Transportation Three: Taxis and Busses – 交通機関3：タクシーとバス

TAXIS are more expensive in Japan than in the United States, with fares typically starting at about 500 yen and increasing incrementally. Compare this to the 220 yen it costs to ride the bus anywhere between the dormitories to Hirakata station. However, taxis are clean and comfortable and can be highly useful. A taxi is probably the way to go between about 11pm and 6am and in situations calling for convenience or a specific destination that is not serviced by train or bus. If going by taxi back to a host family’s house or to any non-famous location, keep in mind that taxi-drivers always know general locations, like cities and wards, but the passenger might need to guide them to the precise destination. As is the case with most services in Japan, do not tip taxi drivers. Most taxis utilize automatic doors 自動ドア when passengers enter and exit. Be careful not to open or close taxi doors, as this could cause damage.

BUSSES can also be useful and highly convenient. Here is the riding procedure:

Keihan Bus, headed for downtown Hirakata City Station

- get on via the back door.
- (Certain places outside of the Kansai region, such as Tōkyō, have occasional one-fee busses with front-door entrances.) Take a
ticket from a box-shaped machine with a number on it, usually located on one side of the door. Especially in big cities, passengers will take bus tickets in order to pay the correct fare from their initial stops. Without this ticket, a passenger must pay the highest amount. This is not necessary on the Katakate-Hirakata City Station route, however, as the fare is a constant 220 yen. After entering and possibly taking a ticket, shuffle forward if the bus is crowded. There is usually a display in the front of the bus (as well as in some local trains) showing what stops the bus has already passed. After your stop is called from the automatic speaker system, press a button (see picture) to notify the driver that this is stop you want to get off at, and pay at the front when leaving. If you have no change, use the machine in the front, but always keep plenty of coins and 1000 yen bills with you. If in doubt, ask the bus driver, “Is this bus going to ____?” 「このバスは__に行きますか？」

If living with a host family and commuting by bus to and from school, buy a Commuter Pass 定期券 at the bus terminal on the north side of Hirakata City Station to save money. Three-month school commuter passes 三ヶ月の通学定期券 cost 22,570 yen for either one of two areas encompassing Hirakata
City Station, Kansai Gaidai, and the Seminar Houses. For students with host families living outside of Keihan Bus Company’s regional designations, there are also commuter passes that cost 32,320 yen for three months and 61,240 yen for six months.

**The most important bus line** for many exchange students (including all those living at the dorms) at Kansai Gaidai is Line 12 between Seminar House Four and Hirakata City Train Station. The whole route takes about ten minutes, with the Main Gate of Kansai Gaidai located about halfway along. The route from the Seminar Houses (again, this means the dormitories) to Hirakata Station is a straight shot, terminating at a tunnel under the east side of the Station. However, the route back, which departs from the north side of the Station, involves one split. If headed to Kansai Gaidai’s East Gate or the Seminar Houses, make sure to take either bus 12 to Kita Katahoko or 13 towards Kokuramachi. If taking number 13 to the Seminar Houses, get off early at Katahoko Chūō Toshokan. If you are simply headed for the main gate of Kansai Gaidai, you can take any of these busses: 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 25, 26, 26A, 27, 29, 39, 39A, or 40. In confusing situations, read the timetable, maps, and front of the bus or ask the bus driver or other people waiting at the stop.