



SEX IN
Japan

PHOTOGRAPHS
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Previous Page Left Dress by Norikonakazato Right Jacket and skirt by Norikonakazato, Lingerie by Rukaika, Shoes and anklet by Naife™ Opposite Page Dress by Norikonakazato, Shoes by Naife™

Sex in Japan 日本でのセックス



If a controversial Guardian newspaper article from a few years back is anything to be believed, Japanese young people have stopped having sex.

The article caused quite a stir in Japan, quoting a survey from the Japan Family Planning Association (JFPA) that stated that 45% of women aged 16-24 'were not interested in or despised sexual contact [writer's emphasis].' More than a quarter of men felt the same way. Walking around the streets of Tokyo today, you'd wonder where the hell they got their information from. From an outsider's perspective, sex is very much still big business and heavily engrained in day-to-day Japanese culture. Love Hotel Hill in Tokyo's Shibuya district is still going strong, as is the random selection of them in Korea Town and other parts of the city. See a bunch of lockers in a random alleyway, and chances are there is a string of love hotels nearby — the lockers provided for you to stash your stuff while you go get busy by the hour.

Love hotels, of course, originated mainly as a way for couples to be intimate since the majority of family homes were so small and offered little to no privacy. Over the years, these simple functional rooms evolved to cater for every taste and fantasy imaginable. Want a Hello Kitty-themed sex room with pink hearts on the wall? No problem. How about a room decked out to look like a classroom complete with its very own teacher's desk and ruler for spanking? You got it.

Japan is somewhat renowned for its extensive fetish culture, particularly in relation to *hentai*. In Japanese, the term describes any type of perverse or bizarre sexual desire or act. Internationally, *hentai* is a catch-all term to describe a genre of anime and manga pornography. Real-life sexual fantasies are, of course, limited by just that — real life. With *hentai*, however, the animators have no boundaries, free to draw giant penis-tentacled monsters having their wicked way with submissive virginal

nymphs. Some of the stuff is borderline questionable. Does that cartoon girl really have to look that young?

Quite often, these seemingly otherworldly fantasies do spill over into the real world. There are a number of fetish clubs in Shinjuku in Tokyo that go beyond what anyone would class as normal. There's an urban legend about one such bar with a glass ceiling. On the hour, girls come out, squat and defecate all over it. Another bar, recently closed but re-opened for selected dates in January due to overwhelming demand, "specialised" in having amputee barmaids for an acrotomophilia-skewed clientele. Tickets for this special reopening sold out quickly, so there is obviously a demand. As the saying goes, if you can think of it, it probably already exists.

Some would argue that this somewhat over-the-top style of public sexual expression is merely a facade for the sexual repression that exists behind closed doors. Despite the apparent external openness about sex, it is still very much a taboo word in the public eye. In 2013, Minami Minegishi of the insanely popular Japanese girl group AKB48 famously shaved her head in a public apology for staying over at her boyfriend's house after being photographed by a tabloid magazine as she was leaving his residence. She was branded a slut by many male fans of the band who probably wanted to somehow think they had a chance with her themselves. Girls in such groups are told to maintain the public image of being single — creating the illusion that they are eternally available. So while fantastical edge-demographic porn is seemingly OK, having a relationship is not. No wonder the country's youth are confused.

Despite all this, Japan does have a long history of sexual celebration. Every spring in Kawasaki, thousands of people

gather for the Kanamara Matsuri (Festival of the Steel Phallus). Legend has it that a sharp-toothed demon hid inside the vagina of a young woman and bit the penises off her first and second husbands on their wedding nights. As a result, the young woman sought help from a blacksmith, who fashioned an iron phallus to break the demon's teeth. This iron penis is now the centrepiece of the festival, carried about the area by chanting locals. Started in 1977, it used to be a small affair, but has grown to become something of a tourist attraction and is now used to raise money for HIV research. In fact, the shrine where the festival is held used to be popular among prostitutes who used to pray for protection from sexually transmitted infections.

Japan is a land of contradictions — a country where modern skyscrapers manage to sit in harmony with ancient temples. Yet Japan's contradictory attitudes towards sex are not quite as harmonious. Sex is most definitely still a huge part of Japanese culture, but perhaps its role in modern society is the most difficult thing to define.



model
Manami
grooming
Kie Kiyohara

photographer assistant
Takuya Nagata
style assistant
Ayumi Nagasaki



Necklace by Noritaka Kazato