

Warm Up in Hakone

Three Cozy Indoor Spots to Sip & Savor in Winter

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Nestled among misty mountains, steaming hot springs, and deep forests just southwest of Tokyo, Hakone is a classic Japanese getaway. Hakone is one of the country's most beloved winter destinations. When temperatures dip and snow flutters on the mountaintops, there are few better comforts than settling into a warm space with a hot drink in hand. This article highlights 3 unique locations in Hakone, from historic teahouses to elegant hotel lounges, where the atmosphere, views, and beverages combine to create unforgettable winter experiences.

1. Hakone Amasake Tea House

Traditional Sweet Warmth in a Historic Teahouse



There's perhaps no better place in Hakone to warm up in winter than at the Amasake Tea House, a centuries-old resting spot that once served weary travelers navigating the steep Hakone section of the old Tōkaidō Road. This teahouse has been in operation for over 300 years and is still run by the same family lineage.

Atmosphere & Experience

Stepping inside feels like a journey back in time. The rustic wooden interior, low lighting, and tatami mat seating convey the aesthetic of Edo-period Japan — a place where travelers historically took refuge from cold winds and treacherous mountain trails.

Recommended Drinks

- Hot Amazake: This is the signature drink: a naturally sweet, non-alcoholic rice beverage made with koji and cooked rice. It has a lightly thick, creamy texture and a gentle warmth that spreads through you — perfect on chilly days.
- Mochi: This pounded warm rice cake is another menu item that has remained unchanged for years. Order a savory soy sauce or sweet kinako

Why It's Unique

The Amazake Tea House isn't just a café, it's a piece of living history. Its beverage recipe hasn't changed in centuries, and the location preserves a cultural link to early travel and pilgrim culture in Japan. Around the teahouse, you'll often hear local tales about samurai and road lore, making your warm drink feel like part of an authentic historical experience.

2. THE FUJIYA HOTEL

Elegant Lounge with Timeless Refined Comfort



For a contrasting experience to the ancient charm of Amasake Tea House, The Fujiya Hotel offers old-world luxury blended with serene comfort. Established in the late 19th century, this storied resort has become one of Japan's most iconic hotels. Past guests include Helen Keller, Charlie Chaplain, Einstein, John Lennon, and more.

Atmosphere & Experience

The hotel's lounge exudes refined nostalgia — think plush armchairs, hardwood floors, vintage decor, and soft sunlight filtering through large windows. In winter, the setting becomes especially cozy as the chill outside makes the warm interior even more inviting. You can even sit at the John Lennon table with a warm drink and apple pie.

Recommended Drinks

- Classic Café au Lait or Latte — Rich coffee balanced with creamy steamed milk, ideal for lingering over conversation.
- Afternoon Tea Set with Specialty Teas — A curated selection of premium teas, perhaps Darjeeling or Earl Grey, complemented with cakes or pastries.

Why It's Unique

The Fujiya Hotel lounge feels like stepping into a chapter of Japanese resort history. The hotel itself has played host to dignitaries and creatives over generations, and its interior is a mix of East-West aesthetics which creates a timeless space where even a simple hot drink feels luxurious.

3. Odakyu Hotel de Yama

Lakeside Views & Lakeside Café Comfort



A short stroll from the scenic red torii gates of Hakone Shrine is the Hotel de Yama. The Odakyu Hotel de Yama is a classic Hakone resort that pairs dramatic winter views with comforting indoor spaces.

Atmosphere & Experience

This lakeside hotel has elegantly decorated lounges and café spaces designed to frame views of Lake Ashi, often mirrored by snow-dusted mountains beyond. The setting feels like a quiet winter painting: still water, soft light, and a gentle hush that invites you to relax and savor the moment.

Recommended Drinks

- Hot Matcha or Specialty Japanese Tea — Served in the hotel's premium lounge café space (often associated with elegant establishments like this), these teas warm you while connecting you to Japan's traditional tea culture. (Often available at luxury hotel cafés like this, though seasonal menus change.)
- Espresso-based Hot Coffee — A robust choice that's perfect after a lakeside stroll. Combine with a light pastry for a cozy treat.

Why It's Unique

Odakyu Hotel de Yama offers not just a café — it offers a view. Whether you're gazing out at Lake Ashi's winter reflections or watching snowfall settle on distant peaks, your warm drink becomes part of a serene visual experience that blends nature and comfort.

(A note: Odakyu Hotel de Yama also has Salon de Thé Rosage, a refined tea room known for premium tea and desserts, just outside the main building.)

