

How to Buy a Ticket (Limited Express Trains)

Buying tickets for limited express trains can be a little more complicated than local and rapid trains. The journey requires an extra “limited express ticket”, regardless of whether you have opted for reserved seating or unreserved seating. We will explain how to book these tickets online, through ticket windows or ticket machines.

For information on how to purchase tickets for Local and Rapid trains, please see this PDF.

Reserve Online

JR East has recently launched a handy [online ticket reservation system](#) for Limited Express and Shinkansen Tickets. After reserving online, all you need to do is pick them up!

Note that there are only a handful of places where you can pick these tickets up and the desks are not open 24/7 so you must make sure you have time to go and pick the tickets up before you are scheduled to board the train.

Below are the desks where you can pick up web-reserved tickets across Hokkaido (as of the time of writing).

What Station?	Where?	Available Hours (Mon ~ Sun)
New Chitose Airport	JR Information Desk	08:30 ~ 19:00
JR Sapporo Station	JR Information Desk	08:30 ~ 19:00
JR Asahikawa Station	JR Ticket Office	09:30 ~ 17:30
JR Kushiro Station	JR Ticket Office	10:00 ~ 18:00
JR Abashiri Station	JR Ticket Counter	05:30 ~ 22:30
JR Hakodate Station	JR Ticket Counter for Rail Pass	10:00 ~ 12:00, 13:30 ~ 18:00
Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto	JR Ticket Counter	09:00 ~ 19:00
JR Obihiro Station	JR Ticket Office	09:00 ~ 17:00
JR Noboribetsu Station	JR Ticket Counter	07:00 ~ 16:15

Ticket Offices

This is definitely one of the easiest and most foolproof ways to make sure you are not missing any tickets for your limited express train journey!

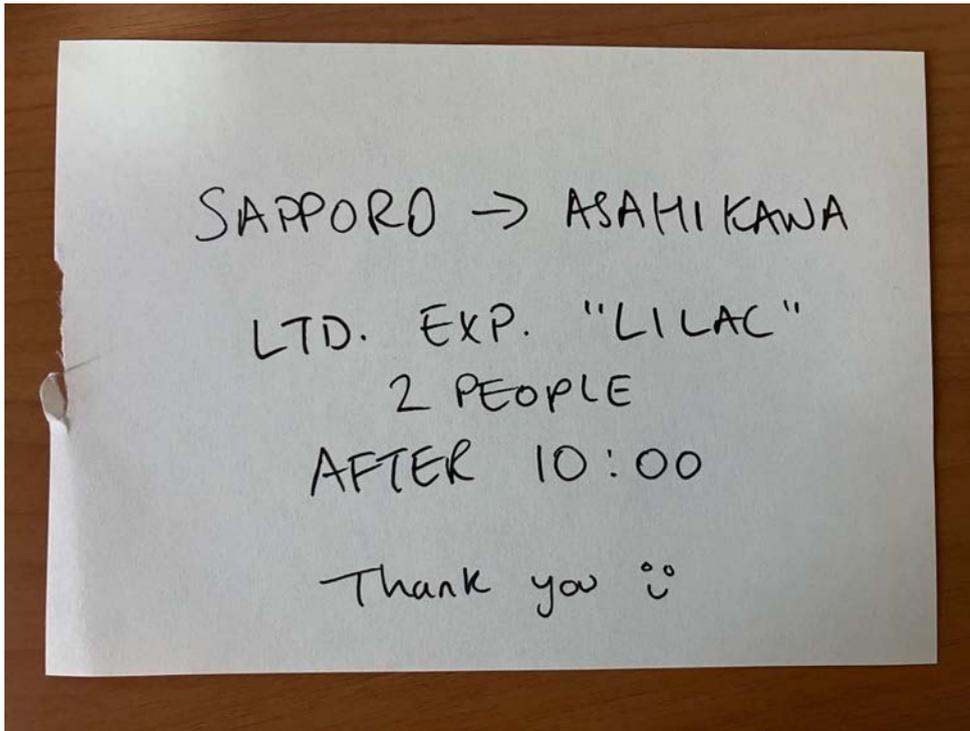


The ticket office or "Midori no Madoguchi" at JR Asahikawa Station.

