



The Places You'll Go...

By Carla Caldwell

Once you've settled into your new home, you'll want to explore your new community. The options for travel vary depending on where you are in the Pacific Rim, but we'll do our best to share some of the easiest to access.

GUAM

Guam is a relatively small island and it's easy to travel by car. If you don't have a car and want to do some exploring, many local businesses rent cars at fairly low rates. Or take the government-operated Guam Mass Transit Authority. The system offers nine routes that connect most island villages. The fare is typically \$3 for the day. Do note, however, that the buses sometimes are not reliable and routes are limited.

Visitors to the island often prefer taking one of the many privately operated shopping or tour buses.

If a short trip or errand is in order, taxicabs are available. Most trips are \$3 for the first mile and 60 cents for each quarter mile afterward. Expect to wait 15 minutes or so for a cab.

For more information on travel in Guam, visit www.visitguam.org

JAPAN

All in all, Japan is known for having one of the best, if not the best, mass-transit system in the world. An estimated 90 percent of urban traveling is done by mass transit. There are numerous options to choose from—subways, commuter trains, buses, taxis—you can pretty much get anywhere you want to go through Japan's transit system.

Subway lines are available in all major cities, and provide prompt, efficient transportation. The JR Yamanote-sen loop line in Tokyo and its Osaka kanjo-sen loop line both circle the center of their respective cities. In Tokyo, JR rates start from 130 Japanese yen (about \$1.22), subway fares at 160 Japanese yen (about \$1.50) for Tokyo Metro and Toei (Metropolitan) lines, and both fares increase with the distance traveled. Almost all stations have vending machines for tickets and automatic ticket-checking machines at their entrance/exit gates.



Photo by Ron Dahlquist; Courtesy HVCB

Visitors report the trains and stations (and bathrooms!) are clean, and trains and stations are very clearly marked with route information and how to get around once inside a station. Bilingual announcements help passengers know which stops are next.

Japan's transit trains are notoriously jam-packed, especially during rush hours, and groping has emerged as a problem. Many trains now offer female-only cars, to help reduce the problem and to encourage more women to ride the trains to work.

Japan offers several rail pass options, which can give visitors unlimited use of its railway, bus and even ferry service. One pass, JR's Japan Rail Pass, can only be bought outside the country, and is designed for use by visiting tourists. Maybe buy one before you head overseas, and explore your new home when you arrive.

For more information on getting around Japan, visit www.jnto.go.jp/eng/arrange/transportation/index.html

HAWAII

Hawaii is made up of six major, yet distinct islands: Kauai, Oahu, Molokai, Lanai, Maui and Hawaii. Each is beautiful and many businesses offer short flights from island to island, so you can explore them all.

Once you've arrived on any of the islands, you'll want to make the most of it. Travel by car is among the best ways to explore. There are many car rental businesses and many of the businesses offer convertibles and jeeps. In addition, many guided tours are available by bus. For short trips and errands most islands have public transportation, taxies and shuttles.

For more information about traveling in Hawaii, visit www.gohawaii.com

OKINAWA

Sightseeing is a must in Okinawa, but doing that can be a little tricky. The least expensive way to sightsee and run errands is by bus, but learning the system takes patience. More than one company operates business, so if you buy a day pass you can use it only on buses operated by the company from which you bought the pass. In addition, most bus schedules and routes are in Japanese. So, unless you speak Japanese, it's best to get a map of bus routes and familiarize yourself with landmarks rather than by relying on written descriptions.

Rental cars are also an option. Roads are typically in good condition and road signs are typically printed in English, as well as Japanese. But a Japanese driver's license or International Driver's Permit is often required.

It's best to get a permit before leaving home. The U.S. State Department allows two groups to issue International Drivers Permits: the American Automobile Association (AAA) and the American Automobile Touring Alliance (AATA), which issues IDPs through the National Automobile Club. Obtain a form from either group's website: www.aaa.com or <http://thenac.com>. Check with either group to get the most current fee, which typically run about \$40 to \$50 a year for renewals or new permits.

For more information about travel in Okinawa, visit www.japanguide.com

SOUTH KOREA

Getting around South Korea is relatively easy by bus. There are a lot of them, they offer numerous stops throughout densely populated areas and the signs are often in English. Be warned, though—you could be in for a tight squeeze. Buses, especially at rush hour, can get so crowded that the drivers can't shut the doors. Drivers are also known for going extremely fast when traffic allows. So you might be in for some tense moments.

In the capital city of Seoul, it's common for residents to skip the buses in lieu of the city's popular subway system. The system usually runs on time and makes a wide range of stops. The subway can be hard to navigate for newcomers, so it's best to study the maps and landmarks ahead of time to avoid frustrations. And, perhaps most importantly, just as in Japan, watch out for gropers! Numerous sex crimes are reported on train cars where people are packed tightly against one another. The subway system was to begin this year offering women-only cars to cut down on incidents.

For more information about traveling in South Korea, visit <http://english.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/index.kto> ●

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