



Refresh yourself in mind and body with the old-yet-new experience of a “sento” public bath

A public bathhouse, or sento, in the Edo period was used as a salon for ordinary people to enjoy after bathing.

This unique Japanese means of public communication was born here and is alive today.

Stepping into the unique architectural style reminiscent of a traditional shrine, you can get a wonderful experience that is different from daily life along with Japanese history and traditional culture.

Through a sento experience, you can add spice to ordinary days, and it will surely rejuvenate your mind and body.



The history of sento

Kofun period

6th century

Buddhism was brought to Japan and public baths were built in temples.

Heian period

9th to 11th centuries

Bath houses appeared in Kyoto.

Kamakura period

12th to 14th centuries

Temple baths were opened to the public free of charge.



Edo period

17th to 19th centuries

Bathtubs like those of today appeared. Public baths became familiar to the common people and formed a social field for drinking tea or playing shogi.



Meiji period

19th century

Public bathhouses were built in a form nearly identical to that of today.

Characters



Roy (age 29)

A Dutchman, he came to Japan for business negotiations as a manager in a consulting company. His hobby is running and has an interest in Japanese architecture.



Sen (age 75)

A regular sento customer who shows Roy the rules for his first visit to the public bath.

Roles and effects



Effect: Cleansing the body,
refreshing the mood

It's effective for cleansing the body and removing dirt from your body and your hair after a day of work. It also offers the effect of refreshing the mood.



Effect: Recovery from muscle fatigue,
recovery from tiredness, relaxation,
alleviation of sleep deprivation

We can expect the effects of recovery from muscle fatigue and recovery from fatigue when soaking in the tub to warm the body. Soaking in a large bathtub will help lift your mood as well.

According to a survey by the Tokyo Gas Urban Life Research Institute, people who soak in a bathtub every day, even those who sleep less than 5 hours on weekdays, experience less difficulty falling asleep than people who soak less than one time per week (see diagram).

Source: Tokyo Gas Urban Life Research report 2019.11

Experience difficulty falling asleep

About 18%

Take a bath almost every day

About 31%

Take a bath less than once a week



Effect: Communication

Having a chat at a sento may deepen some connection with the community.

Pre-check

for heading out to enjoy the sento

☐ Money (for bathing fee, milk, etc.)

☐ Towel for body-washing
(this is easy to forget!)

☐ Towel for drying off



☐ Your favorite shampoo,
rinse, body soap, etc.

