

# How to Buy a Train Ticket (Local & Rapid Trains)

Purchasing train tickets can seem daunting at first, but there is really nothing to it once you get the hang of it! In this document, we will explain how to purchase local train and rapid train tickets at ticket machines, ticket windows and unmanned stations.

If you're looking for information on how to buy tickets for limited express trains, please reference this PDF.

Buying a Local / Rapid Ticket at a Major Station

## Ticket Machines\*

*\*Note that steps may vary depending on the machine.*

Large stations like Sapporo, Asahikawa, Kushiro and so on will have ticket machines that make it quick and easy to purchase fare tickets for journeys on local and express trains in the immediate area. In addition, most large stations in Hokkaido now have multilingual machines that will allow you to navigate the screen options in English.

### 1. English Assistance

So first, hit the "English" button!



*The language settings can usually be found somewhere at the top of the screen.*

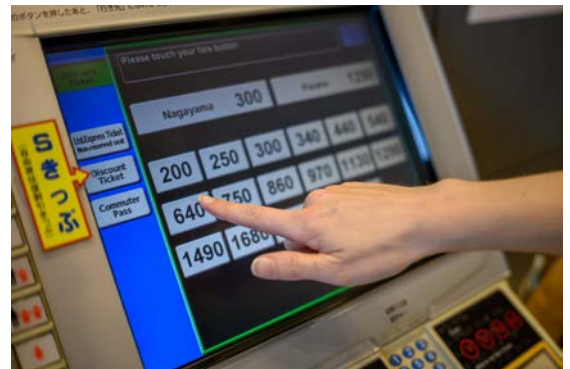
## 2. How Many?

You may notice a vertical row of buttons on the left of the screen, or this option may appear as touch buttons on the screen itself. These denote the number of tickets you are buying, as well as allowing you to choose fares for children. Push whichever button best corresponds to your group.

## 3. Destination or Fare

If your destination is commonly requested at the station, it may appear immediately as an option. Tap it if so.

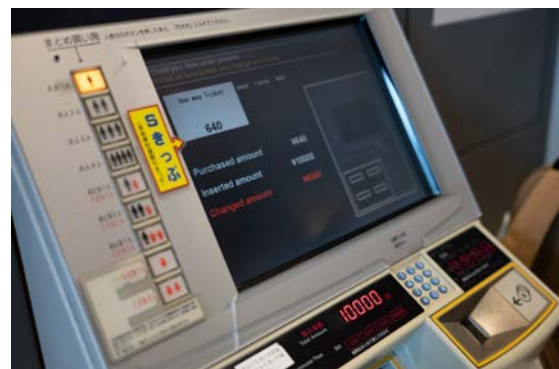
If not, you will notice a list of prices. These are fares. Above the ticket machine will be an English-Japanese map of the local train network, with a price underneath each station's name. That is the fare for where you want to go! Tap the price that corresponds to your destination station.



## 4. Confirm and Insert Payment

Once you have input your selection, the screen will ask you to confirm before payment. For the most part, ticket machines in Hokkaido only accept cash. Luckily, they will give you change. Note however that some ticket machines will not accept 10,000yen notes or new 500yen coins.

If you are having trouble with the machine or with payment, flag down station staff.



*Some ticket machines in rural areas may not accept large 10,000yen notes, so beware!*

## 5. Take Your Tickets

Your tickets will be printed from the slot under the screen. Fare tickets are usually valid for the whole day so you may use them whenever you like. Enjoy the ride!



*That's all there is to it! Don't lose your tiny ticket!*

## Ticket Offices

Sometimes, ticket machines may not have an English option or may not offer the route you need. Or, you may simply prefer to talk to a human instead of a machine! In that case, it is best to go to a JR ticket counter (usually indicated with a bright green label of a person sitting in a seat). These ticket counters are known in Japanese as “Midori-no-Madoguchi” or “Green Window”.



*The ticket office or “Midori no Madoguchi” at JR Asahikawa Station.*

Do not worry about the language barrier– train station staff in Hokkaido are quite used to tourists and you will be able to make yourself understood.

### **1. Get in Line**

Line up politely– it's part of Japanese culture!

### **2. Have a Screenshot or Print-Out Ready**

It helps to have a screenshot or print-out of the train route you'd like to take. If not, however, asking the name of the station you'd like to go with a rising inflection will get the message across just fine! E.g. "Furano?" "Shiretoko-Shari?"

### **3. Confirm the Fare**

The ticket officer will check their computer and may give you a status update about the train if there is any information they feel you should know. Then, they will put the fare into a calculator and show it to you for your confirmation.

### **4. Make Payment**

Pay for your tickets. The beauty of ticket offices over machines is that in major cities, you may be able to pay by card. However, as a general rule of thumb in Japan, it's still better to assume that cash is king (though at least another perk of ticket offices is that the staff can tell you where the nearest ATM is)!

### **5. Take Your Tickets**

The staff will hand you your tickets, and will usually politely indicate the direction of your platform. Again, your fare ticket will be good for the rest of the day so when you choose to take the train is entirely up to you.

## Buying Fare Tickets at Unmanned Stations

As Hokkaido residents rely increasingly on cars, it is sadly the case that train lines across the region are suffering from budget cuts. This means reduced hours at ticket offices in rural areas, as well as some stations where it's just not financially possible to keep staff around.

As such, there may be certain hours of the day or some stations on the line where there doesn't appear to be anybody around. No ticket machines, no station staff, not even an indication of how much the fare costs! Unfortunately, this does not mean you get a free train ride– you are still expected to pay the fare. Here's how...

### 1. Board from the Designated Door

On small trains in rural areas, you may find that only one door opens. There is a reason for this– you must board the train at this door because you need to...

### 2. Take a Numbered Ticket

Similar to buses, there is a dispenser next to the train door printing out small white tickets with a number on them. Be sure to take one as soon as you board– you won't get another chance!



*This is the ticket dispenser. It is next to the payment machine / change dispenser. If you forget or are too late to take a ticket when you board, let the conductor know.*

### 3. Keep an Eye on the Board



You'll notice an electric board near the doors with numbers on it. This is the fare board.

Match the number on your ticket to the board shortly before your destination, and it will tell you the fare!

As always, fare boards may not display English, but in this case, the number is more important than the station name.

### 4. Disembarking at Unmanned Stations

When you disembark the train at an unmanned station, you must pay the fare as per the fare board. These trains may be manned only by one driver and unfortunately, they do not always carry change. Wherever possible, please pay the exact fare. If you need to break down 1000yen notes or coins, there are often exchange machines which allow you to do so.

You may need to give the fare and the white ticket you collected to the driver, or there may be a box in which you can put both. Once you have made payment, you may disembark the train.

### 5. Disembarking at Manned Stations

If your destination is a major station on the line during regular working hours, the ticket office is likely to be manned. The driver will instruct you to give the numbered ticket to the ticket officer before you go through the ticket gates. At larger stations, this is the window commonly labelled "Fare Adjustment" located next to the electronic ticket barriers. At small stations with no electronic ticket barriers, it will be the ticket window.



*A fare adjustment window at Asahikawa Station.*

If you tell the staff the station you came from (e.g. "From Biei") and then pass them your numbered ticket, staff will calculate the fare and you can pay it on the spot. Once paid, you are free to leave the station.