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Love Hotels: The Hidden Fantasy Rooms Of Japan



Synopsis

Sex creates odd cultural conventions everywhere, but nowhere has an institution quite like the Japanese love hotel. To be rented by the hour for amorous liaisons, the theme rooms revealed in this provocative collection of photographs are steeped in fantasy, their elaborate décor ranging from simulated subway cars to religious bondage with much kink in between. These brash rooms are fascinating in themselves, but also present a window into a very classified aspect of this society. The foreword by best-selling author Natsuo Kirino and passages from hotel guest books lend humor and context to these 80 haunting room portraits, creating an astonishing document of sex and romance, public and private space in Japan.

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Customer Reviews

I am of two minds on this book. On one hand, it is full of great fantasy-land photos representing a slice of Japan that I love; the bizarre, the outrageous, the unashamed blending of cute/sexy/violent and anything else that can be thrown into the mix. On the other hand, this book completely misrepresents what love hotels are, the purpose they serve in Japanese society, and pretty much every other aspect of this unique aspect of Japanese life. Anyone reading this book, then going to a love hotel in Japan, would be sorely disappointed. I lived in Japan for many years, and during that time I went to many, many love hotels. The vast majority are nothing like these photographs, and the themed rooms are actually quite rare. If you notice, most of these photographs are from the same couple of establishments, Hotel Adonis, Hotel Loire and Hotel Snowman (not the actual name

of the hotel, which is really Gang Snowman), because they are the few out of the thousands of hotels that offer these kinds of rooms. Most love hotels are...somewhat boring in décor. They are nice rooms, with lots of services such as free movies, karaoke and a big bathtub, which are usually cheaper to stay in than regular hotels. Yes, there are some outrageous love hotels, like the ones in this book, and those are the kind worth seeking out because they are so much fun, but they are hardly the norm. The introduction to this book, by Natsuo Kirino, author of the book *Out*, is depressing and also misrepresentative of love hotels in Japan. She would have you believe that they are some sort of seedy place where men live out their dark fantasies while cheating on their wives and abusing women in general. In my experience, nothing could be further from the truth. Oh yes, there are those who use them as "cheating hotels", but all of my Japanese friends and co-workers, teachers and chefs, young and old, used love hotels without embarrassment. Why? Well, for one thing because Japanese houses are small, with thin walls and families often sleeping in the same room together. Privacy is a valuable commodity. For another reason, they are just fun. It is nice to get out of the house, out of the routine, and go with your partner and indulge in a love hotel for the night. People would chat at work at which hotels they liked, in the same way people swapped good restaurants. My wife and I stayed at a great love hotel for our anniversary, complete with private roof-top pool, huge bed and massive bath. It was fantastic. On another note, in the introduction Kirino calls Japan "a land without religion" and blames that for the moral failing of the country. Japan is indeed a "land without Christianity", but that is not the same thing as being "without religion". I was quite shocked at how poorly she represented her native country, and with such spite and venom she discussed the Japanese people. I dearly hope no one takes her opinion as indicative of the country and its populace. So, in other words, great photos and a nice look at the more bizarre and fringe love hotels, but no one should take this as representative of the industry or the country as a whole. Without Kirino's introduction, this would have been a much better book, but its inclusion drags it down to a sad and misinformed level.

I had only seen a few of these images when I bought "Love Hotels" and was thrilled with how many thrills and surprises the book itself offers. This is a tremendous body of work and a wonderful introduction to the photography of Misty Keasler, who has established herself as an artist of real humanity and complexity. "Love Hotels" is a gorgeously-designed book that is ostensibly about the loaded subject of Japanese hotel rooms used only for sex. In these delicious photos, Keasler goes much deeper than the simple eye-candy of these odd spots, and leads us on an exploration of this strange expression of a society known to be fairly sexually repressed. She communicates a

number of emotions -- some humorous, some sad, some disturbing -- that all reflect her longtime interest in how a particular public or private space illustrates the lives that occupy it. Much of Keasler's other work concerns children living in orphanages or garbage dumps, but no matter what the project, it always returns to place, and here she has found one of the world's most fascinating places. It's a great ride. Highly recommended.

I am glad that I bought this used, cheap. Most of the photos were shot at the same hotel, one with a "Snowman" theme. What the Japanese find sexy about snowmen, I do not know. Admittedly, I have not read the text; it was purchased for its photos, of which there were not enough, and lacked variety. The whole thing seems like a college student's research project. Perhaps the text says that it is. I'll never know, because life is too short to waste time reading the unnecessary. I gave it 2 stars because the quality of the photography was good.

Fun to consume visually and the forward sparks interesting conversations regarding the state of love hotels, the changing populist perspective in an aging country, and contradiction of the book to the modern normal of these places.

The pictures are fantastic, and the "notes" written by the various couples range from pathetically sad to highly entertaining. Be sure to read the forward or you won't understand the significance of Love Hotels in general. Makes an interesting conversation starter if left lying around on the coffee table!

Makes a nice conversation piece that you can place on your coffee table.....that is unless you're having guests over that are a bunch of prudes. Then it's best to hide this book and save it for your more open minded guests.

I took a look at this book while getting inspiration for *Wait For It*. While highlighting some of the more "extreme" rooms, it nevertheless gives readers a look into a world most Westerners will never experience. Like some of the reviewers mentioned, it can be depressing if you think these hotels are really about "love." But they're not -- they're more about escapism.

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