Special Feature

Railway Journey across Japan
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Over valleys, through mountains, across rivers, through tunnels, and along the sea: From Shinkansen traveling at a top speed of 320 km/hr to leisurely local lines, railway journeys in Japan offer unique pleasure and excitement.

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Dream Railway Journey

Photos: Nakai Seiya, Mashima Railway Pictures Co., Ltd.

From mountains and seas to valleys and plains, there are trains offering breathtaking views, trains carrying fresh perspectives on life, and trains bringing you local tastes savored at a banquet or at ease. Let’s embark on the railway journey of your dreams—one more devoted to discovery than destination.
The morning sun glints off a highland train on a summer’s day.

A local train is visible down the lush green tunnel of a northern station.

Seven Stars in Kyushu is a deluxe cruise train that shows the world the beauties of Kyushu, serving up delightful delicacies of local ingredients before a passing vista of breathtaking scenery. The warm hospitality of people at various destinations adds a wonderful and memorable touch to the journey.

The Seto-Ohashi Line crosses a large suspension bridge over the Seto Inland Sea to connect Okayama Prefecture on the main island of Honshu to Kagawa Prefecture on Shikoku Island. A train courses by, bathed in the light of a glowing sunset. Out the window, you see many seagoing vessels—large and small—making their way across glittering waves.

The peak of winter comes to Shimokita Peninsula, Aomori Prefecture. A local train runs along Mutsu Bay. The stark white exterior of a railcar testifies to the area’s severe wind and snow.
Reminiscent

Shimonada Station on the Yosan Line, Ehime Prefecture, is a place to alight from at least once in your life. The moment you set foot on the platform, the vast, tranquil Seto Inland Sea greets you. Sunsets are especially mesmerizing, and the station draws many who long to see a view reminiscent of home or the past.

Lightning Speed

Toboku Shinkansen high-speed services through the northeast region include the Hayabusa and Komachi bullet trains. Their cars are often linked as one train from Tokyo to Morioka, where they separate for different destinations. The Hayabusa goes on to Hokkaido’s Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto Station while the Komachi runs to Akita. It is Japan’s fastest Shinkansen, clocking a top speed of 320 km/hr.

Gateway

Tokyo Station, with a magnificent structure featuring red brick, is Japan’s main rail gateway. Some 3,500 trains, including Shinkansen and conventional lines, depart this station carrying more than 500,000 passengers on any given day.

Smile

The Joyful Train features tatami (traditional rush mat) flooring and a “running banquet,” complete with great smiles and grand window-seat views of the passing landscape.

Crew members of Huisatu Orange Railway, running on the west coast of Kyushu, announce the dining train Orange Restaurant’s imminent departure by joyously ringing a handbell.
Obako Attendants on the Magokoro Train Service

Attendants in traditional local attire provide support to passengers.
(Yuri Kogen Railway, Akita Prefecture)

Local railways provide warm hospitality to travellers and local residents alike. On the Yuri Kogen Railway in Akita Prefecture, female attendants known as Obako, who wear traditional local attire, ride the Magokoro (“sincerity”) train, which operates a return service once a day. The attendants do more than simply help passengers on and off the train. They also provide information on sights along the line and present passengers with handmade gifts as mementos of the trip. All of this helps to make a more than memorable occasion. The thoughtful and heartfelt service that can be found in local areas guarantees a fun and unforgettable journey.

Tama the Second Stationmaster

The super stationmaster cat
(Kishi Station, Wakayama Electric Railway
Kishigawa Line, Wakayama Prefecture)

The local Wakayama Electric Railway took over a line that was close to shutting down and worked together with local people to bring it back to life. A local family asked for their calico cat named Tama to take up residence in the station, and the cat was soon appointed stationmaster, which became the talk of the town. With the passing away of Tama in 2015, a new cat called Nitama has taken on the role of second stationmaster to greet passengers at Kishi Station. In Japan, cats are thought to bring good luck. Many tourists from both inside and outside Japan come to visit and ride the Tama Train adorned with pictures of Tama, who has become the symbol of the area.

The Ultimate in Sweets Created by Fruit Meisters

Fruitea Fukushima, “Traveling café”
(JR East Ban-etsu-West Line, Fukushima Prefecture)

Fukushima Prefecture is one of Japan’s foremost producers of fruit like peaches, strawberries, and cherries. At a long-established fruit company that has been in business for more than 90 years there, heartfelt sweets made by pastry chefs using fruit that has been carefully selected by fruit meisters are served on the train café, Fruitea Fukushima. There are two kinds of original sweets that include seasonal fruit when it is at its tastiest. The menu is full of ideas from the pastry chefs.

