

TRANSPORT

Hyper-efficient, sparkling clean and virtually crime-free, Tokyo's public transport system is the envy of the world. The Tokyo area is a hub for international, domestic and regional travel, so whether you're headed across town or across the globe, you'll be able to get literally anywhere you want to go.

Most residents and visitors use the railway system far more than any other means of transport. It is reasonably priced and frequent (generally five minutes at most between trains on major lines in central Tokyo), and many stations have conveniences such as left-luggage lockers for baggage storage. Most places worth visiting are conveniently close to a subway or East Japan Railway Company (JR or JR East) station or, in some cases, a station on smaller suburban rail line. Where the rail network lets you down (though it really shouldn't), there are usually bus services – although using these can be challenging if you can't read kanji.

Avoiding Tokyo's rush hour is a good idea, but might be impossible if you're on a tight schedule. Commuter congestion tends to ease between 10am and 4pm, when travelling around Tokyo – especially on the JR Yamanote Line – can actually be quite pleasant. Before 9.30am Monday to Friday and from about 4.30pm onward there'll be cheek-to-jowl crowds on all major train and bus lines.

About the biggest drawback to the system is that it shuts down at midnight or 1am and doesn't start up again until 5am or 6am. If you don't plan carefully, you may face an expensive taxi ride home or have to wait for the first morning train – though depending on your perspective this could work to your advantage! Check schedules posted in stations for the last train on the line if you plan to be out late, and make sure it goes all the way to your destination – the last trains of the day sometimes stop mid-route.

Flights, tours and rail tickets can be booked online at www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services.

AIR

Tokyo is a major hub of world aviation. In addition to the flights that originate and terminate here, many international travellers, chiefly between North America and the rest of Asia, make connections here at Narita International Airport, Japan's main gateway to the world. Tokyo is also the hub of air travel within Japan, where the aviation network is extensive, reliable and safe. In many cases, flying is faster and not significantly more expensive than riding the *shinkansen* (bullet train) to some of the country's most far-flung destinations, such as Hokkaido and Kyūshū. Flying is the only way to reach Okinawa from Tokyo.

Airports

Tokyo has two airports: Narita, which handles most international traffic, and Haneda, which is primarily for domestic flights. Customs and immigration procedures are usually straightforward, although they're more time-consuming for foreigners than for Japanese. Non-Japanese visitors are fingerprinted and photographed on arrival. A neat appearance will speed your passage through passport control and customs.

Narita Airport (✈ flight information 0476-34-5000, general information 0476-32-2802; www.narita-airport.jp/en) is 66km east of Tokyo, but aside from its inconvenient location, it's an excellent, modern airport with a plethora of services. It is divided into two terminals, which are connected by a free shuttle-bus service. From Terminal 1 board this bus at stop 6, and from Terminal 2 board at stops 8 and 18. The airport website lists which airlines use which terminal.

THINGS CHANGE...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

Everything at Narita Airport is clearly signposted in English. At both terminals there are post offices, currency-exchange counters (rates are the same as those in town), ATMs, plenty of restaurants, duty-free shops, left-luggage services and baggage-courier services (see [right](#)). The travel-weary (and -dirty) will find showers and day-rooms for napping, and free children's playrooms available to departing passengers who have completed emigration formalities, with computer games and well-designed play areas.

There are several information counters in both terminals, and the staff speaks English. The airport **Tourist Information Centres** (TIC; ☎ 0476-34-6251; ☎ 9am-8pm) are a key stop if you haven't yet booked any accommodation. While you're there, pick up a subway map and the *Tourist Map of Tokyo*. There's a TIC on the 1st floor in each terminal. Narita Airport also has JR offices in each terminal, where you can make bookings and exchange your Japan Rail Pass ([p254](#)) voucher for a pass, if you're planning to start travelling straight away.

If you are going to Narita Airport by land, note that passports are inspected for everyone entering Narita Airport, even if they're not travelling; keep yours handy. Check-in procedures are usually very efficient, but you should arrive at the airport at least two hours before your departure time. Passport control and security procedures are similarly efficient. Bring your embarkation card, which should have been stapled into your passport upon arrival; if you don't have one, you can get a blank form before going through passport control.

Haneda Airport (☎ information 5757-8111; www.tokyo-airport-bldg.co.jp/en) is the airport seasoned Tokyo expats wish was still Tokyo's main air hub. It's a fraction of the distance from central Tokyo and smaller and easier to navigate. Haneda doesn't have Narita's services infrastructure, but there are post offices, banks, restaurants, left-luggage services and baggage-shipping companies. Nor does Haneda have a dedicated English-language information counter, although there is usually someone who can answer your questions in English.

Haneda is Tokyo's main airport for flights within Japan, so if you're arriving into Narita you may well find yourself transferring to Haneda for your connection. As we went to press, the only international flights served

Seoul, Beijing, Hong Kong and Shanghai, but that was all scheduled to change following the completion of a brand new runway in 2010.

Baggage Shipment

Baggage couriers provide next-day delivery of your large luggage from Narita and Haneda Airports to any address in Tokyo (around ¥2000 per large bag). This fabulous service can also deliver luggage to points beyond Tokyo so you don't have to haul it through trains and stations all over the countryside. With the exception of trains and buses serving the airports, it is rare to find storage for large luggage on public transport. Plus, train and subway stations may have only stairs when you need an elevator or escalator for that heavy bag, and taxis may have smaller trunks than you're used to. Baggage service counters are located on the arrival levels of each terminal.

Couriers can also pick up luggage for delivery to the airport, but be sure to call two days before your flight to arrange a pick-up. The companies listed here have some operators who speak English:

ANA Sky Porter (☎ toll free 0120-007-952)

JAL ABC (☎ toll free 0120-919-120, in Tokyo 03-3545-2800; www.jalabc.com)

Getting To/From the Airports

NARITA AIRPORT

Getting into central Tokyo from Narita Airport can take anything from 50 minutes to a couple of hours, depending on your mode of transport. Because the two terminals at Narita are fairly distant from one another, be sure to get off your train or bus at the correct terminal – all airport transport prominently displays lists of airlines and the terminal they use.

Both the Japan Railways (JR East) and the independent Keisei Line connect Narita Airport and Tokyo. Conveniently, trains depart from stations beneath the airport terminals.

On the **Keisei Line** (☎ 0476-32-8501; www.keisei.co.jp), two services run between Narita Airport and Tokyo: the comfortable, fast Skyliner service (¥1920, 56 minutes), which runs nonstop to Nippori and Ueno Stations ([Map](#)