

Japanese Public Baths

Pre-Listening Exercise

Name two customs or traditions visitors to your country may have difficulty adjusting to. As part of this discussion, talk about any points that visitors should be aware of when staying as a guest at a home in your country.

Idioms

"take a bath" = literally, bathe in a bathtub

"I had a long day, so I soaked in the tub. I took a long, hot bath."

Listening Exercise. Listen to the recording and answer the questions. The story describes the very old-style baths that are often not seen today.

What is the first thing you do when visiting a Japanese public bath?

pay the entrance fee

take off your shoes

put your clothes in a locker

What surprised Phil when he went to the bath?

People sit down when they bathe.

The entrance fee was expensive.

The attendant could see him undressing.

What do you wear when bathing?

shorts

a swimming suit

nothing

Traditionally, the bath was a place where people could ____.

socialize with their neighbors

make informal business deals

find marriage partners for their children

What do people sometimes do after their bath?

go for a walk

drink something, like tea

play Japanese chess with friends

Hey, _____ in the Jacuzzi might help you relax your tense muscles.

belongings

Many _____ visit the recreation center to use the sauna and hot tub.

rinse off

You still have shampoo in your hair. Go back and _____ some more.

soaking

Going to the swimming pool is a good way to _____ with family and friends.

socialize

Be sure to put your _____ in a locker to keep them safe.

patrons

Post-Listening Exercise

Discuss the topics below with a partner:

- three aspects of your culture that may require foreigners to get used to
- an experience in visiting a foreign country where you had difficulty with the language or culture.

Transcript. Listen and read along with the conversation. Review the key vocabulary and the sample sentences. The story describes the very old-style baths that are often not seen today.

Nate: Hey Phil: Have you ever been to a Japanese public bath? I hear it's quite an experience.

Phil: Yes, and what an experience.

Nate: What do you mean?

Phil: Well, it's nothing like visiting a swimming pool in the States.

Nate: Well, what do you do when you go to a public bath?

Phil: First, you take off your shoes before you enter.

Nate: Okay.

Phil: Then, you pay an entrance fee to the man or woman at the front counter. [Um-huh.] Next, you get undressed in the dressing room. And I was very surprised . . . and a little embarrassed to see that the woman who took my money was sitting on a **platform** where she had a **clear** view of the men's side of the dressing room. [Really?] This allows the workers to keep an eye on the **patrons' belongings** while they're in the bath.

Nate: Wow. And do you wear a bathing suit or something?

Phil: Oh no! You don't wear anything. Then you go into the main bathing area and wash your body while sitting on a small **stool** about 40 centimeters high.

Nate: On a stool!?

Phil: Yeah. It was really hard getting used to bathing in that position. Sometimes, even, people wash each other's backs.

Nate: Oh really. So, what do you do after that?

Phil: Well, after you've **rinsed off** all the soap, they usually have two or three large baths where you can **soak** for a while.

Nate: Do you actually share the bath with other people?

Phil: Yeah. Traditionally, the bath played an important role in the community. It gave neighbors an opportunity to **socialize** while bathing.

Nate: Huh. Interesting.

Phil: When you're all done bathing, people relax in the dressing room by watching TV, drinking tea or juice, or talking to friends. It's quite an experience.

Vocabulary and Sample Sentences

- **platform** (*noun*): a raised area where you can sit
 - The members of the local government were sitting on a platform overlooking the audience.
- **clear** (*adjective*): not blocked or covered
 - Once the table is clear of dishes, we will start the game.
- **patron** (*noun*): customer or visitor
 - Patrons are asked not to eat or drink in the art gallery.
- **belongings** (*noun*): possessions
 - Please do not leave your belongings unattended while in the amusement park.
- **stool** (*noun*): a small chair often made of wood or plastic
 - The young boy sat on a stool as he shined my shoes.
- **rinse (off)** (*phrasal verb*): remove soap or dirt from something using water
 - Please rinse off before you get in the swimming pool.
- **soak** (*soak*): leave something in water or other liquid for a period of time
 - I enjoy soaking in the tub to relax and forget about the worries of the day.
- **socialize** (*verb*): to talk to or associate with others in a friendly manner
 - I'm having a pool party this weekend as a way of socializing with some new neighbors.