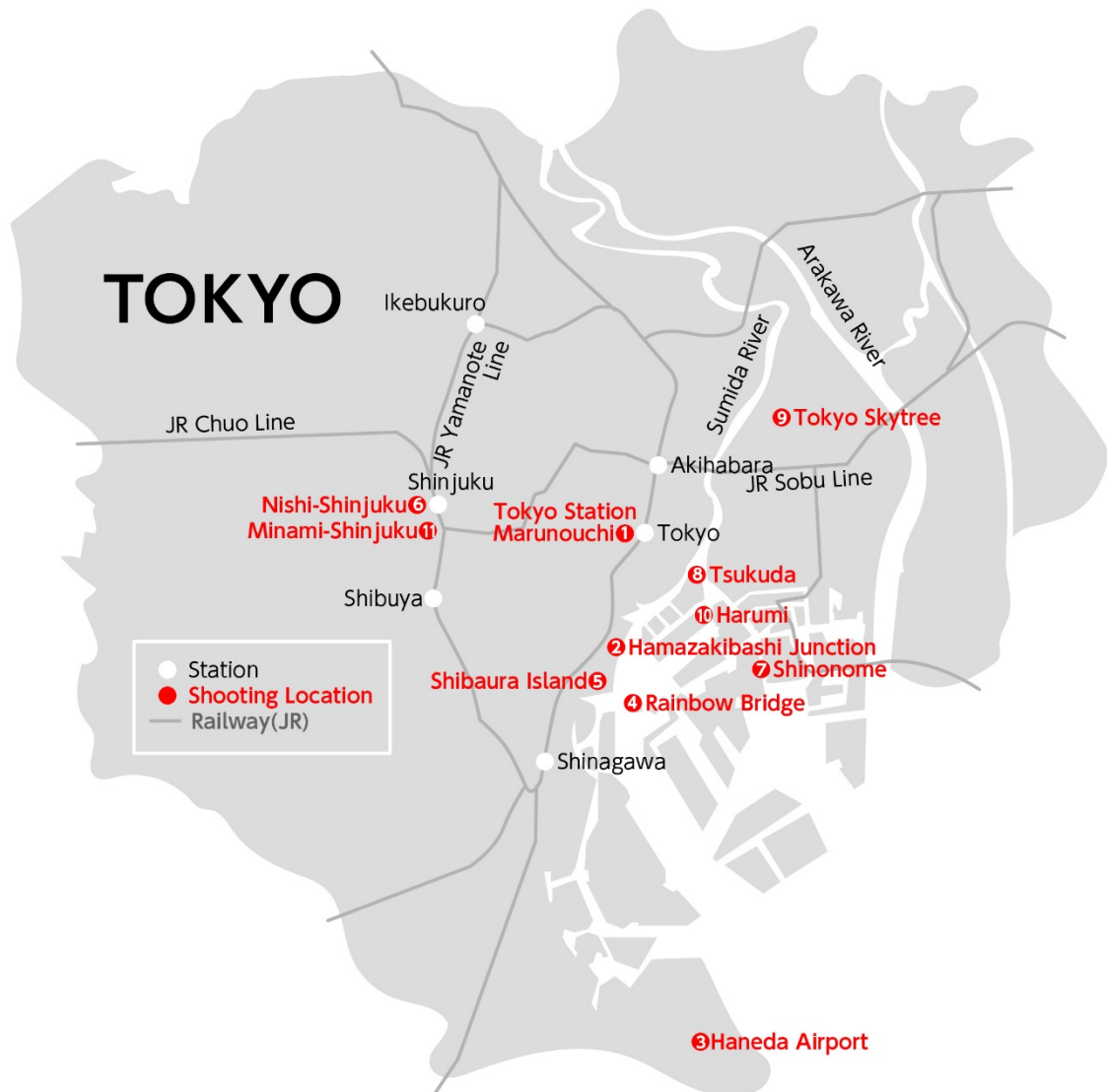


Photographing the Tokyo Twilight with the Time-Lapse Technique



Video: <https://youtu.be/P7Of12mJATA> (With sound)



