

The History of Seibu in Photos (Part 2)

III Business Expansion and Renewal Period (1950–2003)

Expansion of the Hotel Business

Creating a new era for the hotel business, from resort to urban, then back to resort

1956

Seibu Railway, separation of the hotel business

Gaining an overview of the history of the Prince Hotels may, in fact, be difficult for someone outside the Seibu Group. Yasujiro Tsutsumi, the founder of the Seibu Group, established Hakone Tochi in 1920. The name was later changed, and the development of resort areas in Hakone and Karuizawa proceeded under the aegis of Kokudo Keikaku Kogyo; the hotel business began at the same time.

The name Prince Hotels originated in 1947, when the Imperial family's Asaka-no-miya summer home, located in Karuizawa, Nagano Prefecture, was remodeled and opened as the Prince Hotel. Former Imperial lands that had been confiscated by the GHQ following World War II were returned with the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951. When Yasujiro Tsutsumi acquired those lands, the hotel he built there also carried the Prince name.

In 1956, Seibu Railway took the hotel business it had owned and operated independent, establishing Prince Hotels, Inc. The Prince hotel brand was built through a shared business arrangement, under which Seibu Railway continued to own the urban hotels and the land under them, while Prince Hotels was responsible for operating them.

This arrangement continued until 2006, when Prince Hotels acquired Kokudo in an M&A, with Prince Hotels as the surviving entity; at the same time, it was made a wholly-owned subsidiary of Seibu Holdings.

City and resort

The former summer home of influential businessman Kai-chiro Nezu was remodeled and opened as Seizan Hotel (currently Karuizawa Prince Hotel) in 1950. Just three years after the opening of this serene resort hotel, with about 80 rooms, the current Grand Prince Hotel Takanawa Kihinkan opened in Tokyo as Shinagawa Prince Hotel. This was another sedate, tasteful hotel that made use of land and buildings that had originally served as the home of the Takeda-no-miya family, also a branch of the imperial family. In 1971, the hotel constructed a new building with more than 400 rooms (currently Grand Prince Hotel Takanawa), but until then, Prince Hotels was distinct in offering a relaxing resort experience even in the midst of the city. This was true even of Akasaka Prince Hotel (the old wing of what became the Grand Prince Hotel Akasaka).

Following Japan's period of rapid economic growth came a greater focus on business use in central Tokyo, and in 1977, Shinjuku Prince Hotel opened. It was followed by the opening of Akasaka Prince Hotel's new major tower, New Takanawa Prince Hotel (currently Grand Prince Hotel New Takanawa), Shinagawa Prince Hotel, Sunshine City Prince Hotel and others.

This is how the Seibu Group's hotel business became characterized by its rich variety, offering everything from lower-priced business hotels to urban hotels with banquet and wedding facilities, as well as resort properties in more of a summer villa style.



Takanawa Prince Hotel (now Grand Prince Hotel Takanawa Kihinkan) opened in 1953



Akasaka Prince Hotel, in business between 1955 and 2011



Seizan Hotel (now Karuizawa Prince Hotel) opened in 1950

Urban

Shinjuku Prince Hotel

Shinjuku Prince Hotel, located in Kabukicho, one of central Tokyo's prime shopping and entertainment districts, opened in 1977. The hotel is popular for its convenient direct access to Seibu-Shinjuku Station.



Shinjuku Prince Hotel, located in Kabukicho

Sunshine City Prince Hotel

Ikebukuro's landmark Sunshine 60 building was completed in 1978. Two years later, in 1980, the high-rise Sunshine City Prince Hotel opened in the tower. It serves both business and leisure travelers, thanks to its convenient access from Ikebukuro Station.



Sunshine City Prince Hotel has over 1,000 guest rooms.

Resort

Naeba Prince Hotel

This new wing of the Naeba Ski House opened the year after the 1961 opening of the Naeba International Ski Area (currently Naeba Ski Area). It is no exaggeration to say that in the 50 years since, the hotel has continued to serve as a leader in winter sports in Japan.



Naeba Prince Hotel, with a more than 50-year history

The Prince Hakone Ashinoko

Opened as the Hakone Prince Hotel in 1978. Architect Togo Murano, a recipient of the Order of Culture, worked on the design. Development in Hakone has continued over many years, since the time of the company's founder, Yasujiro Tsutsumi, and the hotel offers an especially serene atmosphere.



Hakone Prince Hotel (now The Prince Hakone Ashinoko) under construction

I The Early Days of Seibu Railway

II Initial Period of Seibu Group Real Estate Development

III Business Expansion and Renewal Period

IV The Rebuilding Period

Developing Leaders in Japanese Hospitality

The Prince Hotel School opened in 1971 as Japan's only hotel school created by a hotel. It initially started as part of Prince Hotels, intended to develop the management skills needed in hotel operations.

The school subsequently underwent several transitions, from the establishment of Japan Hotel Gakuin in 2009 to its present form as the Japan Hotel School, and in that time has developed many hotel personnel. As a professional academy specializing in hotel, restaurant and bridal operations, it dominates the industry both in name recognition and because of its long tradition.

The school's educational philosophy includes the following:

- (1) To provide courteous and hospitable service to all guests and customers, with an attitude of respect and professionalism
- (2) To learn and practice "Hospitality"
- (3) To integrate their knowledge and experience as they work in the hospitality industry and grow as hotelmen and hotelwomen
- (4) To adapt and maintain an international perspective
- (5) To make broad contributions to society

The quality of customer service, and not just in the hotel, restaurant or bridal businesses, is determined by people. By focusing on this fact early on, and by using a school to turn out new human resources, Prince Hotels contributed significantly to the development of the tourist industry in Japan.