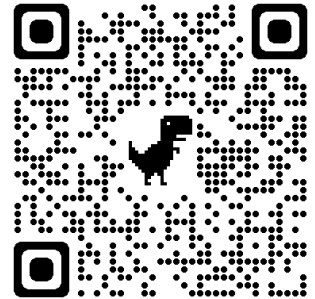


# Tokyo floats ferry service for rush-hour relief



<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/videos/20231124211355240/>

Staying with Tokyo and people on the move, some lucky people in the capital have a new way of getting to work. Yuko Fukushima is here with the maps and timetables. This is good news Yuko-san. Rush-hour trains can be really stressful.

It sure can. You know Tokyo's fame for its vast network of trains and subways crisscrossing the city and as you say it's not a lot of fun maundering the rush-hour crowds. All this persuaded the Tokyo metropolitan government to test a new route along the city's waterways. The new ferry service connects Nihonbashi, a downtown business district, with Toyosu, a high-rise residential area favored by young families. The service just started last month. It's still in testing stage. Operating hours are limited from 4pm to 8pm Tuesdays to Thursdays, so is stress free commuting really possible? I went to check it out.

One way ticket costs about three and half dollars. That's about double the amount compared to what it'd cost for the same route on a subway. The first thing I did was to start talking to other passengers. Not something people tend to do on the Tokyo subway.

Trains can be very crowded, so I think it's good that there are more choices now.

I had some errands to run in Nihonbashi. I heard about this new route, so I thought I would give it a try. The new ferry service takes about 20 minutes to get to Nihonbashi. About the same time it takes on the metro.

The view is beautiful and it's fun, so if the operator can increase the number of rides and make the fare a little cheaper, it would be great.

Sightseeing boats operate on Tokyo's rivers but until now, this form of transport was not an option for getting around town. Some renovations had to be made to make this a commuter route. Like this bridge over there. It had to be elevated 40 centimeters. Without the renovation, the boat could crash right into that bridge you can see there. My conclusion: going by boat is a very relaxing ride, nothing like what you experience on the rush-hour train. And that should be a relief for Tokyo metropolitan government officials.

They've spent the past 7 years testing ways to help ease congestion on public transportation.

We hope many people will use the ferry not only as way to avoid congestion and traffic jams, but also as a form of transportation that allows them to enjoy the ride and get some fresh air.

Wow. That's good. Not necessarily everyday commuting, but once or twice in a week still makes a big change for mental health. So, why didn't Tokyo have this kind of commuting option before?

Fair point. People going to work by boat is a common sight in some cities in the US and Europe and actually in Tokyo. It was once known as a city on the water back from around the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century, boats were used to transport people and cargo and life flourished along the banks and canals. I talked to Iwamoto Tadashi. He's an architect and also an expert on waterside real estate development. He explained why cities' water routes dwindled over the years.

I think one of the major reasons is that transportation on land became very convenient. As a result, the importance of towns along the routes that were used by boats declined compared to those along the landlines. And people saw more investment opportunities for land transportation.

That was a long time ago, so why has the local government decided to reevaluate water transport now?

Iwamoto says it relates to a wider trend of property redevelopment in Tokyo. People want new ideas of somewhere they want to live and how to get around.

It's a trend these days that towns along rivers are getting massive investments. Many buildings are being renovated and attractive commercial complexes are being constructed. And when people decide they want to improve these new sites, they start thinking of ways to transport people and goods on the water. So then it becomes a social issue of investing more for boat transportation.

So in the future, we could have more options on ways of getting around the city and not just for commuting, but it might encourage people to get out and explore Tokyo more, including overseas visitors.

Exactly and Iwamoto says boats will never replace trains and subways, especially when the weather is bad, but it's just nice to know that there is an alternative and commuting doesn't really have to be so stressful.

Source: NHK World News

**Now discuss the questions with a partner.**

1. Would you like ride a boat to work if possible? Why or why not?
2. What problems could occur with this type of commute?
3. Why do you think towns along rivers are getting "massive investments?"
4. What is the most stressful part of your commute?
5. Can you think of any other strategies to reduce rush-hour congestion?