Dinosaur Convey the Attractive Features of the Region

Dr. Dinosaur greets passengers on the platform.
(Echizen Railway, Fukui Prefecture)

Fukui Prefecture is home to one of the world’s most renowned dinosaur fossil excavations sites. At Fukui Station, the gateway to the prefecture, visitors are greeted by dinosaurs at every turn. Dr. Dinosaur dressed in white sits on the “dinosaur bench” on the platform of Echizen Railway’s Fukui Station to greet passengers getting on and off the Dinosaur Express.
This Nankai Electric Railway limited express links the center of Osaka with Kansai International Airport. The outside of the train is done in a futuristic retro style and the strong design evokes the image of a steam locomotive in the streamlined shape of an aircraft. The blue carriages leave a lasting impression on travelers.

**POKÉMON with YOU Train**

Meet the world-famous characters born in Japan

With the cooperation of the POKÉMON with YOU campaign, which aims to help support recovery following the Great East Japan Earthquake, this train running on the Osaka Line in the Tohoku region features the famous Pokémon game character. The train is like a dream for children, with a seated carriage featuring illustrations of Pokémon and a playroom carriage where they can play freely.

**Hanayome Noren**

Experience the traditional “harmony and beauty” of Japan

This sightseeing train runs along the Noto peninsula in Ishikawa Prefecture. The red and black colored exterior was conceived in the image of Mozuma-curl lacquers, a traditional craft of the Hokuriku region. The overlapping pattern is of Japanese-style clothing known as Kaga-Yuzen. The interior of the train offers travelers the chance to rediscover the harmony and beauty of Hokuriku thanks to an aisle designed as stepping stones resembling a Japanese garden, walls depicting the gold leaf of Kanazawa, and individual cabin partitions finished in a yuzen-zome dye style.

**COOL Trains**

A striking form combining strength and speed

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**ART Trains**

Pictures of train culture


**Rapi:t**

This “moving museum” runs on the Joetsu Shinkansen Line. The exterior resembles a painter’s canvas and features images of fireworks in Nikagawa on a jet-black base designed by photographer and film director Kinagawa Mika. The interior of the train displays works that include paintings, sculptures, and photographs by six different artists.

**GENBI SHINKANSEN**

Appreciating modern art while on the move

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People and Technology Drive Japan’s Railways

The wonder of Japan’s railways goes far beyond the speed of the Shinkansen. Other remarkable key elements include on-time performance, safety, comfort, and energy conservation—all achieved while smoothly operating at mass-transit capacity. The synergy of people and technology is the power that drives this outstanding train system.

Next-Generation Eco-Train “DENCHA”

Next-generation trains running on batteries have arrived with the “DENCHA” battery-powered electric cars developed by JR Kyushu. “DENCHA,” which stands for “DUAL ENERGY CHARGE TRAIN,” can recharge its batteries while running on electricity from overhead power lines so that it can keep going in areas without power. The mechanism also allows it to regenerate power from the braking system and can save energy and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 40 to 50% compared with diesel trains on lines without electricity. There is also no exhaust gas.

Less wobble for greater comfort

The shape of the tip of the Shinkansen is one of the important factors that affect the riding comfort of the passengers. A method of aircraft design was introduced in development for the first time for the Series N700 that appeared in 2007. The newly developed model N700S features a new “Dual Supreme Wing” shape designed in the image of spread wings after repeated 3D studies and experiments analyzing aerodynamic drag. This has resulted in less wobble from wind resistance and swirling air caused by the high-speed train as well as a reduction in noise generated when passing through tunnels.

Energy savings through compact, lightweight design

The weight of operation-related electronic equipment of new trains has been reduced by about 20%, leading to further energy savings. Next-generation semiconductors—developed jointly with an electronics company—deliver higher power with less loss and operate at higher temperatures. These achievements, combined with train-draft cooling, have given operation-related equipment a lighter and more compact design.

Safety enhanced by shortening braking distance

Revisions to the system to automatically keep the train under the speed limit and the braking mechanism helped shorten the automatic braking distance during an earthquake by 5% compared to the N700A. Although this may seem minimal, it leads to a safer Shinkansen, especially in terms of more quickly stopping the train when an earthquake occurs.

This steady and constant evolution is the reason the Shinkansen remains the world’s premier train system after all these years.
“Capacity for sound judgment is critical to operational management using a computer system,” says Hirayama Tsutomu, director of the Train Operation Controllers for the Tokaido Shinkansen, as he explains the importance of on-site decision-making.

