TRANSPORTATION IN JAPAN

Even if you know almost nothing about Japan, you probably know that Japanese trains are both crowded and efficient. Most of the major cities have networks of train and subway lines, that when converted to maps, have all the intricacy of spider webs! But learn the basics and you will soon understand how to find your way from place to place and why trains are the more convenient way to travel in Japan.

Travelling between cities - using the しんかんせん

When travelling between cities we use the shinkansen (bullet train). Shinkansen are accessed through their own platforms inside the rail stations and they travel on their own tracks. Our Japan Rail Pass enables us to travel without limit at no cost. It is imperative to secure your JR Pass just as you would a passport.

In Tokyo our main means of travel is via the subway or ちかてつ

USING THE JAPANESE SUBWAY

How do I know where I am going?
Maps are provided at every station. They clearly show where you are and how you get to wherever you want to go, along with the cost of the fare. Easy! Make sure you know the name of the station you are headed to and where you need to change trains to get there.

Are trains really that crowded?
Yes, especially during the commuter rush. The morning rush peaks about 8:00am; that’s when the station workers push people in to the carriages! Once in, you’ll wonder whether you can ever get out! It’s best to avoid the rush hours which are 7:00am - 9:00am and 5:30pm - 8:00pm in the evening.

Are there any special manners I need to know?
As a general rule, no eating or drinking. Avoid crossing your legs or stretching out, especially during rush hour. Trains will often have ‘silver seats which are reserved for elderly or handicapped passengers. ‘Priority’ or ‘Courtesy’ seats are for the elderly, pregnant and disabled.
Lesson 2  Japan Tour 2017

The Tokyo Metro/Subway—It is HUGE!

And it is even more confusing in 3D!

How to Use the Tokyo Metro

1. Confirming the Entrance

There are two subway operators in Tokyo, Tokyo Metro and Toei Subway. At the entrance to each station, you will see the subway sign and the name of the subway station. Be sure to remember the station name and number, and line colour of the subway line you want to ride!

Station numbers consist of a letter representing the subway line and a number for the station, combined with a colour representing the subway line, making finding your station easy. Station numbers can be found on subway route maps and on station signs along platforms.
2. Finding the Fare

Look for an English chart near the ticket vending machines to find the price of a ticket to your destination. The red arrow indicates where you are. Locate the station you want to travel to and then read the number beside this station. This number is the amount in yen of your fare.

3. Buying your Ticket

Buy your ticket at a ticket vending machine. Insert coins or bills and select the button displaying the price to your destination. (Note: Some machines do not accept ¥2,000, ¥5,000 or ¥10,000 notes.) Retrieve your ticket and change.

4. Entering the Fare Gate

Insert your ticket into the slot located above the green arrow on the fare gate. DON'T FORGET to retrieve your ticket as you pass through.

5. Riding the Subway

Line up behind the white line on the platform at the boarding guides where the doors will open. Wait for the alighting passengers to finish before boarding the train. Please do not rush when trying to catch the train. Some subway lines have adopted women-only cars during the morning rush hour so women and young children can ride with a sense of security.
6. Fare Adjustment

If you travelled further than the ticket you bought allows, pay the extra fare at a fare adjustment machine located near the fare gates. When you place your ticket into the machine, it will display the fare difference you owe. After inserting the difference, take your ticket and pass through the fare gate.

7. Exiting the Fare Gate

When travelling with a regular ticket, the gate will not return your ticket.

Changing Trains

In some subway stations you must pass through the fare gates when transferring lines, even when they are both Tokyo Metro lines. In that case, when changing from one Tokyo Metro line to another, pass through the special orange transfer gates. If you take longer than 30 minutes to change trains, you will need to purchase a new ticket.

8. Finding your Exit

After exiting the gate, you can find your exit number on the yellow exit signs and on the vicinity map. After finding your exit number, follow the appropriate exit signs.

In Kyoto our main means of travel is via bus.

BUSES

In most large cities, buses are a minor means of transportation. The elderly seem to make up the majority of bus riders. Buses play a bigger role in the suburbs and smaller cities, where they often connect train stations. In Kyoto there is only a small subway system and so most transport is via bus.

You board the bus from the back and get off at the front.

When you board the bus you take a ticket with a number on it. When you want to get off you refer to the number on the ticket taken at the rear door and compare it with the numbers on the electric board at the front of the bus. The price under the same number on the board as your numbered ticket is the fare for your ride.

Return the ticket with the appropriate fare when you get off the bus. There is a machine at the front of the bus which you place your money into. It will give you change if necessary. If you only have a large note there is a change machine next to the machine that takes your fare. Allow time to change your note before paying your fare. Buses are usually busy and run to schedule so it is important not to hold up the line of people wanting to get off the bus.

Make sure you have lots of coins. There are note changing machines at the front of the buses but this takes time to use and slows down the queue wanting to get off the bus.

Orange Transfer Gate