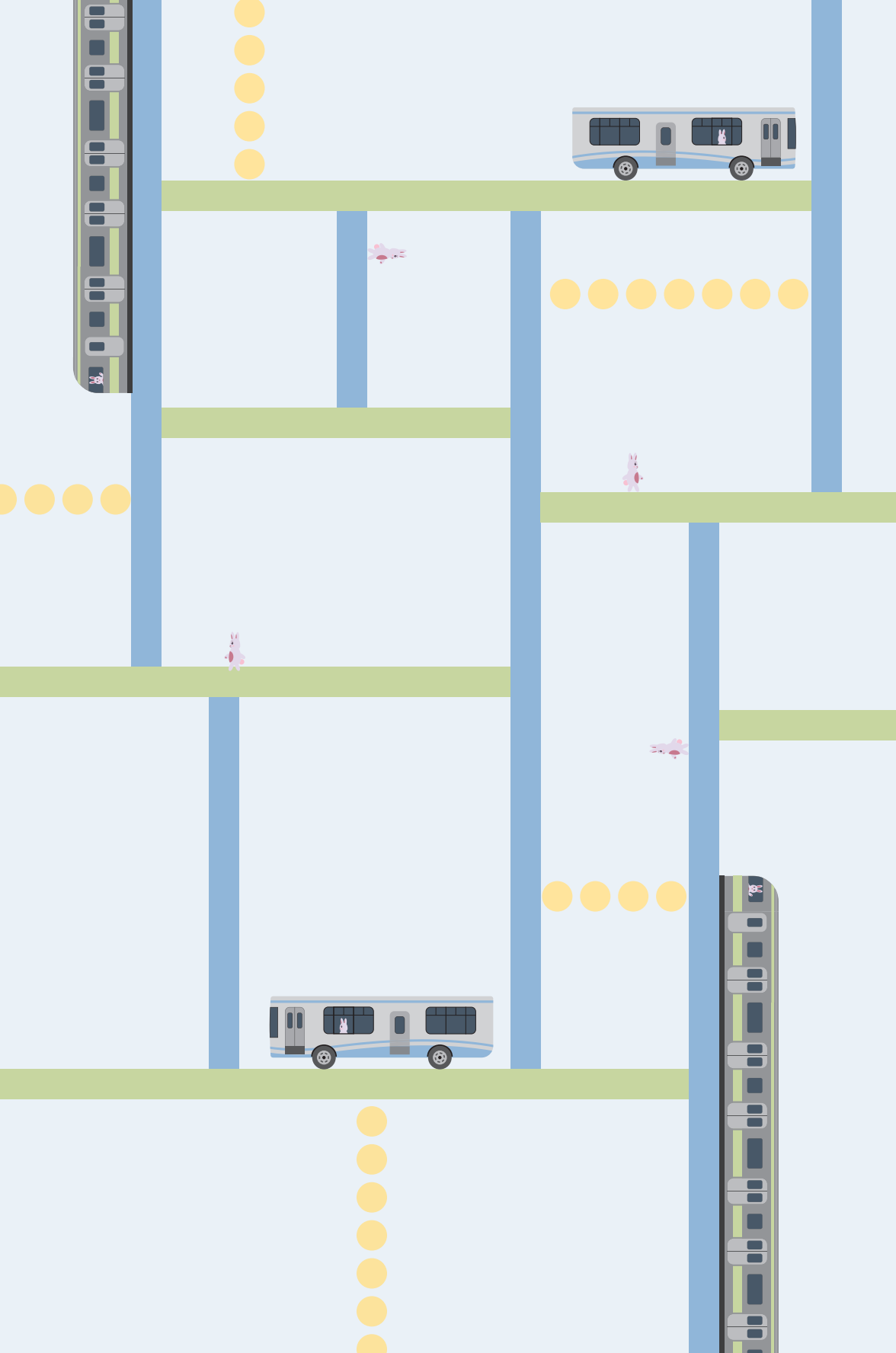




A Visitors Guide  
to Transport in  
**JAPAN**

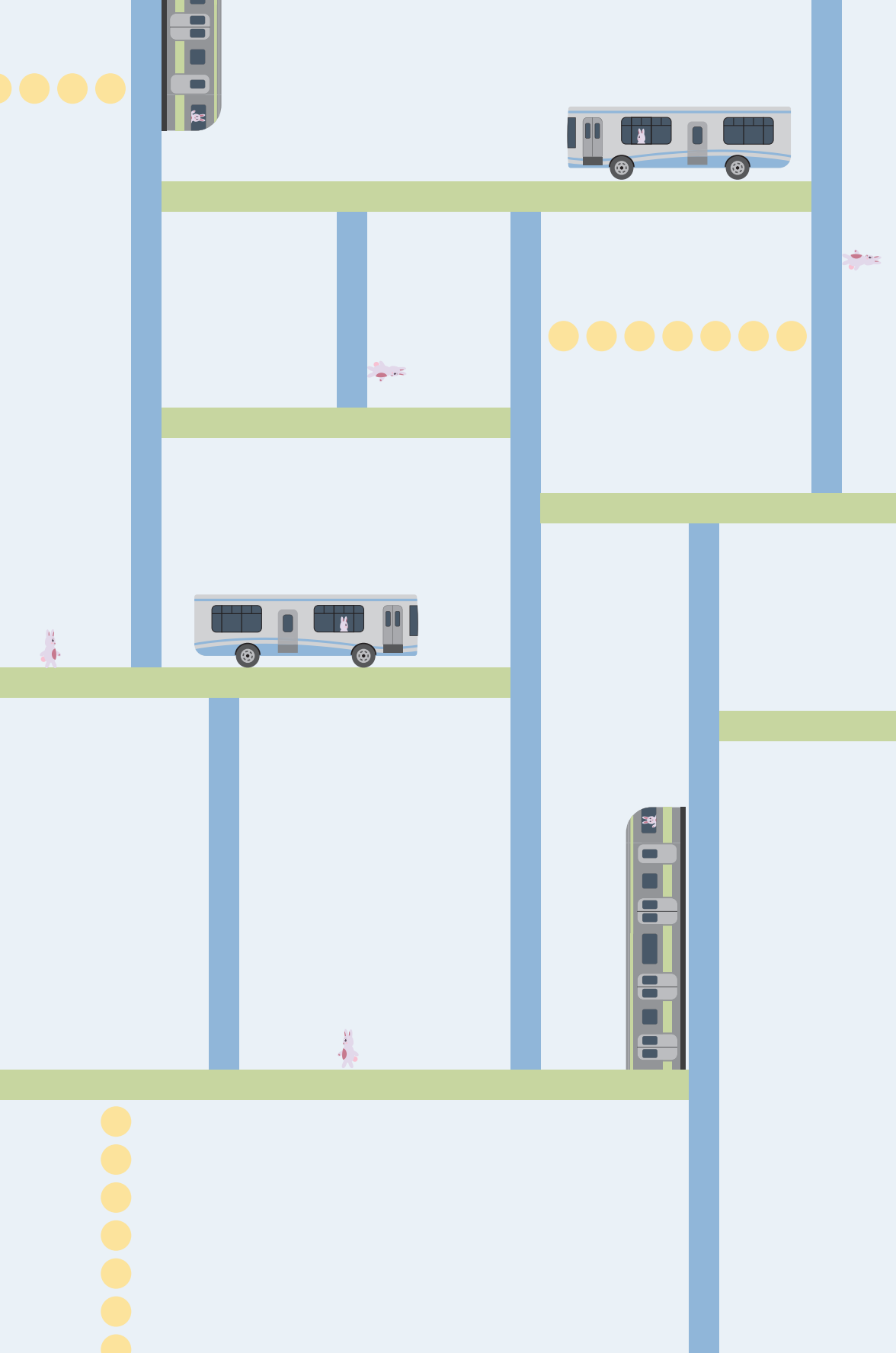
Sydney Wood





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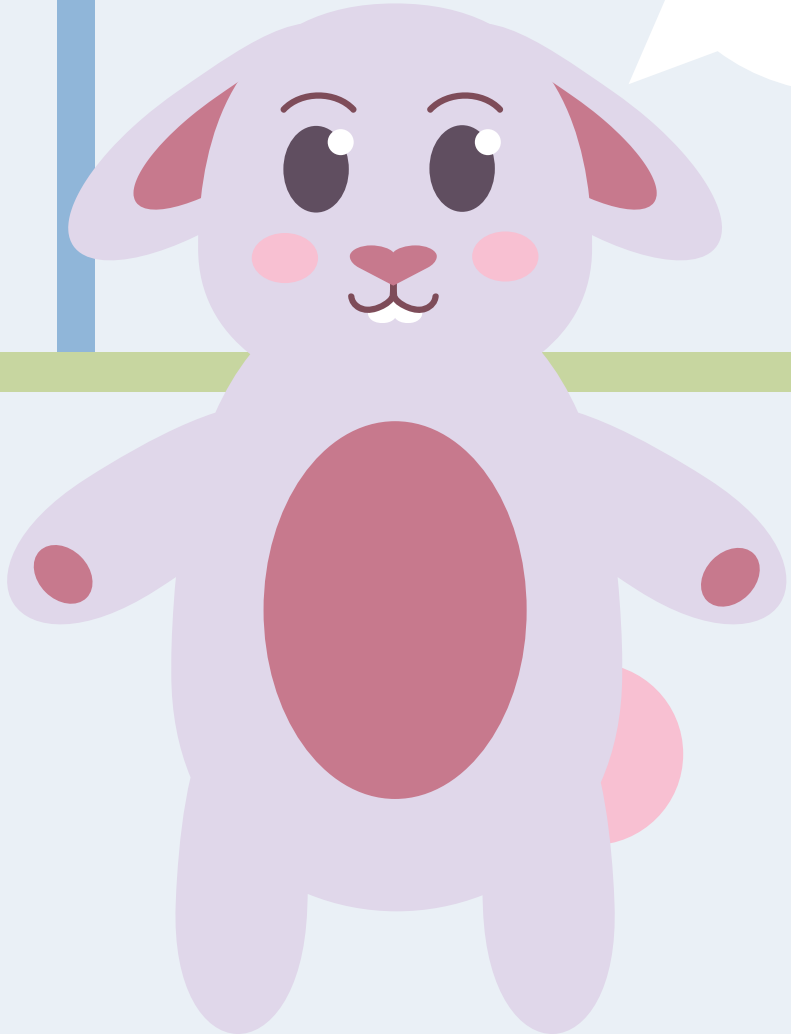
# INTRODUCTION

After traveling in Japan, I came to realize not only how integral public transportation is for moving through space, but also how it brings us all together. While it may not always be regarded as the most glamorous form of travel, it allows us to share parts of our journey with others, regardless of where we're from or where we're going. Given that I found public transit to be not only a crucial part of getting around, but also a meaningful way to engage with a community of people, I was inspired to create this publication to help others navigate these systems. These suggestions primarily are related to the train systems, but also include some information regarding other modes of transport. Additionally, they are drawn from my own experiences, particularly navigating in and around Osaka, Nara, Kyoto, and Tokyo.





This section includes suggestions relating to all forms of transportation.



