

A GOOD PLACE TO BEGIN

Japan by train. You can do this.

Start with one manageable journey. You do not need to memorise Japan's railway network to enjoy it.

Three things to understand

The company: the operator running your train. JR is a group of regional companies; cities also have subway and other railway companies. They may have separate gates in the same building.

The line: a named route. Follow its name and symbol, not just a colour or platform number.

The direction: where the train is heading. Check that it stops at your destination; different services can share a platform.

Before leaving your hotel

Choose a simple route in a journey planner. Save the full instructions: the walk, station, company, line, direction, transfer and exit. Charge your phone and leave time to find your way.

[Read the complete Fumi railway guides](#)

YOUR EVERYDAY PAYMENT

Meet Suica.

Suica and ICOCA are prepaid transport cards. Add yen, tap at participating gates, and the fare comes off the balance. “IC card” means a transport smart card.

iPhone: start in Apple Wallet

Open **Wallet** > + > **Transit Card / Travel Card** > **Suica**. Follow the prompts, choose an amount and pay with an eligible Wallet payment card. Your first travel card normally enables Express Mode automatically.

A compatible device, current software and the required Apple Account and payment setup are needed. Check Apple's instructions if setup fails.

Android: check before downloading

Many phones bought outside Japan cannot use Japanese mobile transport cards. They need compatible Osaifu-Keitai support; Google Wallet or NFC alone is not enough. A plastic card is an easy alternative.

Plastic card: no phone setup

Ask for ICOCA at a participating JR West station, or Suica / Welcome Suica in Tokyo. Choose English on the machine or ask staff. A standard ¥2,000 ICOCA purchase includes a ¥500 deposit and ¥1,500 to spend.

[Choose your setup and see all the steps](#)

FIVE SIMPLE STEPS

Your first ride.

For an ordinary local journey paid with Suica or ICOCA, keep the same card or device from entry to exit.

1. Plan

Save your destination, company, line, direction and useful exit. Start with one short journey without a transfer.

2. Find

Follow the railway company and line signs. Locate a lift before entering if you need one.

3. Tap in

Hold the card or phone still over the reader. Wait for confirmation, then walk through. If rejected, step aside and ask staff.

4. Board

Check the direction and stopping list. Queue at the marked position, let passengers off first and keep bags clear of doors.

5. Tap out

Use the same card or device. The gate normally shows the remaining balance. Follow the exit for your actual destination.

A LITTLE MONEY READY

Top up. Keep going.

Your card is pay-as-you-go, not an unlimited travel pass. Add modest amounts and check the balance as you travel.

iPhone

Open Wallet, select Suica and choose **Add Money**. Confirm your payment. Top-ups need internet. Express Mode lets you tap without opening an app or unlocking; the tap itself does not need a mobile signal.

Plastic card

At a compatible machine, choose English and look for **Charge / Recharge**. Follow the instructions and pay in yen. Participating convenience stores can also top up cards. Keep cash available.

At shops and on buses

Look for a compatible transport-card logo. Tell a shop cashier “Suica” and tap when prompted. Bus boarding and payment arrangements vary; follow that operator's instructions.

A rejected tap

Do not keep tapping or switch cards. Ask the attendant to check your balance or entry record. Show where you boarded. Keep your phone charged, and use the same device at both gates.

[Payment questions and troubleshooting](#)

KNOW WHICH TRAIN YOU NEED

Local to bullet train.

A faster train may skip your stop or need an extra ticket. Check the service before boarding.

Local / Rapid / Express

Local trains usually stop at every station. Rapid and express services skip stops. Many ordinary services use the normal fare, but names and charging rules vary by company.

Limited express

Often requires an extra ticket and sometimes a seat reservation. Airport services such as HARUKA and Rapi:t have their own ticket arrangements.

Shinkansen

Japan's bullet trains use separate platforms and ticket arrangements. For a Tokyo-Kyoto trip, buy the appropriate ticket or reservation separately. A stored Suica balance alone is not the booking.

Before a reserved departure

Match your train name, time, destination, carriage and seat. Check luggage requirements before booking. Allow time to collect tickets, find the gate and reach your carriage.

For rural lines or a continuous trip between separate IC-card service areas, ask about the correct ticket before entering.

[Tickets, reservations and luggage](#)

STATIONS & A CALM NEXT STEP

Keep the right map.

Find your railway, your connection and your exit. Save a map or screenshot before leaving Wi-Fi. These links open online.

Kansai Airport - Choose JR or Nankai for the arrival your hotel needs.

Osaka & Umeda - Several operators and stations share one large district.

Shin-Osaka - A different station from Osaka; the Shinkansen connection.

Kyoto - Match the operator and exit to your onward journey.

Tokyo - Allow time for long walks between railway areas.

Haneda Airport - Check your flight terminal and railway before travelling.

If you are unsure

Step out of the flow, show staff your destination and ask for help. For a missed reserved train, the last train or a rural connection, check your options before boarding another service.

Fumi travel recovery guide

Based on the Fumi railway handbook and official JR, airport, Apple, Google and tourism guidance. Reviewed 22 October 2026. Current station information takes priority.

Official sources and detailed instructions