

New Year Countdown 2026: Tokyo Dazzling With Light, Sound and Projection Mapping

TOKYO, 東京都, JAPAN, December 26, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Are you ready to ring in the New Year amid fireworks, confetti and cheers? Maybe you picture yourself reveling in New York City's Times Square, cruising around Sydney Harbor or exploring further for an unforgettable countdown to 2026.

Come to Tokyo. This megacity of 14 million has kicked off a dazzling display of light and sound at its iconic twin-towered city hall and along its ever-developing waterfront—which adds to regular seasonal light-ups—to make this holiday season something special.

One of the highlights will be a projection-mapping medley using the façade of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG) No.1 Building on New Year's Eve. Directed by globally acclaimed Japanese photographer, film director and contemporary artist Ninagawa Mika, this audio-visual creation will be the centerpiece of the "Happy New Year Tokyo 2026" event.

Adding to the excitement, virtual singer Hatsune Miku, a quartet of Sanrio's kawaii (cute) characters-Hello Kitty, My Melody, Kuromi and Go-chan and real-life Olympian breakdancer Shigekix, aka Nakarai



The iconic landmark Tokyo Metropolitan Government No. 1 Building as seen from the Citizens' Plaza



Tokyo Vice Governor Matsumoto Akiko (right) receives the "Best Overall Destination" trophy in the TOURISE Awards launched by Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Tourism (in Riyadh on November 12)

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Shigeyuki, will perform live at the TMG Citizens' Plaza as the clock ticks toward 2026.

"Happy New Year Tokyo": <https://tokyo-nighttime-project.jp/en/countdown/>

"Tokyo's entertainment scene continues to captivate global audiences with its dynamic and immersive experiences," Tokyo Governor Koike Yuriko said of her administration's tourism initiatives. "We remain committed to enhancing Tokyo's charm and hospitality, welcoming visitors from across Japan and abroad helping them create lasting memories."

'Best Overall Destination'

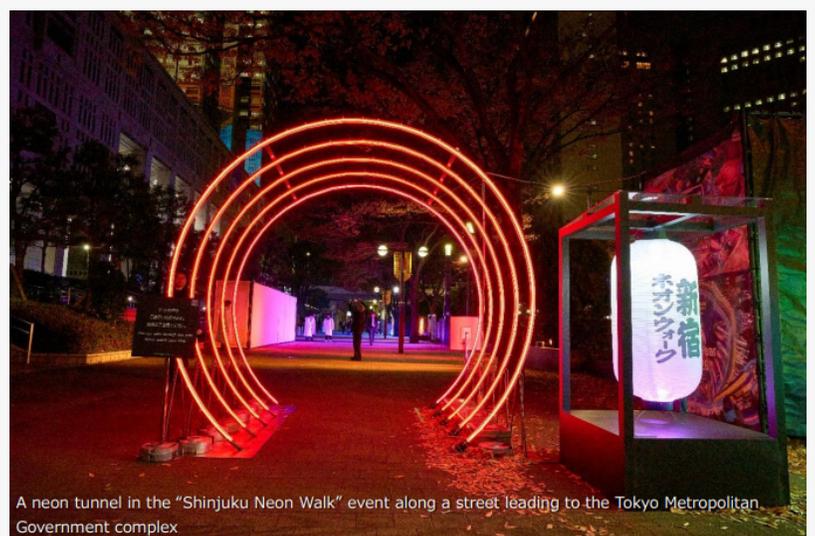
The TMG's global tourism has accelerated under the 2017 brand concept, "Tokyo Tokyo Old meets New," which aims to spur Tokyo with rich traditions and cutting-edge innovation. With the number of foreign visitors to Japan topping 30 million in 2025 to renew its record high, the Japanese capital is focused on nightlife and entertainment to boost its global appeal.

"Tokyo Tokyo Old meets New":

https://tokyotokyo.jp/home/?utm_source=tokyotokyo_ja&utm_medium=referral

Tokyo's tourism drive paid off in November when it was selected as the "Best Overall Destination" in the TOURISE Awards newly launched by Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Tourism. Tokyo also topped two other categories, Entertainment and Food & Culinary, while New York was named the Best Arts & Culture Destination, Ancash (Peru) the Best Adventure Destination, and Paris the Best Shopping Destination. "I am truly delighted that Tokyo's multifaceted appeal is being widely appreciated around the world," Governor Koike said.

Hours after the countdown event, you may have a chance to go up the 48-story TMG building and catch the New Year's first sunrise from one of its two 45th-floor observation decks. The southern deck will be exclusively opened from 6:00 to 7:30 a.m. on New Year's Day to 600 people chosen by a lottery drawing.



A neon tunnel in the "Shinjuku Neon Walk" event along a street leading to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government complex

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A sticker attached to the public telephone booths converted into OpenRoaming Wi-Fi access points

From there, you can join the streams of people making the traditional New Year's pilgrimage to Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples overnight, with the Year of the Snake turning into the Year of the Horse according to the East Asian 12-year animal zodiac. The horse is seen as a symbol of energy, speed and perseverance. This custom of pilgrimage became popular in the stable feudal period of Edo (1603-1868) when popular culture such as Ukiyo-e art and kabuki theater flourished.

Other Holiday Spectacles: Shinjuku and Waterfront

Preceding the countdown, a street leading to the TMG complex comes alive in the evening with immersive art illuminations and light-decorated food trucks in the "Shinjuku Neon Walk" event from November 27 to January 7. Shinjuku is the name of the bustling business and entertainment hub, which is home to the metropolitan nerve center.

