

Azabu Insights - Insight Paper from Azabu Insights Labs:



Azabu Insights Labs Project:

Where's the Yamanote?

We looked to re-visualize the train lines of Tokyo that many people feel they don't "quite" know



**Tokyo, Azabu Jyuban** - Where is the Yamanote Line? Where does it run?  
What shape is it actually?

Those are the questions we asked ourselves and then started asking many more people. We'd lived in Tokyo for many years. The people we started asking had, for many of them, lived in Tokyo their whole lives. But few could confidently say exactly where the Yamanote Line went. Some could name multiple stops; a handful could name all of them. But few felt they could really picture the Yamanote Line. Yes it was green and ran around central Tokyo. But, was it really round? Oblong? Where were the boundaries of where it ran? How close did it go to the water or to neighboring Saitama, Ibaraki? How far was it from Yokohama? They, like we, couldn't quite visually grasp it on a map. They couldn't put the Yamanote Line on a map in their minds.

There began our simple little project to visualize the trains and subways of Tokyo. We wanted to help people not just to know that "you can change at Shibuya to the Ginza Line" or that "Yurakucho is the next stop from Tokyo Station," but we wanted people to be able to visually and contextually grasp where these trains fall on a real world map. How close are they to each other, does this line run out near the bay or out near neighboring Yokohama?

**The Yamanote Line  
in Tokyo is a mystery  
to many despite  
living there,  
prompting a project  
to visualize its route.**

“*We wanted to help people not just to know that “you can change at Shibuya to the Ginza Line” or that “Yurakucho is the next stop from Tokyo Station,” but we wanted people to be able to visually and contextually grasp where these trains fall on a real world map. How close are they to each other, does this line run out near the bay or out near neighboring Yokohama?*”

Technology is a funny thing. In many ways it makes our lives more convenient and efficient. GoogleMaps has done wonders in helping us find the fastest route from Point A to Point B. But technology has the double edged sword of sometimes making us forget as well. In the Edo period many people could tell you that the Tokaido Line ran out towards Mount Ooyama, which is in the foreground of Mount Fuji, before continuing on to Hamamtsu and Osaka. Today many people may know a few stops on the Tokaido Line. But do they get the big picture?

**Technology is convenient but can make us forget the big picture. Azabu Insights Labs helps visualize Tokyo's train system.**

This project of Azabu Insights Labs has helped us, in a small way, to re-grasp a bit of our surroundings. All users now immediately know that the Yamanote Line is indeed a tall oblong green, skinny, upside down eggplant shape. It runs from Shibuya on the far west, up north towards the direction of Saitama, then heads East in the direction of Chiba, around Ikebukuro station, south towards Nippori (where the Narita Skyliner arrives) then to Ueno. From Ueno it heads down to the Tokyo Bay near Hamamatsucho, south towards Kanagawa, to the most southern point at Osaki, before continuing back North and West towards Shinjuku and Shibuya to complete the full circle.

Beyond the Yamanote-sen (Yamanote Line) we found new discoveries as we added new lines, new connections, a re-remembered connection to the city of Tokyo. We've gone from having the information underground and useful in, “getting us somewhere,” to taking a step back and, “visualizing the journey.”

“Where’s the Yamanote Line” is a free service of Azabu Insights Labs. If you’d like to try out visualizing the trains of the Yamanote Line, as well as all 18 subways in Tokyo and all of the trains, let us know and we’ll send you an invite to use it.

A few more thoughts and details:

We’ve spent a fair bit of time optimizing. You won’t want to view all of the lines at once. Particularly the subway stations can be a lot to absorb at once. We suggest you start with one line, maybe the Yamanote Line or Oedo Line. Visualize it alone, notice the shape, the boundaries of where it runs, click on some of the stations. Then begin to add and subtract other lines to see their relationships to space as well.

Some map programs (including GoogleMaps) also offers transit layers. Those are useful in their own right. When you use “Where’s the Yamanote Line,” we hope you’ll enjoy playing with our visualizations that hopefully pop off the page more readily, give you a tactile feel for where train lines go in space, allow you to easily click directly to stations, and allow you to track your journeys as you move along your way down the track.

We’d love to hear your ideas. Let us know overall what you think, something good, something to be improved, and some crazy new ideas. Please reach out by sending an email directly to us at [info@azabuinsights.com](mailto:info@azabuinsights.com).

Thanks for using this. We look forward to hearing from you.

**Optimize your  
experience by  
visualizing one train  
line at a time,  
explore boundaries,  
and provide  
feedback for  
improvement.**

### **About Azabu Insights**

Azabu Insights is a boutique strategy consulting firm based in Azabu, Tokyo, Japan. We work collaboratively with a wide range of companies to help them to achieve their strategic goals and achieve change. We have deep experience in life sciences as well as a range of other industries. We are also able to provide a briefing on rare diseases and further services in Japan. Reach us at [info@azabuinsights.com](mailto:info@azabuinsights.com)

