



Accommodations

Hotel reservations can be made several ways: travelers can contact the hotel directly, go through a travel agency (or the Yujo), or local hotel directory office. If the hotel is large or in a major tourist area, some members of the staff usually speak some English. In resort areas, hotels generally stay open during major holidays (ie. New Year's). However, reservations should be made several months ahead. Advance payment may be required, and later confirmation is recommended. During off-season weekdays, a day's notice may be enough, although a family-run operation may want you to confirm arrival and meal times.

There are several types of accommodations: deluxe hotels with classy restaurants, ryokans (traditional Japanese inns), and business hotels, pensions, and minshukus (farmers and fishermen who open their homes to travelers during holiday seasons). The more expensive hotels may charge per room and offer both western and Japanese-style rooms. Business hotels offer small western-style rooms and smaller bathrooms in locations near train stations. Washcloths, bath towels, toothbrushes, and soap are provided as are yukata robes and slippers. Ryokans or Japanese inns charge per person as do pensions and minshukus. These establishments may include breakfast and dinner in their fees.

At a ryokan, a traveler will usually be greeted by a kimono clad woman ushering him to a tatami room. She may then bring tea and ask for hotel registration, in addition to setting meal times and menus. The menus consist of local delicacies, sashimi or broiled fish plus soups, vegetables, and rice. Dinners are served in the rooms after the travelers have taken a bath. Washcloths, bath towels, toothbrushes, shampoo and soap are provided, as are yukata robes. (Hair dryers and saunas may also be available.) During colder seasons, a heavier kimono-style overcoat or jacket is also provided. In hot springs resorts, one might see tourists wearing these robes around town, and most certainly around the hotel lobby. About 9pm, maids will enter the rooms and arrange futons for guests.

Pensions, similar to lodges, are usually located in a tourist area and are composed of western-style rooms. Meals are served in a dining room and may consist of western-style cuisine. Bath and restroom facilities might be shared with other guests.

Travelers bring their own toiletries for pensions and minshukus (sometimes available from vending machines.)

Minshukus, in general the cheapest form of food and lodging, can be a very good deal for economic travelers wishing to learn more of the local culture. Meals in the common-area dining rooms may be either western or Japanese. (If you do not care for cold Japanese breakfasts, bring pastries and instant coffee.) The tatami rooms are small and simply furnished. Bath and restroom facilities may be shared with the family operating the minshuku. *Note:* leave the bathroom slippers in the bathroom! At bedtime, guests rearrange the furniture and lay out their own futons from linen closets in the rooms (the foam pad on the bottom with a heavier futon on top covered by a sheet, rice-husk pillow, and blanket; the lighter futon encased in a linen cover goes on top of it all). In the mornings, guests strip their "beds", putting out the linens for laundry and returning the futons to the closets.

Teresa Negley

Where to find more info:

Welcome Inn Reservation Center: email: wirc@www.jnto.go.jp
Japan City Hotel Association <http://jcha.yadojozu.ne.jp>
Classic Japanese Inns and Country Getaways by Margaret Pierce from Kodansha International.



Love Hotels

One would think love hotels were Japan's favorite pastime; there are over 30,000 available, ranging from elegant (Zen gardens and in room hot waterfalls) to garish (sound-activated beds on tracks and laser-light shows). These hotels evolved from tea houses called *deacha-ya*, where people gathered. Because many Japanese had several generations living in the same house, and neighbors lived so close, it was hard to find a place for romance. Thus, a different kind of industry, love hotels, was born.

One famous hotel, the Meguro Emperor, features a castle with motifs allowing you to be an astronaut, shogun, cowboy or cowgirl, etc. Another hotel, the Queen Elizabeth Sekitei in Yokohama, is a full-scale version of the real ship. To find a love hotel, look for tall colorful signs displaying "hotel" with a name. When you get to the building, find the information panel with prices and where to go if you've arrived by car or on foot. You then find the room board located beside the money window. The board is inside the hotel at most downtown locations and outside at expressway locations.

