

# JRTIR

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**FEATURE: Railways and Air Transport**

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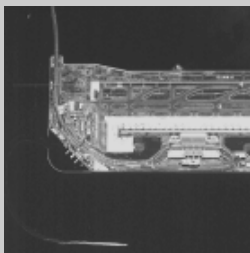
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Aerial view of Kansai Airport's terminal  
area with double-deck road/rail bridge  
crossing Osaka Bay  
(Kansai International Airport Co., Ltd.)

## Editorial

### Can Narita Be a Hub Airport?

For travellers living in most provincial cities in Japan, the easiest and fastest way from their local airports to the USA or Europe is flying not to Tokyo's Narita Airport, but to Seoul's Kimpo International Airport in South Korea and to transfer there to an intercontinental flight. Because of its very limited capacity, Narita cannot accept many domestic flights and Haneda, the domestic airport, is too far from Narita, requiring hours to make the transfer. Although Narita has good rail links with central Tokyo, no long-distance intercity trains call at the airport, making access from the provinces very difficult. The newly opened Kansai International Airport near Osaka can accept more domestic flights than Narita, but it also lacks an intercity rail link. Narita and Kansai are ceding their roles as Japan's hub airports to Seoul and Japan's airlines may eventually suffer from the decline of their main international airports.

By contrast, some European airports such as Frankfurt, Zurich, and Geneva have links with both suburban and intercity railways. In particular, Paris Charles de Gaulle airport is linked with TGV high-speed trains, enabling substantial cuts in journey times to provincial towns. The Aéroport de Paris and the SNCF clearly realize that a hub airport must serve both nearby cities and provincial towns nationwide. Frankfurt Airport will soon offer ICE connections. London's airports have no such connections with intercity rail services, but British Airways' recent stake in Eurostar and the Channel Tunnel rail link suggests the importance of links between airlines and intercity trains.

The value of air-rail cooperation should be reassessed to create a better future for Japan's declining airports and ailing airlines.

T. SUGA

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