



Onsen in Singapore: The Naked Truth

AMANDA BROAD is invited to try a traditional Japanese *onsen* bath, not in Kyoto or Kobe, but right here in the Lion City.

Tucked away on the fifth level of Clarke Quay Central shopping mall is Ikeda Spa Prestige, which offers a 90-minute Japanese Onsen Spa and massage experience. Just as in a traditional Japanese onsen, participants are invited to enjoy the bath completely nude.

There is a constant flow of white ion steam running into the Hinoki wooden bath, whose temperature is set to more than 40 degrees Celsius; a huge mural of Mount Fuji in winter overlooks the tub.

Here are some tips for first-timers to the *onsen* experience.

#1 Wash before entering

Begin with a cold shower seated on a stool; it's important to observe the tradition of showering before entering the bath. Make sure you properly clean all your nooks and fannies – I mean, crannies.

#2 Maintain modesty

Use the small towel provided to maintain modesty as you approach the bath, but be careful not to dip the towel into the water, as this is seen as dirtying the bath. Leave the towel on the side for when you are exiting, or, for a traditional twist, balance it on your head.

#3 Soak and hydrate

The delicious scent of the Hinoki wood (Japanese cypress) and the calming sound of the white ion pouring into the water have an instantly relaxing effect as you ease into the hot bath. I was a little awkward with the nudity at first, but after a few minutes floating in the hot water and watching the steam roll around the water's surface, it was hard not to relax.

Stay hydrated, and keep drinking water! I alternated with a cool shower and drink of water after 15 minutes; this quick change in temperature is thought to be good for circulation and for boosting the metabolism.

After 30 minutes, I dried off with the towel, wrapped myself in my pretty yukata (robe), and headed for a soothing 90-minute body massage. The whole experience was so relaxing, despite my nerves over the nakedness, and I would definitely do it again!

How to book

I discovered that there was a Japanese *onsen* in Singapore with the help of Anita Ngai, General Manager of Viator for the Asia Pacific region. Viator is a TripAdvisor company, with a website and app offering thousands of tours and activities, and over a million verified reviews from people who have already enjoyed the experiences.

Along with a visit to the *onsen*, you can make bookings and check reviews for a wide range of activities in Singapore, such as Breakfast with Orangutans at the Zoo, the Tiger brewery tour, Lamborghini joyrides, or horseracing at the Singapore Turf Club, to name a few. There's also a huge range of experiences available for overseas trips. *ℳ*

Visit the Viator website at viator.com/singapore. Ikeda Spa Prestige is at 6 Eu Tong Sen Street, #05-22 Clarke Quay Central.