

Japanese “Onsen” / Hot Spring Bathing Etiquette

Konnichiwa kawaii travelers!



We would like to share the following information (*do's and dont's*) for those who will be trying out a Japanese public bath for the first time.

The idea of taking a bath with strangers might be a little weird / out-of-this-world for some, but for the Japanese / locals .. it's a stress-relieving activity! I also love going to onsen after a long day of work. At first, I was a little embarrassed but I really enjoyed it. I recommend going to onsen for a "unique" Japanese experience.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rpKDnNLtxU>

Bathing Etiquette by SentoGuide.com

When visiting a sento (japanese public bath) or onsen (hot spring) for the first time, the proper way to do things may seem complicated. And do keep in mind, there is a certain way to do things. The Japanese culture is particu-

lar about manners. It is generally understood that foreigners might be in the dark about these manners, but seeing a foreigner do things right fills the Japanese with delight, or so some say. In any event, knowing the rules will make your visit more enjoyable and for some more genuinely Japanese.

The rules of the public bath start applying as soon as you walk through the door.

1. The first you thing you will find is a genkan, a traditional Japanese entrance hall, where you take off your shoes and put them in a shoe locker.
2. When visiting the smaller local bath, you will now need to choose between two doors: one that leads to the male section (男性, otoko no yu) and one that leads to the female (女性, onna no yu) section. If you plan to frequent sento

or onsen it is probably wise to memorize these kanji. Be careful not to walk through the wrong door, because either you might not like what you see or you might be less than welcome. When visiting a larger public bath the segregation of sexes doesn't happen until after you paid, but the idea is the same, two doors or curtains marked with the aforementioned kanji.

3. In case of the small local bath house, right inside the door you will find the person you pay to, usually an old lady. Don't be discouraged by the fact that this old lady has a clear view into both the male and the female changing area.- For the larger establishments there is either a payment counter or a vending machine for tickets in the lobby.
4. Once you're in the changing area, everything is pretty much the same, no matter the size of the bath you are in. The

changing area will have a tatami floor and lockers on the walls to keep your clothes and valuables. Strip down to your birthday suit. The only thing you need in the bathing area is a small towel to wash yourself with and to cover your privates. Don't forget to bring any soaps, shampoos and other bathroom utensils you might like to use (toothbrush, razor, etc.). In larger public baths soap and shampoo is often provided.

5. Once you're ready to enter the bathing area, walk through the sliding door. The first thing you will likely find is a small basin with warm water and a small bucket. Use the bucket and the water to rinse yourself.
6. Before entering the baths, scrub yourself clean in the washing area that consisting of small stools, hot and cold taps and usually showers. Wash your whole body using the soap and the small

towel you brought with you. After washing, rinse yourself well. Make sure all foam is gone from your body and your towel. Even though the towel shouldn't be taken into the water, it still should not contain any soap.

7. Enjoy the various baths, but keep in mind the following:

- The small towel you brought with you should not be taken into the bath, but rather left on the rim of the bath.
- As said previously, make sure there is no shampoo or soap left on your body.
- If you feel embarrassed about being naked, feel free to use the small towel to cover your privates outside the bath.
- If you use the sauna, make sure you rinse off the sweat from your body before entering the bath again.
- It goes without saying, but DO NOT

urinate in the water. The water in Japanese public baths contains a special chemical that turns the water and your body bright purple if it mixes with urine. ;-)

- Do not bathe when you are menstruating.
- Respect other people in the bath. Don't make a lot of noise and refrain from any other social un-niceties.

8. When you are done soaking and are ready to get out, wipe your body with your towel before re-entering the changing area. There is usually an area between the sliding door to the bath and the tatami floor of the changing area where you can do so.

Original article here:

www.sentoguide.info/etiquette

Where to try Japanese onsen / sento?

Here is a very helpful / comprehensive list of sento / onsen in Tokyo!

Just select the city or district you would like to find a public bath house in:

- Adachi (35)
- Akishima (3)
- Arakawa (23)
- Bunkyo (5)
- Chiyoda (2)
- Chufu (5)
- Chuo (5)
- Edogawa (34)
- Fuchu (6)
- Hachioji (4)
- Hamura (1)
- Higashikurume (1)
- Higashimurayama (1)
- Higashiyamato (2)
- Hino (1)
- Inagi (2)

- Itabashi (27)
- Katsushika (31)
- Kita (1)
- Kiyose (5)
- Koto (2)
- Meguro (2)
- Minato (1)
- Nerima (1)
- Nishitokyo (3)
- Ota (1)
- Setagaya (1)
- Shibuya (10)
- Shinagawa (2)
- Shinjuku (3)
- Taito (18)

I haven't tried an onsen in Tokyo yet but I do regularly go to a local onsen here in Saitama. :
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If you have onsen recommendations in Tokyo, please do share by leaving a comment below! ^^

<3, Kaila