

Ryokan Guide: Your Room



Guest room at the Hiiragiya, Kyoto

[Ryokan](#) rooms vary greatly depending on the size, style, price level and tastes of the specific ryokan. The following is an example of what can typically be expected at an average priced, traditional ryokan.

Rooms are typically designed for two to four occupants, although larger groups can sometimes be accommodated as well. They are almost always covered by [tatami](#) flooring, with a low table at the center of the room. There is often an adjacent smaller sitting room separated from the main room by sliding doors. This area is typically carpeted, with a Western-style table and chairs.

Japanese beds consist of [futon](#) (Japanese mattresses) laid directly on the tatami floor. The futon will not be laid out when you first enter the room. Instead, they are kept in the closet during the day to be set out in the evening and put away again in the morning by the ryokan staff. A separate closet offers space for clothing, luggage and your [yukata](#).



Guest room at the Kagaya, Wakura Onsen

Typical elements of the traditional style ryokan room

Besides tatami floors, low tables and futon beds, there are a few elements of Japanese architecture and decor that help to enhance the room's beauty:



Tokonoma

Most rooms feature a small raised alcove with a piece of pottery or flower arrangement and a small painting or scroll. This alcove is called the tokonoma and its decorations are frequently changed to reflect the season. Traditionally, the most important person in the room sits in front of the tokonoma, particularly during mealtimes.



Fusuma

Fusuma are sliding doors covered in heavy opaque paper that are used as doors to closets and to separate rooms. Fusuma may be painted or otherwise simply decorated.



Shoji

Another type of sliding doors or partition are Shoji, which are made up of wooden lattices covered in paper. Shoji differ from fusuma in that the paper used is somewhat transparent, which allows light to filter into a room.

Typical amenities in ryokan rooms

Ryokan rooms are usually equipped with a sink, bathroom and Western-style [toilet](#); however, older or budget ryokan may only provide shared toilets and sinks in common areas outside of your room. Ryokan also typically provide a television, mini fridge and a safe in each room, along with complementary amenities such as small washcloths for the bath, toothbrushes and tea for every guest.

Bath towels and [yukata](#) are provided as well, but are not meant to be taken home. Yukata can be worn during your entire stay at the ryokan including to meals, to the bath and to bed.



Sitting room (left) and yukata and towel set (right)



Toilet (left) and futon (right)

Ryokan Guide: Dress (Yukata)



A yukata set consisting of yukata, yukata coat, socks, and obi belts (folded into pentagons)

[Yukata](#) (literally "bathing clothes") are a traditional garment, similar in style to [kimono](#), but lighter, much more casual, and made of cotton. Yukata function both as a bathrobe and loungewear, which can be worn at all times during your stay, including to the [bath](#), to both [dinner](#) and [breakfast](#), and to bed as sleepwear. In some [onsen resort towns](#) like [Kinosaki](#), [Dogo](#) and [Kusatsu](#), it is also common to see guests strolling around town in their yukata and geta (wooden sandals).

Upon checking in, your attendant will show you where to find your yukata set, which consists of a yukata, an obi (belt), a yukata jacket and sometimes socks. Some ryokan may only have one size of yukata available, although more often they offer a selection of sizes either in your room or provided by your attendant. If given a choice of sizes, choose one that rests just at the ankle.

How to dress in Yukata

Step 1: Put on your yukata over your underwear (undershirt and socks are optional). Slip your arms into the sleeves of the yukata and grasp it along its front hem, one side in each hand, at about waist level. Fold the right hand side underneath the left hand side, and hold it in place with your hand.

Step 2: Now fold the left hand over the right hand side and hold it in place with your hand while you get your obi (belt).



Step 3: Secure everything in place with the obi (belt) by wrapping it around your waist. Begin in the front and wrap it around your back. The obi are usually stored folded into little pentagons, so look for these if you are having trouble finding the obi.

Step 4: Cross the belt around your back and tie it in the front. For men, the belt should rest fairly low on the hips. For women, the belt is tied at the waist.



