



TOKYO SENTO GUIDE BOOK



Let's enjoy Japanese bath house!!





Alfred Guballa



Born in the United States, Alfred has been living in Japan since 2011. He is working as a high school English teacher.

He entered a sento he happened upon while walking around Tokyo, and instantly fell in love with it. He was completely captivated by the conversation of regulars, warm waters, high ceiling, and the big mural of Mt. Fuji. Today, he not only visits various sento but also serves as a guide at events for foreign nationals and tourists held by the Tokyo Sento Association. Here is a message from Alfred. "During your time in Japan, you can have an excellent bathing experience without having to go to a distant hot springs resort, just by going to your local sento! The sento is a part of Japanese culture that most travelers tend to look over, but I definitely would like visitors to Japan to experience it! There, you will experience the spacious tubs, folksy atmosphere, and most of all: the refreshing feeling as all your worries and stress melt away in the waters! This is what sento is all about!"

Experience a sento during your stay in Tokyo!

Sento (public baths) are one of the symbols of Japanese culture. Today, they are a focus of keen attention among visitors from other countries as an experience-oriented tourism destination. There are presumably some people who would resist the idea of entering a bath in the nude with people they don't know. However, in Japan's bathing culture, which has continued to exist in Tokyo since around 1600, there is absolutely nothing shameful about soaking in a bath in the nude with complete strangers.

In Japan, people have an expression that literally translates "socializing naked." It has absolutely no sexual connotation; the term "naked" is used in the psychological sense. The meaning is to narrow any emotional distance from another person by talking frankly and sincerely, regardless of differences of profession, rank, etc.

There has recently been a steep rise in the number of people from other countries visiting different parts of Japan. These visitors are traveling to see things that could only be seen or felt in Japan. It is really too bad that some of them leave without experiencing a sento.

And this is in spite of the fact that it takes only about one hour to do so. The bathrooms in hotels are liable to be cramped and small. We urge you to include a visit to a sento in your schedule, also as a way to soothe bodies tired from walking around to see the sights.

If your eyes happen to meet those of a Japanese customer in the bathing room, don't be afraid to say "konnichiwa, ii yu desu ne" ("hello, nice water, isn't it"). Instead of just seeing the sights, please try and interact a bit with the locals. That is real tourism, don't you think? It will undoubtedly make your trip different from any before.

If you want to learn more about the history of sento, click here.



Foreign nationals who love sento

Born in France, Stephanie had her first experience of a sento while attending a Japanese university under a study-abroad program. At first, she was surprised at the culture of entering a bath with strangers. But with exposure to the kindness of the proprietor and regulars in addition to the enjoyment of soaking in the waters, she came to love sento. And now, she provides information about sento on social media and her website, out of her desire to convey their appeals to both Japanese and foreign nationals. Stephanie publicizes particularly the artistic dimension of sento, with photos of items such as the traditional Japanese sento architecture and huge wall paintings of Mt. Fuji and several kind of art typically found in the bathing room. In 2015, she was appointed to be Japan's first sento ambassador in recognition of her trips to sento throughout Japan and her activities to publicize their attractions. She published an art book on sento titled "Sento are Small Museums" in 2017 and a sento guidebook titled "A French Girl's Guide to Tokyo Sento" in 2018. Today, she is considered one of the foreign nationals with the best knowledge of sento even in Japan. We encourage you to discover the charms of Japan's sento as viewed through the eyes of Stephanie by taking a look at her Instagram account and website.



Stephanie Crohin



Recommended
Sento
(Public Baths)
in Tokyo



TAKARA-YU

タカラ湯 Tattoo-friendly

30 minutes by train
from Ueno Station

A Japanese-style garden said to be the most beautiful one attached to a sento

The appearance of this sento, which looks very much like a temple, reflects the traditional style that was adopted by many Tokyo sento in the past. The distinguishing feature of this sento is a Japanese-style garden said to be the most beautiful one attached to a sento. Brightly colored carp swim gracefully in the pond. The bathing room is spacious and has many different types of baths. Experience the electric bath and hot water bath!

*The garden is on the side of the men's bath. The men's and women's baths are switched every Wednesday only. Women are advised to come on Wednesdays!



Take a bus from Kita-senju Station (Tokyo Metro Hibiya Line), and get off at "Senju-sakuragicho" bus stop, then walk 5 minutes.
Address ▶ 27-1 Senju-motomachi, Adachi-ku Tel ▶ 03-3881-2660
Opening Hours ▶ 15:00-23:30 Closed ▶ Friday



KAISEI-YU

改正湯 Tattoo-friendly Hot Spring

30 minutes by train
from Haneda Airport

Relax at this black-water hot spring sento near Kamata Station

Within walking distance of the bustling Kamata Station, this sento features black hot spring water. Soak in the "kuroyu" (literally black water) carbonated spring bath and two other types of black-water baths, and enjoy the sensation unique to rich black-water spas! The bathing room has fish tanks in which many little carp swim around. Children love to watch them.



7 min. walk from Kamata station (JR Keihin-Tohoku Line)
Address ▶ 5-10-5 Nishi-kamata, Ota-ku
Tel ▶ 03-3731-7078 Opening Hours ▶ 15:00-24:30 Closed ▶ Friday





HIDAMARI NO IZUMI HAGINO-YU



ひだまりの泉菘の湯

Tattoos are not allowed

**Near Ueno and Yanaka,
it has an expansive full line of facilities**

This sento is also close to popular Tokyo districts such as Ueno and Yanaka, and is conveniently located near a train station. The bathing room is very large and equipped with a full assortment of facilities, including a jet bath, carbonated bath, open-air bath, electric bath, and sauna. On the second floor is a restaurant serving a wide range of menus from Japanese, Chinese, and other styles of cuisine. You can have food and drinks right after bathing, without leaving the building!



3 min. walk from Uguisudani Station (JR Yamanote Line)

Address ▶ 2-13-13 Negishi, Taito-ku Tel ▶ 03-3872-7669

Opening Hours ▶ 6:00-9:00, 11:00-25:00 (Reception ends 30 min. before the closing time)

Closed ▶ The 3rd Tuesday



INARI-YU

稲荷湯 Tattoo-friendly



**Popular for its classic exterior
and new bathing room**

Built in 1930, this sento has a classic appearance. Although the building is old, the bathing room has been renovated, so you can pleasantly soak in the waters. There are baths with three different water temperatures, ranging from tepid to hot. Enter the bath with your preferred temperature. Wooden buckets, a Japanese-style garden with carp swimming in a pond, the warmth of wooden architecture – this sento is a showcase of Japanese esthetics!



photo : Imada photo service

6 min. walk from Nishi-sugamo station (Toei Mita Line) /

6 min. walk from Itabashi station (JR Saikyo Line)

Address ▶ 6-27-14 Takinogawa, Kita-ku

Tel ▶ 03-3916-0523 Opening Hours ▶ 14:50-25:15 Closed ▶ Wednesday





KAIRYO-YU

改良湯 Tattoo-friendly

 **10 minutes** 
from **Shibuya Station**

Close to Shibuya Station, simple yet stylish

Within walking distance from Shibuya Station, this is a simple yet stylish sento. Imbued with a dream-like atmosphere, the bathing room has a tepid carbonated spring as well as a cold bath and sauna. The pictures displayed on the upper part of the bathing room walls are original artworks depicting Shibuya, past and present. The huge whale painted on the outer wall of the sento serves as a landmark.



12 min. walk from Shibuya or Ebisu station (JR Yamanote Line)
Address ▶ 2-19-9 Higashi, Shibuya-ku Tel ▶ 03-3400-5782
Opening Hours ▶ 15:00-24:30 (Mon. - Fri.), 13:00-23:00 (Sun. & P.H.) Closed ▶ Saturday



MATSUNO-YU

松の湯 Tattoo-friendly

 **30 minutes**
from **Takaosanguchi Station**

Relieving fatigue on the way back from Mt. Takao

This sento reopened in September 2019 after a renovation project. It attracts visitors with its chic design, which exudes Japanese esthetics. Ease your fatigue and relax by soaking in the large bath while gazing at the high ceilings lending the whole surrounding an expansive air. Customers love the carbonated spring and the open-air bath, which conveys a sense of the surrounding nature. If you climb Mt. Takao, drop by this sento on the way home!



photo : Kentaro Imai Architectural office

17 min. walk from Nishi-hachioji station (JR Chuo Line) / 19 min. walk from Hachioji station (JR Chuo Line) / Take a bus from Hachioji station, get off at "Orimono kumiai mae" bus stop, then walk 2min. Address ▶ 20 Okadomachi, Hachioji-shi Tel ▶ 042-622-5356 Opening Hours ▶ 14:00-23:30 Closed ▶ Tuesday



HASUNUMA ONSEN

はすぬま温泉 **Tattoo-friendly** **Hot Spring**

A hot spring sento with a classic mood

This hot spring sento features a stylish, classic atmosphere. Spend a soothing interlude in the bathing room, which is illuminated in calming pastel colors. The facilities include a hot spring bath, a tepid carbonated spring, a cold bath, and sauna. Enjoy the light green waters of the hot spring, in a surrounding which seems from a different age.

photo : Kentaro Imai Architectural office



2 min. walk from Hasunuma station (Tokyu Ikegami Line) Address ▶ 6-16-11 Nishi-kamata, Ota-ku
Tel ▶ 03-3734-0081 Opening Hours ▶ 15:00-25:00
Closed ▶ Tuesday



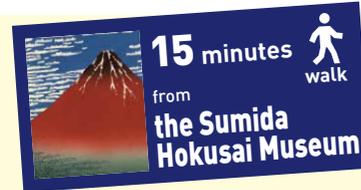
MIKOKU-YU

御谷湯 **Tattoo-friendly** **Hot Spring**

A black-water hot spring sento near the Sumida Hokusai Museum

Wrapped in a Japanese-style atmosphere, this hot spring sento has a retro flair. There are three black-water hot spring baths, each with a different temperature (high/medium/low). Enjoy the distinctive feel of a black-water hot spring bath at the temperature of your choice! On the fourth and fifth floors, which have mutually different facilities and decors, the men's and women's baths are switched every week. A 15-minute walk from the Sumida Hokusai Museum.

photo : rou mochizuki



16 min. walk from Kinshicho station (JR Sobu Line) / take a bus from Kinshicho station, get off at "Ishihara 3(san)-chome" bus stop, then walk 2 min.
Address ▶ 3-30-8 Ishihara, Sumida-ku Tel ▶ 03-3623-1695 Opening Hours ▶ 15:30-26:00 Closed ▶ Monday (open on P.H., and close the following day)



OSHIAGE ONSEN DAIKOKU-YU

押上温泉 大黒湯 **Tattoo-friendly** **Hot Spring**

A hot spring sento with a view of TOKYO SKYTREE

This hot spring sento is a 10-minute walk from TOKYO SKYTREE. Its full line of facilities includes a huge open-air bath with a view of TOKYO SKYTREE, a carbonated spring, sauna, and a cold bath. It also has space with a wooden deck and benches. You can relax here without your clothes. Another popular attraction is the medicinal bath, which changes daily. Open all night!



6 min. walk from Oshiage station (Tokyo Metro Hanzomon Line / Tobu Isezaki Line / Toei Asakusa Line / Keisei Oshiage Line) Address ▶ 3-12-14 Yokokawa, Sumida-ku Tel ▶ 03-3622-6698 Opening Hours ▶ 15:00-10:00 (next morning), Open from 14:00 on Sat., 13:00 on Sun. Closed ▶ Tuesday (open on P.H., and close the following day)



TOGOSHI GINZA ONSEN

戸越銀座温泉 **Tattoo-friendly** **Hot Spring**

A black-water hot spring sento located in the popular Togoshi Ginza Shopping Street

This hot spring sento is in the Togoshi Ginza, a popular shopping street. Its black hot spring waters moisturize the skin. The two bathing rooms have mutually different decors and facilities. The men's and women's baths are switched every week. Try out various tubs in a retro atmosphere! After bathing, it is recommended to take a stroll on the Togoshi Ginza streets, which are lined with little stores.

photo : Kentaro Imai Architectural office



3 min. walk from Togoshi station (Toei Asakusa Line) Address ▶ 2-1-6 Togoshi, Shinagawa-ku
Tel ▶ 03-3782-7400 Opening Hours ▶ 15:00-25:00 (8:00-12:00, 15:00-25:00 on Sun. & P.H.) Closed ▶ Friday



MYOHO-YU

妙法湯 **Tattoo-friendly**

Relax in waters near Ikebukuro and beautify your skin

The bathing room has a bright, modern atmosphere and is equipped with all sorts of facilities. Besides the "soft-water/carbonated/silky" baths with an outstanding effect for beautifying the skin, there is also a sauna and a cold bath. Make sure to experience the powerful water jets and the electric bath! Many of the customers are foreign nationals who like the friendly owner. The sento is within walking distance from Ikebukuro Station.