Tokyo Twilight

Tokyo is one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world. Its development over the past few decades has been amazing. By around 2000 Tokyo had more than 100 buildings rising more than 100 meters in height. Its accelerated growth toward 2020 has been especially awesome. There are now more than 400 such buildings. Rainbow Bridge, which has become a symbol of Tokyo Bay, was completed in 1993, and Tokyo Skytree in 2012. In the evening, the nighttime lights radiating from Tokyo's buildings, airport, stations, bridges, and other means of transportation illuminate the sprawling city brilliantly. Have you heard of the “magic hours”? These are the short periods of time, less than an hour, just before sunset and just after sunrise, when the color of the sky changes in a most beautiful way. In the evening, when the sky turns dim, office buildings and other facilities light up, and the city begins to shine. It is the time of the Tokyo twilight, the time when Tokyo begins to sparkle. The season is winter, when daytime is shortest, and lights come on early. People are still working in their offices, so most buildings have their lights switched on. It was at this time of the year that I began to photograph Tokyo using the time-lapse technique.* (Photographs taken in January 2017.)

*Time-Lapse Technique

The time-lapse technique is a method of filming whereby a series of still photos taken over a long period

of time are put together to create a video. It is also known as interval timer shooting or slow-speed photography. This method enables you to replay images taken over a long period of time in a short time, thus accelerating the action. Also, when shooting videos of night views, it is necessary to raise the ISO (International Standards Organization) sensitivity. But raising sensitivity generates noisy images (that is, rougher or grainier images), thus impairing the quality. With the time-lapse technique, since long exposure is possible, you can photograph with low sensitivity, thereby producing beautiful and noise-free images of even night views.

1. Tokyo Station

Video: <https://youtu.be/0JEfzN8lN1M>



The Marunouchi Station Building on the Marunouchi side of Tokyo Station was renovated in 2012 at a cost of 50 billion yen, reproducing its appearance at the time of its original construction in 1914. The building has two domes to the north and south and a main entrance in the middle. The beautiful interior, decorated by plaster parts and so on, is well known, but the exterior, decorated with red bricks and copperplate, is tasteful as well. The lights are all LED, and in keeping with the concept of creating a friendly atmosphere, there is a lot of soft indirect lighting. The structure is quite appropriate for this main gateway into Tokyo. The station has about 3,000 trains arriving and departing each day, and the JR lines alone carry nearly 500,000 passengers. The contrast with the many modern high-rise office buildings in the vicinity is beautiful too. When the sun falls and the station building lights up, it exudes a warmth that one feels is a little different to the lighting in the surrounding office buildings.

2. Hamazakibashi Junction

Video: <https://youtu.be/4QVAiozSyuo>





This junction on the metropolitan Shuto Expressway might well be described as the most important interconnection in Tokyo. To the north, the expressway runs in the direction of Ginza and Tokyo Station; to the west, the Chuo Expressway leads in the direction of Shinjuku and Roppongi, and the Inner Circular Route heads in the direction of Haneda and Yokohama. Traffic is always busy and at times congested. In the vicinity there are places like Shimbashi and Shiba, so this spot also is part of central Tokyo. The lights of the vehicles driving along the Shuto Expressway are beautiful. Shinkansen bullet trains frequently pass nearby. And to the side one can see the Tokyo Monorail heading toward Haneda Airport. It certainly gives you the feeling of observing a vibrant metropolitan artery.

3. Haneda Airport

Video: <https://youtu.be/G4jczdh8RQQ>



Officially called Tokyo International Airport, Haneda Airport is Japan's main airport. In 2017 it had the fourth highest number of arriving and departing passengers in the world. The number of planes taking off and landing is about 384,000 a year, which works out at approximately 1,000 a day. The number of passengers is about 66.7 million a year, or approximately 180,000 a day. At one time Haneda Airport lost its ranking as Japan's principal airport to Narita Airport (New Tokyo International Airport) in Chiba Prefecture, but it has regained the top spot following expansion made possible by land reclamation and other factors. Haneda Airport has four runways and three terminals, each of which has a rooftop observation deck looking out over the runways, so you can watch planes taking off and landing. On this day I set my camera to time-lapse mode and took pictures for about three hours, and I was amazed by the number of planes constantly taking off or floating down onto the runway. I really admire the enormous skills of the airport's staff safely controlling this huge number of aircraft.

4. Rainbow Bridge

Video: <https://youtu.be/kDWCEjz5cF8>



Perhaps many people, including myself, are not aware of the fact that the name Rainbow Bridge was decided through the solicitation of proposals from the public and the official name is actually the Port of Tokyo Connector Bridge. Rainbow Bridge has become popular as a driving spot to enjoy the wonderful views, including Tokyo Bay and the office buildings of Tokyo. They are even more beautiful when lit up after sunset. There is also a fireworks display in December. On this day, I set up my camera in Odaiba Marine Park on the opposite side. So many sightseers were gathered in the park, there were almost no gaps in the fence erected at the place for viewing the bridge. I could hear only foreign languages around me. Maybe these tourists had come from other countries

in Asia. When the imposing and dignified bridge is illuminated, it appears even more beautiful than ever.