If the room picture is lit, the room is available. Push the button and receive a room key, card, or other marker. Go to the window and pay from ¥3,000 to ¥5,000+ for a two-hour stay between 7am and 10pm. Prime evening time may cost more. After 10pm, all-night rates range from ¥5,000-¥15,000. Better hotels have room service, but it's very expensive. A stocked refrigerator is provided, but you pay for what you consume. Better to take a picnic basket full of your favorite foods and spirits. Remember to keep your voice down in the halls, and mind your manners.

Ride down Ome Kaido or Route 16 and you will see many love hotels. The Blue Castle and its neighbor, the Glass House, in Hachioji are recommended. The Blue Castle has four sides and changes color. Neither place has the outlandish facade typical of love motels and appear most respectable.

DIRECTIONS: Just before the intersection of old Route 16 with the Royal Host on the corner (after the Chuo Expressway entrance, headed south), you will see a small entrance sign. This leads you down a narrow lane to the Glass House. To get to the Blue Castle, you must go up to the intersection and make a left onto Route 16 and immediately look for a similar small sign on your left. Don't be put off if you drive up to a parking lot with a closed door. It is the first of many gestures of privacy. An electric eye will open the door as you drive up.

You may have seen a sign for the Selva Court from the north end of the runway: to get there, turn right out the Terminal Gate, make a right turn off Route 16 near the end of the base fence. Take the single track road near a gas station; the entrance is about 20 yards further. The decor is tastefully done and the overnight rates range from ¥8,500 - ¥11,500. There are English instructions and photos show the interiors of the rooms. The Selva is clean with rooms larger than a business hotel. There's even a bonus for 30 visits. One more thing - don't forget the champagne!

Barbara Smith and Maria White



DoD Lodging

New Sanno Hotel

Operated by the U.S. Navy, the New Sanno Hotel is open to all U.S. service members plus DoD civilians, diplomatic personnel, and authorized dependents. Call 229-7121 for reservations. In addition to affordable lodging, the Sanno has four restaurants, and their Sunday Buffet is a gastronomical delight. Travel services are available at the Tours Desk in the lobby. A mini exchange, shoppette, and gift shops make your visit comfortable.

TRAIN DIRECTIONS: Take the Ome Line to Tachikawa and, if necessary, transfer to the Chuo Line for Tokyo. At Shinjuku, change to the green Yamanote Line toward Shibuya. Go 4 stops to Ebisu, go out the west exit, and change to the Hibiya subway. Go one stop to Hiroo and go out Exit #1. Turn left and cross the street (to the Mitsubishi Bank). Walk alongside Garden Plaza Hiroo (shopping center) to Tengenji intersection - the next light - with a large pedestrian overpass. Turn left and walk a block. The dark brown New Sanno Hotel is on the left, next door to the French Embassy. Travel time from Yokota is about an hour and a half. (*Note:* A Services bus also provides daily rides between the Kanto Lodge

and the New Sanno. Check with the Yujo Community Center for a schedule.)

Check the front of the Stars and Stripes each week to find out what availability the New Sanno has for the upcoming month or two...

DRIVING DIRECTIONS: Driving is not difficult, but travel time ranges from 1 - 3 hours depending on the traffic. Take Rt. 16 to the Chuo Expressway in Hachioji and head for Shinjuku. Look for Exit 402 about 8km after passing the Shuto toll gate (about 30km from Hachioji. It is easily recognized because it looks like a rocket-sled launcher.) Taking Exit 402, you ascend about three stories before turning right and crossing the expressway, then descending to a stop. Go straight to the



second signal light. Stay in the center lane as you turn left and stop at a major intersection. Turn right onto Gaien Higashi Dori. Follow the signs toward Tengenji. Cross a major intersection with Aoyama Dori/Route 246 and curve around to the right. Continue on the tree-lined street down a hill past a cemetery (taxi are often parked on both sides of the street). At the next signal light near the end of the cemetery, pass Hardy Barracks in the fenced-in compound on the left. Proceed straight through the intersection. At about 1 km past Hardy Barracks, pass Hiroo Subway Station and Garden Plaza Hiroo. At the next intersection (Tengenji), note the pedestrian overpass. Turn left and see the New Sanno on your left just before the entrance to the expressway. There is limited parking, so be sure to register your vehicle when you check in. Parking is allowed up to four hours for short visits.

