

The Rainbow Bridge, A Symbol of Tokyo

The Rainbow Bridge, which opened in 1993 as a multifunctional transportation facility connecting the sub-center¹ of the Tokyo waterfront area and the city center, celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2023.

(Text: Morohashi Kumiko)



The Rainbow Bridge, serving as a suspension bridge connecting the heart of Tokyo and the waterfront sub-center, stands as a symbolic icon of Tokyo. We spoke with an official from the Bureau of Port and Harbor to learn about the construction of the bridge.

“The Rainbow Bridge, a new symbol of the Port of Tokyo connecting the waterfront sub-center and the city center, was jointly undertaken by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and Metropolitan Expressway Public Corporation (now Metropolitan Expressway Co., Ltd). Construction commenced in January 1987, and the bridge was opened on August 26, 1993. The name ‘Rainbow Bridge’ was selected through public submissions, embodying the hopes of bridging towards the future like a rainbow. It serves an important role in facilitating the smooth operation of transportation and logistics functions, which are essential

for waterfront development in Tokyo.”

The bridge, spanning a total length of 798 meters, features a two-layer structure: the upper deck accommodates the Metropolitan Expressway, while the lower deck is designated for general roads, pedestrian walkways, and the New Transit Yurikamome² line.

“The bridge was built over the Port of Tokyo, a busy waterway for large vessels such as cruise ships. A suspension bridge design was chosen to preserve the width of the navigational route. In addition, height restrictions were put on the main towers to ensure the safety of aircraft taking off and landing at Tokyo International Airport, commonly known as Haneda Airport. Because it serves as the gateway to the sea and sky, the structure had to meet strict regulations. Additionally, the connection point on the Shibaura side takes on a loop bridge shape, as it must ensure the extension of the access road due to the surrounding



The Rainbow Bridge as seen from above

Photo: Metropolitan Expressway Co., Ltd.



The Rainbow Bridge offers a panoramic view of Tokyo's city center. The tower on the left in the center is Tokyo Tower.

Photo: Metropolitan Expressway Co., Ltd.

land use conditions and vertical gradient restrictions.”

The Rainbow Bridge is renowned for its beautiful, colored illumination. We had the opportunity to chat with Iijima Rina from the Management Planning Department of the Metropolitan Expressway Co., Ltd. to learn about the inspiration behind this captivating display. “The Rainbow Bridge’s illumination was planned in detail to establish the area as a visual icon of the waterfront sub-center. It was carefully considered from the perspectives of enhancing urban aesthetics, ensuring urban safety, and expanding the time and space of daily life. In 2020, the conversion of floodlights to LED technology was completed, allowing us to replicate the original design without modifying existing design while significantly reducing power consumption. From around 30 minutes after sunset until midnight, the entire surface of the main towers and the undersides of the bridge beams are illuminated, with the lower sections of the anchorages³ also brightly lit. The main towers are lit up in a cool white color during warmer months (April to October) and a warm white color during colder months (November to March). This, combined with the chang-

ing cable illumination (white, green, coral pink) depending on the time, adds a beautiful contrast to the nights of the Port of Tokyo.”

Iijima invites visitors to experience the captivating view of the Port of Tokyo at night, where the glowing main towers of the Rainbow Bridge blend with the bright white illumination covering the entire structure, while the cable lights add vivid contrast, changing with time and events. The pedestrian walkway beneath the bridge spans 1.7 kilometers, with current operating hours from 10:00 to 18:00. From here, visitors can enjoy views of Tokyo Tower and Tokyo Skytree, with the added spectacle of their illuminated facades during the evening hours. Starting from April, opening hours are extended from 9:00 to 21:00.

Whenever you get the chance, take a moment to enjoy

the glittering night views of the city center and waterfront area from the bridge. 



The Rainbow Bridge illuminated at night



A view of Tokyo at night from the Rainbow Bridge

1. Areas that play a role in dispersing the functions of the city center, including Shibuya, Shinjuku, Ikebukuro, the waterfront district, etc.
2. An automated guideway transit (AGT) system line that connects Shinbashi Station in Minato Ward to Toyosu Station in Koto Ward.
3. A large concrete mass located at the end of a bridge structure, designed to anchor the cables of a suspension bridge.



The distinctive loop design on the Shibaura side of the Rainbow Bridge (toward the city center)



The Rainbow Bridge is designed with width considerations to accommodate the passage of large cruise ships.