5. Shibaura Island

Video: <https://youtu.be/g-5mZoNVyl4>



Shibaura Island is the overall name for the redeveloped area of Shibaura 4-chome in Minato-ku. Reclaimed at the beginning of the twentieth century, this island is surrounded by canals. Previously it was occupied by factories, garages, and warehouses, but redevelopment began in the latter half of the 1990s as a joint project by a large construction company and others. The nickname “Shibaura Island” dates from that time. The island consists of four zones, and several high-rise condominiums have been built. The Tokyo Monorail runs through the center of the island, but there is no station. Coupled with the lights of the monorail trains occasionally passing by, the shining skyscrapers present a magnificent sight.

6. Nishi-Shinjuku

Video: <https://youtu.be/zXjPN-h6y-A>



Just after World War II, a Shinjuku subcenter plan was drawn up with the aim of concentrating commercial and other facilities in Shinjuku. The Keio Plaza Hotel was constructed in 1971, and then numerous other skyscrapers towering more than 200 meters in height were built. High-rise buildings are no longer unusual, but at that time Shinjuku's skyscrapers stirred quite a debate, because previously it had been thought that construction was impossible in earthquake-prone Japan. The building in the forefront on the right is Cocoon Tower, a relatively new building constructed by a private vocational school. Cocoon Tower's unique design has produced a novel atmosphere in Shinjuku.



7. Shinonome High-Rise Condominium Cluster

Video: <https://youtu.be/FXgSIdPRv-0>



Located in the waterfront area of Koto-ku, Shinonome used to be the site of a large steel company's factory. In 1990 the government, public corporations, and private developers got together, and development progressed. The area is now occupied by several high-rise condominium buildings housing more than 23,000 residents in over 10,000 households. I set up my camera at the foot of the pedestrian-only Tatsumi Sakura Bridge not far from Tatsumi on the Tokyo Metro, which is the nearest station. It was just the time of the evening rush hour, so there were many people crossing the bridge and returning to their homes in the huge condominium cluster. In the distant background, together with the sunset, clouds drifted across the sky, enveloping the entire condominium cluster and producing a fantastic image.

8. Tsukuda High-Rise Condominium Cluster

Video: <https://youtu.be/GmsoGN1Atqw>



Tsukuda is the name of a town in Chuo-ku situated on a sandbar at the mouth of Sumida River, a branch of the Arakawa River flowing into Tokyo Bay. In the past Tsukuda was called Tsukudajima (Tsukuda island), since it really was an island at the river mouth, but then, after reclamation and development work, it merged with the neighboring Ishikawajima to form the present town. There are several bridges crossing Sumida River. This time I positioned my camera on Sumidagawa Ohashi bridge, which also serves the Shuto Expressway. This spot is well known among photographers as a good place for capturing the night view. On this day too, some other people had set up their tripods. From here it is possible to photograph the high-rise condominium cluster of Tsukuda together with the illuminated Eitai Bridge. The beautiful Eitai Bridge is an important cultural property built in the Edo period (1603–1868). Sometimes lit-up roofed pleasure

boats can be seen passing under the bridge. Even in Tokyo, Tsukuda is famous as a place that pioneered the building of super-high-rise housing, and it is now dotted with condominiums and commercial facilities. There are about 15,000 people in more than 7,000 households living in Tsukuda. The shapes of the buildings and Eitai Bridge strike a really good balance and make for a delightful image.

9. Tokyo Skytree

Video: <https://youtu.be/hIO0OkRb15I>



Tokyo Skytree is a radio-wave tower with commercial facilities and offices that opened in 2012 after three and a half years of construction work. At 634 meters, it is the second tallest artificial structure in the world. The plan to construct Tokyo Skytree emerged when Tokyo Tower in Minato-ku began to experience difficulties in its emission of radio waves due to the appearance of high-rise buildings in the vicinity. Since its completion, various media have carried articles recommending good spots for photographing Tokyo Skytree, and various images have been introduced, including especially the beautiful nighttime illuminations. On this occasion, I crossed Komagata Bridge from Asakusa Station on the Tobu-Isezaki Line and positioned my camera on the pavement near the foot of Asakusa-dori avenue, enabling me to capture the tower as if it were standing down there in the middle of the road. Looking at Tokyo Skytree from this distance, one again feels its huge presence as a landmark.

