



Getting around Tokyo

A guide to public transport

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Welcome to Tokyo!

For most visitors coming to Japan, exploring Tokyo is a must. Maybe you're excited to bathe in the glow of futuristic neon lights as you sample the best of Japanese cuisine on a nighttime street food tour, or perhaps you have a long list of temples and shrines that you're desperate to visit. Whatever you're into, Tokyo has something for everyone.

To make the most of your time in the capital, you'll need to make use of Tokyo's extensive public transport network. While public transport may have an expensive or unreliable image in your own country, the transport options available in Tokyo are considered to be among the world's best, with cleanliness, punctuality and efficiency at the forefront of every provided service.

We're confident that you'll find travelling around Tokyo to be a simple and stress-free part of your time in Japan, but we also understand that at first, figuring out your way through the maze of train lines, subway stations and bus routes can seem somewhat daunting. For that reason, we've created this useful guide to help you start commuting like a native from the moment you arrive.

Happy travels!



Transport Options

Depending on where you live, you may find that Tokyo has a lot more options for public transport than you're used to. To make it a bit easier, here's an explanation of the different services available:

Trains

Using the train is one of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to travel around Tokyo and beyond. Thanks to the extensive network of lines available, you're never too far from a well-connected transport-hub station.

There are several train lines running throughout Tokyo, operated by multiple different service companies. This can make getting around seem complicated, but there's no need to worry about all of them. Instead, you can focus on the five main routes operated by JR East:

- **Yamanote Line** - a circular line that connects all of the main city centres across Tokyo
- **Chuo Line (Rapid)** - a rapid service that connects Shinjuku Station and Tokyo Station
- **Chuo/Sobu Line** - a slower speed, local service that crosses from the East to West of Tokyo
- **Keihin-Tohoku Line** - a service following the east side of the Yamanote Line loop, stopping at popular locations such as Ueno, Akihabara and Tokyo Station
- **Saikyo Line** - a service that runs along the west side of the Yamanote Line loop, stopping at popular locations such as Shinjuku and Shibuya

Subways

There are two main companies operating the subway lines in Tokyo.

The Toei Subways run four lines:

- **Asakusa Line (identified by the letter A in a rose-coloured circle)**
- **Mita Line (identified by the letter I in a blue circle)**
- **Shinjuku Line (identified by the letter S in a leaf-green circle)**
- **Oedo Line (identified by the letter E in a magenta circle)**

The Tokyo Metro runs nine lines:

- **Ginza Line (identified by the letter G in an orange circle)**
- **Marunouchi Line (identified by the letter M in a red circle)**
- **Hibiya Line (identified by the letter H in a silver circle)**
- **Tozai Line (identified by the letter T in a sky-blue circle)**



- Chiyoda Line (identified by the letter C in a green circle)
- Yurakucho Line (identified by the letter Y in a gold circle)
- Hanzomon Line (identified by the letter Z in a purple circle)
- Namboku Line (identified by the letter N in an emerald circle)
- Fukutoshin Line (identified by the letter F in a brown circle)

Buses

When it comes to transport options in Tokyo, buses are not as popular as trains or subways, partly due to being both slower and oftentimes more expensive. Most buses in Tokyo are run by the Toei Transport Network, and operate a flat fee fare of 210 yen for adults and 110 yen for children, which means that you will pay the same amount whether you plan to get off after one stop or you'll be riding until the end of the line. In most cases, you'll pay your fare when you first board, using the fare machine beside the driver. If you're using a travel pass, you can simply tap it and go, but otherwise you will need to drop your change into the slot provided. Many buses will provide you with change automatically, but others require exact fare. The bus driver can explain this to you when you board.

Taxi

Travelling by taxi in Tokyo can be a lot more expensive than you might expect, and therefore they are usually used more as a backup option than as a main form of transport. If you find yourself needing to get home at night long after the train lines have stopped, then you can catch a taxi either by waiting by the side of the road, at a taxi rank outside of a train station, or by asking your hotel or some other establishments to call one for you.

Shinkansen

The Shinkansen is not a main transport option in Tokyo. Rather, the Shinkansen is a popular choice for people travelling to areas outside of Tokyo, such as Kyoto. Tickets for the Shinkansen are considerably more expensive than a regular train ticket, but can be reserved in advance. If you're travelling with Heartland JAPAN, we will help to arrange this for you.



Tickets and Transport Passes

Prepaid IC Cards

The most popular and practical tool to help you commute around Tokyo is the prepaid IC Card. IC Cards don't give you any discounts compared to the usual ticket cost, but they do eliminate the confusion and inconvenience of constantly purchasing (and losing) your tickets. Even better, they can be used on trains, the subway and commuter busses, as well as as a method of payment for some cafes and vending machines.

There are two options available in Tokyo when it comes to IC Cards:

- **Pasmo** - the prepaid card supplied by the train, subway and bus operators other than JR
- **Suica** - the prepaid card supplied by JR East

Whether you choose a Pasmo or Suica card, both can be used regardless of whether the service you want to use is provided by JR East or not, so don't worry about which one you buy.

