

Hidden Wonders | A Tokyo Bathhouse Where Firewood Heats the Soul

東京・江古田の学生街にたたずむ「江古田湯」は、昭和の空気が今も残る昔ながらの銭湯。薪で沸かすやわらかなお湯と、あたたかな常連客の笑顔に包まれながら、初めて訪れる人もどこか懐かしい気持ちになれる場所です。最近では災害時の地域の支えとしても注目されているそう。日本ならではの銭湯文化、海外の人にはどう映るでしょうか？講師と話してみましょう。



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

Just a 10-minute walk from Ekoda Station in Tokyo, tucked away in a quiet residential neighborhood, is Ekodayu — a public bathhouse, or sento, where the spirit of the Showa era still lingers.

Ekoda, a district in Tokyo, retains the nostalgic charm of an old student town. Step into one of its narrow alleyways, and it feels as if you've slipped back in time.

The doors of Ekodayu open at 2:30 PM, and familiar faces begin to trickle in. As you ease into the steaming bath, the first hit of heat can feel prickly on the skin — but soon the sensation gives way to a deep, soothing warmth.

"The water is heated with firewood, which gives it a soft quality," explains Hiromu Hokkyo, the 26-year-old third-generation owner. Since its founding in 1970, Ekodayu has remained committed to this traditional method of heating.

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1. Article

With its warm, family-like atmosphere, Ekodayu preserves the essence of a classic neighborhood bathhouse, cherished by both locals and travelers. Today, with most homes equipped with private baths, a visit to a sento is a nostalgic experience — and for younger generations, it offers a glimpse into the Showa era.

But sento like Ekodayu serve a deeper purpose. Thanks to its dual heating system — using both firewood and gas — the bathhouse can continue operating even during emergencies. "Even if the power goes out, we can still heat the water and support the community," says Hokkyo.

"I want first-time visitors to experience not only the retro charm of sento, but also their role in the neighborhood," he adds, smiling warmly as he greets regulars from behind the reception desk.

2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. **linger** (煙・においなどが) 残る、漂う

The smell of smoke **lingered** in the air after the fireworks show.

2. **soothing** (音・言葉・雰囲気などが) 心地よい、落ち着く

The sound of the leaves in the wind is very **soothing**.

3. **committed** 献身的な、(be committed to の形で) ～に専念している

We are **committed** to giving all children in this country a good education.

4. **preserve** (文化・環境などを) 守る、保つ

The arts—music, dance, literature, and graphic arts—help to **preserve** a culture.

5. **cherish** (思い出・人間関係などを) 大切にする、愛しむ

I **cherish** my memories of long cycling trips with my friends in junior high and high school.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. How is the district of Ekoda described?

2. Why is Ekodayu “cherished by both locals and travelers”? What makes it special?

3. How can the bathhouse help in an emergency?

4. Have you ever gone to a *sentō*? What did you enjoy most about it? If you have never gone to one, would you like to?

5. Besides *sentō*, what other customs and traditions bring the members of a community together?

4.

学生街の懐かしい銭湯「江古田湯」 三代目のこだわりは「薪で沸かしたやわらかいお湯」

路地に一步入ると、昔懐かしい学生街の雰囲気が残る東京・江古田。西武池袋線の江古田駅から徒歩10分ほどの住宅街の中に、「昭和レトロ」を感じられる銭湯「江古田湯」がある。

午後2時半の開店と同時に、常連客達がお店に入っていく。湯気をたてる浴槽に浸かると、熱さでピリッとした後に、肌になじむ感覚があった。

「薪で沸かしていて、やわらかいお湯になっています」と説明するのは、三代目の法橋広歩（ほっきょう・ひろむ）さん（26）。昭和45年の創業以来、平成を経て令和になった今も、薪でお湯を沸かすことにこだわっている。

家族的な雰囲気を大切にし、古き良き銭湯の姿を守る江古田湯は、地元の人から遠方の客まで幅広く親しまれてきた。各家庭が風呂を備えるようになったいまでは、「銭湯通い」はノスタルジーを感じる手段の一つ。若者にとっては、手軽に昭和を味わえる場所にもなっている。

しかし、銭湯にはもう一つ大切な役割がある。薪とガスを併用してお湯を沸かせる江古田湯は、「災害時に電気が止まっても、お湯を沸かして、地域の人を助けることができる」と法橋さん。

「初めて来るお客さんには、レトロで懐かしい銭湯文化と、地域での銭湯の役割の両方を知ってほしい」と、番台で常連客をもてなしつつ、話してくれた。

出典：学生街の懐かしい銭湯「江古田湯」 三代目のこだわりは「薪で沸かしたやわらかいお湯」

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