

hotspots Hyatt Regency Hakone Resort and Spa, Japan

Where is it? Hakone is a resort area about 80km west of Tokyo, nationally famous for its healthy climate, park, mountains and hot springs.

So plenty of hot spring resorts? There is no shortage of places to stay but even the most upmarket properties tend to cater exclusively to the Japanese tourist trade. Consequently, they lack amenities usually expected by foreign guests, such as English-language TV channels and English-speaking staff. The new Hyatt Regency – the only international hotel in the area – takes up the slack.

What's it like? Like many new Hyatts in the region its interiors were designed by the chic Japanese firm Super Potato, so there's a contemporary feeling throughout. Appearances are fashionably minimalist: a log fire crackles away in the centre of the cosy living room, where guests sprawl post-tourist trail before drifting into the dining room for French provincial

repast or to prop up the sushi counter. There are 79 surprisingly large guest rooms (above right) spread through the west, east and north wings. The last two offer the best views: hills and the valley from the east wing, with the top of Mount Fuji visible from the north wing. Layouts are "contemporary residence" or Japanese tatami-style, or a mixture of the two. There are even half a dozen "dog-friendly" rooms, serviced by specially trained staff.

What about the spa? The Izumi Spa and Onsen claims to be the largest in Hakone, with eight treatment rooms – four for couples – offering signature therapies including the ambitious-sounding Lunar Phase. Products used are a combination of the Yon-Ka brand from Paris and locally sourced herbs and other ingredients. Two large on-site onsens adjoining the changing rooms offer traditional hot-spring immersion to hotel guests only.



Pictures: Peter Walbrook

What else is there to do? Hakone has been popular with the Japanese since the ninth century and is still one of the country's most visited health resorts. Tourist attractions include a cable car that passes over boiling sulphur pits, replica pirate ships that sail across Lake Ashinoko and a museum displaying sculptures by the likes of Auguste Rodin and Henry Moore. On clear days, a worthwhile excursion is to drive to Yamanaka to see Mount Fuji reflected in the town's boating lake.

What's the bottom line? Deluxe twin rooms cost HK\$3,145 a night, including tax, but cheaper online rates and special offers are available on occasion at www.hakone.regency.hyatt.com.

Hyatt Regency Hakone Resort and Spa is at 1320 Gora Hakone-machi, Ashigarashimo-gun, Hakone, Japan, tel: 81 460 82 2000. *Peter Walbrook*

spree Hamburg

Dusseldorf may claim to be Germany's fashion capital but anyone who knows anything about the industry will tell you otherwise. In Hamburg, home town of icons Karl Lagerfeld, Jil Sander and Wolfgang Joop, a cadre of young designers has set up boutiques and working ateliers along a once-rundown stretch southwest of the city centre, where they are creating whimsical and headline-grabbing pieces that are the envy of Dusseldorf.

Herr von Eden (above right; 33 Marktstrasse, tel: 49 40 439 0057; www.herrvoneden.com) is perhaps the flashiest; in a clubby corner menswear shop the latter-day suit is recast in rich velvety fabrics and bold patterns (from €500/HK\$5,350) but with archetypal Savile Row signatures such as side-vents, slant-cut ticket pockets and peak lapels. Across the street at **Garment** (25 Marktstrasse, tel: 49 40 410 8403; www.garment-online.de), both sexes are catered for by designers Kathrin Muller and Ullinca Schroder, who have given a svelte update to everything from summer dresses (€200) and mod evening jumpsuits for women (€500) to trousers for men (€200).

The same is true at **Reuker HP** (133 Marktstrasse, tel: 49 40 439 3256), where the buys to scoop up are Hans Peter Reuker's body-hugging jackets and sweaters for men, and flowing skirts and blouses for women. For something more retro or country, **Recession by Marla** (8 Glashuttenstrasse, tel: 49 40 1801 8970; www.recession-by-marla.de) specialises in flapper



fashions from the roaring 20s, as well as tweed ensembles from Edwardian times (blazer and trousers from €329 and €189, respectively).

