

# Shinkansen (Bullet Train)

## The Original High-Speed Train

The first shinkansen train line was built in 1964, just in time for Japan to host that year's summer Olympic Games. It was the first high-speed railway in the world, traveling between the cities of Tokyo and Osaka, and its trains' incredible speed and sleek, aerodynamic design earned them the nickname shinkansen, or bullet train.

**COUNTRY:** Japan  
**LENGTH:** various routes  
**MAIN STOPS:** many cities all over Japan  
**BUILT:** 1964  
**FAMOUS FOR:** being the world's first high-speed train

Shinkansens are faster than other trains for several reasons: They run on their own tracks, separate from other trains. Their tracks have no road crossings, which means they don't have to stop very often. They use tunnels instead of going around obstacles, so they don't have to slow down and turn as often as other trains. They have an efficient signaling system to keep them on schedule. Finally, power is distributed through the trains' wheel axles, so they can accelerate faster.

Today, Kimiko and her classmates are riding the shinkansen from Tokyo to Osaka to see the famous castle there. Traveling between these two cities will take three hours each way—on a regular train service it can take more than six, which wouldn't leave the schoolchildren much time to explore the castle!



*Osaka Castle is a popular tourist destination because of its splendor and importance in Japanese history. Built in 1583, it was the site of famous battles between the Japanese lords and the armies of samurai\* warriors who protected them.*

*The most amazing element of the shinkansen's speedy design is its long and slender "nose," which helps it move faster through the air in its path.*