**Transportation Four: Subways and Trains**

**General Information** – 一般の情報

Trains are the most important kind of transportation in Japan. Although Japan has many different rail companies, all trains and subways are part of one giant, interconnected system. Riding procedures for rail transportation are generally the same across Japan. Transfers 乗り換え between two rail lines, even if owned by different companies, usually involve the same station or two stations located close to each other. Although guide signs are generally thorough at transfer points, sometimes it is necessary to ask attendants how to get to the connecting line. There is usually a window 窓口 open for passengers to buy tickets 切符 and ask for help. The much more frequent and convenient path for purchase, however, is through automatic ticket machines 発売機.

Look at the board located over the machines to find information on rail lines, stations, and transfers. Fare 運賃 depends on distance. Start by finding 当駅, which means “This Station” and look to either side of 当駅 in order to find the destination station. In the picture to the left, the black numbers indicate adult prices and the red indicates child prices.

High school and college students pay the adult price. For a fare example, if you want to go from Hirakata to Kuzuha 桜

Here, “This Station” is Hirakata City Station

A trip to Kuzuha would cost 200 yen.
Kuzuha. Look under it to find the price, which is 200 yen.

Because some machines do not accept high denominations of bill, it is important to make sure to have enough change for a roundtrip fare. Once the machine has enough money inserted, red buttons corresponding to various fares should light up. Make sure to correctly choose the button with a fare corresponding to your destination. Before pressing a button, ensure it is the correct fare for your destination.

**Tickets – 切符**
button, canceling 取り消し is also an option for the transaction. After you press a button, change will spout out the bottom and the ticket will come out somewhere below as well. Once you have bought your ticket, walk over to the entrance stalls, usually located near or next to the ticket machines. These are almost always electronic, and will process tickets automatically. Go to a stall with a green arrow and without a red X. Put your ticket in the (usually) yellow ticket slot. Go to the other side and take your ticket back from the reader. Passengers exit in the same exact fashion, with the exception that tickets are not given back at the other side. You must keep your ticket safe and secure for the entire ride, because you will need it at your destination and certain transfer locations.

If you accidentally purchase the wrong ticket, either ask an attendant or ride the train like normal and use a fare adjustment machine 精算機 just before the exit stalls at the final station. Here is the automatic fare adjustment procedure: First, insert your ticket. Next, if applicable, the machine will show the amount of money needed on top of the ticket price to exit the station. Insert this amount of money. Finally, remove your ticket (and money, if applicable) and proceed leaving the station as normal. If there are any problems, ask an attendant at the window.

Platforms – ホーム

Inside Hirakata City Station, there are three platforms ホーム past the ticket-taker stalls. One leads to the line terminating at Kisaichi 私市. Unless your host family lives near this line, there is no reason to take it. The other two platforms lead to the other rail line in Hirakata, the Keihan Main Line 京阪本線 between Osaka and Kyōto. Keep in mind which direction you are going. Usually visual and audio directions should make it clear. Signs pointing to and located at the platforms will say something like 京都方面
(方面 means “direction”) or 出町柳行き (行き translates as “going to”). Additionally, right before a train comes, an announcement will be made, saying something like 「まもなく、淀屋橋行き電車が参ります。ご注意ください。」 meaning “Before long, a train headed for Yodoyabashi will humbly come. Please exercise caution.” For detailed knowledge of when trains will come to the platform, look at a timetable 時刻表, usually located on stand-alone signs placed incrementally along the platform. More often than not, the timetable signs are located next to benches. If a platform serves two tracks, each side of the timetable signs will show the timetable for a different track. Furthermore, train timetables, like bus timetables, are divided up into weekday 平日, Saturday 土曜日, Sunday 日曜日, and holiday 休日 schedules. All times indicate departures from the departure station 当駅 and are in military (24-hour) time. To convert from 24-hour time to the 12-hour system, simply subtract twelve from all times after 12:59. For instance, 17:30 means 5:30pm, and 20:00 means 8:00pm. Finally, the timetables are broken up into varieties of train speed.

