

## **Public Baths in Uzen**

Unzen Onsen Town has a number of public baths, some of which have been enjoyed by local residents for centuries. Communal bathing is a cherished tradition in Japanese culture; in some places it is not uncommon for residents to take baths only at their local bathhouse, where there are both spacious tubs and good friends.

*Sentō* is the term for standard public baths, which heat their own water and are rarely seen as a tourist destination, being mainly geared toward daily use. *Onsen* is the term for baths that specifically use natural hot-spring water. Hotels are often built around onsen, and the baths can be quite luxurious.

Unzen is rare in that its everyday local community baths are also hot springs. These simple facilities allow visitors to enjoy natural, mineral-rich hot-spring water for only a few hundred yen. The baths are run by community collectives, and each one has its own quirks. All have separate sections for men and women.

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