JAPAN
experience serenity

Etiquette
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Visiting a shrine

1. Just like visiting a temple, behave calmly and respectfully.

2. Traditionally, you are not allowed to visit a shrine if you are sick or injured as they are viewed as causes of impurity.

3. Near the shrine’s entrance, there is a purification fountain where you have to take one of the ladles provided, fill it with fresh water and rinse your hands. Put some water onto your hands, rinse them. Do not drink or swallow water and instead spit it out next to the fountain.

4. Before going into the shrine, at the offering hall, throw a coin into the offering box, bow twice deeply, clap your hands twice, and then bow deeply once more and pray for few seconds.

5. Photography is permitted in shrine as well.
Greeting

1. In Japan, people greet others by bowing to each other. Not only that, people bow to thank, apologise, make a request or favour.
2. The bow ranges from a small nod to deeply bowing.
3. The deeper you bow, the more respect you are showing.
4. People tend to get on their knees and bow if they are on tatami floor.
5. Japanese people do not expect foreigners to bow, so they nod slightly. They do not shake hands to greet, however exceptions can be made.
6. In formal meetings, business cards are exchanged during introducing themselves.
7. In shops and restaurants, customers are welcomed by staffs with the saying, ‘Irasshaimase’. No response is required from customers, but a small nod will suffice those who want to reciprocate the greeting they received.

Visiting a temple

1. Behave calmly with respect
2. Make a short prayer in front of the sacred object to show respect
3. At some temples, visitors burn incense in huge incense burner. If you want to do so, buy a bundle of incense and let them burn for few seconds before extinguishing the flame by waving your hand, not blowing it out. After that, fan the smoke towards yourself as it is believed that it has a healing power.
4. When you enter the temple, you may be required to take off your shoes. Leave your shoes on shelves or at the entrance of the temple inside a plastic bag given to you.
5. You are not allowed to take a picture or a video on temple grounds.
Names

1. Address people politely using San, sama, kun, chan or sensei
2. San can be used most of the time except for really formal situations which may not be polite enough
3. Sama is used only in really formal situation as it is too polite
4. Kun an informal title used for boys and men that are younger than yourself.
5. Chan is an informal title used for young children and very close friends or family members
6. Sensei is a title used for teachers, doctors and other people with a higher education and from whom you receive a service or instructions.
7. Do not add any addressing to the end of your name as it showing arrogance.
Giving gifts

1. Giving gifts is a common in Japan. Most attention is given to wrapping presents, so if not packed nicely, the present should at least be handed in a bag.

2. Gifts in sets of four are usually avoided when giving gifts as it is considered an unlucky number.

3. When handing over a present, you should use both your hands as the recipient will as well.

4. Temiyage are gifts you bring when visiting someone for the first time.

Others

1. Do not bite or clean your fingernails, gnaw on pencils, or lick your fingers in front of others.

2. You can pick up your rice or miso soup bowl and hold it under your chin to keep stuff from falling.

3. If you must use a toothpick, at least cover your mouth with your other hand.

4. Avoid shouting loudly at someone to get their attention. Instead wave or go up to them.

5. For taxis the driver will open/close the rear left hand.
1. In formal occasions, you should kneel as shown in the picture below.
2. In casual occasions, men should sit legs crossed, back straight.
3. Women should sit back straight and their legs to one side.
Inside the homestay house

1. Japanese people have separate outdoor and indoor shoes and slippers.
2. You should take your shoes off when visiting the house and place it neatly on a shelf or on the ground. You will usually given slippers to wear.
3. It is considered polite to bring a new air of socks to wear after removing your outdoor shoes.
4. Slippers are worn on generally anywhere except tatami floor. It should be stepped with clean socks or in bare feet.
5. There is a separate slippers for toilets and they are usually left outside the door when in use.

Chopsticks

1. Hold your chopsticks towards the end.
2. Kay them down in front of you with the tips to the left when done eating.
3. Do not poke food, particularly rice, with your chopsticks. This is only done at funerals.
4. Do not point at something or someone with your chopsticks.
5. Do not wave around and play with your chopsticks.
6. Do not move plates or bowls around with .your chopsticks
7. If you want to separate a piece of food into two, put controlled pressure on chopsticks while tearing them apart.
8. Use the opposite end to tale food from a shared plate if you have already eaten with your chopsticks.
Taking a Bath

1. Rinse yourself before soaking yourself into the bathtub.
2. If you would like to take a shower in the morning, it is best to express to the homestay family.
3. After soaking, come out of the bath tub and wash your body with soap.
4. Keep the water in the bath tub for the next person.
5. Keep the bathtub clean.
6. Rinse the soap outside the bath tub.
Japanese toilets

1. Public washrooms are equipped with both Western and Japanese style. Some of older facilities may equip only Japanese style toilets, but newer ones have Western style toilets. Modern houses and hotels’ toilets are mostly Western style toilets.

2. Both Western and Japanese style toilets both have two flushes - small" (小) and "large" (大) and they differ according to amount of water used.

3. It is very rare, but some public toilets may not have a toilet paper. You should always carry around a small package of tissue.

Eating Etiquette

1. You should not eat while walking down the street
2. It's customary to say "Itadakimasu" before eating and "Gochisosama deshita" after eating.
3. When sharing a dish, put what you take on your own plate before eating it.
4. Don’t poke foods with chopsticks
5. Don’t eat your food fast
6. Don’t point at other people with chopsticks
7. Don’t dish our foods with the same end you ate with
8. Cover your mouth with your using a tooth pick
9. Do not our sugar or cream in Japanese tea
10. Don’t leave your plate messy
11. When your eating rice or soup, hold the dish under your chin to prevent from spilling
12. Do not put soy sauce in your rice
13. It’s good to make loud gulping sounds when drinking.
Dining out

1. When entering a restaurant, you will be welcomed by the staffs with the saying, ‘irasshaimase’, which means ‘welcome, please come in’.

2. You are not expected anything in return but you may nod your head.

3. Majority of restaurants in Japan provide Western style, but traditional style is also common. In this case, you should remove your shoes at the entrance or before stepping onto the seating area.

4. Smoking is permitted in many restaurants in Japan. Some restaurants have smoking and non-smoking sections, so if there is a choice, the waitress will ask your preference before taking you to your seat.

Table manners

1. Clean your hands before eating.

2. If you are eating on tatami floor, make sure your slippers are removed before stepping on the floor.


4. It is considered as bad manners if you blow your nose, burp and munch food loudly.

5. It is good to empty your dishes to the last grain of rice.