

International travel in an IT society

ANDON Ryokan, opened in Minowa in June 2003, is keen to provide a complete range of information to guests. Its staff are all fluent in English and the signs inside the inn are posted in English. In addition to free Internet services in the lobby, all rooms are equipped with a TV, DVD player, and an

Internet connection. International phone cards are available at the front desk. The rooms are small and covered with four woven tatami mats, but the lobby has three different common spaces—a Japanese-style room, western style room and a terrace—and guests are welcome to use the open kitchen. With free beverages, guests are encouraged to enjoy the company of other guests and staff in these areas. The inn provides a variety of

sightseeing information and a handmade map of the neighborhood. If asked, the staff will also quickly search for and provide additional information. The 'friendly atmosphere of relaxing with family and friends' has been well received by guests, and the inn already has many repeat visitors. Because the inn will temporarily hold suitcases and other large items free of charge, it has many guests that come from Narita Airport and stay one or two

nights, travel to outlying regions, and then return for another night before going back to their home countries. The inn completely charges by the room, which is quite innovative for a Japanese inn. An uncanny harmony has been achieved between a contemporary design and the dimly-lit atmosphere of old Japanese homes, and the soft lighting makes the entire building look like a single paper shade lamp at night. The idea of enjoying the shadows that faintly emerge in the dimly-lit rooms is a Japanese tradition that has become obsolete in recent times. The inn represents a new attempt in a corner of Tokyo to adhere strictly to a Japanese aesthetic while being completely modern and international. ■