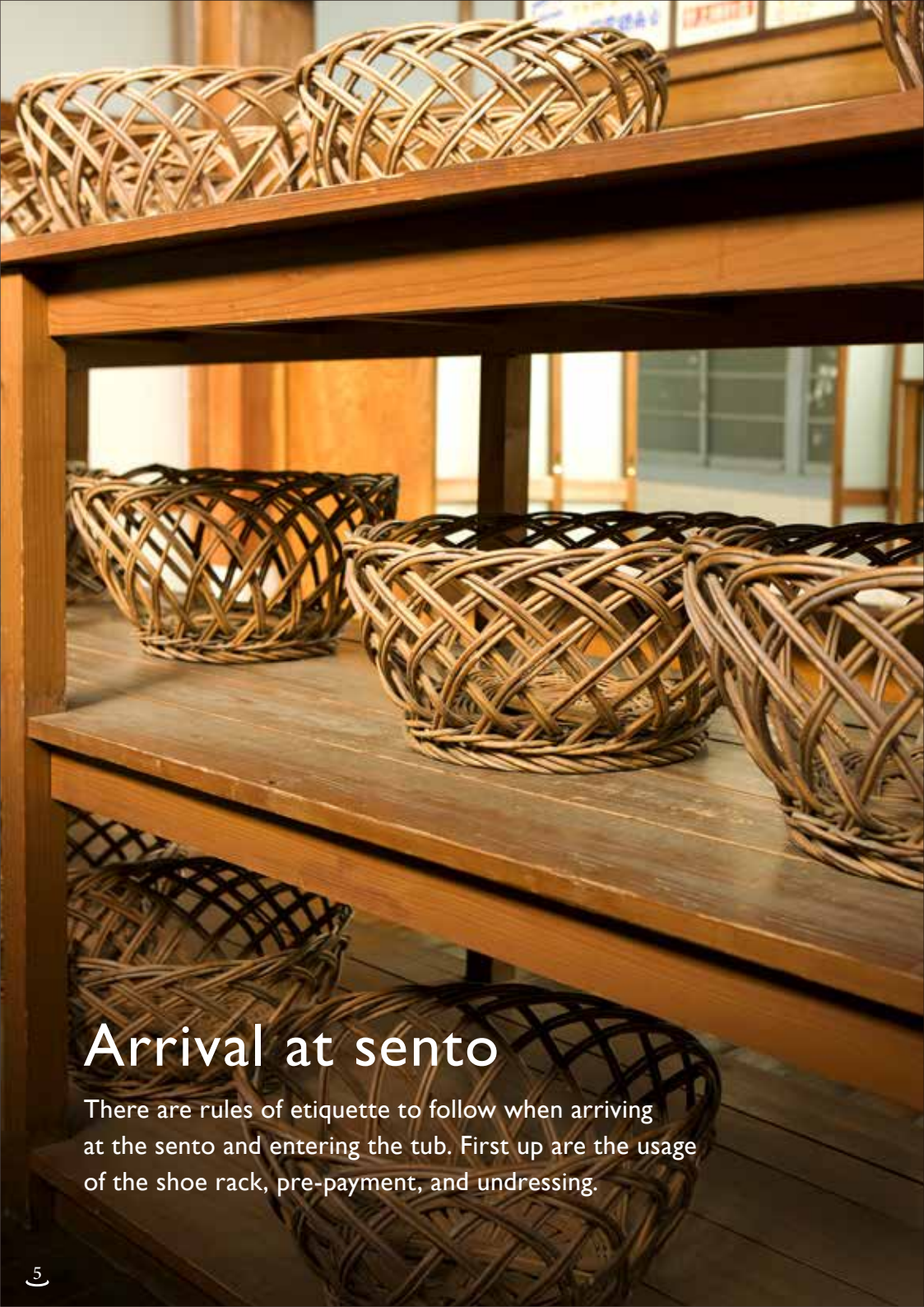
☐ Spare clothes

☐ Shower cap and hair band
(for persons with long hair)

☐ A willingness to enjoy the sento♡

Note: Some facilities may supply some of these items.
Please ask the bathing facility in advance.





Arrival at sento

There are rules of etiquette to follow when arriving at the sento and entering the tub. First up are the usage of the shoe rack, pre-payment, and undressing.



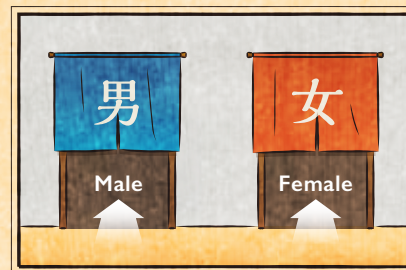
Place your shoes in the shoe rack

Don't leave your shoes out. Please place them in the shoe rack.



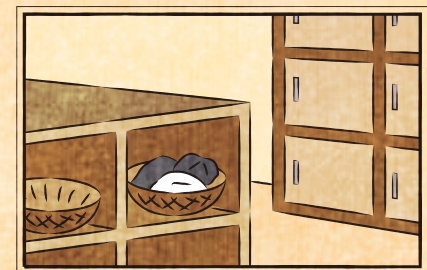
Pay the fee at the desk

The bathing fee is paid at the desk before entering the sento. Shampoo, soap, and other items can also be bought at the desk.



Male and female entrances are separated

Mixed bathing exists overseas but men's baths and women's baths are separated in Japan. The men's bath and women's bath are marked by cloth curtains at the entrances.



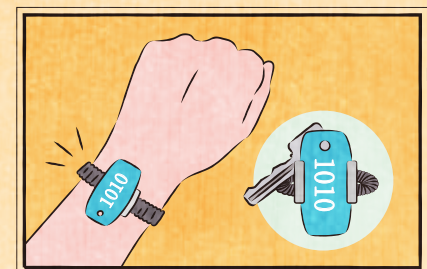
Place your clothes in a locker or basket

Place your clothes in a locker or undressing basket after undressing.



