

Seibu Ikebukuro Line

1. Network overview

a. General overview

The Seibu Ikebukuro Line is a 57.8 km (35.9 mi) long passenger railway in Western Tokyo, belonging to the Seibu Railways Company, a Japanese private railway company.

It links Ikebukuro station, one of the most important transport hubs in central Tokyo and in the world, and Chichibu, a mountain town in central Japan and an important touristic destination. It serves a large part of the western Tokyo suburbs, one of the most populated residential areas of the city. As such, it is one of the most crowded commuter lines in the Greater Tokyo area, and it went through many modifications to handle a large number of trains and various services during rush hours.

It is entirely double-tracked between Ikebukuro station and Hanno Station (the busiest section of the line), as is the Seibu Yurakucho line, a short bypass which connects Nerima Station with the city subway network.

There also is a four-track section between Nerima Station and Shakuji-Koen Station which allows faster trains to easily overtake slower trains. The Seibu Sayama line and the Seibu Toshima Line (branches) are single-tracked.

Beyond Hanno:

The portion between Hanno Station and Agano station is still called “Ikebukuro Line”, while the portion from Agano to Seibu-Chichibu is called “**Chichibu Line**”. Nevertheless, the shuttle operation is only between Hanno and Seibu-Chichibu. This portion serves a mountainous area with very light traffic, apart from holidays (as Chichibu is a fairly popular sightseeing spot). The area is then served by extra special services through from/to Ikebukuro station.

It is mostly single-tracked (apart from the stations). A few trains are connected to the Chichibu Railway, a private company serving Chichibu City. Those are split in two carriage sets at Yokoze Station; the first carriage goes to Seibu-Chichibu Station, then reverses and goes towards Mitsumineguchi Station; the other carriage goes directly through towards Nagatoro Station.

b. Branch lines

Branches from the main line are generally given separate names in Japanese railways. Here are the different denominations:

- The **Seibu Yurakucho** Line is a small 2.6 km (1.6 mi) underground branch between Nerima Station and Kotake-Mukaihara Station on the Yurakucho and Fukutoshin subway lines. It is used as a bypass to the subway lines, on which some Seibu trains run through to / from Central Tokyo and Yokohama. It is not operated separately in regular service, although some early morning and late evening trains start from / terminate at Kotake-Mukaihara Station.

- The **Seibu Toshima** Line is a 1 km (0.6 mi) single track small branch from Nerima Station to Toshimaen Station, which mostly serves the Toshimaen amusement park. All trains serving this line are local trains that run between Toshimaen Station and Ikebukuro Station on the main line. The first morning train and the last evening train start / terminate at Nerima Station in regular service.
- The **Seibu Sayama** Line is a 4.2 km (2.6 mi) single track branch between Nishi-Tokorozawa Station on the main line and Seibu-Kyujomae Station. It mainly serves the Seibu-Kyujo (Seibu Baseball Stadium) and an amusement park nearby, also belonging to Seibu. Unlike the other branches, it is mainly operated as a shuttle in regular service, with a few off-peak trains running through from / to Ikebukuro or Tokorozawa stations. Extra through trains are added during stadium events, some of them being connected to the subway network via Kotake-Mukaihara station, and to the Seibu Shinjuku line through Tokorozawa station.

c. Stations layout

All stations on the line and its branches have at least two tracks (excepted Higashi-Hanno). On the single track sections, double-tracked stations are for crossing, and also for overtaking on the Hanno – Seibu-Chichibu section.

Some stations have particular layouts for terminating trains and overtaking:

Ikebukuro: The main terminus has 4 tracks ending in the station, with one platform on each side, one for boarding and one for exiting. The westernmost track is longer than the others and has only one platform for both purposes; it can hold two trains in the same time. The most backward part of the track calls at “Tokkyu platform” (or “T platform”) and is used all day for limited express trains. The remaining of the track calls at platform #7, which is only used by a few regular trains during peak hours.

Higashi-Nagasaki: The station has two extra tracks on each platform side. These are used to retain the local trains when faster trains need to overtake them. However, local trains use the central tracks when there is no overtaking train.

Kotake-Mukaihara: Trains through to and from Seibu line can only use the two central tracks.

Toshimaen: Due to the light traffic, only track #2 is used most times. Track #1 is only used by trains during rush hours.

Nerima: The station has four tracks calling at two platforms. The middle ones are used by trains from and to Ikebukuro, while the outer ones are used by trains connecting to the subway lines via the Seibu Yurakucho Line. The station also has also two outer express tracks without platforms, used by services skipping Nerima station.

Nerima – Shakujii-koen section: The central tracks are only used by local trains, while the faster trains always use the two outer tracks for overtaking.

Shakujii-Koen: The central tracks are normally always used by local trains (and sometimes by semi-express and express trains), on which they are frequently retained to allow faster trains to overtake them. Trains starting / terminating at Shakujii-Koen also have to use the central tracks to access sidings.

