

Taiwan Railway Guide

Traveling in Taiwan by railway is the most convenient and easy way. Almost the whole of Taiwan is linked by railway. Currently Taiwan railway is managed by Taiwan Railway Administration (臺灣鐵路管理局) which is an agency under Ministry of Transportation and Communications of Taiwan. It should be not mistaken as Taiwan High Speed Rail which is managed by the Bureau of High Speed Rail.

The birth start of Taiwan Railway begins during the reign of Guangxu (Qing Dynasty). The building of railway system was first proposed by Liu Mingchuan, Governor of Taiwan. In 1891, a 28.6km railroad connecting Keelung and Taipei became the earliest railroad system of China. However Taiwanese did not get to enjoy the railway facilities until the cession of Taiwan to Japan. In 1908, Kabayama Sukenori, the first Governor-General of Taiwan established a plan to build a standard Japanese gauge railway connecting Takao (Kaohsiung) with Keelung. The work of construction was started from both termini and finished in April 1908.

Since then, the Japanese had been extending the railway tracks. By the end of World War II, railway system had been extended to almost the whole island. In 1979, the western line was fully electrified and the north-link line was also completed. In 1991, the south-link line which runs from Fangliao to Taitung was completed, thus completing the rail loop around Taiwan.

The current railway lines include the Western line, Pingtung Line, South-link line, Taitung line, North-Link Line and Yilan Line. The western line (Taiwan Trunk Line) consists of Northern section, Coast line, Mountain line (Taichung line), Southern section and Pingtung line. In addition, there are 8 sub-branch lines. They are namely: Pingsi line, Neiwan Line, JiJi Line, Linkou Line, Old Mountain Line, Shalun Line, Liujia Line and Chengzhui Line.

The Taiwan Trunk Line (Northern section) runs from Keelung station (Keelung City) to Zhunan station (Miaoli County). It act as an interchange and is connected to both Taichung Line (Mountain Line) and Coast Line. Both the Mountain Line and Coast Line start from Zhunan station (Miaoli County) and meet up at Changhua station (Changhua County). The difference is the route taken and stations serviced. The Taiwan Trunk Line (Southern section) runs from Changhua station (Changhua County) to Kaohsiung station (Kaohsiung City). Connecting Kaohsiung station (Kaohsiung City) is the Pingtung Line. It runs from Kaohsiung station (Kaohsiung City) to Fangliao station (Pingtung County). After which it is connected to the South-Link Line. The South-Link line runs from Fangliao (Pingtung County) to Taitung station (Taitung County). Taitung station (Taitung County) is connected to Hualien station (Hualien County) by Taitung Line. It is also known as Su-hua Line. From Hualien station (Hualien County) to Su'aoxin station (Yilan County), the trains are served by the North-Link Line. Lastly is the Yilan Line which runs from Su'aoxin station (Yilan County) back to Badu station (Keelung City).

Apart from the main line, Taiwan railway system also has 8 sub-branch lines. Pingsi Line runs from Sandiaoling station to Qingtong station. However some trains do runs till Houtong station or Ruifang station. Neiwan Line runs from Hsinchu station to Neiwan station. JiJi Line runs from Ershui station to Checheng station. However some trains do runs till Taichung station. Currently it is also the only railway line which runs pass Nantou County. All the 3 mentioned lines are also referred as tourism line. Passengers can purchase a 1 day ticket and enjoy unlimited rides for the day. Linkou Line runs from Taoyuan station to Haihu station. However operation had been suspension in 2012. This suspension is expected to be in place for 5 years. This is to facilitate the building of elevated railway in Taoyuan City. The Old Mountain Line runs from Sanyi station to Houli station.