Place your valuables in a locker with a lock

Please keep any valuables locked in a locker



Put the locker key on your wrist

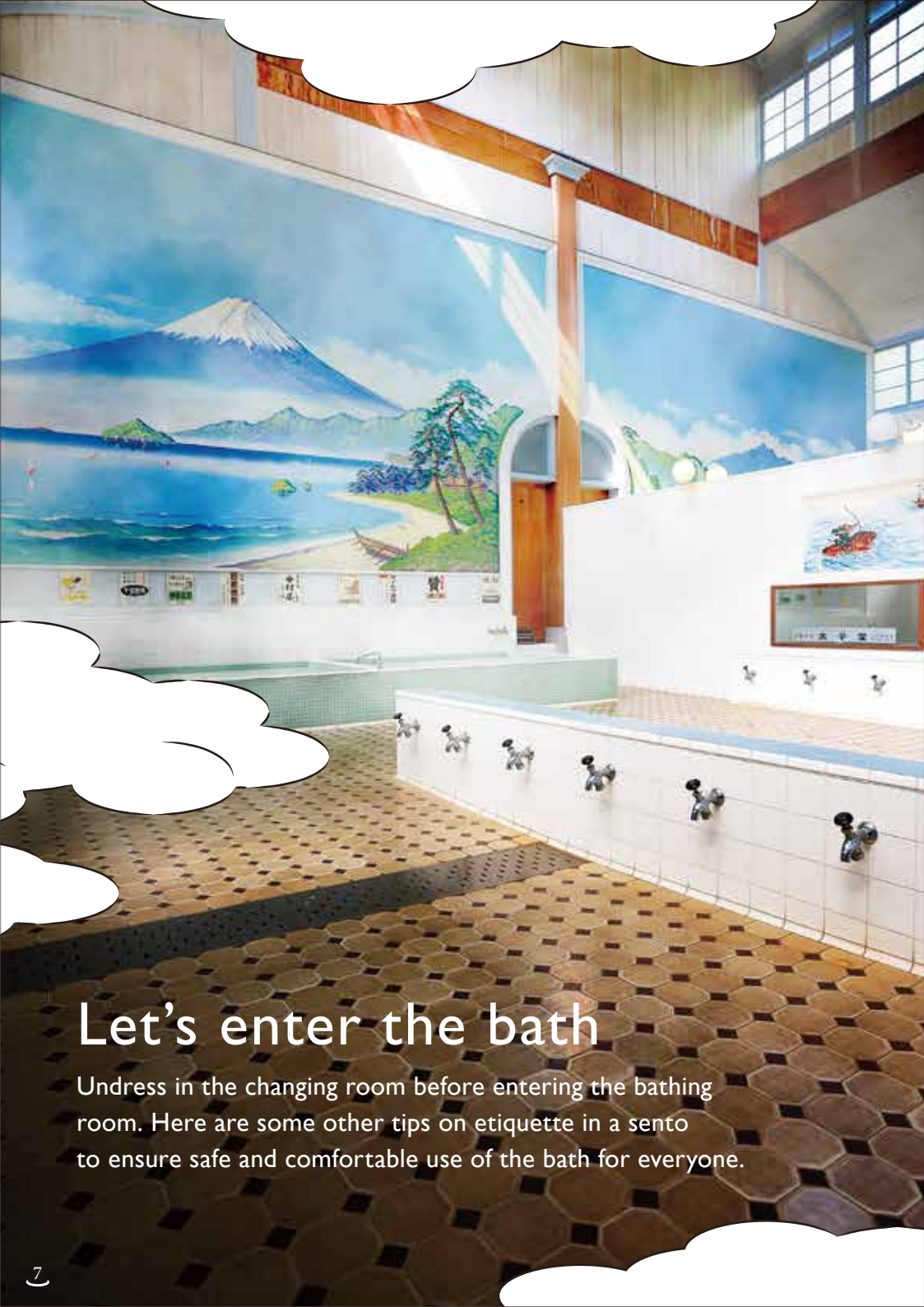
Put the locker key on your wrist and enter the washing area.

The right time for bathing

Warming up in a bath decreases blood flow to the stomach, which may cause indigestion.

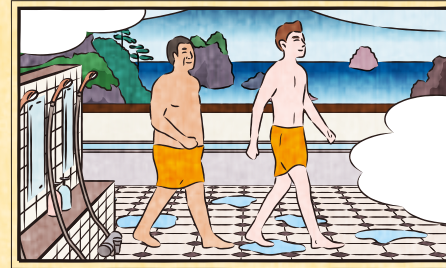
If you have just had a meal, rest for an hour before bathing.

If you are planning to have a meal after your bath, rest for about 30 minutes before the meal.



