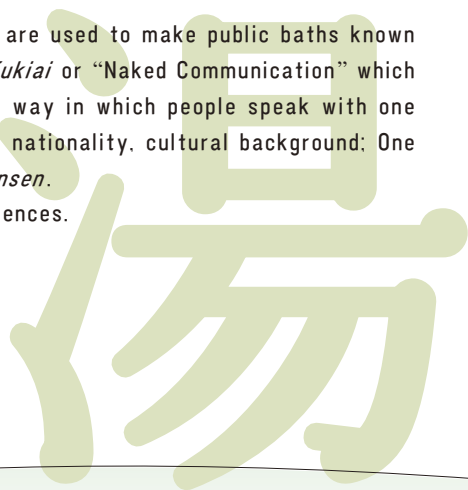




In Japan, there are thousands of hot springs that are used to make public baths known as *Onsen*. There is a Japanese phrase *Hadaka-No-Tukiai* or “Naked Communication” which refers not only to bathing itself, but also to the way in which people speak with one another at the *onsen*. All barriers are broken: age, nationality, cultural background: One can communicate freely in the atmosphere of the *onsen*. *Onsen* is truly one of Japan's unique cultural experiences.



Welcome to *On*

The Japanese Love *Onsens*

For Japanese, bathing is not only for cleaning, but to refresh the body and spirit. Baths come in several types, including house baths, *Sentô* (simple public baths), and *onsen*. The popularity of the *Onsen* means they play a central role in Japanese domestic tourism. On weekends or vacation, Japanese people often go on an *onsen*-trip not only to relieve their fatigue but to enhance their mutual relationship with family, friends and co-workers.

What is *Onsen*?

There are laws in place that regulate the definition, protection, etc. of an *Onsen*. According to these laws, an *Onsen* is defined as hot water and water vapor that springs from the Earth either naturally or from artificially-bored holes. The water temperature needs to be higher than 25°C. However, meeting other conditions, the water can be cooler and still be authorized as an *Onsen*.



sen



History of the *Onsen*

Japan is a volcanically active country, and as such, *Onsen* have been used since olden times and are mentioned in Japanese legends and mythologies. Descriptions are found in renowned Japanese texts such as; *Kojiki*, *Nihonshoki*, and *Manyôsyû* .

During the Kamakura and Sengoku era (12th-17th century), records indicate that the *samurai* healed their wounds there. In the Edo era (17th-19th century), the culture of *onsens* spread to common people. In the Meiji era (early 20th century), scientific

studies began and by the Shôwa era (mid 20th century) the medical benefits of *Onsen* were proven.

Through the years, more and more people come to use *onsens* for different reasons. Today people enjoy them not only for medical treatment but also for sightseeing, socializing, and leisure. *Onsens* are a multipurpose place to have a great time.