The easiest way back is to turn slightly left and immediately up the ramp in front of the New Sanno onto Shuto Expressway #2. Follow the signs for the Chuo Expressway, #4. Get off at Hachioji Exit 2, heading towards Akishima and Kawagoe via Rt. 16.

Hardy Barracks

The U.S. Army Garrison Honshu, Tokyo Administration Facility, a.k.a. Hardy Barracks is available to all services and ranks. Open 24 hours (but check in on the 4th floor before 9pm), Hardy Barracks offers twin rooms, shared bathrooms, AC, TV, radio, and refrigerator at low costs. There are 24 rooms and reservations may be made up to 14 days in advance. Personnel on TDY status have priority, and there is an additional charge for children.

Call 229-3270 (or commercial 03-3402-6024 ext. 229-3270) for information.

TRAIN DIRECTIONS: Take the Ome Line (then Chuo) toward Tokyo. At Shinjuku, change to the green Yamanote Line, and take it two stops to Harajuku. Exit near the front of the train, and enter the subway system (Meiji-Jingumae). Take the Chiyoda Line toward Omotesando and get off two stops later at Nogizaka, leaving through Exit 5. Go left, then right across the street for about 4 city blocks down the hill past a park. When you reach a fenced in-building (Hardy Barracks), turn left at the intersection toward the gate.

DRIVING DIRECTIONS: To drive there, see New Sanno directions. If you use a taxi, tell the driver "Aoyama-Bochi-Shita" or "Seijouki-Shimbunsha".

Donna Alexander 4/97

Onsen - Japanese Hot Spring Baths

One of the many pleasures of Japan is the onsen or "hot springs". A result of the volcanoes which populate the mountainous landscape, almost 2,000 springs have been turned into onsens for the tourists who visit these areas.

The water in an onsen can be fairly hot depending on its source (77 degrees C at Ikaho Springs). It is relaxing and filled with minerals, making it a therapeutic treatment for chronic diseases including rheumatism and hypertension.

There are generally three ways to enjoy your visit. Most people stay in hotels offering onsen baths, in ryokans (Japanese inns) or minshukus (family-run lodging houses.) If your lodging has no onsen pipes, you can use the public baths. Most people stay in the area for a few days to enjoy the bathing facilities and to do some sight-seeing. It is a great way to relax. It is truly something you should try before leaving Japan.

There are many places in Japan to enjoy hot springs, including areas close to Tokyo. One is Beppu, located on the northern coast of Kyushu. In this area there are about 3,700 hot springs. When traveling to Beppu most visitors do a "hot-springs circuit" or onsen meguri, where they will try up to a dozen or so baths on one trip.

Viki Lyn Paulson-Cody

Taking a Japanese bath

- 1) Slide open a door covered by a fabric bath sign and put your towel and clothes in a basket.
- 2) After entering the bath area with your washcloth, soap, and shampoo, take a bucket and stool over to an available faucet (or shower attachment if lucky), and rinse yourself off.
- 3) Wash from head to toe, rinsing thoroughly from top to bottom.

4) Once clean, step into the common tub for a long, hot soak. (Note: if you have long hair, wrap it in a towel to prevent rinse residue from soiling the tub water.)

Teresa Negley

Ikaho Springs

I enjoyed a wonderful weekend with a group of friends in Gunma's **Ikaho Springs**. We took a side trip to Haruna Lake where we enjoyed the scenery and a boat ride. Then we settled into a typical hot springs hotel. The remainder of our trip centered on the baths. We enjoyed beautifully prepared traditional meals and the service was outstanding. All meals were served in a private room for our party of 13. It was elegant as well as relaxing.

