



**Visiting temples and shrines**

**ETIQUETTE** There are many, many Buddhist temples (o-tera) and Shinto shrines (jinja) across Japan and most are open and welcoming to visitors, whether or not you're a believer. But these are still religious sites: speak quietly in the main halls, don't poke around cordoned-off areas, and avoid dressing as though you're out for a day at the beach.

**SHRINE RITUALS** There will be a water source in front of any shrine. Before entering the shrine, use the ladles provided to pour water over your hands to rinse them, and pour water into your hand to use to rinse your mouth (spit out on the ground, not back into the water source).

**Public behavior**

**QUIET, PLEASE** It's considered rude to speak on your mobile phone while on trains and buses, and announcements encourage travelers to switch phones to silent mode. People also tend not to speak loudly when travelling on public transport, so as not to disturb fellow passengers.

**QUEUING** At busy times when waiting to board a train, Japanese form an orderly queue. Train station platforms will have markings showing where the carriage doors will pull up, and may have lines drawn on the platform to guide the direction of the queues.

**SNIFFLES** It's considered uncouth to blow your nose in public. You may also see people

walking around wearing surgical-style masks - some choose to use these when they have cold or flu to help prevent passing on their ailment to others.

**Language matters**

**DON'T ASSUME** It's not uncommon to meet Japanese who are keen to practice their English skills, but English is not as widely understood as some visitors expect and many people will be uncomfortable or too shy to use it. It's best not to approach people with

the assumption they will be able to speak it.

**TURNING JAPANESE** A few basic words and phrases in Japanese will go a long way, and locals will be disproportionately impressed by even your most tortured attempt at speaking their language. Su-mi-ma-sen ('excuse me', which can also be used for 'sorry'), a-ri-ga-t? ('thank you'), ei-go ga ha-na-se-mas ka ('do you speak English?'), and wa-ka-ri-ma-sen ('I don't understand') are all very handy for starters.

—(www.lonelyplanet.com)

