



Sonia Jones Travel

Your Japan Travel Update

From tap-on trains to cashless payments and quiet corners of Kyoto, here's what's new and what's worth knowing.

Sonia has just returned from a week in **Tokyo and Kyoto**, attending a major travel trade event as a buyer, meeting with hotel partners and local operators, and experiencing firsthand how Japan continues to evolve. From lesser-known neighbourhoods and hidden cafés to brand-new hotel openings and easy new travel tech — here's what's changed and what you'll want to know before your next trip.



Money Matters in Japan

While Japan has traditionally been a cash-based society, **credit card and contactless payments** are now far more widely accepted than before. Many shops, restaurants, taxis and even vending machines now take international cards or phone payments.

That said, you'll still find **cash-only** spots, especially in small restaurants and local stores. Japan is very safe, so keeping yen on hand isn't a concern.

ATMs: 7-Eleven stores and Japan Post offices are the most reliable places to withdraw cash with foreign cards, along with some international banks like Citibank and HSBC.

Tip: Always have a mix of cash and cards so you're covered wherever you go.

IC Cards (Suica & Pasma)

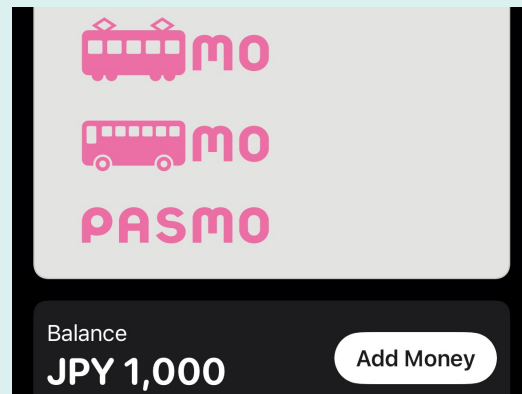
An IC card makes getting around Japan effortless. You can use it to tap on and off trains, subways, and buses, and even pay at convenience stores, vending machines, and some taxis.

Skip the physical card and activate an **inbuilt transport card** on your **iPhone or Android**. Both **Suica** and **Pasma** work exactly the same nationwide.

- **iPhone:** Open the Wallet app → tap "+" → select **Transport Card** → choose *Suica* or *Pasmo*.
- **Android:** Open Google Wallet → tap "Add to Wallet" → choose **Transport Card** → select *Suica* or *Pasmo*.

Just tap your phone at the gate — no need to open an app. Top up easily through your phone, and use any leftover balance at a convenience store before you leave.

Tip: Mobile IC cards are so convenient there's really no need for a physical one anymore!

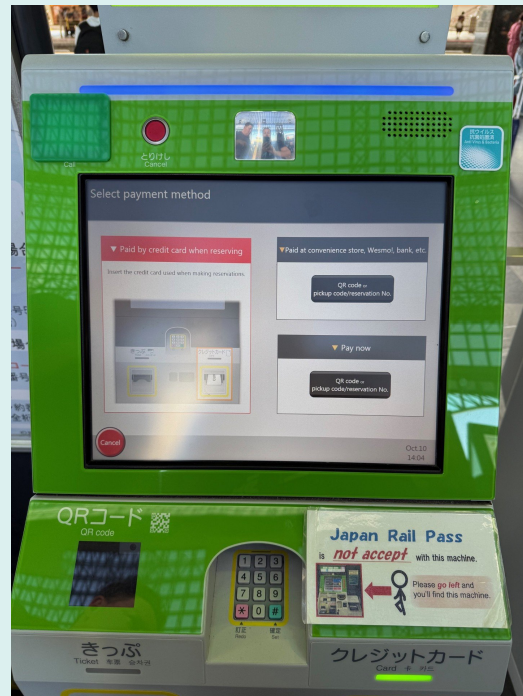
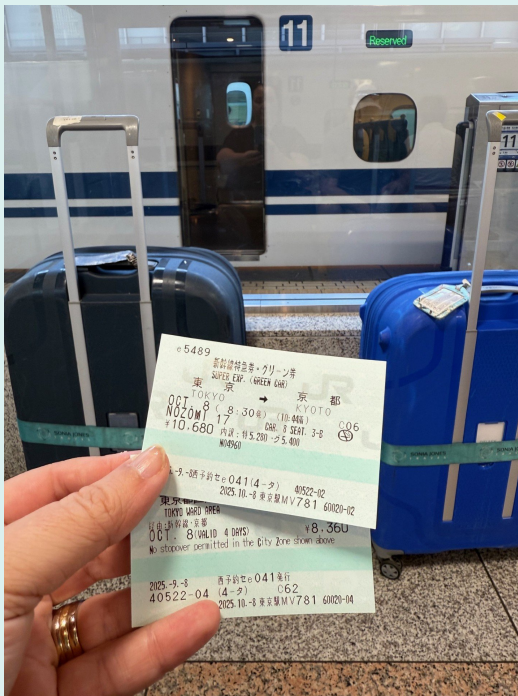


Point-to-Point Tickets

Rail passes are still an excellent and flexible option for travellers doing multiple journeys. But if you only plan one or two long-distance trips, **point-to-point tickets** are a great alternative.

Sonia tried and tested these — and SJT can book them for you in advance. You'll receive a **QR code and PIN** to scan at the ticket machine, which instantly prints both your fare ticket and seat reservation.

Hot tip: When entering the **ticket gate**, make sure you feed both tickets through together. And stock up on **snacks at the station** before boarding — the old trolley service has been phased out, but you'll find incredible options in station shops and convenience stores.



Avoiding the Crowds

Overtourism is a real challenge, particularly in Kyoto. Sonia found that exploring **lesser-known neighbourhoods** made a huge difference.

In Tokyo, try **Ueno, Ameyoko and Akasaka** — lively but local, full of atmosphere, and perfect for wandering.

In Kyoto, head to the **Silver Pavilion (Ginkakuji)** and stroll the **Philosopher's Walk**, where you'll find local crafts, cafés, matcha ice cream and cold beers with almost no queues.

Oh, and don't miss the **best rooftop bar in Kyoto** — perfect for a sunset cocktail overlooking the city!



More Japan Inspiration

Read Sonia's latest blog post, [Just Back: Sumo to Sunsets](#), for more personal highlights and insights from her time in Japan.

We've also shared videos, travel moments and insider tips on our socials – find us at **@soniajonestravel** on Instagram and Facebook for more behind-the-scenes content.

If you or someone you know is planning an **immersive and inclusive journey to Japan**, our team are genuine Japan experts. From first-timers to seasoned visitors, we'll help you uncover authentic, local experiences while travelling with ease.



Ready to plan your next journey?

We're here to help when you're ready to start dreaming, designing or booking.

[Get in touch with us](#) or reply to this email - we'd love to hear from you.

Warm wishes,

Sonia and the team at Sonia Jones Travel

About SJT

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