

GETAWAYS

A personal room attendant takes care of all your needs during your stay and offers you a summer *kimono*, *obi*, and vest jacket. Then you don *tabi* socks, slip into wooden clogs, and set off to explore the stunning architecture and gardens en route to the spa or the communal baths.

At the hot springs, men and women have their own spaces, but after that, all privacy is left at the door. Among fellow guests, you sit naked on a low wooden stool in front of a set of taps and scrub yourself clean, rinsing off with a bucketful of water. Only then can you luxuriate in the super-hot mineral waters of the indoor and outdoor baths, which overlook a verdant landscape of perfectly placed plants, rocks, and lanterns against a backdrop of swaying bamboo. Spa choices include a variety of massages, Dead Sea mud and algae wraps, and facials.

Thoroughly relaxed, get ready for the 13-course *kaiseki* dinner—an elaborate tasting menu of Japanese delicacies such as conger eel,

grilled mugwort, and firefly squid—served in your *tatami*-matted room, before settling blissfully into the plump futon that awaits you for the night. —CORINNA GORDON

GORA KADAN ONSEN RYOKAN 1300 Gora, Hakone, Ashigarashimogun, Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan, 011-81-460-82-3331, gorakadan.com. Rates: From \$476 for two, including breakfast and dinner.



LEFT TO RIGHT: An *akomeogi* (folding fan); a room attendant clad in a traditional *kimono* and *obi* sash.

PHOTOGRAPHS: TOP AND MIDDLE, LARRY DALE GORDON; BOTTOM, CATE STEPHENSON

CALL OF THE ISLANDS What immediately strike you at **Surfsong**, an intimate villa resort on the British Virgin Island of Tortola, are the sounds and sights of nature: a hummingbird hovering over a tropical bloom or the music of the waves lapping nearby Well's Bay. The four villas are so discreetly sited on the beach and garden that you rarely encounter fellow guests. Opened in 2005, Surfsong is the project of Canadian expats Mark and Cate Stephenson, who spent four years sailing through the Caribbean before they were lured by Tortola's beauty and friendly people. Deciding to settle down on the island, they designed the resort with style and a keen sense of consideration. The accommodations—from a studio to two-bedroom lodgings—have airy interiors with sleek Balinese wood furniture, romantic bedrooms, and gourmet kitchens. Beyond the reception area, there's a central garden courtyard, two-story waterside pavilion with perfect sunset views, kayaks, hiking trails, and a quiet beach too. A chef is on hand to provide meals of the guests' choosing, and spa services can be arranged as well. Or you can simply let your cares disappear with the siren sounds of the surf. —JOAN TAPPER

SURFSONG Road Town, Tortola, BVI, 284-495-1864, surfsong.net. Rates: From \$350.



The beach lounge