There are also other brands of IC Card available across Japan, such as the Toica card in Nagoya or the Nimoca card in Fukuoka.

IC Cards can be purchased from ticket machines or ticket counters in participating stations, and usually require a refundable deposit of 500 yen, as well as an initial charge of around 1000 yen or more. Both Suica and Pasmo operate a special card for foreign tourists (Welcome Suica and Pasmo Passport) that do not require a deposit fee, but they are also non-refundable. You can get more information from the counter or nearby staff when you purchase them.

To use your IC Card, simply make sure that it has been charged with enough money to cover the cost of your travel (you can charge your card at ticket machines on the platform, and there is an option to use the machine in English or one of multiple other languages). When you're ready to board, simply press the card against the IC scanner on the ticket gate or bus ticket machine.

If you're riding a bus, you can get off without using your card again. If you're using the train or subway, you will need to use the card once again to exit the ticket gates at your destination. The correct fare for your journey will be automatically deducted from your balance.

Japan Rail Pass (JR Pass)

If you plan to travel by train across the lengths and breadths of Japan during your trip, then it may be worth investing in a JR Pass.



The JR Pass is a cost effective option if you plan to use multiple JR trains, with you paying one set price dependant on whether you want to use it for 7, 14 or 21 consecutive days. Once you've purchased the ticket, you can use it as often or as little as you like, although we recommend only purchasing it if it will save you money in the long run.

The JR Pass is available in two options:

- **Ordinary** - the ordinary pass, which allows you to travel freely using the standard carriages
- **Green Car** - this pass allows you to travel in the special, first class carriage of the train

The Green Car pass is considerably more expensive than the Ordinary option, but is recommended if, for any reason, you feel that you require more leg room or to use quieter, more spacious carriage.

Before you invest in a JR Pass, it's important to calculate whether it will be a cost-effective option for you, and also to research whether you will be travelling mostly via JR rail during your trip. If your itinerary has you mostly travelling around cities, or you'll mostly be using services that are not covered by the JR Pass, then it may not be a sensible investment. Heartland JAPAN can you to decide whether or not you need a JR Pass during the initial stages of planning your trip - feel free to ask us about it!

You can find out more about the cost and conditions of the JR Pass, as well as how to purchase it, here: <https://japanrailpass.net/en/>

Day Passes

If you don't plan to spend much time in Tokyo, or you'll be using scheduled transport for most of your trip, then you may find that a day pass would suit your needs.

There are several day pass options available in Tokyo:

- **Tokyo Subway Ticket** - this ticket can be purchased to cover your transport for either 24 hours (800 yen), 48 hours (1200 yen) or 72 hours (1500 yen) and is a highly cost-effective option for anyone looking to squeeze all of Tokyo's must-see sights into a short period of time. With this ticket, you can enjoy unlimited travel on all of Tokyo's subway lines, regardless of provider, but not on JR trains. You can purchase this pass at ticket offices in some subway stations, Narita and Haneda Airports and some Bic Camera and Yamada Denki electronic stores (it may be necessary to show your passport at the time of purchase)
- **Tokyo Free Kippu (Tokyo Tour Ticket)** - for just 1600 yen, you can enjoy unlimited travel on all of Tokyo's subway and JR train lines, as well as Toei



buses, for one full calendar day. This is a very expensive ticket, but may be cost effective if you plan to try and see everything on your Tokyo 'To Do' list in one single day

- **Tokunai Pass** - this pass costs 760 yen and means that for one full calendar day, you can enjoy unlimited use of JR trains throughout Tokyo. Simply purchase this pass at a ticket counter or purple ticket machine at a JR station
- **Tokyo Metro 24 Hour Ticket** - as the name suggests, this 600 yen ticket allows you to use all of the nine Tokyo Metro subway lines for a full 24 hours, but it's important to note that you can not use it on any of the four Toei Subway lines or on JR trains. You can purchase this ticket from ticket machines in Tokyo Metro stations.
- **Toei One-Day Pass (Toei Marugoto Kippu)** - for 700 yen, you can use all four Toei Subway lines, Toei buses and Toei street cars for one calendar day. It's not possible to use this pass on any Tokyo Metro lines or on JR trains, however. Buy it from a ticket machine or ticket counter at a Toei station.
- **Toei and Tokyo Metro One-Day Economy Pass** - for one full calendar day, you can travel freely on all subway lines, whether you're using Toei or Tokyo Metro for your commute. The ticket costs 900 yen and can be purchased at a station within central Tokyo, but you should only purchase it if you plan to use it for over 900 yen's worth of travel.

Before you use a day pass, you should check to make sure what lines or services that you plan to use for the day, and also calculate how much you expect your commute to cost. While the passes are affordable, it may be more-cost effective to just purchase separate tickets depending on your personal needs.

Tickets

For one-off travel or short journeys, you may wish to simply purchase a ticket rather than think about day passes or IC Cards. In this case, you can easily purchase your ticket from a ticket machine at the station before you travel. Ticket machines throughout Tokyo are multilingual and have been designed to be as simple as possible to use. It's also possible to purchase a ticket from a ticket counter located within the station.