10 minutes by train
from **Ikebukuro Station**

2 min. walk from Shiinamachi station (Seibu Ikebukuro Line) Address ▶ 4-32-4 Nishi-ikebukuro, Toshima-ku Tel ▶ 03-3957-8433
Opening Hours ▶ 15:00-25:00 Closed ▶ Monday



MANNEN-YU

万年湯 **Tattoo-friendly**

A sento in Koreatown that's popular with travelers

This sento seems to have been hidden away in a backstreet in the Koreatown district. The interior is very stylish, with a unified Japanese-style design making abundant use of wood. In addition to a tepid bath and hot bath, the bathing room also offers a cold bath. Once you are refreshed from bathing, pay a visit to the Golden Gai section of Shinjuku!



10 minutes walk
from **Kabukicho**

5 Min. walk from Shin-okubo station (JR Yamanote Line) Address ▶ 1-15-17 Okubo, Shinjuku-ku Tel ▶ 03-3200-4734 Opening Hours ▶ 15:00-24:00
Closed ▶ Saturday



MINATO-YU

湊湯 **Tattoos are not allowed**

A stylish sento near the Tsukiji and Ginza districts.

This stylish sento is within walking distance from the Tsukiji and Ginza districts. Its full assortment of baths includes one with a powerful jet. The two bathing rooms have mutually different decors and facilities. The men's and women's baths are switched every week. Enjoy a relaxing soak in the bathing room, which is illuminated by a soft light. The entrance looks quite like that of a restaurant, so be careful not to miss it!



photo : Imada photo service

15 minutes walk
from **the Tsukiji Market**

7 min. walk from Hatchobori station (Tokyo Metro Hibiya Line) Address ▶ 1-6-2 Minato, Chuo-ku Tel ▶ 03-3551-0667 Opening Hours ▶ 15:00-24:30 Closed ▶ Saturday



AKEBONO-YU

曙湯 **Tattoo-friendly**

Take a dip while sightseeing in Asakusa

Add a special experience to your tour of the must-see Asakusa district! Akebono-yu stands out with its classic exterior. Decorated with a mural taking Asakusa as its motif, the bathing room offers enjoyment of various types of baths. Consider yourself lucky if you can make a visit from late April to late May. The wisteria gracing the front entrance may be in full bloom then.

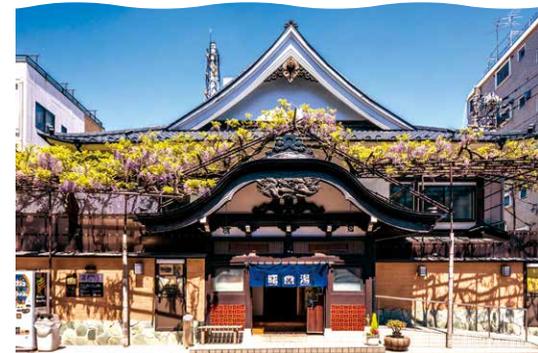


photo : Imada photo service

5 minutes walk
from **the Sensoji Temple**

15 min. walk from Asakusa station (Tokyo Metro Ginza Line) Address ▶ 4-17-1 Asakusa, Taito-ku Tel ▶ 03-3873-6750 Opening Hours ▶ 15:00-25:00 Closed ▶ The 1st & 3rd Friday



Sento

Q & A

Can I enter a sento if I have a tattoo?

It is generally permitted, but some sento refuse entry to people with tattoos. Although tattoos are widely perceived as fashionable decorations in other countries, please note that some businesses in Japan prohibit entry by people who have tattoos due to its association with anti-social organizations.

Do all sento charge a fee of JPY470?

The approximately 530 sento that are members of the Tokyo Sento Association charge a reasonable JPY470 for admission, but the fees for facilities and services differ depending on the sento. (In some cases, there is an extra charge for use of the sauna.) Please appreciate the individuality of each bathhouse. It should be added that facilities known as "super sento" are not members of the Tokyo Sento Association and generally charge a very high admission fee of JPY2,000 or more.