# GENERAL INFORMATION

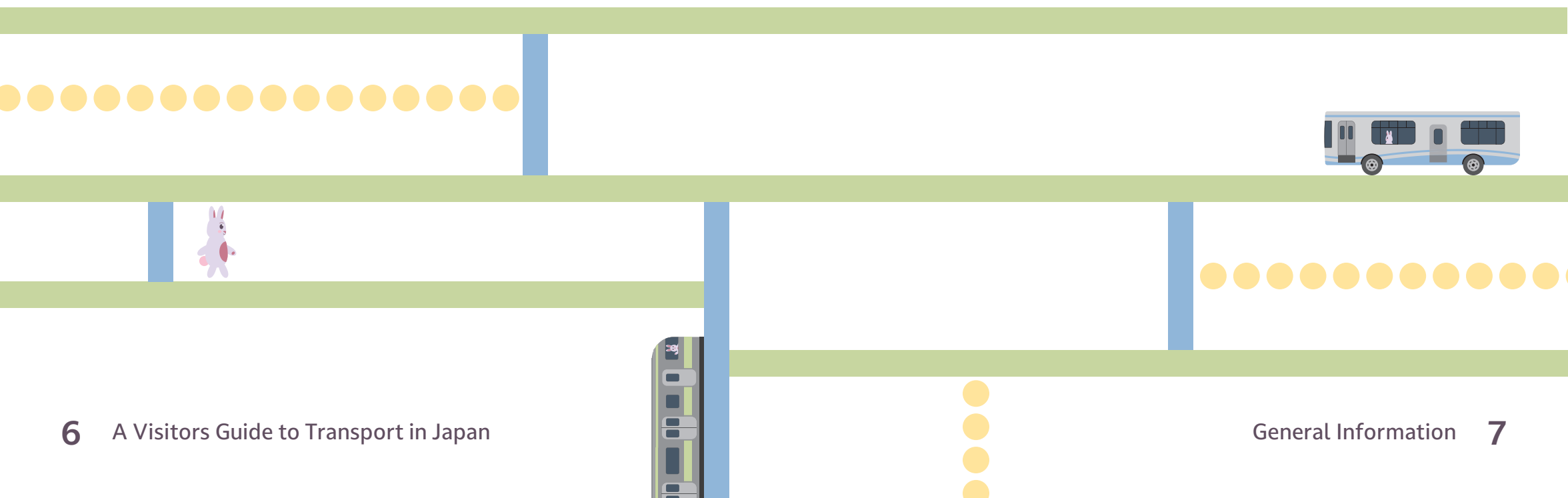


# DOWNLOAD GOOGLE MAPS

First and foremost, having a reliable way to map out routes and assist with navigation is essential when exploring a new place. Whether you're figuring out walking directions, identifying the correct train stops, organizing transfers between different modes of transportation, or simply checking how far away something is, a dependable, easy to use navigation tool needs to be your top priority. While there are several options available, such as Apple Maps or Waze, I've found Google Maps to be the most versatile overall, offering reliable guidance for everything from a short walk down the street to a lengthy train ride.

# PLAN ROUTE IN ADVANCE

Always plan your route in advance and try to get a general sense of where you need to go. Taking the time to map things out not only gives you a clearer idea of how long your journey will take, but also helps you build in extra time, which is important as navigating a new place often takes longer than expected. In fact, already knowing where you need to go can also help to limit the amount of time it takes you to get to a location given that it allows for a smoother, streamlined process. Google Maps, for example, is incredibly useful for this!



# GET THE DIGITAL SUICA CARD

Whether you're taking trains, buses, or other forms of transit, the Suica card is one of the most useful tools for navigating Japan's public transportation system. Adding the Suica app to your phone and linking it to your digital wallet makes moving from stop to stop significantly easier and more convenient. Just as important is keeping track of your balance. Checking your funds and topping up the card before heading out for the day can save you from unnecessary delays or stress at the station. And if you happen to load more than you need, the Suica card is also accepted at almost every local convenience store.