A Guide To The Services

Trains and Subways

Trains and subway services in Tokyo do not run 24/7, and while the schedule varies depending on the service and line, they usually only run from around 5am to just after midnight. If you plan to go somewhere very early in the morning or very late at night, you should research your route in advance to avoid any issues.

Between 7:30am to 9:30am in the morning and 5:30pm to 7:30pm in the evening, train and subway services in Tokyo (and other areas across Japan) become incredibly busy due to the 'rush' of commuters making their way to work, college and school. During these times, it's not unusual to find trains so crowded that station staff have to help push passengers into the carriages. In summer months, the temperatures in cramped carriages can reach uncomfortable levels, and with very little to no personal space, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. For this reason, it's best to avoid travelling during rush hours unless absolutely necessary.

On some subway and train services, a 'women only' carriage has been designated for use by women, children and disabled people during morning rush hour services. This carriage is usually always at the very front of the train, and is considered a safe space for the people who use it. While the service is in operation, people who do not fit into the specified list of passengers above should not use this carriage.

When the service finishes around 9am, everyone can use the carriage as usual. If you have any questions about 'women only' carriages, you can ask a nearby member of staff, who will be happy to help you.

On many station platforms, a barrier door system will be in operation to prevent accidents and to stop anyone from stepping onto the train tracks. When waiting to board a train, passengers are expected to line up on either side of these barrier doors and wait patiently for them to open when it's time to board.

Some stations don't have barrier doors. In this case, the location of carriage doors will be clearly marked on the platform floor.

When boarding, it's important to wait for passengers to get off the train before you get on. A song or sound will be played when it's time for the doors to close, and it's important not to attempt to rush on or off a train once the song has begun, as there is a risk of getting stuck in the doors.



If there are seats available in the carriage, you should sit down and place your bag(s) either on your lap or on the storage shelf above you. Avoid crossing your legs or sitting in any position that might inconvenience others.

While riding on public transport, it's expected that you will try to be as quiet and conscientious of others as you can possibly be. For this reason, it is requested that you put your electronic devices (phones, games consoles, etc.) on silent mode, and refrain from making phone calls (it's perfectly okay to use your phone for messaging or browsing, however). If using headphones, check to make sure that other people can not hear what you are listening to.

It's also best to refrain from eating while riding on the trains and subway in Japan.

NOTE: At the end of each carriage, you'll find a seating area for 'priority' passengers, such as pregnant women, the elderly and the disabled. When the train is empty you are welcome to use these seats, but you must offer your seat to anyone who may need it. Some people with health conditions may have a red charm attached to their bag showing a white cross, while pregnant women may have a pink, heart-shaped charm with an image of a woman and baby's faces on it. If you see someone with one of these charms standing near the priority seating, you should always offer your seat to them. To do so, you can simply say "douzo" while gesturing to your seat.

Buses

You can find bus stops dotted along the street across the Tokyo region, with a list of the services that stop there and the timetable they follow clearly displayed. Some stops also have a small screen displaying how many stops away the next bus is.

Buses in Tokyo normally use a two door system. Passengers boarding the bus do so using the door at the front of the bus, while those getting off do so using the door at the back. When waiting for the bus, you should begin to line up from the front of the bus stop, where the bus' front door will be.

Lining up is important, and attempting to skip the line or even accidentally getting onto the bus in front of someone who has been waiting patiently is considered very rude. Always check to make sure you are not skipping the line before you board.

When you enter the bus, you will immediately need to pay your fare, using either your IC Card, your pass or cash. If using an IC Card, you should make sure that your balance is enough to cover the bus fare. If you aren't sure, have enough coins to pay for your fare in your pocket, somewhere that you can quickly reach. Taking a long time to



pay or find money when boarding the bus will inconvenience other passengers and potentially also cause the bus to run late.

Seats at the front of the bus are for pregnant, elderly or disabled passengers. You can sit there if the bus is empty, but you must always give up your seat for someone who may need it, just as if you were riding the train or subway. Some seats also fold away to make room for wheelchairs, and you should be prepared to move if you are asked to make room for a wheelchair-using passenger.

If the bus is full, you can stand - simply make sure that you are holding onto a handle or straps provided so that you don't fall over during the journey.

When you would like to get off the bus, simply press the button located nearest to you to let the driver know. You should exit using the door at the rear of the bus (not the front, unless there is only one door). You don't need to use your ticket or IC Card when getting off the bus.



Useful Links

- Japan Rail East have created a handy English document to help answer any questions you may have about riding on a JR Train in Tokyo. You can find it here: https://www.jreast.co.jp/e/downloads/pdf/jr-east_guide_e.pdf
- Toei Bus has prepared a rough guide on how to use their services, which you can find here: https://www.kotsu.metro.tokyo.jp/eng/tips/bus_ride.html
- You can download a map of the Tokyo Metro services here: <https://www.tokyometro.jp/en/subwaymap/>
- Multilingual maps of the Toei Subway services can be found here: <https://www.kotsu.metro.tokyo.jp/eng/map/>
- A comprehensive guide to travelling around Tokyo, including information on air, boat, bike and traffic services, can be found here: <https://www.gotokyo.org/en/plan/getting-around/index.html>