Hoya: The westbound platform has two tracks; the outer one (#1) is used by trains towards Hanno, while the central one (#2) may be used in any direction, mainly for services terminating at this station. Some limited express trains can overtake slower trains in this station towards Hanno; slower trains are then retained on track #2. Some trains terminating and reversing at Hoya station use track #2 without going to the sidings, mainly during off-peak times.

Hibarigaoka: Like Higashi-Nagasaki, the outer tracks may be used for slower trains to allow faster trains to overtake them using the central tracks. On special events, some trains start / terminate at this station, but it cannot be used for reversing trains on normal service, as it doesn't have any crossover switch nor sidings. In this case, trains are reversed at Hoya station.

Kiyose: Main tracks are tracks #1 and #3, and are always used by faster and overtaking trains. Trains terminating in this station use track #2 and #4, as well as trains waiting to be overtaken. A few trains ending in this station go directly on track #2 without going to the sidings, especially during rush hours.

Tokorozawa: The westbound platform has two tracks; the outer one (#5) is used by regular trains, while all limited express trains, all trains terminating at this station, and trains starting at this station towards Hanno use track #4. Bypasses exist between the Seibu Ikebukuro and Seibu Shinjuku lines, which are sometimes used during special stadium events.

Nishi-Tokorozawa: The northern part (tracks #3 and #4) is used for main line services, while the two southern tracks (#1 and #2) belong to the Sayama branch. They are completed with a single-track siding towards Tokorozawa. The Sayama branch shuttle only uses track #2 on normal service, while track #1 only serves for a few trains, mainly those running from Seibu-Kyujomae to Ikebukuro during off-peak hours. The platform is closed at other times.

Seibu-Kyujomae: The station has 6 tracks ending in the station so as to park many trains in a time during special events, but regular services only use the #1 track (and the #2 track on weekday off-peak service).

Kotesashi: Main tracks are tracks #2 and #4. Overtaken trains and trains terminating / starting at this station use platforms #1 and #3. A few trains ending in this station go directly on track #1, without going to the sidings.

Irumashi: Limited express trains towards Hanno use track #2, which has a special extra platform. Central tracks are used for normal service and side tracks for the few waiting trains.

Bushi: The central track without platform is not used in normal service. It may be used to park or retain empty trains at certain times of the day, however. On special events, it is also used to reverse trains starting / terminating at Irumashi Station.

Hanno: The northernmost track (#5) is used by limited express trains. Trains from / to Ikebukuro usually use tracks #1 and #4, while the central track (#3) is usually used for trains from / to Seibu-Chichibu and through trains between Ikebukuro and Seibu-Chichibu (Express and rapid express trains).

d. Depots and sidings

Ikebukuro: The station has two parking locations on side track, used during the midday off-peak and accessible from #7 and T tracks. All other trains run without passengers to other depots with better capacity (Hoya or Kotesashi).

Shakujii-Koen: The station has two parking tracks, which can accommodate one 10-car train each. They are used for reversing in normal service but also serve as parking locations during the night.

Hoya: A small siding split in two parts, with a total of 8 parking locations that can mostly accommodate 8-car trains only. Most local trains are parked there and start / end at Hoya station; however, the limited capacity of the siding leads to park some trains at Kotesashi instead.

Kiyose: The siding track is used for reversing in normal service, but it can also accommodate one 10-car train during the night.

Tokorozawa: There are two siding tracks, one of which is used for reversing trains, while the other one can be used to park extra trains at various times of the day.

Kotesashi: The main depot of the entire line, which can accommodate about 30 full-length trains. It also hosts the main maintenance bay of the entire Seibu network and a train washing machine. Most trains start at Kotesashi station in early mornings and go back there at the end of the service.

Sayamagaoka: The station has a small depot on the south side with a parking track that can accommodate one 10-car train during the night. This train is brought from / to Kotesashi station.

Hanno: The station has sidings that can accommodate three 10-car trains, but aren't used during regular service.

Musashigaoka: The second biggest depot of the line, which can accommodate about 12 trains, also with a maintenance bay. It is located near a mountain between Koma and Higashi-Hanno stations. The trains parked in this depot are usually brought non-stop from / to Hanno station.

Yokoze: A small depot that can accommodate 7 trains. It is usually used to park Limited Express trains and trains from the Seibu-Chichibu line.

2. Regular service

a. Service Pattern

The whole line is served by eight different types of trains. Here are their descriptions, from the slowest to the fastest:

Local (各停 *Kakutei* or 各駅 *Kakueki*)

These trains call at all stations. Local trains on the main section usually run between Ikebukuro and Toshimaen or Hoya, with a few ones also terminating at Shakujii-Koen, Kiyose, Tokorozawa or Kotesashi. In the midday off-peak, one train per hour runs the entire section from / to Hanno and one train per hour runs through the Sayama Line from / to Seibu-Kyujomae. Most trains going through the subway lines via Kotake-Mukaihara are local.