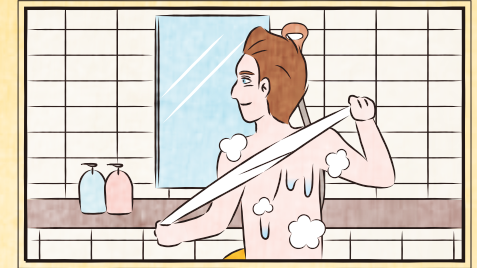
Let's enter the bath

Undress in the changing room before entering the bathing room. Here are some other tips on etiquette in a sento to ensure safe and comfortable use of the bath for everyone.



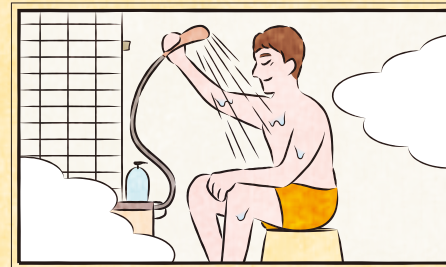
The floor is slippery, so walk slowly.

The washing area is slippery.
Running is prohibited! Watch your step.



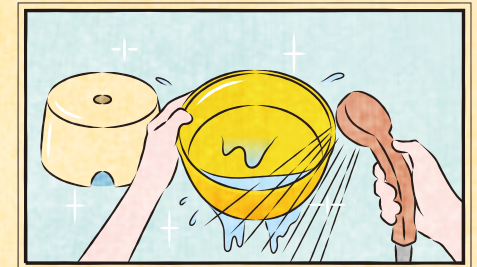
Wash yourself before entering the bathtub

Before entering the bathtub, pour hot water over yourself. This step, called *akeyu*, rinses off sweat and dust.



Sit down in the shower.

Sit down on your heels or on a stool when using the showers. Please don't stand and shower, as this will splash your neighbors.



Wash the stool and washbowl after use

After using them in the washing area, wash and return the stool and washbowl to their original spots.

