

Transparent toilets are the place to go in Tokyo

21st August, 2020



Image: The Nippon Foundation

Architects in Japan are redesigning the public toilet. They have unveiled a public toilet with transparent walls, until someone locks the door. An organisation called the Nippon Foundation created a project called "The Tokyo Toilet" to make public restrooms more attractive and usable. The idea was to use innovative design to make public toilets more accessible. An official said it wanted people to feel comfortable using public toilets, "and to foster a spirit of hospitality for the next person". World-famous architects such as Tadao Ando and Kengo Kuma participated in the project. In total, 16 top designers came up with toilets that will be dotted around in 17 parks and public spaces in Japan's capital Tokyo.

The Nippon Foundation said it wanted to stop people having a negative image of public toilets. It said many people thought toilets were "dark, dirty, stinky and scary" places. It said people care about if the toilets are clean, and that "no one is secretly waiting inside". The first transparent toilets opened in a park in Tokyo's Shibuya Ward on August the 16th. They immediately became a tourist attraction with many people lining up to take photos of them, and of course to do their business. The toilet walls are transparent - you can see the white toilets and sinks from the outside. However, when the door is locked, the special film and glass walls suddenly become opaque so no one on the outside can see inside.

Sources: *asahi.com* / *forbes.com* / *archinect.com*

Writing

All public toilets should be beautiful. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

architects / public / toilet / transparent / organisation / attractive / spirit / hospitality / negative / image / dark / scary / stinky / tourist / attraction / photos / sinks / opaque

True / False

- a) Architects in Japan put a veil over some new toilets. T / F
- b) The toilet's walls become transparent when someone locks the door. T / F
- c) The designers want people to think about the next user of the toilet. T / F
- d) Sixteen different designers worked on the new toilets. T / F
- e) Many people think public toilets are scary places. T / F
- f) Some people worry about people waiting in secret inside public toilets. T / F
- g) The new toilets in Tokyo quickly became tourist attractions. T / F
- h) The walls of the toilets are made of clear plastic. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. unveiled | a. nice-looking |
| 2. created | b. non-transparent |
| 3. attractive | c. helpfulness |
| 4. hospitality | d. bad |
| 5. came up with | e. shown |
| 6. negative | f. frightening |
| 7. scary | g. wash basins |
| 8. lining up | h. made |
| 9. sinks | i. queuing |
| 10. opaque | j. thought of |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What are public toilets like in your country?
- b) What do you think of public toilets?
- c) Should public toilets be well designed?
- d) What do you think of a toilet with transparent walls?
- e) Should cities spend money on designing toilets?
- f) How comfortable are you in public toilets?
- g) How can a public toilet 'foster a spirit of hospitality'?
- h) Are public toilets better than those in chain restaurants?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. They have unveiled | a. attractive and usable |
| 2. until someone locks | b. opaque |
| 3. make public restrooms more | c. Tokyo |
| 4. foster a spirit | d. inside |
| 5. in Japan's capital | e. the door |
| 6. having a negative | f. attraction |
| 7. no one is secretly waiting | g. of hospitality |
| 8. a tourist | h. to take photos |
| 9. people lining up | i. a public toilet |
| 10. glass walls suddenly become | j. image of public toilets |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- Why do public toilets have a negative image?
- How scary do you think public toilets are?
- Would you take a photo of the transparent toilets?
- How can we make public toilets better?
- Should more money be spent on toilets for women?
- Would you like to use the transparent toilet?
- What questions would you like to ask the designers?

Spelling

- They have ulviende a public toilet
- trnntsraeap walls
- make public restrooms more vertcitata
- use nitnaeivvo design
- foster a spirit of piohiatlyts
- public spaces in Japan's lapitca Tokyo
- people having a igevntea image
- dark, dirty, stinky and yscra
- immediately became a tourist iaatonrttc
- people innlgi up to take photos
- the iacpsel film and glass walls
- suddenly become qpaoue

Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. h	3. a	4. c	5. j
6. d	7. f	8. i	9. g	10. b

Role Play

Role A – Park Toilets

You think park toilets are best. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their toilets. Also, tell the others which are the worst of these (and why): McDonald's, school or train station toilets.

Role B – McDonald's Toilets

You think McDonald's are best. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their toilets. Also, tell the others which are the worst of these (and why): park toilets, school or train station toilets.

Role C – School Toilets

You think school are best. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their toilets. Also, tell the others which are the worst of these (and why): McDonald's, park toilets or train station toilets.

Role D – Train Station Toilets

You think train station toilets are best. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their toilets. Also, tell the others which are the worst of these (and why): McDonald's, school or park toilets.

Speaking – Best Toilets

Rank these with your partner. Put the best toilets at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| • Train station toilets | • Airport toilets |
| • Street toilets | • McDonald's toilets |
| • Campsite toilets | • Park toilets |
| • Toilets in bars | • School toilets |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	T	e	T	f	T	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.