FT Story Playbook: Photo Essay
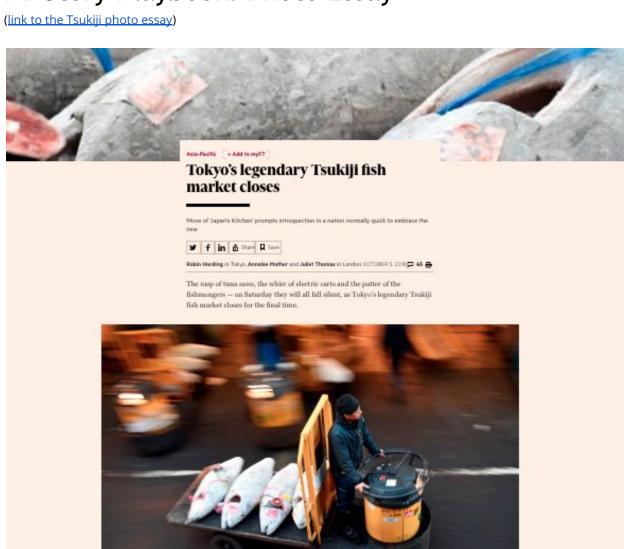
([link to the Tsukiji photo essay](#))

Tokyo's legendary Tsukiji fish market closes

Move of 'Japan's Kitchen' prompts introspection in a nation normally quick to embrace the new

Robin Harding in Tokyo, Annalee Mather and Juliet Thomas in London OCTOBER 5, 2018

The rasp of tuna saws, the whir of electric carts and the patter of the fishmongers — on Saturday they will all fall silent, as Tokyo's legendary Tsukiji fish market closes for the final time.

Frozen tuna are carried after been auctioned at Tokyo's Tsukiji fish market. © Franck Robichon/EPA

By the end of the following week, the market known as "Japan's Kitchen" will be up and running again at its new location, an austere concrete hangar located 2km across the bay at Toyosu.

Tsukiji is a symbol of the global food trade, the home of Japanese cuisine, and is one of Tokyo's most popular tourist attractions. Its gritty, shitamachi (downtown) atmosphere exemplifies an older Tokyo that is gradually disappearing in favour of glittering high-rise towers.

Where can I find it?

You can choose the 'Photo Essay' template when you create a new story in Methode under the World, UK, Markets, Tech, Companies and Features baskets.

What is it good for?

- Photo essays are a good format for news stories or short features with a strong visual component (ex. natural disasters), human interest stories, obits and retrospectives, or anything with a sequence/process (ex. How tos)

- Photo essays are good for offering a new way to look at the everyday and for giving voice to overlooked people/experiences.

- The best photo essays must have:
  - Strong pictures and a visual narrative
  - A variety of shots (scene/place setters, characters, shots ranging from extra wide to extra close ups, etc.)

- Good-to-haves but not essential:
  - Original photography

What is it not good for?

- News stories that need to be turned around very quickly. (It takes time for images to drop on the wires, and the photo desk will need time to select great photos and crop them to the appropriate sizes.)

*Note: The Photo Essay is different to "in pictures" stories, which are collections of photos that can be assembled more quickly in reaction to news.

What other photo essays have we've made in the past?

Tokyo's legendary Tsukiji fish market closes
By Robin Harding, Annalee Mather and Juliet Thomas

Ukraine: On the front lines of Europe's forgotten war
By David Bond and Roman Olearchyk

Other examples of good photo essays

How Asian social media transformed a quiet UK walking spot (NYT)
Portraits of a nation contemplating a 'Brexit' (NYT)

[Invisible Irish border carries the scars of a fractured past](#) (NYT)

How long does it take to make one of these?

It'll take time to find and crop the pictures and assemble the words (and longer, if original photography is commissioned). The time will vary from story to story, but in general, budget 2-3 days from commission to publication.

Detailed Production Guide

Who do I need to talk to

- The picture desk: for 8-12 pictures that tell the story and a topper set
- A reporter/someone to write 400-500 words. (The picture desk and the writer will need to collaborate on the narrative.)
- Notify the social media team
- Add to Asana schedule / notify #top-stories on slack

Note: If it is a big story that is particularly visually strong, speak to Charlie Bibby about commissioning original photography.

What do I do

Commissioning

- Speak to the picture desk about the photo essay and ask them to gather photos and crop a topper set, and commission someone to write the words. (A photo editor will make an album on Fotoware, to be shared and discussed with the writer)

- The picture desk and the reporter will narrow the collection down to 8-12 photos that best illustrate the story

- The reporter then writes the words, while the picture desk resizes the decided photos into the appropriate sizes for image sets (small: 625px wide, med: 1458px wide, large: 2458px wide. In each case, the depth doesn't matter).

- Create an entry for the story in Asana, add to Creative production schedule, and assign picturebot to the story, making sure you specify in the story name that it is a photo essay.

- The picture desk will provide, in order, the UUIDs for each photo (and a short title indicating what the photo is of)

Production

- Create a new story in methode, and choose the "Photo Essay" template.
- Copy or write in the intro par and the text accompanying each photo
- In the order provided by the picture desk, add in the images by UUID into the corresponding slots (note: image sets don't preview). Not all photos need to be the largest size - feel free to vary between medium and large so the most striking photos stand out.
- Write headline and add other web furniture, such as a topper
- Fill out metadata, and run tansa
- Release to web-revise
- Notify the social media team

Headline
- Consider using a '– photo essay' or '– in pictures' suffix at the end of the headline. This is especially useful when a) the headline otherwise reads like news or opinion, or b) the fact that the story is in this format is part of its appeal.

If you run into trouble…

Please talk to Neil Way (_____@ft.com), Robin Kwong (_____@ft.com), Richard Martin (_____@ft.com), or the creative producer on your desk.

The picture desk is: _____@ft.com