



From Hot Springs to Art:
Japan's
Bath Culture

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 *sentō* (public baths) and how special bath salts can transform your own tub into a mini-*onsen*.