Japanese ability is not required for this, but we recommend making the below preparations.

1. Prepare a written copy of the journey you'd like to take as a written note, a print-out or to display on your smart device screen (e.g. "Sapporo to Asahikawa")
2. If you know the name of the limited express train, write that underneath the journey too. If not, just write "Limited Express" and, if you are on a schedule, a rough time that you'd like to depart in the 24-hour clock format (e.g. "after 13:00", "before 09:00" or even "first train").

Here's an example note!



If you show this to station staff, they will very quickly know what you need and will be able to put together the train tickets for you.

Based on whatever time you specified, you may be offered a list of suggested departures based on seat availability and, of course, when it is realistic for you to get on a train! (Japan being the land of impeccable service, station staff will never book a last-minute train that you would have to run to catch— so don't worry!)

You will also be asked if you'd like to travel in the reserved seat or unreserved seat carriages. This is a matter of your personal preference of course, but as we discussed in our article, we do recommend opting for reserved seating purely for comfort.

Once you have paid the fee for your journey, staff will provide you with your limited express ticket and your fare ticket. You'll need both for your journey so hold onto them!

Ticket Machines*

*Note that steps may vary depending on the machine.

You can also purchase limited express tickets from ticket machines at large stations.

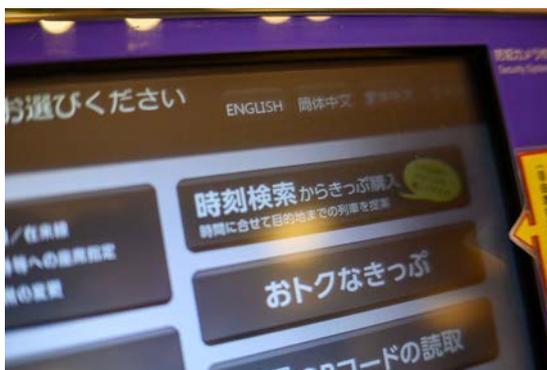
Note that you need to use a special ticket machine labelled “Reserved Seat Ticket Machine”. Make sure you use these specific machines, or you will not be able to purchase a limited express ticket.



The Limited Express ticket machines usually have these green stickers at the top of them to indicate reserved seating, as well as slightly brighter colouring so that they stand out.

1. English Assistance

Change the machine’s language to English.



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

2. Choose Your Train

You may first be asked to choose the type of train or route you wish to take, followed by reserved or unreserved seating and then being asked to choose your destination station.



3. Choose the Date and Number of Passengers

Choose the date you wish to travel and then select the number of passengers on the screen (if there are no buttons up the side of the machine to do this at the beginning of the process).



4. Choose Departure and Carriage

Choose the departure time and train carriage of your choosing (Unreserved, Reserved or Green). A green circle indicates good availability while a triangle means seats are limited. A cross means seats in that particular carriage are full. Some machines may give you the option to choose where on the train you sit (e.g. "Aisle" or "Window" or even a full seating map) but this depends on the station and the route.



We highly recommend the window seats if available!

5. Purchase Fare Ticket

Some machines may have a button at this point which will ask you to purchase the fare ticket in addition. Please do this! (On some machines, this order may be inverted and you may need to purchase a fare ticket first.)



If you do not purchase the fare ticket, you won't be allowed to board the train.

6. Confirm and Insert Payment

Make payment. It is best to make sure you have cash for this as many ticket machines in Hokkaido are older and will not accept credit cards.



7. Take Your Tickets

Your tickets will be printed under the screen. Unlike fare tickets, limited express tickets can only be used for the specific departure printed on the ticket so be sure not to miss your train. If you wish to change your departure, you may do so only before the specified train on your ticket has departed.