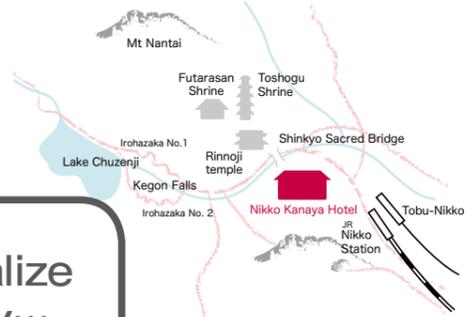


We asked travel writer Yumi Yamaguchi about Quality Japanese Inns and Hotels

[No. 2]
Photography/ Yuko Iida Text/ JQR

Japan Historical Stay



Q

I'm looking for somewhere to revitalize myself both physically and mentally...

(Food products company employee)

With the earthquake and all the extraordinary events that have occurred since, I've been short on sleep and rest for a month now. But the factory lines started working again so at last it looks like I can take a break this weekend. Is there somewhere close to Tokyo that's quiet and relaxing, where I could revitalize myself physically and mentally for a complete change of mood?

A

I recommend the **Nikko Kanaya Hotel** (Yamaguchi)

The Kanaya Hotel is a historical hotel very close to the Toshogu Shrine. Isabella Bird described its original appearance in her book *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*. Helen Keller, Albert Einstein and Frank Lloyd Wright have also stayed there. It's the perfect place for a change of mood; you'll feel calm and relaxed in its classic, tasteful surrounds, and the Toshogu Shrine is also within close walking distance.

The Mystery of Feeling Part of the Passage of Time

Travel is always such a busy affair. I always have some objective that drives me on, sightseeing and looking around without rest. But since I was feeling not just physically but also mentally fatigued, I decided to return home in search of the luxury of doing nothing. So I left the city and sped up the Tohoku Expressway for two hours, turned left just before the Sacred Bridge and went up a sloping road. After parking, I took my bag in one hand and entered through the wooden revolving door, finding myself being greeted by a smiling receptionist in a lobby with a retro atmosphere. After completing the check-in a bell-boy led me down a corridor from the main building to the new wing. Well, they call it "new," but it was built in 1901. The red-carpeted corridor with a high ceiling

was gently illuminated by floor level electric lighting. Old photographs displaying the hotel's history decorated the walls. The bell-boy showed me into a twin room, and when I opened the windows it filled with the fresh scent of trees. I lay down on the bed, letting my mind clear of everything for a while, then set off for the dining room. After dinner I dropped by the Dacite Bar in the main building. Rumor has it that Frank Lloyd Wright designed the igneous oya-stone hearth where burning logs fuelled a warm fire. I sat there in the warmth listening to the jazz music that played, taking small sips from a scotch. The bar has a record collection that you couldn't find anywhere else these days. If you have a special favorite of your own you can take it along to play. Ever since arriving in this place a wonderful, peaceful feeling had slowly crept over me. The furnishings throughout the hotel were old-fashioned, which was somehow soothing. It truly was a classic atmosphere through and through. Little wonder, for the Kanaya Hotel in

Nikko is the oldest surviving Western-style hotel in Japan. It had its beginnings in 1873, when Zenichiro Kanaya established the Kanaya Cottage Inn as a guest house for foreigners at the suggestion of missionary Dr. James Curtis Hepburn. In 1893 Kanaya opened the present Kanaya Hotel as a proper Western-style hotel in a different location. With a century and a half of history behind it, the hotel is a designated National Tangible Cultural Property. You can actually sense how the entire hotel itself is a repository of a vast store of knowledge. The next morning I crossed the Sacred Bridge on my way to the Toshogu Shrine. I wonder why it felt so bracing to be standing in that magnificent space created by trees hundreds of years old, gazing at the beautiful shrine pavilions. Just to be at the Kanaya Hotel and the Toshogu Shrine—places that been through times which we cannot know—made these two days fully satisfying.



Rainbow trout has been a Nikko specialty ever since Thomas Glover released trout into Lake Chuzenji at the end of the Meiji era. Rainbow Trout a la Kanaya is sautéed with a sake flambé. The exquisitely patterned Baccarat wine glasses were imported during the Meiji era.



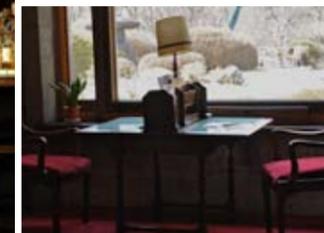
The current lobby entrance was dug out by hand and built during the Showa era. Yukio Kikuchi, the general restaurant manager, is a veteran of forty years who knows many interesting stories about the hotel.



There are a variety of rooms due to the rebuilding, extensions and renovations over the years. Pictured is a deluxe room in the main building. It's a spacious arrangement suitable for an extended stay in a resort.



The elegant Dacite Bar is a popular spot. Some people coming to stay at the hotel bring their own records. Even now the lounge in the main wings has old-style desks for writing letters.



Nikko Kanaya Hotel

Kamihatsuishi-machi 1300, Nikko-shi, Tochigi
Telephone: 0288-54-0001
Weekdays twin room from 17,325 yen (tax and service inclusive)
<http://www.kanayahotel.co.jp/>

[Access]

- Spacia train from JR Shinjuku Station to Tobu-Nikko Station (110 minutes)
- Spacia train from Tobu-Asakusa Station to Tobu Nikko Station (110 minutes)
- Tohoku Shinkansen from JR Tokyo Station, transfer to the JR Nikko line and arrive at JR Nikko Station (100 minutes)
- Tobu bus from the JR and Tobu-Nikko Stations to the Shinkyo Sacred Bridge (10 minutes)

Yumi Yamaguchi

Travel Writer. Author of *Teikoku Hotel · Wright kan no nazo* (Mysteries of the Imperial Hotel and Wright Buildings), *Shueisha Shinsho; Kieta shukuhaku meibo-hotel ga kataru senso no kioku* (A Register of Vanished Hotels: Memories of War that Hotels can tell us), *Shichosha; Tabi no mado kara* (Window Scenes from my Travels) *Chihaya Shobo*, and others.