The onsen bath was exquisite; the atmosphere traditional. This hotel had separate sides for men and women (and quite a relief to me; it was my first time in a public bath among strangers. Although nervous at first, within a few minutes after slipping into the water, I felt as comfortable as though I had been doing it my whole life.)

Viki Lyn Paulson-Cody

Akishima Spa

Hoya Hot Baths

Hoya Hot Baths on the left side of Rt. 16 across from Hoya Crystals is another much recommended local spa.

Teresa Negley, 5/02



Finding a hot spring to visit is easily researched through travel books and agencies. Braver souls might want to try a local public bath such as the silver-tiled **Akishima Spa** on Rt. 16 near the Tama River bridge. Follow directions to the Chuo expressway/Hachioji bypass and you will see the two large circular buildings on the left hand side before crossing the Tama River on Route 16.

Viki Lyn Paulson-Cody

Asakusa Kannon Onsen

There are also two baths in downtown Tokyo that offer the feel and taste of traditional Japan. The only drawback you might find is that they are both unisex baths, but they are still enjoyable if you are adventurous. The first is the **Asakusa Kannon Onsen**, adjacent to Asakusa Kannon Temple. It is a 10 minute walk from Asakusa Station on the Ginza Subway Line. See the article on Asakusa for directions. Open 6:30am to 6pm, this onsen is closed the first and third Thursdays of the month. Call (03)3844-4141 for information.

Viki Lyn Paulson-Cody

Azabu Juban Onsen

The second bath in downtown Tokyo that offers the feel and taste of traditional Japan is the **Azabu Juban Onsen** which is a ten minute walk to the southeast from Roppongi Station on the Hibiya Subway Line. It is very popular and you can ask for directions if you get lost. It is open from 3pm to 11pm. It is closed on Tuesdays (Wednesday if Tuesday is a holiday). Telephone (03) 3404-2610. You will find this a bath establishment with foreigners, especially on weekends.

Viki Lyn Paulson-Cody

Iwakura Spa

Iwakura Spa is about 20 minutes from Yokota. There are hotels nearby. Directly across the street from the Mamadaya Hotel is a small park with a pond and a typical Japanese Garden. There is a parking lot here for Mamadaya guests. There, you will see a large billboard map of the area. In back, overlooking the river there are decks off the baths.

The cost of the hotels is about ¥5,000, which includes lunch and a bath or two in the spa, plus a few hours use of a room for changing. If you prefer to spend the night, prices are ¥10,000/person. This includes two meals, use of the spa, plus room tax.

Call for reservations, even just for lunch. The Nabeya is (0428) 74-4126 or 5405. The Mamadaya is (0428) 74-4221.

DIRECTIONS: Turn right out the Terminal Gate and continue via the underpass. Turn left onto Iwakura Kaido (3.2km/6th light; big Honen building on far right of intersection). This road passes through tea and flower fields.

After about 6km, there should be a golf driving range on your right, just before you enter the spa area. Start looking for small hotels. At first glance, they look rather like large homes. Park your car, walk and look for the hotel lobbies. The first hotel is the Nabeya, on your left. About a block further, also on your left, is the Mamadaya Hotel.

