

6. Transport and Driving

A. Public Transport

◎ Trains

There are 3 main types of trains: ***futsu* or normal** [普通] (stops at every station), ***kaisoku* or rapid** [快速] (faster, stopping at select stations), and ***tokkyu* or limited express** [特急] (fastest, only stopping at a few stations). Express and limited express trains are normally marked in bold. If there is a small airplane symbol, that train goes to the airport.

You can buy a ticket either at the JR office or from the ticket machines located inside the station. Fares are written next to the destinations on the map above the ticket machine. There are also special discount tickets you can buy to ride any of the three types of trains to and from Sapporo. These tickets are the S-kippu and S-kippu-4, which can be purchased at both the ticket counter and from the ticket machines. These discount tickets are usually only valid for a three-month period.

Most rapid trains will have cars/carriages that are labeled “Reserved” [指定席 *shiteiseki*], “Unreserved” [自由席 *jiyuuseki*] and that some that have half and half. Make sure you take a seat in the correct car/carriage according to whether you bought a reserved or unreserved ticket. If the seats have a little white cover with orange or blue writing in kanji, then that seat is a reserved seat. If you do not have a reserved ticket, the conductor will either make you move to a non-reserved seat or pay the reserved seating surcharge.

Note: Trains in Japan leave *on the dot*, so pay special attention to the scheduled departure time.



Some useful travel words and phrases for Trains

片道: (*kata michi*) one way

往復: (*oufuku*) round trip

乗り換え: (*norikae*) change trains

のりば: (*noriba*) platform

普通で: (*futsuu de*) by normal train

特急で: (*tokkyu de*) by limited express

禁煙: (*kin'en*) non smoking

急行: (*kyukou*) express

満員: (*man'in*) full/sold-out

料金箱: (*ryoukin bako*) fare box

算所: (*seisan jyo*) fare adjustment office

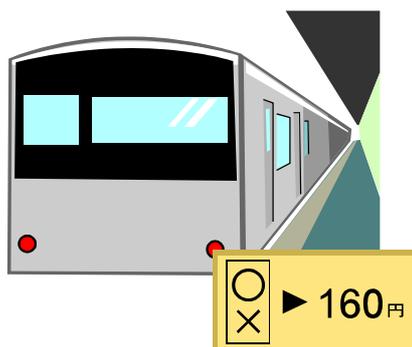
食堂車: (*shokudou sha*) dining car/carriage

寝台車: (*shindai sha*) sleeping car/carriage

この電車は 札幌 行きですか?

(*kono densha wa Sapporo yuki desu ka?*)

Is this train bound for Sapporo?



◎ Buses

At the bus terminal, you can either **buy a ticket at the ticket counter or take a numbered ticket from the ticket machine on the bus**, paying as you get off. Some bus companies have prepaid books of ticket vouchers called *kaisuken*.

When getting on a bus, **enter at the rear and exit through the front**. There is usually a numbered ticket machine next to the door. This numbered ticket is a record of the place where you boarded the bus. As your journey progresses, you will see the numbers on a display in the front of the bus change according to the fare. When it is time to get off, look at the number corresponding to the number on your ticket. **Place both the ticket and fare in the box next to the driver**. The machine does not give change, so you'll need to pay the exact fare. There will be a change machine next to the box, but on most buses the most you can change is a 1000-yen bill. You should also be aware that some buses are only equipped to change 500-yen coins, so if you need change, you should break it down before boarding.



◎ Transport Timetables

Free pocket-sized train and bus timetables can be obtained at JR stations and at the bus terminal. Bus timetables are also posted at the individual bus stops. Monthly train/bus/plane timetables for all of Hokkaido can be purchased at kiosks, newsstands, and bookstores for about 1,000 yen. Most timetables will be written in Japanese only.

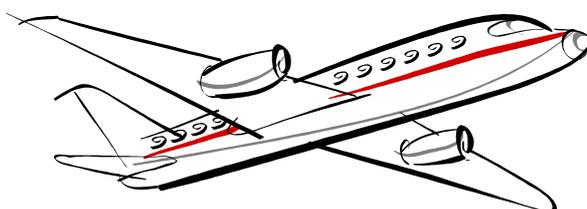
Say you want to go from Iwamizawa [岩見沢] to Sapporo [札幌]. If you have a larger timetable, you can look at the map in the front find out which pages list the times for that route. If you have a smaller timetable, you will need to turn through the pages until you find the appropriate kanji. In the timetables on the upper left hand corner below the page number will be either the kanji “上り” (“inbound”) or the kanji, “下り” (“outbound”). The concept behind these kanji is you are either going toward or away from the main station on that train line. In our case above, you would look for the Iwamizawa kanji in the 上り section to go towards Sapporo. Conversely, from Sapporo, you would look in the 下り section for trains heading to Iwamizawa.

