



Obihiro Pioneer

Tourism and Goodwill Exchange Section Newsletter

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Japanese Shrines and Religion

日本の神社と神道

Here comes the summer, pioneers! Sure has been a chilly spring, no complaints, With travel season around the corner, surely you are planning on visiting some shrines around Japan, aren't you? These shrines are central to Shinto (神道, Shintō), Japan's indigenous religion. Let's dive into the basics of Shinto, and what you can expect when visiting a shrine.

What is Shinto?

Shinto, which means "the way of the gods," is a religion that focuses on ritual practices to connect with Kami (神), the spirits or gods. Shinto is deeply intertwined with Japanese culture and traditions, celebrating the beauty of nature and the sanctity of life.



A Brief History of Shinto

Shinto has no known founder and no sacred scriptures like other major religions. It evolved over centuries, influenced by Buddhism and other religions. Shinto was initially a collection of animistic beliefs, worshipping natural phenomena and ancestors. It contains mythology about the creation of the Japanese islands. It exists in harmony with Buddhism and you will often see shrines near temples.

Prominent Gods in Shinto

Shinto's pantheon includes numerous Kami, each associated with different aspects of life and nature. Here are a few prominent ones:

- Amaterasu (天照大神, Amaterasu-Ōmikami): The sun goddess and the most important deity in Shinto, believed to be the ancestor of the Japanese imperial family.
- Susanoo (須佐之男命, Susanoo-no-Mikoto):

The storm god, Amaterasu's brother, known for his temper but also for slaying a great serpent to save a maiden.

- Inari (稲荷大神, Inari-Ōkami): The god of rice, fertility, and prosperity, depicted with foxes (kitsune), who are his messengers.

Why Do People Go to Shrines?

People visit Shinto shrines for various reasons, including:

- Prayers (祈願, Kigan): Asking for blessings, success, health, or protection.
- Festivals (祭り, Matsuri): Celebrating seasonal events, historical occasions, or enshrined kami.
- Purification (お祓い, Oharai): Cleansing oneself of impurities and evil spirits.
- Weddings (結婚式, Kekkonshiki): Traditional Shinto weddings are popular in Japan.
- New Year's Visits (初詣, Hatsumōde): The first shrine visit of the new year to pray for good fortune.

Who Works at Shrines?

Shrines are typically maintained by priests (神職, Shinshoku) and maidens (巫女, Miko). Shinshoku (usually men) conduct rituals and maintain the shrine. Miko are young women (rarely men) who assist in ceremonies and sell amulets. They wear traditional white and red garments.



Shrine Symbols

- Torii Gates (鳥居): Gates that mark passing through one symbolizes leaving the human world and entering a holy place.

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They come in many colors and styles, but red is the most common. It's customary to bow briefly before and after passing through.

- Komainu (狛犬): Lion-dog statues that often guard the entrance of a shrine. They come in pairs, with one usually having its mouth open (Agyō) and the other closed (Ungyō). They protect the shrine from evil spirits. 
- Shimenawa (注連縄): Braided rice straw ropes often hung with white paper strips (shide). They mark sacred spaces and objects, warding off evil spirits.
- Magatama (勾玉): Comma-shaped beads often used as sacred jewelry in ancient Japan. They are considered to be protective talismans and sacred objects.

How to Pray at a Shrine

Here's a step-by-step guide on how to pray, regardless of your religion. Following these steps shows respect for the shrine and its deities:

1) Bow at the Torii (鳥居)

Before passing through, stand before the torii gate and bow slightly to show respect as you enter.

2) Walk on the Side of the Path

When walking to the shrine, walk on the side of the road. The center of the path is where the gods walk.

3) Purify Yourself (お清め, Oshime)

Stop at the purification fountain near the entrance. Pick up the ladle (柄杓, Hishaku) with your right hand, scoop some water, and pour it over your left hand. Switch hands, pour water over your right hand. Pour water into your left hand, rinse your mouth (do not drink directly from the ladle!), then spit the water beside the fountain. Rinse your left hand again. Finally, hold the ladle vertically to let the remaining water cleanse the handle.

4) Proceed to the Main Hall (拝殿, Haiden)

Approach the shrine and walk up to the offering box (賽銭箱, Saisenbako)

5) Pray (お祈り, Oinori)


1. Donation: Toss a coin (a 5-yen coin is considered lucky) into the offering box.
2. Bow Twice (二礼, Nirei). Bow deeply from the waist twice at a 90 degree angle to show respect.



日本の神社と神

3. Clap Twice (二拍手, Nihakushu): Clap your hands twice to get the Kami's attention and keep your hands together after the second clap.
4. Pray (祈願, Kigan): Express your appreciation for your daily life in your heart and make a silent prayer or wish.
5. Bow Once (一礼, Ichirei): Finish with a single deep bow. Enjoy your visit and the peaceful atmosphere of the shrine!