Pat Nolan & Masumi Lawrence

Tsuru Tsuru Bath House

Another hot bath house can be found in the town of Hinode. It's about a 35 minute drive. Turn left out the Fussa Gate (0 km) and immediately get into the right hand lane because you will be turning right at the next light onto Tambashi-Dori, which crosses the Tama River (2km) and turns into Itsukaichi Kaido. (Tambashi-dori is just after Mosburgers and a motorcycle shop on your right hand side.) Stay on Itsukaichi Kaido, past the Farmer's Market with its gardens and the Tokyu Department Store (6km) until you come to Musahi Itsukaichi Station, about 25 minutes (~ 11.6 km from Fussa Gate). You have to turn right or left at Musashi Itsukaichi Station, so make a right here. Proceed underneath train tracks and up towards the mountains. Keep going about 5 minutes and make a left at the second stop light (~ 13.4 km). At this stop light, you will see a sign that says, "Tsuru Tsuru Onzen Iriguchi." Approximately 1.8 km before the onzen is a small parking lot where you can park the car and take a red "trolley" looking car up to the onzen. This red trolley leaves the onzen every 15 & 45 minutes after the hour and will take you back to your car. If you choose, you can drive your own car up past a round wood building on the left (~ 20 km), turn left, then right into the parking lot which also belongs to the onzen. The round building is the Panorama restaurant with menus in Japanese. (450 Yen Yakitori, 500 Yen yakisoba, 220 Yen ice cream 500-700 Yen noodles (buckwheat and white "udon," cold, "sansai" mountain vegetables, curry flavorings.) A specialty taking some time is "kamameshi" of rice steamed with vegetables in a pot for 850-950 Yen. If you take the train to the onzen, there is a blue trolley that will pick you up at the train station and take you directly to the onzen and back. The cost to get into the onzen is 800 yen for 3 hours and 200 yen for every hour thereafter. If you think you'll frequent this place, they have a book of 12 tickets for 8,000 yen. You can bring your own towels or purchase a hand towel for 100 yen, 500 for a back towel. Sorry, no drinks in the onzen area. However, there are vending machines and a small restaurant for afterwards. Also, a drinking fountain inside the onzen area. There's a hot bath, cold bath, sauna, therapeutic bath, and the hot bath outside. There's a calendar posted outside and inside the onzen areas depicting red hearts for women and a blue upside-down heart for the men, on who gets to have the outside hot bath. They switch the sides of the onzen each week. This onzen is closed every Tuesday and you can call them at 042-597-1126 or find them on the web at www.gws.ne.jp/home/hinode/ but, you may need to install the Japanese language option on your computer. This bath house is supposed to be regionally famous for making yoru skin smooth. Surusuru is the Japanese word meaning to make smooth.

Kathleen Vactor - Reprinted from the Yokosan-May 2000



Mountain Resorts

Hakuba

If you like to ski, mountain climb or simply relax, Hakuba is the place for you! Located in the southern Alps, it's an easy 4-hour drive. A resort and site of the 1998 Winter Olympics, the scenery is gorgeous. There are sports activities, shopping, cultural attractions, hot baths, restaurants, parks, and night life. It is busy during ski season and holidays, but if you go during the off seasons, keep in mind some facilities will be closed. Most area hotels are pensions, similar to bed and breakfasts, ranging from elegant to rustic in size, price, and convenience.

The **Pension Garni** is very cozy with a fireplace, pine furnishings and homemade quilts. The twin rooms are ¥8,500+ plus tax per person, including breakfast and supper. The meals are delicious and basically western cuisine. (Choices are not offered, so if you have dietary preferences, make it known when calling for reservations.) The friendly host and hostess will help with sight-seeing and shopping information; however, they speak little English.

To reserve rooms, call 0261-75-2485. If no one in your group speaks Japanese, have requests written in Japanese before you go.

DIRECTIONS: Take the Chuo Expressway from Hachioji toward Nagoya. Stay on the Chuo until it splits, then take Nagano Expressway to its end. Take Rt. 147 toward Nagano, then Rt. 148 to Hakuba and Itoigawa. Rt. 148 will go by Lakes Aokiko and Kizakiko before a tunnel and Kamishiro Station. On a left-hand corner past the station (before a post office on the left), there will be a place called Yusa Vira with a blue roof. Turn left, then right (before the Villa Raicho) to reach Pension Garni.

Charlene Elmore

Another pension in Hakuba is the Pension Hayaokidori where the Yokota Outdoor Recreation trips go.

Phone: 0261-75-2142 (domestic)

+81-261-75-2142 (overseas)

<http://www.hakubajapan.com>

email: info@hakubajapan.com



Notes:

