



Yoshi perches on a window railing at the Kansui-roh inn, bathed in light from a setting sun.

# Autumn Colors

The Kansui-roh *ryokan* in the mountainous Hakone community of Gaura was traditional to a fault, almost spartan but not at all cheap — \$620 per night for the two of us, and we were staying two nights. Evening and morning meals, served at a low table in our second-floor room, were included in the price, but don't ask here for an "American breakfast" of fried eggs, bacon and toast with jam. The inn wasn't equipped for such modern-day nonsense. The bathing pools, both inside and open-air, were hot, as expected, but I never found a suitable place with mirror to shave, so I just didn't shave. No big deal. This was the only traditional Japanese inn we scheduled during our twelve days in the Hakone

region southwest of Tokyo. The other hotels were Western-style. That was unlike us, but an old American friend, Jerelaine Lipman, was supposed to come with us to Japan, and we wanted her to be comfortable without having to sit on *tatami* floors, sleep on *futon* laid out on *tatami*, and bathe in the company of strangers. The Kansui-roh was our single non-Western exception, an opportunity to give our friend a brief taste of Old Japan tradition. As it turned out, Jere chickened out, and she didn't come with us after all. It was at Kansui-roh when Yoshi and I first smiled at each other and said, "Jere would have *hated* this." Truth be known, we would say the same thing a couple of other times during our Hakone visit. We are old

hands at this, always comfortable, while many other Americans might miss conveniences that have become necessities. But surely Jere would have liked the autumn colors of Gaura. It was the second half of November, and Gaura was higher in the mountains, cooler, than the place from which we had come that day. Foliage was changing rapidly and spectacularly. We left our baggage at the inn, since check-in was hours away, and caught a cable car that took us even higher, to the Hakone Museum of Art. I saw some Japanese pottery that was 4,000 to 6,000 years old. The people of the prehistoric Jomon Era were hunters and gatherers, but they needed pots in which to put their kills, berries and nuts, so they made them of clay and often added intricate decorations, since men, even then, couldn't live on meat and berries alone. But the museum wouldn't let me take photos inside. Why do museums do that? So I took mere notes inside, and contented myself outside by photographing the museum's tree-studded moss gardens. Nice thing about Japanese museums. They always have gardens.



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