Bus timetables are read the same as train timetables. Fares are often listed down the side of the bus timetable or along the top. Looking at a bus timetable you may see two sets of times, one for weekdays [平日], the other for Saturday, Sunday, and public holidays [土、日、祝].



◎ Airport

In order to reach New Chitose airport, you would have to head to Sapporo station either by bus or train. Then at the station you can board the train headed to New Chitose airport to reach your final destination.



◎ Taxis

Taxis are readily available from almost anywhere. If you have been drinking, you can have someone else drive your car home while you follow in a cab by calling any taxi company and asking for *daiko sahbisu*. This service costs about twice as much as the normal fare.

Iwamizawa Taxi Companies:

Hokkou Taxi Tel: 22-2323

Hinode Tax Tel: 25-2121

Kogata Taxi Tel: 22-4500

Gankou Taxi Tel: 23-6633



B. Driving in Japan

Driving in Japan can be very different from driving in your home country. Traffic laws, driving manners, and road conditions can differ slightly or greatly depending on where you are from, and winter road conditions can be treacherous, especially for those who are inexperienced at driving on snow and ice. **Drinking and driving laws are exceedingly strict in Japan, and after consuming even a single alcoholic beverage, you *should not* drive.** Hokkaido is notorious for high rates of both traffic accidents and fatalities, so if you do decide to drive, do so defensively. For more information on driving in Japan, please see the English section of the National Police Association website (<http://www.npa.go.jp>) or this website (<http://www.japandriverslicense.com>).

◎ International Driver's License

You can drive in Japan for 1 year if you possess a valid driver's license from your own country in addition to an International Driver's License. Anyone staying in Japan for *more* than 12 months and wanting to legally drive however must get a Japanese license. Driver's Licenses from Brazil, China, Germany, and Mexico are not valid in Japan (however, you can drive in Japan with a German driver's license for one year after your arrival in Japan if you have an official translation from the Japanese Automobile Federation (JAF) and you carry your passport with you at all times when driving.)



◎ Getting a Japanese License

You can receive a Japanese driver's license upon presentation of a driver's license from your home country and successful completion of both a driving and written test. (People with licenses from many European countries, and Australia, New Zealand, and Canada do **not** need to do these tests.) Additionally, you must be able to prove that you have had your license for at least three months prior to entering Japan either by having it on the license itself or in the form of an official letter from your country/state/region's Department of Motor Vehicles.

The written test in Hokkaido is only available in English and Chinese. When you go to the licensing centre (*menkyo shikenjo*) you will need to take the following items with you:

1. The **original license** from your **home country**
2. An **official translation of the license**
3. **Residence Card** (or Alien Registration card)
4. **Passport**
5. **One passport size photo** (3cm x 2.4cm)



It is also advised to have someone who speaks Japanese very well to go with you.

As mentioned above, you will need an official translation of your home country license, which can be handled by the Japan Automobile Federation (JAF) for 3,000 yen plus 500 yen shipping and handling fee. In addition to this, further administrative costs and fees can add up quickly to the tune of over 20,000 yen and the process can take weeks on end to complete, so patience is definitely necessary.

In general, there are two procedures to complete in order to get your license. To begin with, you'll need to take the written test.

If for some reason you fail it, you can take it again the following week. About one to two weeks after passing the written examination, you will then take the driving portion of the test. After successfully accomplishing this, you will need to wait another three hours, after which you will be issued a new license.

Useful contact details:

JAF Sapporo Branch

1 jo 15 chome 8-1, Tsukisamu higashi,
Toyohira-ku, Sapporo 062-0051

Tel: (011) 857-7155

Sapporo Drivers License Testing Centre

5 jo 4 chome 1-1, Akebono
Teine-ku, Sapporo 006-0835

Tel: (011) 683-5770

Before going to the testing centre, it is always a good idea to call ahead and confirm any scheduled tests.