

ASIAN BATHHOUSES

by Whitney Yang, on 06/11

CATEGORY

Wellness



SUMMARY

From Japanese mineral hot springs to Indonesian milk baths and Korean clay saunas, Asian bathhouses offer guests a plethora of healing experiences

TOP SPAS

Spa Castle	New York, USA
Fivelements	Bali, Indonesia
Takaragawa Onsen	Minakami, Japan

Public bathing houses are an important part of many Asian cultures. In Japan, Korea, Thailand, Laos, and other countries, visiting bathhouses is a common part of social life. Locals visit bathhouses to congregate with their neighbors and friends. Bathing is considered a normal tool to maintain inner and outer health.

Often, bathhouses will include steam and sauna rooms where visitors are encouraged to purify and detoxify their bodies. Saunas are said to detoxify the body by removing heavy metals and chemical [xenobiotics](#). To clear the skin and lungs, and relax the body, steam rooms will often be infused with a complex mixture of [essential herbs](#) such as tamarind leaves, Thai Ginger, kaffir lime leaves, and lemongrass.

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JAPANESE ONSEN

“Onsen” refers to the traditional spas of Japan where there exists a long culture of bathing in natural hot springs. Hot springs are naturally heated through the earth’s crust and their waters are rich with minerals. The mineral elements in hot springs are said to have physical healing properties. Some Onsen even claim to promote happiness in marriage or prosperity in business. Often a spa will have a selection of both indoor and outdoor hot spring baths with different mineral make-ups to choose from. Some examples include iron, sodium chloride, sulfate, and hydrogen carbonate. Onsen bathing is known for treating arthritis, skin conditions, and other diseases. While public bathing is a traditional social pastime, more “ryoken” or privately-owned hot spring inns are opening around Japan, [attracting tourists](#) from around the world.

INDONESIAN BATHS

In Indonesia, spas commonly provide bathing services for single customers who enjoy a private bath with specific health benefits. The baths are usually aimed at purifying, softening, and smoothing the skin. Popular “mandi” or milk baths use goat’s or cow’s milk with herbs and flowers. The lactic and alpha hydroxy acids in milk work to clean and exfoliate skin. Indonesian spa baths may use any variety of ingredients including seaweed, tamarind, coffee, and avocado - each with their own healing properties.

KOREAN SAUNAS

In Korean “Jimjilbang” or modern spas, variety is key. Jimjilbang offer an extensive array of temperature controlled rooms ranging from ice boxes at 11°C (52°F) to scouring clay rooms at 52°C (127°F). Korean saunas may incorporate different materials in their structures like jade, salt, [charcoal, and clay](#). Each material when heated is said to provide specific health benefits including anti-aging properties and improving blood flow. Traditional clay saunas may raise the temperature to as high as 200°C (392°F). In Thai, Laotian and Korean bathhouse cultures, it is usual for guests to spend several hours at the spa alternating between sauna, herbal steam rooms, bathing, and resting with a cup of tea or water.

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FURTHER READING

[Kinosaki Onsen – The seven hot springs of Kinosaki, Japan](#)

[Lonely Planet – Top 10 Hot Springs in Japan](#)

[The Washington Post – A bathhouse immersed in tradition \(Jimjilbang\)](#)

[The Brunei Times – Milk, not just good for your bones](#)