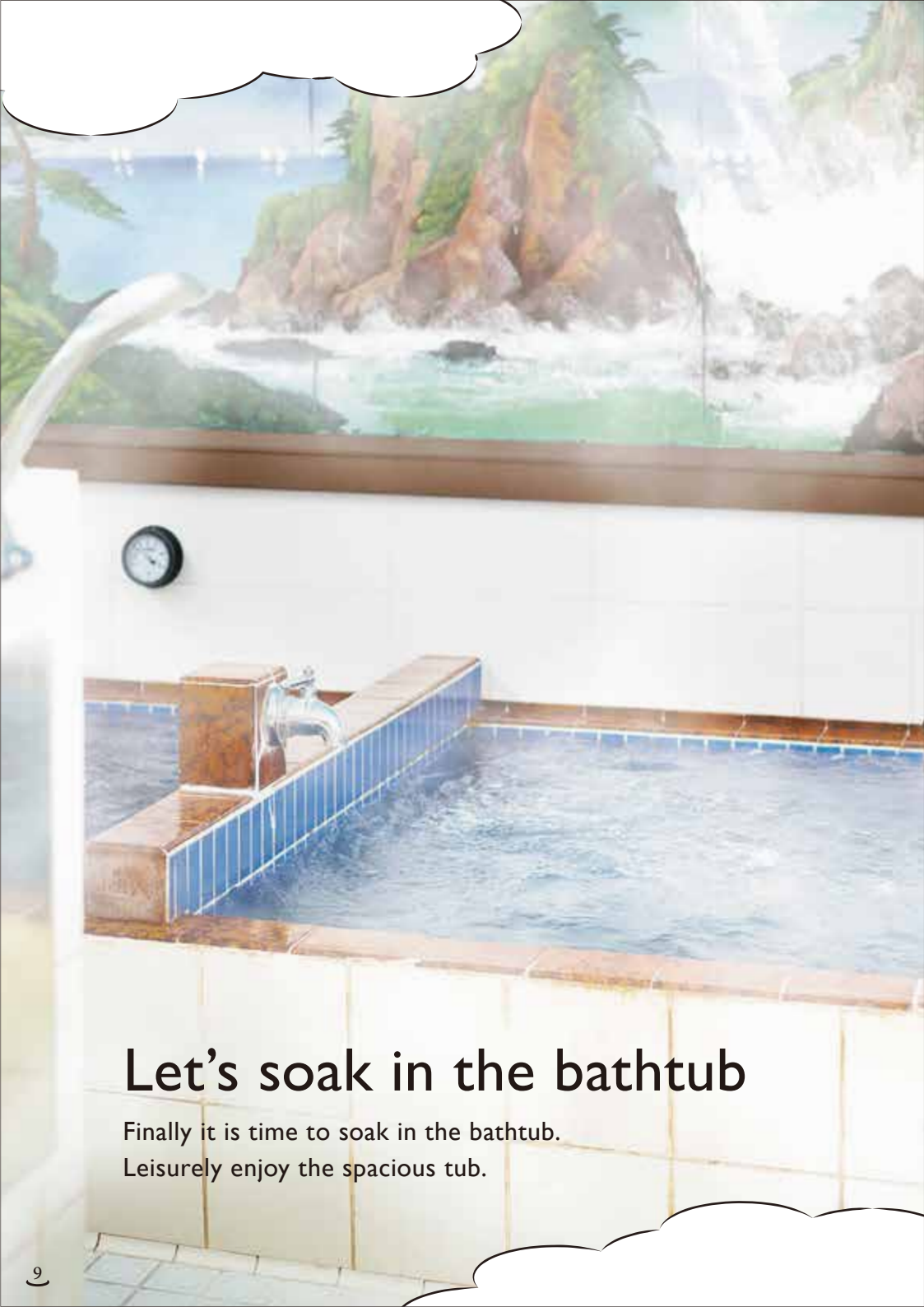


Wash yourself before soaking in the bathtub. This is *akeyu*. It's an etiquette of enjoying the bath.

Following manners so that everyone can enjoy the bath is what etiquette is all about.

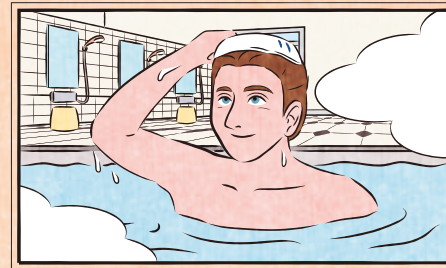
Leisurely soaking in hot water will improve the circulation of the blood and relieve muscle fatigue!

Is that so. That's good to know!



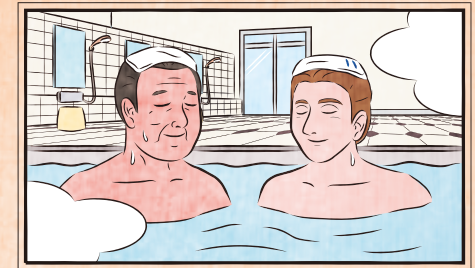
Let's soak in the bathtub

Finally it is time to soak in the bathtub.
Leisurely enjoy the spacious tub.



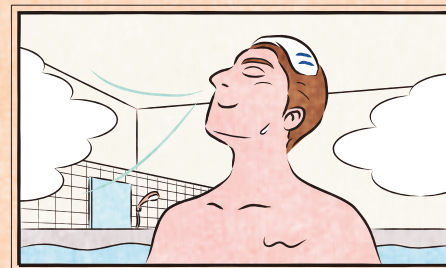
Keep your towel outside of the bathwater

Don't put your towel into the bathwater. Instead, place it on your head. This prevents a rush of the blood to the head.



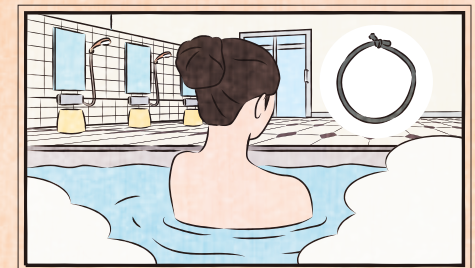
Enter the bath quietly.

Don't talk or sing loudly in the bathtub. Bathe quietly.



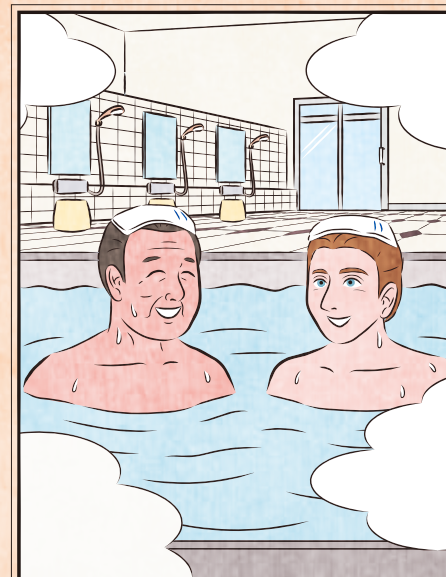
Soak leisurely

Breathe deeply and experience the great feeling of the bath.



