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 Onsen

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, Sentō (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℃. However, meeting other conditions, the water can be cooler and still be authorized as an Onsen.
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 Manyōshū.

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 onsen spread to common people. In the Meiji era (early 20th century), scientific studies began and by the Shōwa era (mid 20th century) the medical benefits of Onsen were proven.

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