This sub-line was originally part of the current Mountain Line. In the early 90s, the management decided to re-structure the tracks. New tracks were in use in 1998. In 2010, the management re-opens the old tracks for tourism usage. Shalun Line runs from Zhongzhou station to Shalun station. This new extension is to reduce the congestion between Tainan City and Tainan HSR station. Liujia Line runs between Zhuzhong station and Liujia station and it connected to Hsinchu HSR station. Chengzhui Line runs between Chenggong station and Zhuifen station. It acts as an interchange between the Mountain Line and the Coast Line.

All railway stations are categorized into 9 grades. They are namely: Principal Station (特等站), First Class Station (一等站), Second Class Station (二等站), Third Class Station (三等站), Grade A Easy Station (甲種簡易站), Grade B Easy Station (乙種簡易站), Grade C Easy Station (丙種簡易站), Easy Station (簡易站) and Taxi Stand (招呼站). The first 4 types of stations are considering bigger stations with higher ridership usage. The remaining 5 stations are considering small stations. Each station is graded based on the ridership usage and the location of the station. While most of the stations are located near downtown area, some located in remote countryside area. Eg: Sandiaoling station (Yilan line) and Shanli (Taitung line)

Despite the stations had been renovated for numerous times, most of the stations still maintain its original looks and structure. A walk into the stations often brings you back into the colonisation days of Japanese Rule. Most of the stations were built based on a Baroque architectural style but there are others which took a traditional Japanese architecture look. Currently there are still some wooden train stations which also serve as a tourist attraction. Some of these stations are; Qingtong station (Pingsi line), Shengxing station (old Mountain line-no longer in use), Bao'an station (southern section of the western line) and many more.

Currently there are 5 classes of trains used. They are namely; Tsu-chiang Express (自強號), Chu-Kuang Express (莒光號), Local Express (區間快車), Local Train (區間車) and Taroko Express (太魯閣列車). Although all trains pass by every station, they do not stop at every station. Usually the smaller stations are serviced by local train only. There are also stations servicing certain trains based on their timing.

Passengers can purchase their tickets on the spot, automated vending machine and thru online booking. For some stations along the western line, easycard can be used as well. Fares are calculated differently based on the types of trains and distance travelled.

For easy reference

Taiwan Trunk Line (Northern section) (縱貫線-北段) runs from Keelung Train (基隆車站) to Zhunan (竹南車站).

Taichung Line (Mountain Line) (臺中線) runs from Zhunan (竹南車站) to Changhua (彰化車站).

Coast Line (海岸線) runs from Zhunan (竹南車站) to Changhua (彰化車站).

Taiwan Trunk Line (Southern section) (縱貫線-南段) runs from Changhua (彰化車站) to Kaohsiung (高雄車站).

Pingtung Line (屏東線) runs from Kaohsiung (高雄車站) to Fangliao (枋寮車站).

South-Link Line (南迴線) runs from Fangliao (枋寮車站) to Taitung (臺東車站).

Taitung Line (Su-hua Line) (臺東線) runs from Taitung (臺東車站) to Hualien (花蓮車站).

North-Link Line (北迴線) runs from Hualien (花蓮車站) to Su'aoxin (蘇澳新車站).

Yilan Line (宜蘭線) runs from Su'ao (蘇澳車站) to Badu (八堵車站).

Pingsi line (平溪線) runs from Sandiaoling (三貂嶺車站) to Qingtong (菁桐車站).

Neiwan Line (內灣線) runs from Hsinchu (新竹車站) to Neiwan (內灣車站).

JiJi Line (集集線) runs from Ershui (二水車站) to Checheng (車埕車站).

Linkou Line (林口線) runs from Taoyuan (桃園車站) to Haihu (海湖車站).

Old Mountain Line (舊山線) runs from Sanyi (三義車站) to Houli (后里車站).

Shalun Line (沙崙線) runs from Zhongzhou (中洲車站) to Shalun (沙崙車站).

Liujiia Line (六家線) runs from Zhuzhong (竹中車站) to Liujiia (六家車站).

Chengzhui Line (成追線) runs from Chenggong (成功車站) to Zhuifen (追分車站).