Step 5: Adjust the length of the belt ends so that they hang evenly from your right hip. Then adjust the knot so that it lies on your right hip.



Step 6 (Optional): In cooler weather, the outer jacket can be worn over the yukata like a coat. Yukata coats have ties at chest level with which they can be secured, and may have a pocket for carrying small items such as your room key. Alternatively, yukata coat sleeves are designed so that items can be carried inside.



Toilet Facilities at Ryokans

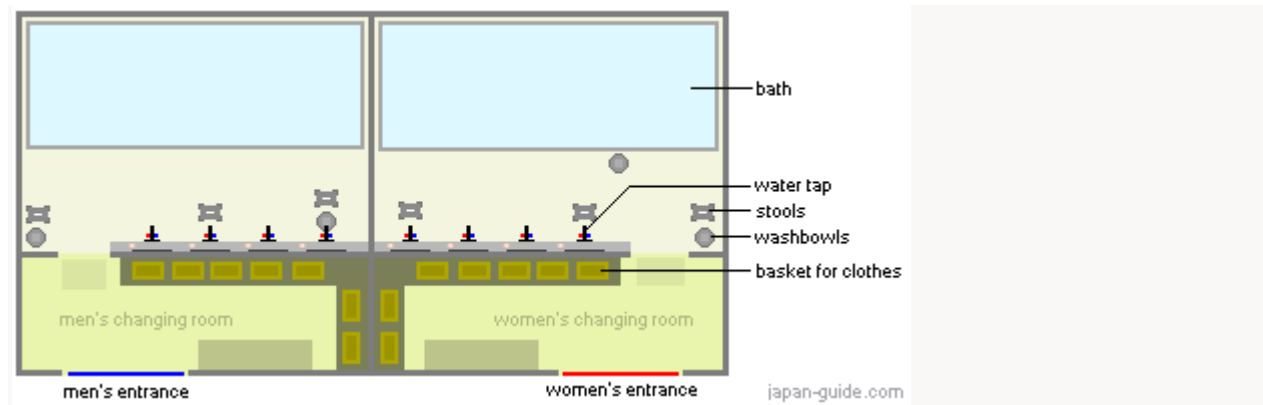
Toilets and Restrooms at Ryokans

There will usually be a separate pair of slippers to use in the toilets. This will all be made clear by your host. Leave your ryokan slippers outside the restroom and switch to the restroom slippers that you'll find just outside the doorway. Don't forget to switch back – this is most common western tourist faux pas in Japan!

How to take a bath?

Below is a description of the most common way of taking a bath in a [hot spring](#) or [public bath](#) in Japan. The actual rules may differ slightly between baths, but if you follow the instructions below, you should be alright most of the time.

Typical layout of a small indoor hot spring bath:



1. Take off all your clothes in the changing room and place them into a basket together with your bath towel. Coin lockers for valuables are often available.
2. Japanese hot springs are [enjoyed naked](#). Swimming suits are not allowed in most places. However, it is the custom to bring a small towel into the bathing area, with which you can enhance your privacy while outside of the water. Once you enter the bath, keep the towel out of the water.
3. Before entering the bath, rinse your body with water from either a tap or the bath using a washbowl provided in the bathing area. Traditionally, just rinsing your body is considered sufficient (and many older baths do not even provide showers and soap), but particularly among younger bathers you will find an increasing number of people who insist on taking a shower before entering the bath these days.
4. Enter the bath and soak for a while. Note that the bath water can be very hot (typical temperatures are 40 to 44 degrees). If it feels too hot, try to enter very slowly and move as little as possible.
5. After soaking for a while, get out of the bath and wash your body with soap at a water tap, while sitting on a stool. Soap and shampoo are provided in some baths. Like in private [Japanese bathrooms](#), make sure that no soap gets into the bath water. Tidy up your space after you finished cleaning your body.

6. Re-enter the bath and soak some more.
7. After you finished soaking, do not rinse your body with tap water, for the hot spring water's minerals to have full effect on your body.