**Speeds and Varieties of Train – 電車の速度と種類**

There are four main color-coordinated speeds of train on the Keihan Line. The colors are sometimes different depending on the railway company, but since Keihan is the most important to the Kansai Gaidai student, its color code is annotated here. Red, called Tokkyū 特急 or “Limited Express”, is the fastest. This also means that it stops at the fewest stations. Keihan and JR (Japan Rail, the largest and most important Japanese train company) make no fare distinction with Tokkyū, but some companies, like Kintetsu, charge a higher price for riding the Tokkyū. Beware of this, especially during inter-company transfers. The difference should be indicated somewhere around the automatic
ticket machines. Conductors on such companies’ Tokkyū will ask passengers for their tickets, and if a passenger has not paid enough, the conductor will ask for additional money. Orange, called Kyūkō or “Express,” is usually only marginally slower than the Red Tokkyū. The next step down is Blue, called Junkyū or “Local Express” on the Keihan. Some other companies call “Local Express” Kaisoku. Black, called Futsū or “Local,” stops at every station. Some other companies call this train Kakutei, abbreviated from 各駅停車, literally meaning “every-station-stop-car”. Occasionally a 回送, meaning “out of service,” train comes along. If riding the train to Osaka or Kyōto, it would be prudent to use only red or orange. Both are much faster than blue and black. However, because the faster trains do not serve most stops, passengers have to switch between different speeds of trains to arrive at certain stops quickly. It is a good idea in all cases to look above the doors inside the trains for the route map indicating different colors train. Dots indicate stops, so first find the departure 出発 station and then look for the arrival 到着 station. If only Junkyū (Kaisoku) or Futsū (Kakutei) trains stop at the destination and you are traveling on a Tokkyū or Kyūkō, pay attention to where to exit and wait for a slower train.

**Example: Going to Nara** 例文：奈良へ

Another common example of travel is from Hirakata to Nara, the first permanent capital of Japan. To execute this, go to an automatic ticket machine in Hirakata Station. The most direct route to Nara is by transfer to the Kintetsu Line. So, by looking at the 鉄線連絡 part of the board overhead, you can find exactly how much it costs, which is
860 yen. After inserting the correct amount of money, press the “近鉄線乗り換え” button on the automatic ticket machine and then press the correct fare button. Take your ticket, go through the ticket-taking machines, and go up the stairs to the Keihan Main Line bound for Kyōto and terminating at Demachiyanagi. Take a Tokkyū or Kyūkō and get off at Tanbashi 丹波橋 and follow the signs for the Kintetsu Station. Along the way in Tanbashi Station, passengers go two sets of ticket stalls, one each for Keihan and Kintetsu. Both stalls should emit the ticket back out on the other side. If a transferring passenger does not press the “近鉄線乗り換え” button, then the ticket stall will eat the ticket at the transfer station no matter how much the passenger paid. Once inside the Kintetsu Station, look for the stairs going down to the Nara platform. Make sure to avoid the Kyōto platform, because the trains departing there go the wrong way. Also make sure to avoid the Tokkyū, since Kintetsu charges more for their use. Take a Nara-bound Kyūkō to the end of the line, which puts passengers out immediately east of the main attractions in Nara, including the history museum and Tōdaiji 東大寺, which houses one of the largest statues of Buddha in the world and is itself the largest wooden structure in the world. The way back from Nara is very similar to the way there.

The Shinkansen – 新幹線

The Shinkansen 新幹線 (or “Bullet Train”) is the fastest train in Japan. Japan Rail (JR; the main Japanese train company) controls all Shinkansen lines. Currently, the main Shinkansen line (combining Sanyō 山陽 and Tōkaidō 東海道) runs from Fukuoka 福岡 (specifically Hakata 博多) to Tōkyō 東京 (with stops in between at such places as Kitakyūshū 北九州, Hiroshima 広島, Kōbe 神戸, Osaka 大阪, Kyōto 京都, Nagoya 名古屋 and Yokohama 横浜). From Tōkyō to the north, Shinkansen lines run to
Hachinohe 八戸, Akita 秋田, Shinjō 新庄, Niigata 新潟, and Nagano 長野. In the south of Kyūshū, a relatively short line runs from Yatsushiro 八代 to Kagoshima 鹿児島. There are two stations in Tōkyō: Tōkyō Station 東京駅 and Shinagawa 品川駅. In Kyōto, Shinkansen are located inside Kyōto Station 京都駅. Yokohama, Osaka, Köbe, and many other cities have Shinkansen stations separate from their normal central stations. These Shinkansen stations are named with a 新 in the front of the city, for instance Shin-Yokohama 新横浜, Shin-Osaka 新大阪, and Shin-Köbe 新神戸. More Shinkansen are currently being planned and built, including connections between Yatsushiro, Hakata, and Nagasaki 長崎 in Kyūshū and a continuation from Hachinohe through Aomori 青森 to Hakodate 函館 and Sapporo 札幌 in Hokkaidō 北海道. These extensions of Shinkansen are variously scheduled for completion between 2010 and 2020.

