

# How to Buy a Ticket (Buses)

Like train tickets, bus tickets can be purchased in a couple of different ways, depending on whether it's a local bus (or a non-reservation bus) or a highway bus, night bus or other pre-reservation bus.

Airport buses may fall into either of these categories. Check the route in advance.

## Local Buses / Non-Reservation Buses\*

*\*Tip: Make sure you confirm the fare and have plenty of change before boarding the bus. Drivers will only accept exact change.*

### 1. Board the Bus

Board the bus by the back door (the door right in the middle of the bus).

### 2. Take a Ticket

Take a numbered ticket from the machine by the door. Don't lose it– you will need to put it in the fare box when you get off the bus.

### 3. Take a Seat!

If there is space to sit down, take a seat wherever you like! (Except of course for the priority seats!) Keep an eye on the LED board at the front of the bus. This indicates the fare for your ticket number.

### 4. Get Off at the Right Stop

Buses in Japan will announce every stop in Japanese. Some buses frequently used by tourists may also have English announcements or will announce popular stops in English. Buses also often display the station name on a monitor or a ticker at the front of the bus, but usually in Japanese only.

Keep in mind that older buses and less-frequently used lines may rely only on Japanese announcements, so it's a good idea to remember your bus's ETA and keep an eye on the clock. When you think it may be about time to arrive at your stop, head to the front of the bus when it stops. You can confirm the bus stop with the driver by asking the stop name with a rising inflection (e.g. "Sounkyo Onsen?") and a nod or shake of the head will be all you need for confirmation.

### 5. Pay the Fare

Pay the bus fare by putting the numbered ticket you received and the required change into the fare box. Note that you can only pay in cash and only the exact fare will be accepted. The bus driver cannot give you change, but there is a money exchange that will usually take 1000yen notes. Exit via the front door.

## Highway Buses / Night Buses / Advance Reservation Buses

Some bus companies may be able to link you with websites that will allow you to book your bus tickets online. Below are some major bus companies operating within Hokkaido. Check their English websites to find the relevant reservation links.

The following are the names of major bus operators you'll find in Hokkaido and ones that offer long-distance journeys or airport buses (links to English websites where available).

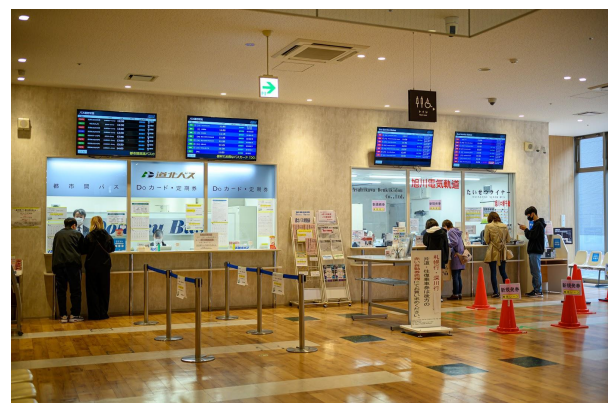
- [JR Hokkaido Bus \(serving most major cities in Hokkaido\)](#)
- [Chuo Bus \(serving most major cities in Hokkaido\)](#)
- Hokuto Bus (serving most major cities in Hokkaido)
- Dohoku Bus (serving the Asahikawa area)
- [Tokachi Bus \(serving the Obihiro area\)](#)
- [Donan Bus \(serving the Hidaka and Muroran-Noboribetsu-Lake Toya area\)](#)
- Akan Bus (serving the Kushiro area)
- [Shari Bus \(serving the Shiretoko Peninsula\)](#)
- [Abashiri Bus \(serving the Abashiri area\)](#)

However, some bus companies do not offer advance reservations while others may only offer a reservation website in Japanese. In this event, you will need to go in-person to a bus ticket counter. These are commonly found near to the bus stops at train stations and of course within bus terminals.

Some of these bus counters will have multilingual ticket machines. If so, this is the easiest and fastest way to make a reservation! Simply select your language, select the journey you need, the number of people and then pay the fare required.



An multilingual ticket machine at Asahikawa Station Bus Terminal



The ticket desks at Asahikawa Station Bus Terminal.

If a ticket machine is not available, you will need to reserve in-person at the ticket desk. We recommend writing down the name of where you need to go in either Japanese or English as well as a time you'd like to depart. If you want to take a night bus, you could also write "Night Bus".

E.g. "to ASAHIKAWA, 13:00~"  
"to KUSHIRO, night bus"

Staff at the counters will have enough English to piece together what you want. Once they have checked availability and calculated the fare, you will be able to make payment. As with so many things in Hokkaido, don't assume you can pay by card- cash may be the only option.