Tie up hair longer than shoulder length

If you have long hair that extends past your shoulders, tie it up with a hair band or cap.



In my country, people mainly take showers. A tub of hot water is unusual for me!

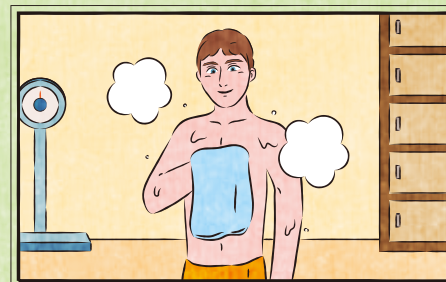
Is that so.
Did you know that people in Japan like soaking in baths?

How much do people in Japan like taking a bath?

About 90% like soaking in the tub. Some people bathe with family every day! (Survey: Tokyo Gas Urban Life Research Institute)

Spending time after the bath

When you've warmed up in body and mind, it's time to leave the bath. How you spend the time after your bath is a part of the enjoyment of the public bath.



Head to the dressing area after you dry off your body and feet

Before heading to the dressing area, dry off your hair, body, and feet with your wrung-out towel.



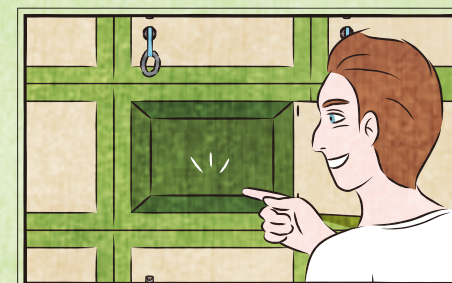
Take a little break

Enjoy the afterglow on the chair. Take a seat and bask in feeling of warmth. This is a nice time to chat with the other bathers.



Let's drink some water

The body loses a lot of moisture in the bath from perspiration, so be sure to drink some water.



Check your locker for forgotten items

After changing clothes, check your locker and basket for any forgotten items. Clean up any waste.



- Wow! Milk in a bottle! That's unusual!
- You can bring back your milk bottle when you're done with it and use it again and again.
- It's so environment-friendly! It's similar in my country! It's a part of normal life in Japan.
- Yes. Japanese like to enjoy eco-friendly lifestyle.

Why are many sento decorated with pictures of Mt. Fuji?



The Mt. Fuji paintings are said to have originated in the sento Kikaiyu in the Kanda-Sarugakucho district of Tokyo in 1912. Because Mt. Fuji was popular as a symbol of luck, it came to be painted on the walls of many sento, particularly in Tokyo.

Why do people place their towel on their head?



Placing a wet towel on your head as you get in the bathtub has the effect of keeping your body from heating up and your head from becoming overly hot. It also blocks drips of water from the ceiling.

What is the meaning of "Kerorin" written on washbowls?



Kerorin is the brand name of an analgesic. An advertising agency at the time suggested advertisements on plastic tubs. Back in 1963, hygienic plastic tubs were rare and were much appreciated.

Why do so many sento have milk?



At a time when baths and refrigerators were not widespread in ordinary households, milk companies sold bottled milk to sento that had both baths and refrigerators, and milk became a staple feature of sento.

How is the chimney cleaned?



A cleaner uses a broom to clean off the ash and debris that accumulate inside the chimney, with a clean towel covering the face.

What is the relationship between the *furoshiki* ("bath cloth") and sento?



During the Edo period, bath items such as towels, *yukata* robes, and *yumaki* bath wrappings were wrapped in a cloth that resembled those laid on floors of sento, which is thought to have led to the word "*furoshiki*" ("bath cloth").

Recommendation of "bathing education"

To help us to develop better mental and physical health through bathing,

we will learn about the effects of bathing, how to bathe, and how to enjoy bathing.

We call this "bathing education."

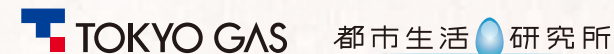
Bathing every day to warm both body and mind will give you energy and spirit for the following day.

Why not visit a public bath once in a while and expand your enjoyment of bathing?



The Bathing Culture Research Institute, a gathering of companies involved in bathing, offers ways to make daily bathing richer and more enjoyable in the form of "Suggestions for 'bathing education'."

Representative: Tokyo Gas Co., Ltd.



Bathing Culture Research Institute website
<http://www.toshiken.com/bath/>