

Why Sleeper Trains Are Making a Comeback

かつて「ブルートレイン」と呼ばれ、日本各地の旅を支えた夜行列車が、再び注目を集めています。移動しながらゆっくり休める“夜の旅”は、動画でも話題で、「一度乗ってみたい!」という声も増えています。暗い車窓を眺めたり、ゆったりした時間を楽しんだり、普段の旅とはちょっとちがうワクワクがありますよね。昔ながらの雰囲気と今っぽさが混ざっていて、新しい旅のスタイルとして注目されています。あなたは、これまでの電車旅で印象に残っている思い出はありますか? 講師と話してみましょう。



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

Sleeper trains, including the famous "Blue Trains" that were once a key part of travel across Japan, are making a comeback. When JR West launched a new night train connecting Kansai and the San'in region in 2020, it quickly became a hit, with most [departures](#) nearly full.

JR East is also set to begin operating a new night train linking the Tokyo metropolitan area with northern Tohoku in the spring of 2027.

The history of night trains in Japan goes back to 1889, when the full Tokaido Line opened and trains began running between Shimbashi and Kobe. Making numerous local stops, these trains took more than 20 hours, essentially functioning as overnight services.

After World War II, networks of limited-express and express night trains expanded nationwide, serving both business travelers and tourists. As transportation options diversified, however, their importance gradually [declined](#).

Continued on next page.

Source: Why Sleeper Trains Are Making a Comeback
[JAPAN Forward](#)

1. Article

However, the recent rise in hotel prices, driven by increasing inbound tourism, has led to a renewed appreciation for night trains. Offering both transportation and accommodation, along with the distinctive charm of traveling through the night, they are once again attracting attention as a unique and practical way to explore Japan.

It was after 9 PM on November 21, the day before a three-day weekend. The destination board at JR Kyoto Station, usually filled with local routes within the Keihanshin region, showed an unusual destination: "Shimonoseki." That night, many young travelers and families boarded JR West's night train, the WEST EXPRESS GINGA, for a roughly half-day journey.

JR West revived the GINGA during the pandemic, using a refurbished older train on routes between Kansai and Ise/Chugoku, areas where night trains had disappeared. This month, it is operating several round trips per week between Kyoto and Shimonoseki via Osaka.

Fares from Kyoto to Shimonoseki start at around ¥12,900 JPY (about \$80 USD). As tourism demand has rebounded, the train's popularity has surged, with even weekday departures frequently selling out.

JR East's new night train, set to launch in 2027, will feature an exterior design inspired by the classic Blue Trains of the past.

According to railway analyst Ryoza Kawashima, night trains declined because they could not compete in price or speed with the Shinkansen, airplanes, and overnight buses.

The breakup and privatization of Japanese National Railways also contributed. Profits from night-train operations had to be shared among the JR companies that owned each segment of track, which lowered overall profitability.

Night trains also require staff at stations during late-night hours, adding to the operational burden. For many years, the only regularly scheduled night train was the Sunrise Seto/Izumo, connecting Tokyo with Takamatsu and Tokyo with Izumo City in Shimane Prefecture.

So why are night trains back in the spotlight? Kawashima says that compared to the past, "usage is increasingly for tourism rather than business."

The Sunrise trains offer carpeted open seating areas as well as around 120 private, lockable rooms per train. Fares from Tokyo to Izumo City range from about ¥16,000 to ¥30,000, depending on the type of seat or compartment.

Continued on next page.

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1. Article

The chance to enjoy both travel and accommodation at the same time has proven especially appealing to younger travelers. Social media platforms are filled with influencers posting night-train videos. Even videos that run nearly an hour often receive over a million views.

Yuki Kobe, a university student from Kanagawa Prefecture who first rode a night train in elementary school, said, "Among all forms of transportation, night trains have a special excitement even before boarding. Tickets are hard to get, but that only adds to the sense of a special journey."

