In this land where hot springs abound and Buddhist teachings on cleanliness reach far and deep, perhaps it was inevitable that bathing would become something of a religious experience. The Japanese will go to great lengths for a satisfying soak, everywhere from high-class onsen resorts to public baths to the humble ofuro at home. In this issue, we reveal how taking to the waters helped shape Japan’s body politic, some remarkable onsen to explore, and how the Japan Self-Defense Forces provide sorely needed comfort to disaster victims in the form of bathing facilities with multi-ton tubs. We also explore the realm of the sento (public baths) and how special bath salts can transform your own tub into a mini-onsen.