Japanese Culture Now

まんが喫茶: まんがを読む場所から、くつろぎの空間へ Manga Cafes: From Reading Spot to Relaxation Space



Many of the customers at this Shibuya manga cafe are the young people in their late teens and early twenties who frequent this Tokyo commuter and shopping/entertainment hub. Six to sevenhundred people visit daily, and on busy weekend evenings, all of its 144 seats are likely to be taken. During the day, men and women often take a break from their work to stop by, and in the evening and nighttime the cafe is a popular stop-off for students and working people on their way home. The shop's shelves are lined with some 40,000 manga, magazines, and photo collections.



Visiting a Manga Kissa



X-Box consoles. These cafes are also popular as places to go with a friend or a date to sit in a love seat and watch movies or enjoy video games.



Every week the cafe posts a ranking of the mo lar manga. This week they are, from first to fift *no oji sama* [The Prince of Tennis], *Bagabondo* [Vag *Ai yori aoshi* [True Blue Love], *Doragonboru* [Drag and *Beruseruku* [Berserk].



It is also quite common for people who miss the night to spend the night at a *manga kissa*. She available for use at 300 yen per half-hour. A (100 yen) and a fresh pair of Boxer shorts (50 the personal toiletries available for purchase.



At the self-serve drink bar all drinks are free and juice. Those who get hungry can also orc *bento* (box-lunch of rice topped with sweet-gi yen; a *karubi-don* (bowl of rice with seasoned, I yen; and *bifu kare* (rice with beef curry) is 380 free to bring along their own food and drink.

Choose your seat preference: There are five types, including massage chairs and recliners. All types of seats cost the same.

Step 2.

Step 3. Select non-smoking or smoking.



Photos: Hongo Jin

Manga cafes (manga kissa) got their start in Nagoya back in 1979 as a style of coffee shop offering a large collection of manga comics available for customers to read on the premises. Those familiar with the early era of the manga cafes are likely to remember rather cramped and dim shops where customers were absorbed in reading manga and did little else. Such images, however, are a thing of the past. The manga cafes of today are bright and spacious-places where anyone can feel comfortable, even a young woman entering alone.

Reading manga is not the only pastime offered by manga cafes today. Customers can now access the Internet, view DVDs, play video games, or relax in a massage chair. The approximately 2,000 manga kissa throughout Japan are thus multipurpose spots for relaxation and diversion, now a familiar part of daily life.

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e last train late at wer facilities are razor for shaving) yen) are among





※お井当は店内でお召したがり下さい

including coffee, tea, soda,

ler a box lunch. A *shoga-yaki*

nger sauteéd pork) costs 480

proiled rib-meat slices) is 380

yen. Customers may also be





The private rooms are equipped with sofas and massage chairs where customers can relax as they would in the comfort of their own home. Quite a few people can in fact be found napping there.

Step 4. Decide how long you will use the facilities and pay your tab. The rate is 400 yen per hour, and 100 yen for every 15 minutes that you extend your stay. The three-hour set rate at 880 yen and the six-hour set rate at 1,180 yen are a bargain.

> Step 5. Kick back and relax!

*For the health and protection of young people and in order to prevent damage and crime, the Japan Complex Cafe Association issues strict store operation guidelines. Staff make regular rounds of customers to forestall underage drinking and smoking. Customers under the age of 16 after 8 p.m. and customers under 18 years of age after 10 p.m. are not permitted on the premises.

Manga Kissa Yesterday and Today

- 1979 Manga kissa originate in Nagoya. Coffeehouse style.
- 1997 The library-style manga kissa emerges, featuring long tables with chairs around them. Shops offer collections of about 5,000 to 15,000.
- 1998 About 300 stores nationwide. Manga kissa become established fixtures of popular culture and more stores open.
- 1999 Increasing number of stores introduce facilities for amusement, such as Internet access and video games, and amenities like reclining chairs and free self-service drink bars. The standard style for today's manga kissa is established.
- 2000 Transition from manga kissa to multifaceted cafe. Growing number of stores in which all seats are equipped with television and computer monitors, allowing customers to enjoy TV, DVDs, video games, Internet, etc.
- 2001 Number of manga kissa as multifaceted cafes reaches 1,500 nationwide.
- 2002 Manga kissa business expands to 2,000 stores nationwide. Internet connections upgraded with the installation of fiber-optic lines, etc.

*For CDs, DVDs, and video games, manga cafes market use of these media to customers under their user licenses acquired according to copyright law. Books and magazines, however, are circulated free of charge because there are no regulations regarding their rental in Japan. Manga artists and publishing firms claim that if these practices continue, not only will authors not receive a fair return on the profits generated by manga kissa but the number of manga buyers will decrease, causing the manga market to collapse. They hope for a revision to the current law that will acknowledge "lending rights," allowing them to collect copyright use fees on published materials similar to that for other media. Discussion of these proposals is currently underway.



まんが@カフェ ゲラゲラ Manga@Cafe Gera Gera, Udagawacho branch, Shibuya. This chain has 47 branches nationwide.

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