"Shinjuku Neon Walk": <https://tokyo-nighttime-project.jp/en/neonwalk/>

The fast-growing land-filled waterfront of Odaiba morphs into an illuminated fairground at night in the "Light Walk Odaiba" event from December 4 to 27. The whole area glistens with lights covering a two-kilometer-long park, commercial complexes, hotels and railway stations—plus weekend fireworks. The Seagull Clock tower in Symbol Promenade Park plays an uptempo tune by the J-pop duo of asmi and Rinne every hour on the hour.

"Light Walk Odaiba": <https://lightwalkodaiba.jp/en/>

Looking ahead, Odaiba—which hosts the premier innovation conference "SusHi Tech (Sustainable High Tech) Tokyo" every spring—will unveil one of the world's largest fountains in its marine park next March. It jets water 150 meters high.

Back at the TMG building, the 22-month-old "TOKYO Night & Light" projection mapping show continues to wow nighttime tourists, drawing more than one million viewers since its debut in February 2024.

"TOKYO Night & Light": <https://tokyoprojectionmappingproject.jp/en/>

The nightly show has been recognized by the Guinness World Records™ as the "largest architectural projection-mapped display (permanent)."

TOKYO Night & Light has featured audio-visual pieces along the themes of Japanese culture and content ranging from the movie monster Godzilla to ukiyo-e paintings and robot anime icon Mobile Suit Gundam. Most recently, it has incorporated global soccer anime phenomenon "BLUE LOCK," demonstrating the power of Japan's content industry.



A tag worn by people who need assistance or consideration as their difficulties are not readily visible

Go to “GO TOKYO” for Anything You Want to Know

Foreign visitors can benefit from an increase in free Wi-Fi hotspots at public facilities in Tokyo. The OpenRoaming service enables seamless and secure Wi-Fi access worldwide.

In addition to OpenRoaming-enabled Wi-Fi at metropolitan and municipal facilities, about 1,500 public telephone booths in Tokyo are being retrofitted with OpenRoaming Wi-Fi access points in three years from 2025. Once registered with OpenRoaming, users can connect automatically to the service’s hotspots worldwide without re-registering.

Wondering how to buy a ticket for a sumo tournament, or looking for the most brightly illuminated streets in winter? Go to “GO TOKYO” websites for a wide-range of information on how to make the most of your experiences in the old-meets-new landscape.

Dubbed the “Official Tokyo Travel Guide,” the GO TOKYO package is run by TMG and the Tokyo Convention & Visitors Bureau. A site on Japanese manners and customs shows, for example, how to beat the heat in Japan’s hot summer. It advises the readers: “Take frequent breaks and stay hydrated.”

GO TOKYO Events and Tickets site: <https://www.tickets.gotokyo.org/en>

GO TOKYO general information site: <https://www.gotokyo.org/en/index.html>

GO TOKYO Manners & Customs Handbook: <https://www.gotokyo.org/book/en/list/2594/>

Help Mark: What Could This Mean?

Hosting two global sports events in 2025—the World Athletics Championships and the Deaflympics (an Olympic-style multisport festival for deaf people)—the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG) has further promoted public awareness among people, including foreign tourists, regarding the “Help Mark.”

The white-and-red badge means that its holder may need assistance because they have difficulties that are not readily visible. It is assigned to people who have prosthetic limbs or joints, internal health issues, or are in early stages of pregnancy.

This year, the TMG Bureau of Social Welfare has designated July 20 as the Help Mark Day. It introduced the symbol badge in 2012 as a step towards building an inclusive society. The Help Mark became a nationwide standard on that date in 2017.

A promotional poster in English prompts train and bus passengers to support Help-Mark bearers by “giving up your seat and offering assistance as needed.” “Help Mark: A little thought makes all the difference,” says the English voice-over in a YouTube video prepared by the bureau.

Help Mark:

<https://www.fukushi1.metro.tokyo.lg.jp/helpmarkforcompany/multilingual/en.html>

Help Mark PR video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PyX5dE-falw>

Food Loss: You Can Ask for a Takeout Bag

Tokyo prides itself on its diverse eating establishments offering an array of traditional dishes like sushi and tempura as well as international cuisines. "Tokyo's culinary landscape is both vibrant and diverse," Governor Koike noted, citing its status as the world's most Michelin-starred city for 19 straight years.

But on the flip side of the coin lies the problem of wasting food, now looming large as a global environmental, social and economic challenge.

Tokyo has embarked on a campaign this year to call on citizens and foreign visitors to reduce food waste at restaurants. It is in line with the TMG's sustainability goal of reducing food waste by 65 percent in 2035 from the year 2000.

Over the final two months of 2025, posters and stickers calling for "Zero Food Waste with the Spirit of Edo" have been shown at 1,054 restaurants in Tokyo. Edo, present-day Tokyo, was the seat of the Tokugawa shoguns where major life resources—clothing, food, and housing—were recycled and reused in what we may now call a circular economy.

An English sign at one restaurant calls on customers to "kindly ask the staff whether it (leftover) can be packed to take home."

A humorous haiku writing contest to promote the reduction of food waste has become a nationwide trend. Suyama Sachi, an elementary school girl, recently won a contest organized by the city office in Higashi Hiroshima, western Japan.

Her winning poem can be roughly translated into English as: "Leftover food earns five stars thanks to Mom's cooking."

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