownership into your name.

## **MAPS**

"Thomas Brothers" map books and other detailed maps of San Diego and California are sold in bookstores and Costco.

Otherwise, online websites such as yahoo map or mapquest.com are an excellent source for help with directions.