Put succinctly, experience for controllers comes when a typhoon or similar calamity throws the train schedule way off. As an example, the extent of congestion on the platform changes constantly with the seasons, days of the week, time of day, and other factors. It’s not possible to determine how to lessen the confusion simply by moving the trains with computers alone. Train operation controllers take a close-up look at conditions on the platform in addition to the monitor in order to make the most appropriate decisions.

The advanced technology in Japan, a major power in rail, is being introduced in earnest around the world. The Taiwan High Speed Rail, which started operation in 2007, uses 700T carriages based on the Series 700 carriages on Japan’s Tokaido-Sanyo Shinkansen. A Japanese rail company with proven results also lends a hand with human resource development to ensure safe and punctual service. Japan’s unique and meticulous practice and training helped foster development to ensure safe and punctual service. Japan’s diverse rail technology in action overseas.

The high-speed railway in Taiwan has been highly praised for its comprehensive Japanese technology in such aspects as quietness, comfort, and punctual service. Japan’s rail technology has been introduced in emerging countries such as Indonesia and Myanmar. The used trains, with their role completed following the introduction of new models in Japan, are exported along with maintenance-related technology as a set. Rather than merely handing over used trains, many countries around the world are also given the know-how to continue using the high quality products for a long time to come.

Japanese trains are exported to Jakarta in Indonesia. These trains once operated on the JR Joban Line and Tokyo Metro Chiyoda Line. The high-speed railway in Taiwan has been highly praised for its comprehensive Japanese technology in such aspects as quietness, comfort, and punctual service.

Trains Inspire a Taste for Travel

Japan is teeming with sightseeing trains, each with its own local color. These trains offer panoramic views of the country’s nature in each season and are built using local natural materials to ensure a comfortable space to relax. More than just a means of transport, it’s a joy simply to ride on one of these trains.

**Cruise train “Seven Stars in Kyushu”**

On this cruise train, which travels around Kyushu, passengers stay in luxurious cabins. The interior includes porcelain that is individually hand-made by local traditional artisans as well as Japanese-style wooden toxins, providing a glamorous feel to the classical interior. (Photo provided by Kyushu Railway Company)

**“Yufuin no Mori”**

This limited express resort train heads to the popular hot spring area of Yufuin. The train has big windows so that passengers can take in the best view along the trip. A lounge space boasting a contemporary wooden design provides the perfect chance to chat, which adds to the enjoyment of the journey.

**Eizan Electric Railway’s “Kirara”**

The seats face windows that extend to the ceiling for passengers to fully appreciate the northern area of Kyoto’s beautiful nature in comfort. When the autumn leaves cast their crimson color inside of the train, it is truly a sight to behold.

**“Echigo TOKimeki Resort SETSUGEKKA”**

On this sightseeing train operating along a local line in Niigata Prefecture, passengers can enjoy the beautiful scenery while tasting local foods and sake. With a carriage featuring Japanese-style tatami flooring and a lounge car serving local food and sake, people on board can experience the atmosphere of staying in a hot spring resort town.

**“Toreiyu Tsubasa”**

This resort train has been introduced on the Yutaka Shinkansen line. One of the key features is a footbath carriage where passengers can bathe their feet in hot spring water. With a carriage featuring Japanese-style tatami flooring and a lounge car serving local food and sake, people on board can experience the atmosphere of staying in a hot spring resort town.

**Japan’s Diverse Rail Technology in Action Overseas**

Experience in the Shinkansen General Control Center Essential to Smooth Operation
In April 2014, townspeople along the Sanriku Railway Line in Iwate Prefecture finally had a reason to celebrate. After waiting three long years for repairs of immense damage from the Great East Japan Earthquake, they gathered on platforms to greet the trains, shouting a hearty “Welcome Back.” Their joyous reception reveals the role of trains in the life of a town or village.

The passenger train is at the heart of Japanese railways. Rail lines are meticulously laid to be integral to daily life, and trains carry a high volume of passengers every day. The close connection between people and trains in Japan adds something warm and inviting to a place.

Also, Japan is blessed with beautiful seasons. Each one colors the land with a different kind of beauty. Spring is the time to look at cherry blossoms; summer sights are white cloud banks; autumn comes into view ablaze with glowing leaves; and winter is seen turning the world silvery white.

