

Tuesday 04.03.18

Tokyo Story

♥ 10 Likes



by Gerri McLaughlin

From the back of the car the Tokyo night slides by, immense and exciting it splashes my eyes with neon possibilities and shadow worlds yet to be found.

It's late when we arrive in *Senzoku*, this is downtown as the Tokyo people say, *Shitamachi*, *Yoshiwara* and *Asakusa* are only steps away. *The Seven Eleven* across the way stays open to serve the stragglers, the hungry and the lonely at the closing of the day.

The room is photographer big, a bed, a place for clothes and a low table that will make a charging station for my travelling companion Fuji San, a perfect base for my 17 day stay.

Tokyo winter is often cold and sunny with blue blue skies, it has a special light on these days and being a huge city lots of action, contrasts and juxtaposition of ancient and modern and just downright photograph-ability.

Being so huge I have a rough plan of shooting the first couple of days based around my jet lag and the walk to, jump a metro circle of *Asakusa, Okachimachi, Ueno, Senzoku*. This is part of the *Shitamachi* downtown area of Tokyo and here you will find temples, markets, shopping malls, restaurants and vibrant street life! Like all major cities it takes a couple of days to feel your way into it, the temptation is of course to shoot everything you see and there's plenty to see. After a couple of days I start to see my themes emerging, I travel with a WD Wireless Pro hard drive and can look at the shots on my iPhone in the evening with the MyCloud app, although not so much of a "shot planner" it's interesting for me to see what emerges from my subconscious as I wander the streets of the city. I work intuitively mostly and don't have a definite plan when out but here I'm interested in the meeting of ancient and modern.

The residents are cool and stylish people, I love the way Japanese people dress and express, from the fashionistas to the old ladies and men of the streets. You can work here as a street photographer, the people are on the whole not concerned with your camera, will often smile at you and a wave or a smile in return is enough to seal the deal I've yet to have any kind of confrontation in Tokyo. It's clear though in some red light districts that you have to "shoot clever or discreet" and for me as an outsider that's okay!

Alongside my daily shooting plan, I have arranged to meet some of Tokyo's Street Photography community, starting with **Naoki Iwao**, one of the movers and groovers of *Void Tokyo magazine* whose exhibition is on while I'm in town! Naoki's photos are essential Tokyo Street so to see them on the wall and in print was a real treat for me and also an inspiration to get out there and capture my Tokyo!

The very next day I spontaneously arrange to meet **Atsuya Harukawa**,

the wonders of Facebook, he sees I'm posting from Asakusa and later that day we're shooting street together round *Ueno* and *Okachimachi* with a firm arrangement to hit *Shinjuku & Shibuya* the next time. Shooting with a local photographer takes you to places you might not ordinarily find as a stranger and **Atsuya** san was very generous with his local knowledge and his time especially as it was holiday season. It's a new thing for me to shoot with other street photographers and I found it really cool and inspiring to watch how others work and approach the shots and interestingly how my own concentration improves.

Next up is **Kenichi Chiyonobu** who's work I'd been following for some years on FB, a dedicated street photographer he is without a doubt the most relaxed street photographer I have ever seen, he has his style and technique down to a focused fine art, I learn a lot in our one day of shooting in *Shinjuku* and *Okubo* especially how to take you place in the street without fearer need for explanations, it's very different from shooting in Europe, I like it!

Shinjuku and *Shibuya* are classic Tokyo venues for shooting and there is a reason, they're bright and brassy and alive with a river of people and scenes unfolding at every moment. I have to admit to being a little overwhelmed at first, it's like jumping into a river of visual and aural stimulation. I compose myself and start shooting, hours flow by as they do in Tokyo. Out and about in *Shibuya* we meet **Ash Shinya Kawaoto** also from *Void Magazine* and later on we go to shoot with **深津友成 (Tomonari Fukatsu)** san, these guys are there doing it every time they have a free moment and I realise that this kind of dedication is what is needed to really get the shots you are after, my dream of moving to Tokyo to live and work is taking shape. Every trip I learn more about myself as a photographer and a little piece of my human puzzle is put in place and I become clearer about my next aims as a street photographer, it's a real learning by doing journey for me.

If you haven't been and you have the chance to, I highly recommend Tokyo for street photography it is, in my opinion, one of the worlds greatest cities for street and this trip for me was made all the sweeter for meeting the warm, generous and dedicated photographers from their SP community, it was at once a humbling and inspiring experience.

Thank you friends and thank you Tokyo my darling city, until the next time sayonara!



The interviews and features I wrote on the Tokyo Street Photography scene are available online at [EYE-Photo Magazine](#)....

[Newer](#) / [Older](#)