**Saving some Money on the Shinkansen – 新幹線代を節約**

Although Shinkansen can get expensive, there are a couple small ways to save money. First, buying roundtrip 往復 tickets saves money, just as it usually does with any method of transportation. Second, some Shinkansen are slower, and therefore cheaper, than others. Between Hakata and Tōkyō, the Nozomi のぞみ (meaning “wish”) is the fastest, Hikari ひかり (meaning “light”) is in the middle, and Kodama こだま (meaning “echo”) is the slowest. Third, purchase a ticket for a car with non-reserved seats 自由席 (自由 means “free” and 席 means “seat”) instead of a car with reserved seats 指定席 (指定 means “assignment,” “designation,” and “pointing at”). Sometimes, especially around holidays, space can become limited in the non-reserved Shinkansen cars. Be prepared to stand up for the whole ride when purchasing a non-reserved ticket, as it is a
faux pas in Japan to sit or lie down on train floors. Fourth and finally, there are 10%
student discounts available on certain means of transportation, including the Shinkansen.
Because certification of student status is required, however, to receive a discount,
students must go to the Center for International Education (CIE), which is the main
foreign exchange student services office at Kansai Gaidai, located on the main floor of
the building where most exchange students take classes. Before you go to the CIE to
request the student certification document, be ready with your general itinerary (that is,
the departure and arrival stations and dates of travel). For more information on what
discounts are available, ask the CIE. Bring your Japanese university student ID along
with the certification during travel. The student discount savings alone are well worth the
effort. For example, on a roundtrip between Tōkyō and Kyōto, the discount is around
2,000 yen.

Student Commuter Passes – 通学定期券

If you have a host family and commute using the train, get a student commuter
pass 通学定期券. The most convenient place to buy it would probably be the ticket
window next to the entrance to the platforms at Hirakata Station, but they are also
available for purchase on the Internet and via machine at certain stations. There are
passes for three different lengths of time – one-month, three-month, and six-month –
which can be combined into single passes of other monthly durations. Each semester is
about four months long, and due to winter break, the most practical commuter pass to buy
would be for either three or four months. All durations have a 210-yen service fee. The
price of a four-month commuter pass, for instance, is equal to a three-month pass, a one-
month pass, and the 210-yen service fee added together. The price of the pass depends
on which station the commute originates at. For a school commuter pass between Hirakata City and Kuzuha, for instance, the baseline costs are 2,430 yen for one month and 6,930 for three months. Therefore, a four-month pass from Kuzuha would cost 9,570 yen. The cost of commuting without a rail pass between those same two stations every weekday for fifteen weeks would be about 30,000 yen.

**Manners on the Train – 電の中のマナー**

As happens occasionally on the Shinkansen, regular trains regularly get crowded, particularly around rush hour. Around these times, most passengers are forced to stand up. For comfort’s sake, the best plan of action is to wait until the next train, but if riding a crowded train in unavoidable, the best advice is to have patience 我慢 (see the glossary for more meanings of this culturally important word). Although foreigners are allowed leeway when it comes to etiquette-related things, it is best to abide by Japanese cultural norms. For the sake of cleanliness, Japanese generally do not eat or drink on trains, except on the Shinkansen, where tray tables are available. However, this “rule” is becoming laxer among young people. Furthermore, largely because of long work hours, many Japanese sleep while riding on the train. Out of consideration not only for sleeping passengers, but also for those who like peace and quiet, put cell phones on silent mode マナー・モード and minimize talking. If talking is a must, keep conversations to a low volume.