Japan’s railways are richly varied: from the high-speed Shinkansen and local lines to steam locomotives, trams, and gourmet restaurant trains. Trains are enveloped by the warmth of the people riding them, and the lines are designed to harmonize with nature. Whether a frequent visitor or first-timer, be sure to experience the wonder and the joy of Japan’s railways.
The railway is an integral part of Japan’s landscapes in many ways, blending in with each of the four seasons. Take a look at railway photographer Nakai Seiya’s selection of picturesque railway lines across the country.

Journey to Railway Scenes of Japan

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Kurobe Gorge Train, Kurobe

The sightseeing line features open-air carriages that give you an intimate feeling of nature as they carry you through precipitous cliffs of Kurobe Gorge. The best time to ride is autumn, taking in the season’s fresh crisp air and vibrantly colored foliage.

Ibusuki-Makurazaki Line, Ibusuki

Kyushu’s southernmost railway provides majestic views of two volcanoes, Kagoshima—also known as Sakurajima—for its beautiful silhouette and resemblance to Japan’s top peak—and Satsuma-Fuji, with its rising vapors.

Ichibata Electric Railway, Izumo

The sight of the train coursing behind red torii gates (gate to a sacred place) is something magical, like the setting of a mythical tale. Elsewhere, along the Ichibata Electric Railway line is Izumo Taisha (Izumo Grand Shrine), known for the deity of marriage and matchmaking.

Ibusuki-Makurazaki Line, Ibusuki

Coursing along the Seto Inland Sea and Uwa Sea, this line offers views near Iyo-Iwaki of waraguro, traditional conical stacks of rice straw left to dry after fields have been harvested.

Kishin Line, Sayo Town

It’s hard to believe this retro rural line is only about an hour from Tokyo, where the huge ginkgo tree at Kazusa-Kubo Station turns a breathtaking gold in autumn.

Oigawa Railway, Kawanekincho Town

Passengers on this line, operating the most steam locomotives in the country, travel in rare style and pleasure through beautiful tea plantations. Riding in a steam locomotive through a vast landscape makes you feel as though you’ve slipped back in time.

Wakasa Railway, Yazu Town

This local railway serves the eastern part of Tottori Prefecture. Looking up from the base of a waterfall at the 128-meter-long bridge, one of the Registered Tangible Cultural Properties, it seems as though the train runs atop the waterfall.

Kawase Railway, Yazu Town

Most of the line runs along the Sea of Japan coast, revealing beautiful, dynamic scenes of ocean sunsets and choppy winter waves. Also pleasurable is a trip through the apple orchards of Tsugaru Plain.

Kominato Railway, Ichihara

It’s hard to believe this retro rural line is only an hour from Tokyo, where the huge ginkgo tree at Kazusa-Kubo Station turns a breathtaking gold in autumn.

Shizuoka Prefecture

Yosan Line, Seiyo

Counting along the Seto Inland Sea and Uwa Sea, this line offers views near Toyama—of sexagons, traditional conical stacks of rice straw left to dry after fields have been harvested.

Toyama Prefecture

Kurobe Gorge Train, Kurobe

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Kawanehoncho Town

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Senmo Line, Shibecha Town

The highlight of the Senmo Line through eastern Hokkaido is the passage across Kushiro Shitsugen, Japan’s largest wetland, where magnificent nature spreads out before your eyes. Look out your window and you just might see Japanese cranes out on the marshes.

Hokkaido

Gono Line, Happo Town

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Hyogo Prefecture

Shimane Prefecture

Tottori Prefecture

Kagoshima Prefecture

Shizuoka Prefecture

Akita Prefecture

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Onigiri, or a rice ball, is a Japanese food made with freshly cooked rice and filled with tasty ingredients that is formed into shape by hand. Japanese people have loved onigiri since long ago and this food remains popular today.

Onigiri is simple to prepare and can be made ahead of time. Since the rice balls are easy to carry around and can be eaten by hand, they can be consumed anytime, anywhere. This makes them the perfect companion for trips and especially convenient for packed lunches since long ago. Onigiri is typically formed into a triangular shape and the rice is filled with such ingredients as umeboshi (pickled Japanese plum), grilled salmon, kombu (kelp), or katsuo-bushi (dried bonito) and wrapped in nori (seaweed). Nowadays, there are many variations to traditional onigiri. Different types of meat can be used as filling, and besides white rice, fried rice, rice with red beans, or rice seasoned and cooked with different ingredients can be used. The surface can also be coated with miso or soy sauce and then grilled. Food sections in department stores, convenience stores, supermarkets, and other food outlets sell a wide range of onigiri. As a fast food that can be eaten anywhere one chooses, onigiri has become Japanese soul food. The next time you take a train trip, be sure to take a few onigiri to enjoy.
Within the city of Kitakyushu, at the northern tip of Kyushu, is the ward of Moji. Here you’ll happily encounter a number of historic buildings of modern Japan and an old train station that is a symbol of the exotic town.

