

JRTR

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Feature

Railway Timetables

- The Story of Foreign Language Timetables in Japan
- Thomas Cook Timetables—Covering the World
- The Tale of One Thousand Timetable Issues

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Montage of timetables from around the world,
past and present (Original photographs
provided by authors of this issue)

Editorial

Timetables are Manuals for Using Railways

The Railway Museum in Saitama City is currently (2 June 2009) holding an exhibition of railway timetables created to celebrate the publication of the 1000th issue of JTB's monthly timetable in May this year. Nearly all 1000 covers of JTB's timetables are on display but a few are missing here and there. Although we might have thought JTB would surely have a full set, old timetables proved to be excellent fuel during the hard days of WWII. After all, keeping old timetables after the schedule changes just increases the chance of missing the train, making old timetables fairly useless. As a result, almost nobody except collectors and train hobbyists saved timetables and most copies remaining today were just ones people forgot to throw away. The exhibition offers a chance to see how timetables, which were an integral part of life, changed over time as well as the effort put into making them readable. These 'hidden bestsellers' were printed by the millions and show great diversity; besides serving their main function as timetables, they also served as travel magazines introducing tourist destinations, as advertisements for inns, and even as quiz books through the postwar recovery and high economic growth periods. Timetables have probably been such a large part of Japanese life because railways have been a universal nationwide mode of transport. Just like today's close relation between computers, mobile phones and user's manuals, easy-to-use timetables are essential for rail travellers and helped promote railway use. In this sense, they have played a major role in the growth of railways.

K. Aoki

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