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2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. **departure** 出発、出発時刻

The departure times are listed on the main display near the airport entrance.

2. **decline** 減少、衰退／減少する

The decline of vinyl records began when CDs became popular.

3. **board** 乗り込む

We will be boarding the train in just a few minutes.

4. **compete** 競争する

Four teams will be competing for the soccer league title next week.

5. **privatization** 民営化

The privatization of the Japanese postal system started in 2005.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. When did night trains first become popular?

2. Why did the use of night trains decline?

3. Why have night trains become popular again?

4. Would you ride a night train somewhere if you had the chance?
Where would you go?

5. What was the most memorable train trip that you have ever taken?

4. 復活する夜行列車 宿泊料高騰のなか若者らで連日満席

かつて「ブルートレイン」と呼ばれ、日本各地の交通網を支えた夜行（寝台）列車が復活の兆しをみせている。JR西日本が令和2年に関西と山陰を結ぶ新たな夜行列車の運行を開始したところ、ほぼ満席が続く人気ぶり。JR東日本も9年春から首都圏と北東北を結ぶ新たな夜行列車を運行する。インバウンド増加に伴い、宿泊料金が高騰する中、宿泊と移動を兼ね、夜の旅情も味わえる夜行列車の良さが見直されている。

3連休前日の11月21日午後9時過ぎのJR京都駅。普段は京阪神地域の行き先が表示される案内板に下関の文字が光った。ホームにJR西の夜行列車「WEST EXPRESS 銀河」が到着すると、観光客らしき若者や家族連れなど多くの人が乗り込み、およそ半日の鉄道の旅を楽しんだ。

JR西は新型コロナウイルス禍の2年、旧型車両を改造した銀河を一度は廃止した関西と伊勢・中国方面で復活。今月は京都から大阪駅を通り、山口県の下関駅間を週に数往復している。京都から下関までの座席の料金は約1万2900円からで、観光需要の回復で人気が高まり、平日でも満席の日が続く。

JR東日本も今年6月、新たな夜行列車を運行する計画を発表。外観はかつての寝台列車「ブルートレイン」をイメージした。

これまで夜行列車が衰退していった理由について、鉄道アナリストの川島令三（りょうぞう）さんは、新幹線や航空機、夜行バスとの価格競争で需要が低下したとする。国鉄の分割民営化で夜行列車の運行利益が路線を持つJR各社に分配され、収益性が低下したことも要因という。

実際、夜行列車の停車駅では深夜に駅員を配置するなど負担も大きい。唯一残る定期運行の夜行列車は東京駅と高松駅、東京と島根県の出雲市駅をそれぞれ結ぶ「サンライズ瀬戸・出雲」のみとなっていた。

夜行列車が再び脚光を浴びているのはなぜか。川島さんは「需要が昔と変わり、ビジネスよりも観光目的の利用が増えているためではないか」と指摘する。

次頁に続く

出典：復活する夜行列車 宿泊料高騰のなか若者らで連日満席
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4. 復活する夜行列車 宿泊料高騰のなか若者らで連日満席

「サンライズ」にはカーペットが敷かれている座席スペースがあるほか、鍵付きの個室も1編成に約120室ある。料金は東京から出雲市まで約1万6千円から約3万円など座席や個室のクラスに応じて変わるが、こうした宿泊しながら移動を楽しめる夜行列車そのものが非日常的な体験として若者を中心に受けているという。

SNSの動画サイトにも夜行列車でインフルエンサーらが旅行する動画が数多く投稿されており、再生時間が1時間近くにもかかわらず、100万回再生されている動画も少なくない。

小学生のころに一度乗車したという神奈川県的大学生、神戸佑貴さん（20）は「数ある交通機関の中でも夜行列車は乗車する前のうきうき感がある。チケットは取りにくいのが、旅の特別感を駆り立てる要素となっている」と話した。



出典：復活する夜行列車 宿泊料高騰のなか若者らで連日満席
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