Experience the Romance of Modern Japan

Moji

Facing Kanmon Straits separating Honshu and Kyushu, Moji has been strategic for transit and trade throughout the ages. The port, for example, was one of Japan’s three major international trading ports, including Kobe and Yokohama, since opening in 1889. It served as a hub for trade with the Asian continent, which also helped the town flourish, and was the rail gateway to Kyushu until the undersea railway tunnel between Kyushu and Honshu opened in 1942.

Formerly known as Moji Train Station, today’s Mojiko Station building has a symmetric appearance configured in Neo-Renaissance style, as befits its construction in 1914. The interior has notable historic design elements considered modern at the time, including a bronze washbasin and a restroom of marble and tile. A first for Japan was designating the train station as an Important Cultural Property in 1988, and visitors will be happy to know that ongoing restoration is planned for completion in March 2018.

The Mojiko Retro Area around the station attracts visitors from far and wide for making the past come alive. This sense of living history is palpable not only in hotels and commercial facilities but also in buildings from a time when the town was a bustling center of international trade.

One such building in the Mojiko area is the Kyushu Railway History Museum, with a red brick main building built in 1891. Here you’ll see old and new rolling stock, which make for a fun way to learn about the railway history of Japan. Overseas and native visitors alike will delight in knowing that buildings formerly used as shipping companies, trading companies, banks, or warehouses may very well be the museums, galleries, and restaurants they presently occupy. Such knowledge enhances any walk for pleasure through this amiable port town. You can also ride a rickshaw and soak up the ward’s nostalgic ambiance or a sightseeing boat cruising past majestic sights, both enjoyed while strolling.
listening to a tour guide describe the town.

Beside the Mojiko area is Mekari, reached by tram from Kyushu Railway History Museum Station on the Mojiko Retro Sightseeing Line*, which makes use of the former port cargo railway line. From Mekari Park - the Second Observation Deck, you can experience a breathtaking view of the Kanmon Straits.

Another choice is to take a local train from Mojiko Station for about 10 minutes to Kokura Station in the center of Kitakyushu City. Katsuyama Park, on the grounds of Kokura Castle built in 1602, has a Japanese garden that is beautiful in all four seasons and replete with literature and history facilities for full appreciation of this place and its people.

A bit farther away is Mt. Sarakura, offering enjoyment of commanding views. Find delight in panoramic views of Kitakyushu City from the observatory, at an elevation of 622 meters, by day as well as in fabulous night views. From the station at the mountain foot to the summit is a 10-minute trip by cable car connecting to monorail.

Mojiko and its surrounding area are also extremely popular for its gourmet restaurants. You won't want to miss out on restaurants offering freshly caught fish and shellfish from nearby waters.

In addition to the appeal of savory seafood, there are a number of well-established eateries serving up Western and Chinese cuisines. Finally, be sure to try Mojio’s notable delicacy, known as yaki curry (baked curry rice).

Railways have played an important role in the development of industry and culture across modern Japan in its big cities and villages. By riding the railways and walking the streets of Moji, you also are taking a journey that brings to life the memory of times gone by.

*The train runs regularly on Saturdays, Sundays, and National Holidays from the middle of March to late November. During spring and summer vacation it is operated daily.

For More Info

Kitakyushu City Tourist Information Corner
TEL: (+81) 093-541-4189

Kyushu Railway History Museum
TEL: (+81) 093-322-1006
http://www.k-rhm.jp/ (Japanese)
Made in Japan kutsushita (socks) boast high quality embodying the spirit of manufacturing and production technology. There are many different kinds that infuse Japan’s unique material technology, ranging from warm, wool-like socks made from a blend of ordinary and organic cotton to ones with excellent deodorizing ability.

In Japan, where the custom is to take one’s shoes off indoors, particular attention is given to ensuring both functionality and an inimitable fashion sense. This has led to a variety of styles, including socks designed with motifs that have been widely popular in Japan through the ages, comfy socks with glove-like pockets for each toe that also provide health benefits, and socks with a split between the big toe and other toes like traditional Japanese tabi socks. Both practical and trendy, Japanese socks of exceptional quality are sure to make the perfect gift.