Semi Express (準急 *Junkyū*)

These trains are operated all day, with usually two or three trains per hour in each direction. They are mainly operated between Ikebukuro and Tokorozawa or Kotesashi, with some trains going as far as Hanno (especially at off-peak times). A few of them are interconnected to the subway lines, especially on rush hours. On weekends, some trains run through from Ikebukuro to Seibu-Kyujomae in the morning off-peak, and some from Seibu-Kyujomae to Ikebukuro in the late afternoon.

Commuter Semi Express (通勤準急 *Tsūkin Junkyū*)

These trains are only operated during weekdays morning rush hour from Kotesashi to Ikebukuro. These semi express trains skip the heavily used Shakujii-Koen station to avoid crowding.

Rapid (快速 *Kaisoku*)

These trains are operated during rush hours in both directions, either from / to Ikebukuro or interconnected with the subway network. A few extra trains are also operated westbound in late evenings. They mainly end in Hanno Station.

Some trains may run through the Sayama Line from / to Seibu-Kyujomae on baseball match days.

Express (急行 *Kyūkō*)

These trains are operated all day between Ikebukuro and Hanno. During weekdays evening rush hours, two trains bound for Ikebukuro start at Kotesashi station.

On weekends, two trains run from the Chichibu Railway to Ikebukuro, backing at Hanno station. Some trains may also run through the Sayama Line from / to Seibu-Kyujomae on baseball match days.

Commuter Express (通勤急行 *Tsūkin Kyūkō*)

These trains are only operated during weekdays morning rush hour in the eastbound direction, from Hanno to Ikebukuro. They call at some heavily used stations skipped by the regular express trains, and skip Hibarigaoka Station instead.

Rapid Express (快速急行 *Kaisoku Kyūkō*)

These rapid trains only stop at the main stations and are operated during midday off-peak; all those trains run through the subway network. They start and terminate either at Hanno or Kotesashi.

On weekdays, during the morning rush hour, two trains are also operated from Hanno to Ikebukuro. On weekends, two trains run in the morning from Ikebukuro through to Seibu-Chichibu and then to the Chichibu Railway. One train is operated in late afternoon from Seibu-Chichibu to Ikebukuro. All trains from / to Ikebukuro skip Nerima Station.

Limited Express (特別急行 *Tokubetsu Kyūkō* or 特急 *Tokkyū*)

These fast trains with reserved seats are operated all day, every half hour at peak hours and every hour at off-peak times, to and from Hanno or Seibu-Chichibu. Except at Tokorozawa station, they call at special platforms as an extra fee is needed to board them. On weekends, the first westbound train starts from Tokorozawa Station.

Some extra trains are added on baseball match days to serve Seibu-Kyujomae station.

b. Rolling stock

(See

<http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E8%A5%BF%E6%AD%A6%E6%B1%A0%E8%A2%8B%E7%B7%9A#.E4.BD.BF.E7.94.A8.E8.BB.8A.E4.B8.A1>)

Seibu trains

Seibu 10000 stock “Red Arrow” (1993): 7-car carriages for limited express trains, with reserved individual seats. One train, called “Red Arrow Classic”, has a cream and red livery.



Seibu new 2000 stock (1977): 8-car carriages and 2-car carriages, that can be coupled together to form 10-car carriages.



Seibu 3000 stock (1983): Can be operated either in 4-car or 8-car carriages. Withdrawn from service by December 2014. One train had a special *Galaxy Express 999* livery.



Seibu 4000 stock (1988): These trains are mainly operated between Hanno and Seibu-Chichibu as they are equipped for longer fares, with lavatories and more seats. They can either be operated in 4-car or 8-car carriages. They are also used for express and rapid express trains running between Seibu-Chichibu and Ikebukuro on weekends.



Seibu 6000 stock (1992): 10-car carriages, the only ones able to run through the subway lines.



Seibu 9000 stock (1993): 10-car carriages.



Seibu 20000 stock (2000): Either 8-car and 10-car carriages.



Seibu 30000 stock “Smile train” (2008): 8-car carriages and 2-car carriages, that can be coupled together to form 10-car carriages.



Trains from other railway companies

These rolling stocks belong to the subway network or to other companies interconnected with the subway network, and can run on the Seibu lines.

Tokyo Metro 7000 stock (1974): Either 8-car and 10-car carriages.



Tokyo Metro 10000 stock (2006): Either 8-car and 10-car carriages.



Tokyu 5000 stock and 5050 stock: 8-car carriages (5000 & 5050) and 10-car carriages (5050). Not used on the Yurakucho subway line.



Yokohama Rapid Transit Y500 stock (2004): 8-car carriages. Not used on the Yurakucho subway line.



Pietro Rei, 2016