10. Harumi High-Rise Condominium Cluster

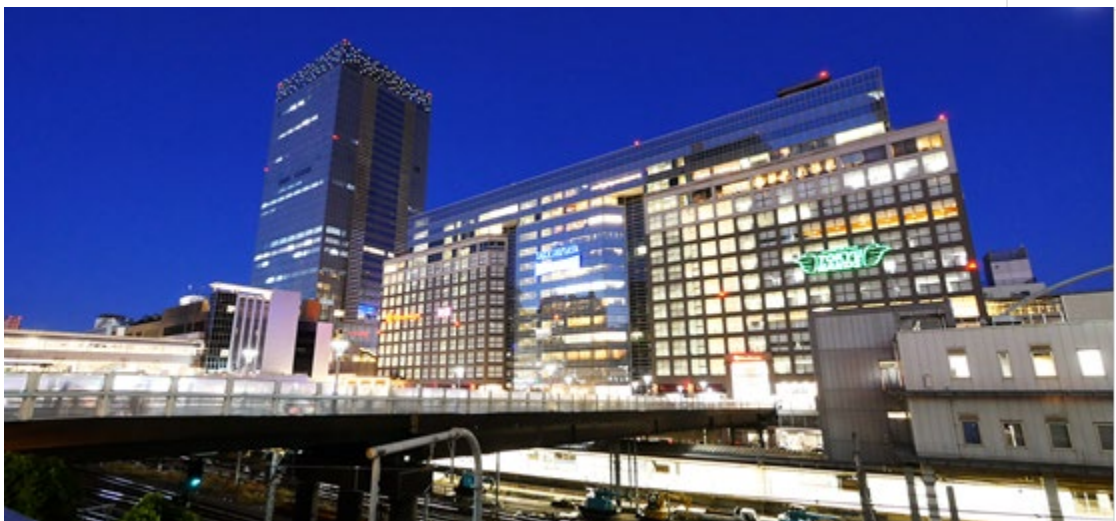
Video: <https://youtu.be/dgBkmwMLEJg>



A few minutes' walk from Toyosu Station on the subway and Yurikamome lines brings you to the promenade of Toyosu Park, laid out alongside a canal. From the promenade, you can see the whole of Harumi. When I took these photos in 2017, there were still only a few high-rise buildings in this area. There are many more now, though, following construction of the athletes' village for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. Sometimes strangely shaped water buses ply their way along the canal. It turns out that these water buses were designed by a well-known manga artist. A typically Tokyo scene!

11. Minami-Shinjuku

Video: <https://youtu.be/uc5yl-PX750>



This redeveloped area used to be a freight yard belonging to the Japanese National Railways (now the privatized Japan Rail companies). In 1996 a leading department store opened a commercial facility here, and later Buster Shinjuku (officially the Shinjuku Expressway Bus Terminal) opened as a terminal for expressway buses arriving in and departing from the Shinjuku area. Office buildings and commercial facilities have also opened near these two facilities, so the south side of Shinjuku has undergone a wholesale transformation. About 1,600 expressway buses arrive at and depart from Buster Shinjuku every day, going from here to places around the country. Many people also use the commercial facilities and office buildings in Minami-Shinjuku every day. Yet another spot has been born near the Shinjuku subcenter!

Postscript

This photography made me again aware of the attractions of Tokyo. This time I employed the time-lapse method of photography, whereby the shutter clicks once every 3–5 seconds 1,000–3,000 times. So one photo session took a long time---about an hour at the shortest, and sometimes more than three hours. The camera, of course, operated automatically, but still I could not leave the spot. I could only photograph one place a day. And it was midwinter too. So setting up my tripod by a road or at the foot of a bridge to take photos required a lot of fortitude. But Tokyo was glittering. And now, in 2020, it should have been even more glittering than it was back in 2017. What an incredible turn of events. Nobody can believe what has happened. But Tokyo is sure to recover and sparkle even more than before. After all, each shining light, without doubt, is going to continue glittering powerfully into the future.

Photos and text: Arata Matsumoto, Sharata and Advise, Inc. (<http://sharata.info/>)
(Sharata supplies 4K videos of outstanding scenery in Japan so that as many people as possible can enjoy it.)