The doyenne of the district, **Anna Fuchs** (above left; 106 Glashuttenstrasse, tel: 49 40 4018 5408; www.annafuchs.de), whose refined flowing dresses (from €450) have garnered her an international cult following and made her a prominent socialite, continues constructing stalwart items for "the urban cosmopolite and the jet-set" from her flagship showroom. Across the street, newcomer and Hamburg native **Inga Thomas** (117 Marktstrasse, tel: 49 40 4319 0471; www.ingathomas.de) is quietly making a name for herself for the bespoke handmade peep-toe heels and ballerina shoes she fashions in her spartan shop from colourful organic hides (from €300).

Former costume designers are in on the act too. For her 10th collection at **Sium** (27 Marktstrasse, tel: 49 40 430 7327; www.sium.net), Regine Steenbock has unveiled an ultra-feminine range of wavy, scrunched-up and



creased one-piece dresses with splattered Pollock-like patterns. Meanwhile, Evangeline van Niekerk, the proprietor behind **Krefeld** (102 Glashuttenstrasse, tel: 49 40 3483 0859; www.krefeld-atelier.de) has sent out her first collection of stencilled knit shirts and knee-high corduroy skirts from her shoebox atelier.

The glut of relatively posh indie labels – which includes **Karo Dame** (147 Marktstrasse, tel: 49 40 4318 2813), the lone bespoke stylist whose one-off dresses, shirts and skirts are exclusively for women – doesn't mean the street-chic crowds are forgotten. **Fortuna** (15 Marktstrasse, tel: 49 40 4018 6872) offers polyglot university students an expansive selection of lifestyle and limited-edition trainers (from €85) plus biker-wear items such as messenger bags.

At **Faktorei Geheim** (5 Glashuttenstrasse, tel: 49 40 2805 3485; www.faktorei-geheim.de) husband and wife team Detlef and Britta Klug add floral embroidery and needlework (starting at €6 per design) to otherwise masculine-looking army jackets and canvas messenger bags. *Farhad Heydari*

trial run Leaf Tea Travel Kit



What is it? A chic way to guarantee the perfect cup of tea while travelling. The Leaf Tea Travel Kit is a stylish pure wool "envelope" measuring 13cm x 13cm x 3cm and weighing 150 grams, designed by Parisian company Les Petites Emplettes. It unfolds to reveal six tins of loose leaf tea and individual cup filters. Each recyclable and refillable tin contains enough for two cups.

Why do I need one? There is a good reason why people have been drinking tea for more than a millennium. Tea contains healthy antioxidants and boasts cardiovascular protective properties, not to mention half the calories of a cup of coffee. But tea quality varies considerably and the stewed concoction proffered in-flight or in hotel mini-bars bears little resemblance to a well-brewed cup. The limited edition Leaf Tea Travel Kit (500 available) means you have everything at hand to prepare a good quality cup of tea whenever you need it.

Tell us more. The kit comes with a Surprise Selection of teas, or you may choose your favourite blends from Leaf Tea's range of natural, fair-trade teas. The online store has beautifully designed accessories and useful information about tea.

Leaf teas include Earl Grey, organic blue oolong, black tea scented with rose or lychee, black tea from Nepal, green tea scented with osmanthus flowers, white tea and Darjeeling. Ten per cent of profits are donated to charity.

What's the downside? While the travel kit is ideal for a long weekend getaway, Leaf Tea's limited edition portable tea kit (€17/HK\$270) is more convenient for a shorter trip. This mini set includes five small tins filled with natural leaf teas and non-bleached natural-fibre tea filters in a cotton zipped pouch. Measuring 18cm x 11.5cm and weighing 100 grams, it is small enough to slip into a handbag.

Where can I find one? The Leaf Tea Travel Kit costs €35 and is available online at www.leafshop.co.uk. Delivery to Hong Kong can be arranged. *Catherine Shaw*