Final Thoughts

In Hakone, the winter chill isn't a deterrent, it's an invitation to discover places where warmth, flavor, and atmosphere converge. Whether you're drawn to centuries-old traditions, elegant lounge culture, artisan coffee, or lakeside serenity, Hakone's winter cafés and cozy stops elevate a simple hot drink into an immersive experience. From the historic comfort of Amasake Tea House to the modern motion of the Hotel de Yama, each destination offers its own way to embrace the season — one steaming cup at a time.

Travel Information

Hakone Bus Information (HAKONE JAPAN official site)

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Hakone Tourism Association

Email: yuukyaku@hakone.or.jp



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Hakone After Dark

Unforgettable Evening Experiences in Japan's Mountain Paradise

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As the sun dips behind the mountains and a soft indigo hue settles over the landscape, Hakone transforms. Steam rises gently from hillside hot springs, lantern light flickers against historic facades, and the crisp evening air carries the promise of stillness and wonder. While many visitors know Hakone for its daytime views of Lake Ashi and Mt. Fuji, the region's true magic often reveals itself after dark.

Here are some great experiences in Hakone at night—where warmth, light, and sky come together in unforgettable ways.

Hot Springs Under the Stars



Few experiences capture the essence of Hakone more beautifully than soaking in an open-air onsen beneath a star-filled sky. Surrounded by forested mountains and natural geothermal waters, Hakone's hot springs offer a serene nighttime retreat that feels worlds away from city life. Many of the hotels and ryokan in Hakone will have outdoor baths, but check to make sure. As evening settles in, outdoor baths, known as rotenburo, take on a special atmosphere. Steam drifts into the cool air, the scent of cedar and stone lingers, and the quiet is broken only by the gentle sound of flowing water. The contrast between the crisp night air and the soothing warmth of mineral-rich waters creates a deeply relaxing sensation.

Facilities such as Tenzan Onsen, Mori no Yu, and Hakone Yuryo are nestled along forested hillsides and are particularly enchanting at night. Soft lighting preserves the natural ambiance, allowing bathers to gaze up at the stars while immersed in centuries-old bathing traditions. In

winter, snow occasionally dusts the surrounding rocks and trees, adding a storybook quality to the scene.

Many ryokan (traditional inns) also offer private or semi-private open-air baths, perfect for couples or families seeking a more intimate experience. Whether you choose a historic bathhouse like Kinokuniya or a modern resort spa like Tenyu, soaking under the stars in Hakone is not simply about relaxation, it is about connection to nature, to tradition, and to yourself.

Why it's special: The mountain setting and minimal light pollution make nighttime bathing especially atmospheric, blending wellness with the surrounding natural beauty of the forests or mountains.

Lantern Night at Hakone Kowakien Hotel



For a truly romantic and nostalgic evening, step into the warm glow of Lantern Night at Hakone Kowakien Hotel. This seasonal event from January 1st to March 31st transforms the hotel grounds into a softly illuminated wonderland where hundreds of lanterns cast delicate patterns of light and shadow.

As guests stroll through the garden pathways, lanterns line the walkways and reflect gently off nearby water features. The scene evokes an old-world charm, reminiscent of Japan's Taisho-era elegance, yet presented with refined modern hospitality. Couples wander hand in hand, families pause for photographs, and visitors find themselves lingering in the golden glow. Inside, the hotel's refined architecture and welcoming lounges provide cozy vantage points to enjoy the ambiance with a warm drink in hand. The interplay of lantern light against the surrounding mountains creates an atmosphere both festive and peaceful—perfect for quiet reflection or shared moments.

Lantern Night typically coincides with cooler seasons, when early sunsets allow guests to fully appreciate the luminous display as preparations start at 18:30 and lanterns go up at 19:00. The experience is more than decorative; it is immersive. It invites you to slow your pace, breathe in the evening air, and savor the simple beauty of illuminated pathways.

Why it's special: The combination of heritage-inspired design and contemporary comfort makes Lantern Night a uniquely Hakone blend of tradition and refinement.

An Evening to Remember

Hakone's evenings invite you to slow down and experience the region in a different light, sometimes literally. Whether you are soaking in a steaming open-air bath beneath the stars, strolling through lantern-lit gardens, gazing at constellations from a mountain summit, or wandering among winter illuminations, each moment offers its own quiet enchantment. Unlike the lively energy of major cities, Hakone's nighttime charm is gentle and restorative. It encourages presence, conversation, and appreciation for the natural world. The mountains grow silent, the skies deepen, and the glow of warm light and geothermal steam create scenes that linger in memory long after your journey ends. When planning your visit, be sure to set aside time not only for Hakone's famous daytime attractions, but for its magical nights as well. In Hakone, evening is not the end of the day. It is the beginning of a new and luminous experience.

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