# Renting a Motorbike in Santorini: What You Need to Check First

## Know the local rules before you ride

Driving in Santorini is different from what many visitors are used to. The island has narrow roads, steep hills, and sharp turns, especially around villages like Oia and Fira. If you plan to rent a motorbike, you need a valid driving licence. For most European visitors, a standard car licence lets you ride a motorbike up to 125cc in Greece, but riders from outside the EU often need an International Driving Permit. Check the Greek driving licence rules for your country before you travel. Without the right paperwork, the rental company cannot legally hand you the keys, and you risk a fine if stopped.

## Check the bike's condition yourself

Do not rely on the rental agent's word alone. Walk around the motorbike before you take it. Look at the tyres - are they worn unevenly? Is the tread deep enough for the roads you will ride? Squeeze the brake levers and check the brake fluid level if the bike has a transparent reservoir. Test the lights: front, rear, turn signals, and brake light. Start the engine and listen for strange noises. A bike that sounds rough now will sound worse halfway to Akrotiri. If something feels off, ask for a different machine or go to another rental. A good rental company will let you inspect the bike without rushing you.

## Understand the insurance cover

Basic rental insurance in Greece often covers very little. The minimum third-party insurance is required by law, but it does not cover damage to the bike itself or your own injuries. Many rental agreements include a waiver that reduces your financial liability if you crash, but the waiver may have exclusions. For example, damage from riding on unpaved roads or from a single-vehicle accident might not be covered. Read the small print or ask the staff to explain exactly what is and is not covered. If you are not comfortable with the level of protection, consider buying a separate travel insurance policy that covers motorbike rental in Santorini. That way you ride with fewer worries.

## Take photos of every scratch

Before you ride off, photograph the motorbike from every angle. Include close-ups of any existing damage: scratches, dents, cracked plastic, or worn paint. Do this with the rental agent present, ideally while they are filling out the condition report. If the company uses a paper diagram, mark every mark on it and have them initial it. This simple step saves arguments

when you return the bike. Even small scuffs that were there before can be blamed on you later. Photos with a timestamp or a newspaper in the frame add proof. It takes five minutes and can save you a deposit.

## Test the weight and balance

Santorini's roads are not flat. You will climb steep inclines from the port to the caldera edge, and you will descend into valleys on the way to Kamari beach. A heavy motorbike or a scooter with a high centre of gravity can feel unstable on a steep downhill turn. Sit on the bike, lift it off the stand, and rock it side to side. Can you hold it steady? Can you put both feet flat on the ground? If the bike feels too heavy or too tall, try a smaller model. The extra stability is worth less power. Many visitors rent a 125cc scooter because it is light and easy to handle on the island's winding roads.

## Plan your route in advance

Riding without a plan on Santorini can lead to stressful moments. Some roads are unpaved, some are one-way without clear signs, and parking near popular viewpoints fills up fast. Before you set off, look at a map and pick the roads you will take. Stick to paved main roads where possible. If you want to visit the Red Beach area, remember that the last section is a dirt track - your rental agreement may forbid riding on gravel. Also, check if your rental includes a helmet for the passenger. Greek law requires both rider and passenger to wear a helmet. If the company does not provide one, buy a basic helmet at a local shop before you ride. It is not expensive, and it keeps you legal and safe.

## Know what to do in an accident

Accidents happen, even to careful riders. If you are involved in a crash, stop the bike and stay calm. Check if anyone is hurt. Do not move an injured person unless there is immediate danger. Call 112 for emergency services anywhere in Greece. Exchange details with the other driver, but do not admit fault. Take photos of the scene, the vehicles, and the road conditions. Then contact the rental company. Most rental agreements require you to call them before any repairs are done. If you leave the scene or fail to report the accident, you may lose your deposit or face legal trouble. Keep the emergency number saved in your phone before you ride.

## Choose a reputable rental company

A professional rental company makes the whole experience smoother. Look for a place that maintains its fleet well, offers clear insurance terms, and provides helmets and locks without extra charge. A company like moto-empire.com, for example, rents quad bikes, motorbikes, scooters, and buggies to visitors on the island. Their staff can advise on the best vehicle for

your needs and the roads you plan to ride. A good rental will also give you a map and a quick safety briefing. If the rental office is disorganised or the bikes look neglected, walk away. There are many rental shops on Santorini, and you do not have to settle for the first one you see.

## Prepare for the wind and sun

Santorini is exposed to strong winds, especially in the summer afternoons. A gust can push you across the lane if you are not ready. Wear a jacket with some padding, even on hot days. The asphalt gets very hot, and a fall without protective clothing can cause serious burns. Sunscreen on your face and arms is a good idea, but do not wear greasy sunscreen on your hands - it makes the grips slippery. A pair of sunglasses under the helmet visor helps with the glare off the sea. The weather changes fast, so carry a lightweight waterproof jacket in a backpack. You will be glad you did when a short shower passes over.

## Trust your instincts

If something feels wrong - the bike handles oddly, the rental agent is pushy, or the contract has blank spaces - do not sign. You are not committed until you hand over the deposit and sign the paper. A legitimate company like moto-empire.com will answer your questions clearly and give you time to read the terms. If they rush you, that is a red flag. Renting a motorbike on Santorini should be a fun way to explore the island, not a source of stress. With a few checks before you ride, you can enjoy the winding coastal roads, the views over the caldera, and the freedom of two wheels without unexpected trouble.