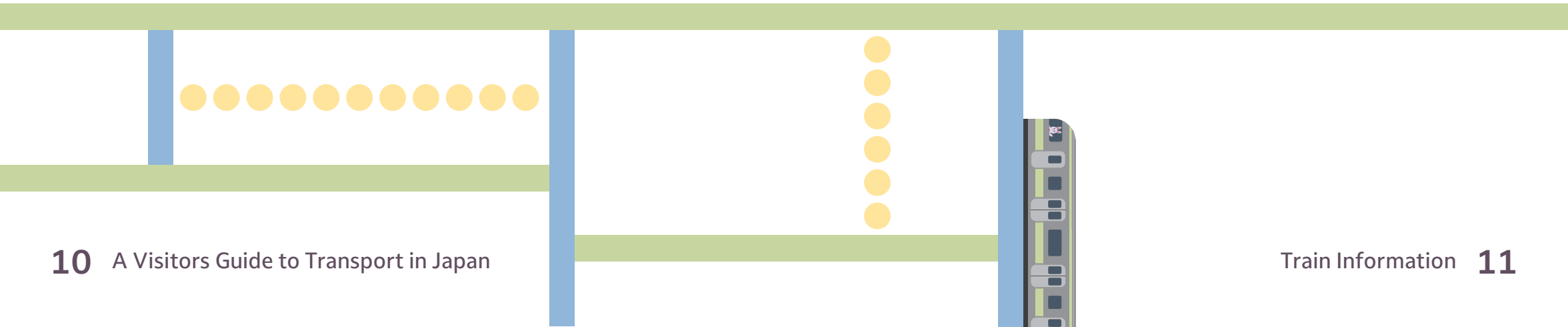
# TRAIN INFORMATION

# LOCATE LOCAL TRAIN STATIONS

Find the train stations closest to your location and take time to get to know them, as you will likely be using them frequently. Having a clear understanding of your starting point will benefit you throughout your travels. Additionally, be prepared to learn which trains you can take from each station. Similar to many public transit systems, not every train runs from every station. Depending on your destination and the line you need, you may need to use several different stations in your area. Familiarizing yourself with the primary stations you'll frequent will help you feel more confident and ready to navigate your daily journeys with ease.

# PAY ATTENTION TO SIGNAGE

Pay close attention to the signage in stations, especially when it comes to exits, train locations, and transfer points. While tools like Google Maps are incredibly helpful for overall navigation, sometimes the most reliable way to ensure you're on the right path within a station is to rely on the direct visual information around you. Most signs incorporate visual elements such as arrows to help guide you, even if you are unable to read the text. Be sure to know the name of your destination and the train line you need, and follow the directions accordingly. Train lines are also color-coded, offering an additional visual cue to help you navigate the signage with ease.



## CONFIRM THE TRAIN TITLE

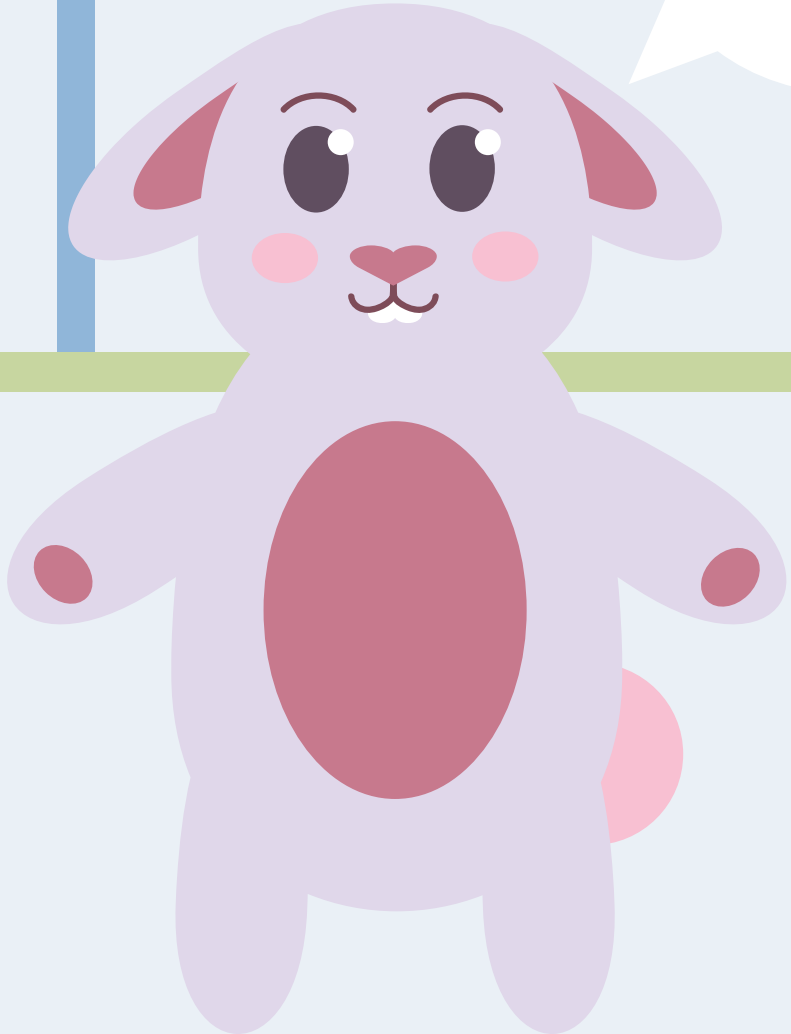
Before getting on the train, confirm that the title on the screens matches the one you're looking for. These screens are typically located near the front of the train, both on the sides and directly on the front. Many train lines feature specialty trains, such as express services, which may skip certain stops. So, it's important to make sure you're boarding the type of train you need. Google Maps can also be helpful in this situation, as it allows you to cross-check projected arrival times with what you're seeing at the station, which is especially useful if you're unable to clearly see the train's signage. If you do accidentally miss a train because you aren't sure, losing a few minutes is usually a much better alternative than ending up in the wrong location!