Can I go to a sento without bringing anything along?

You can buy towels and other items at the bath, generally for a price ranging from JPY100 to 200. In almost all cases, body soap, shampoo, and other items are available for use at the bath.

What are the bathing hours?

Sento are usually open for bathing from 3:00 pm to 11:00 pm. Check locations on a sento map and drop in while you are out sightseeing. A sento map is available here.

Do sento have a special etiquette?

First, take off your shoes and put them in the shoe rack or cupboard. Do not enter the bath in a swimming suit or your underwear. Before getting into the bath, wash your body. Before returning to the dressing room, wipe your whole body off with a towel. There are other rules as well. For details, see the poster in the sento.

Can I take photos inside a sento?

Sento are both public places and facilities for bathing. For these reasons, it is prohibited not only to take photos but also to use a smartphone after entering the building.

Are there hot springs in Tokyo too?

There are famous hot springs in all parts of Japan. Tokyo has hot springs known as kuroyu, meaning "black water." It is said that these waters can stand comparison with those in other hot spring areas. When you get into the tub, you may be surprised by the depth of the black color, which makes it impossible to see your body under the water. However, black-water baths are very good for health and beauty, and definitely something to experience at least once.

Why is there a painting of Mt. Fuji on the walls of sento?

All Japanese know that sento in Tokyo have a painting of Mt. Fuji on the wall. The practice reportedly began when an artist painted Mt. Fuji as seen from his hometown on the wall to delight the children using the sento. The picture won praise, and the practice spread among other sento in Tokyo. Mt. Fuji symbolizes Japan to begin with, and is widely regarded as an auspicious motif. It is therefore not hard to see how painting it on a sento wall became popular. At present, there are only three such artists who make paintings on sento walls in Japan. One of them is Kiyoto Maruyama, who is more than 80 years old. He stays very active and continues to do paintings on sento walls.



Noren

【のれん】

This is a curtain that is often hung at the entrance to business establishments in Japan. While you may feel some reluctance, resolutely step through the noren and enter the building.

Noren 2

【のれん2】

The men's bath (blue curtain) and women's bath (red curtain) usually have mutually separate entrances.

Wooden shoe key

【下足札】

In some cases, there is a wooden key for the shoe cupboard. After putting your shoes inside, remove the wooden key and make sure not to lose it.



Peculiarities in a sento

Attendant's Booth/ Front Desk

【番台・フロント】

Sento have either a traditional attendant's booth located between the men's and the women's baths or a front desk. Pay the fee of JPY470 here. (Some sento have a ticket vending machine.)



Put the hand towel on your head

【頭にタオル】

As a point of etiquette, do not put your towel in the water of the bath. Leave it beside the bath or fold it and put it on your head.



Basins and stools

【桶と椅子】

Once you enter the bathing room, take a basin and a stool to the washing area, and wash your body. When you have finished washing, take the basin and the stool back to where you found them.



Have you heard of Yuppokun, the sento mascot?



Yuppokun is the mascot of the Tokyo Sento Association. Following his creation in 2014, Yuppokun quickly became a favorite with sento fans owing to his cute looks.

His white coloring and round shape represent soap and foam, and express cleanliness and peace of mind. On his chest is a mark depicting his heart, with three lines indicating steam from bath water. His pink cheeks stand for the way that sento warm both body and soul. On his head is a "tenugui," the traditional Japanese hand towel. In sento, it is customary to put the towel on your head while bathing, because putting it in the water is frowned upon. The excellence of this design was given high ratings, and led to Yuppokun's inclusion in "Mascot Design," a book introducing mascots around the world that was marketed in September 2019. Yuppokun is the subject of special features along with stars such as Miffy and Snoopy. The design of the character and related goods has won high marks for its excellence.

Yuppokun stuffed toys are available at all sento in Tokyo, and there are diverse types of Yuppokun posters. We encourage you to take a look at these items.



yuppokun.com



Yuppokun stuffed toys are found at all of the approximately 530 sento in Tokyo.



Yuppokun is widely active in the form of posters, gifts, and other items.



Children are also delighted when Yuppokun makes appearances at events.

