A Stay Unlike Any Other

Unique and affordable accommodations are popping up all over Tokyo.

A s the number of overseas visitors to Japan continues to increase each year, so do the types of accommodations available to tourists. Now, more than ever before, travelers from all around the world have a much wider variety of options for where to lay their weary heads after a busy day of sightseeing, business meet-

At First Cabin, first class rooms offer space and plenty of amenities.

ings, or visiting friends.

The world's first capsule hotel opened in Osaka in 1979 as a place for overworked and overtired businessmen (or "salary-men," as they are known in Japan) to get a good night's sleep even after missing their last train home. The capsules, which originally could only be rented by men, were small sleeping

pods stacked on top of one another and including a television, a privacy screen, and air conditioning and lighting controls. While these types of capsule hotels certainly still exist, there is also a new wave of more modern, boutique-style capsule hotels that is becoming more popular in Japan.

the capsules have a futuristic look, with no sharp corners and minimalist detailing

Nine Hours Hotel is a chain of capsule hotels with many properties in Tokyo and all over Japan. Its designer gave the hotel's original capsules a futuristic look, with no sharp corners and minimalist detailing. Rather than a television or radio, there are simply outlets for plugging in electrical appliances and USB devices such as a smartphone. The hotel's main focus is to provide guests with an excellent night of sleep, and therefore the mattresses and pillows are designed to be as comfortable as possible. The name is derived from the idea that most people on average spend nine hours in a hotel: one hour getting ready for bed, seven hours sleeping, and one hour before leaving in the morning.

I recently had a chance to spend 4,900 yen and stay a night in the newly opened Nine Hours Hotel in

the affluent central area of Akasaka. It was my very first experience in a capsule hotel, and I must admit I was a little apprehensive. But in the end, I needn't have worried. Once inside, the capsule felt surprisingly spacious and comfortable—I was even able to sit up comfortably without hitting my head on the ceiling, and I never once rolled into one of the walls in the middle of the night. The common areas were also very clean and spacious, with plenty of showers, sinks, counter space, and toilet stalls so that I never saw anyone having to wait their turn in the women's side. The loungewear, towels, and other amenities provided were also impressively high quality.

First Cabin offers a simulation of what it's like to fly first class

First Cabin is another new chain of concept hotels that takes the capsule idea and expands upon it further. First Cabin offers a simulation of what it's like to fly first class by offering four types of cabins: first class, business class, premium class, and premium economy class. The various classes offer varying degrees of space, with premium class rooms being nearly as large or larger than rooms at a business hotel, with some rooms able to accommodate up to four guests.

The minimalistic look of the Nine Hours capsule hotel.

a library concept, with beds amongst the stacks, hidden behind curtains

Looking for something even more unique? Book and Bed Tokyo bills its hotels as "accommodation bookshops," even though it sells no books. It's more of a library concept, with beds amongst the stacks, hidden behind curtains. Three sizes of beds are available, and guests can browse the shelves for reading material before turning in for the night.

So whether you're a design freak, an airplane aficionado, or a lover of the written word, there is a concept hotel in Tokyo that will offer a unique experience just for you. And the best part is that you won't even have to part with much of your hard-earned cash to stay there.

At Book and Bed Tokyo, book lovers can curl up with their favorite author in a cozy space.

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