Do you need a motorcycle licence to rent a scooter in Greece?

Quick answer: it depends on the scooter's engine size

For most visitors renting a small scooter or moped in Greece, a full motorcycle licence is not required. Greek law treats two-wheeled vehicles differently based on their engine displacement and maximum speed. A standard car driving licence (category B) is enough for scooters and mopeds up to 50cc, but anything larger demands a motorcycle licence (category A1, A2 or A). So the short answer is: you do not need a motorcycle licence for a small scooter, but you do for a more powerful one.

This distinction catches many tourists by surprise. On the island of Santorini, where winding coastal roads and steep hills make scooters a popular way to get around, rental shops usually offer a mix of 50cc mopeds, 125cc scooters and larger ATVs. Knowing which one you can legally drive without a motorcycle licence will save you trouble at the rental counter and keep you on the right side of the law.

What the Greek law says

Greek traffic law follows EU directives on driving licences. The key categories for two-wheelers are:

- **AM category**, for mopeds and scooters up to 50cc and a maximum design speed of 45 km/h. A category B (car) licence automatically gives you AM entitlement in Greece. No separate motorcycle test is needed.
- **A1 category**, for light motorcycles up to 125cc (11 kW). This requires a dedicated motorcycle licence, usually obtained from age 16.
- **A2 and A categories**, for more powerful machines above 125cc. These also require a full motorcycle licence.

If you hold a valid car licence from any EU/EEA country, you can legally ride a 50cc scooter in Greece without any extra endorsement. The same applies to licences from many non-EU countries that Greece recognises through bilateral agreements or international driving permits. However, for a 125cc scooter (a common rental option in Santorini), you need at least an A1 licence. Very few tourists have that unless they took a motorcycle test back home.

How rental shops handle it

Rental agencies in Santorini, such as easyride-santorini.com, are used to these rules. They will ask to see your driving licence before handing over the keys. For a 50cc moped, a standard car licence is fine. For a 125cc scooter, they will expect a motorcycle licence. Some shops may still rent a 125cc to someone with a car licence, but that is a grey area. The police can fine you and impound the vehicle if you are caught without the correct licence. Insurance may also be invalid in an accident if you are not legally entitled to drive that class of vehicle.

It is always worth checking the specific terms at the rental desk. Many shops in Santorini offer 50cc scooters specifically for tourists with car licences. These are light, easy to handle and perfectly adequate for exploring the island's main roads and villages. If you want something faster, you may need to book a 125cc scooter and accept that a motorcycle licence is required.

What about an international driving permit?

An International Driving Permit (IDP) is not a magic solution. It translates your existing licence into multiple languages, but it does not give you any new entitlement. If your home licence does not already include the category for a 125cc scooter, an IDP will not help. For a 50cc scooter, your car licence already covers you, and an IDP simply makes it easier for the rental shop and police to read your details. Many visitors from outside the EU find that bringing an IDP is still a good idea because the Greek authorities often ask for it, but it does not change the underlying licence requirement.

Practical advice for Santorini

Santorini's roads are narrow, winding and often busy with tourists. A 50cc scooter is fine for short trips around Fira, Oia and the beaches, but it will struggle on the steepest inclines. If you plan to ride up to the higher villages such as Pyrgos or travel long distances across the island, a 125cc scooter gives you more power and comfort. The trade-off is the licence requirement. Many visitors who would prefer a 125cc end up renting a 50cc because that is all their licence allows.

For groups or couples, ATVs (quad bikes) are another option. Greek law treats ATVs differently, and a car licence is usually sufficient for the smaller models (up to 50cc equivalent). Larger ATVs may require a motorcycle or car licence with a specific endorsement. Again, the rental shop will tell you what you need.

One more thing: the minimum age to drive a 50cc scooter in Greece is 16, but rental shops typically require you to be at least 18 or 21. Check the age policy before you book.

What to do before you arrive

If you are planning to rent a scooter in Santorini Greece, the best approach is to check your own driving licence categories before you travel. Look for a code or class that mentions AM, A1 or a moped entitlement. If you have a full car licence from an EU country, you are almost certainly covered for 50cc. If you are from the US, Canada, Australia or another non-EU country, the situation varies. Some countries have bilateral agreements with Greece that recognise their car licence for 50cc scooters. Others require an IDP. The safest way is to contact the rental agency directly, such as easyride-santorini.com, and ask what they accept for the specific vehicle you want.

Be honest about your licence when you book. It avoids disappointment at the pickup and ensures you are properly insured. A few minutes of research now can save you a lot of hassle on holiday.

What happens if you ride without the right licence?

The penalties in Greece are not trivial. Police can issue a fine of several hundred euros, seize the vehicle and suspend your driving privileges. In serious cases, you could face a court appearance. Insurance companies are quick to deny cover if the driver did not hold the correct category. That means you could be personally liable for damage, injury or third-party costs. The risk is real, and the local police in tourist areas such as Perissa and Fira are known to check rental vehicles regularly.

For these reasons, it is not worth bending the rules. Stick to a scooter that matches your licence. The island is small enough that a 50cc scooter will get you everywhere you need to go, even if it is not the fastest option.

Final points

To sum it up: you do not need a motorcycle licence to rent a 50cc scooter in Greece. Your standard car licence will do. For anything above 50cc, you need at least an A1 licence. If you have only a car licence, limit yourself to a moped or small scooter and enjoy Santorini at a relaxed pace. If you happen to hold a motorcycle licence, you have the freedom to choose from the full range of rentals. Either way, check ahead and ride safely.