## WATCH STOPS ON-BOARD

As you are riding on the train, make sure to keep an eye on what station you're at and how close you are to your stop. Depending on how new the train car is, the interior set-up may vary slightly, but there is almost always a screen, which is typically located above the doors, that shows your current stop as well as the upcoming ones (if you don't see your stop right away, don't panic! These screens usually display only the next few stations, so yours may simply not be listed yet). An alternative to using these screens is, once again, checking your progress on Google Maps as you ride. It can be another reliable way to keep your trip on track.



This section includes suggestions about bus travel, walking, and taxis.



# OTHER TRANSPORT INFORMATION



# HOLD ON TIGHT IN THE BUS

While on the bus, take care to make sure you are either sitting or holding onto something tight! Overall, the public bus experience in Japan is relatively similar to the experience you would have in most other parts of the world. This to say, the ride is not always the most smooth given the nature of the vehicle having to navigate streets and traffic. It is best to make sure you are prepared for the occasional jostle so as to avoid bumping into others as much as possible. Expect to share some personal space with fellow passengers, much like during a busy train ride.



# FIND WALKING LANDMARKS

Identifying simple 'landmarks' as you walk can help you to familiarize yourself with the area. Being able to navigate back to your accommodation from a nearby restaurant or locate the closest convenience store without relying on your map can make a big difference. It allows you to not only move more efficiently, but also to feel more comfortable in the area, and to conserve some phone battery. Even if you're only visiting for a day or spending an afternoon shopping, having a basic mental map of where you are offers peace of mind. Landmarks like distinctive street signs, storefronts, or buildings can be especially useful in helping you get your bearings.



## DOWNLOAD A TAXI APP

While it is likely that you will be able to get around entirely by walking or utilizing public transportation such as trains or buses, it is a good idea to have one of the taxi apps widely used in Japan, such as Taxi GO or DiDi, downloaded in advance. This can be especially helpful if you are unable to reach a particular location efficiently or happen to miss the final train of the day. Having the app already installed on your phone spares you the stress of setting it up in a moment of urgency, and even if you never end up needing it, simply having it on hand offers significant peace of mind.



## FINAL THOUGHTS

The purpose of this guide is to provide information and suggestions to help readers feel more prepared to navigate transportation, specifically public transit, in Japan. My hope is that, after reading, the idea of getting around will feel less intimidating and that this familiarity will lead to greater comfort in these spaces. To round out the experience, I'd also like to offer a list of useful vocabulary related to transportation and travel. The following provides hiragana notation.

Train station/station えき eki (eh-key)  
Bus stop ばすてい basutei (bass-oo-tae)  
Here ここ koko (koe-koe)  
There そこ soko (soe-koe)  
Where どこ doko (doe-koe)