Other Things to Do At a Shrine

- "Donate" to get an amulet/charm (お守り, Omamori) for various types of protection and blessings. Religious institutions cannot technically sell things, so you need to "donate" the price asked for to obtain the omamori. 
- "Donate" to get an ema (絵馬), a small wooden plaque on which you can write your prayers or wishes. You hang it at the shrine where the kami can receive it.
- "Donate" to draw a fortune slip (おみくじ, Omikuji) to see what luck awaits you. If it's bad luck (凶, Kyō), tie it to a designated area to leave the misfortune behind.

Famous Shrines in Japan

- Meiji Shrine (明治神宮, Meiji Jingū) in Tokyo: Dedicated to Emperor Meiji and Empress Shōken, it's one of the most visited shrines, especially during New Year's.
- Fushimi Inari Taisha (伏見稲荷大社) in Kyoto: Known for its path of thousands of red torii gates.
- Ise Grand Shrine (伊勢神宮, Ise Jingū) in Mie: The most sacred Shinto shrine, dedicated to Amaterasu, and rebuilt every 20 years.

Shrines in Hokkaido vs. Mainland Japan

Shrines in Hokkaido, like Obihiro Jinja (帯広神社), often reflect the region's history and indigenous Ainu influences. Hokkaido's shrines are typically newer, established during the Meiji era to support the settlement of the island. In contrast, shrines in mainland Japan often have ancient origins and elaborate structures.

Shinto shrines are an integral part of Japanese culture, offering a glimpse into the spiritual and historical heritage. Enjoy your exploration of Shinto and the beautiful shrines across Japan!

Electronic Payment Options

電子マネー支払いについて

Electronic Payment Systems (電子マネー) in Japan

Understanding electronic payment systems (電子マネー, *denshi manē*) can make your life much easier in Japan.

These systems allow you to pay for goods and services without using cash or having to sign up for a credit card. It's a smart way to manage your finances and enjoy a more convenient lifestyle!



Popular Electronic Payment Options

1) PayPay (ペイペイ)

PayPay is one of the most popular electronic payment apps in Japan. It's easy to use and widely accepted in many stores, restaurants, and even vending machines. You can even use it to pay for the bus in Obihiro! After setting up an account, you pay by scanning the QR code at the store with your phone and enter the amount you want to pay. That's it! PayPay often has promotions and discounts, making it a great choice in general.



2) Suica (スイカ) and Pasma (パスモ)

Originally used for transportation, Suica and Pasma cards can also be used for shop-



ping at convenience stores, vending machines, and more. These cards are easy to get at train stations and can be recharged at ticket machines or convenience stores.

3) Line Pay (ラインペイ)

Line Pay is integrated with the popular messaging app Line. It allows you to send money to friends, pay for purchases, and use various promotions. Simply add money to your Line Pay account through your bank account or convenience store.



4) Rakuten Pay (楽天ペイ)

Rakuten Pay is another widely accepted option, especially in stores affiliated with the Rakuten Group. You can link it to your Rakuten account and earn Rakuten points with every purchase.



Benefits of Using Electronic Payments

- Convenience: You don't need to carry cash with you and you don't have to pay withdrawal fees..
- Security: Reduces the risk of losing money. Even if you lose your phone, if you have a lock, your money is safe!
- Promotions: Many payment systems offer discounts, cashback deals and points. You can use the points as money when making a payment. Happy Shopping!

Movies @ Cinema Taiyo in Obihiro

Nishi 3 Minami 11, Obihiro Tel: (0155) 20-1525

Not all movies are listed. Times and movies are subject to change.
To confirm, call or check online at: www.taiyogroup.jp/movie/obihiro

Title	Genre	Lang	Dates
Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire <i>Gojira x Kongu: Aratanaru Teikoku</i>	Action/ Sci-Fi	EN•JP	Until 13th
Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes <i>Saru no Wakusei Kingudamu</i>	Action/ Suspense	EN•JP	Until 20th
Detective Conan: The Million-dollar Pentagram <i>Meitantei Konan: Hyakuman Doru no Michishirube</i>	Anime/ Mystery	JP	All Month
Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga <i>Maddo Makkusu: Fyuriosa</i>	Action/ Suspense	EN•JP	All Month
Dear Family <i>Dia Famiī</i>	Drama	JP	From 14th



Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga



Dear Family

KEY: EN = English voice with Japanese subtitles JP = Japanese voice with no English subtitles

Events in Tokachi

Please be aware that these and other events are subject to changes. To find out the latest information about these events, please contact the respective organizers or check out their webpages online.

When	What	Where/Contact
6/8 (Sat) 16:00-18:00	<p>International Potluck: Indonesia ポットラック:インドネシア</p> <p>Enjoy an evening of delicious food and fun conversation while making new friends from all over the world! This time, Jamil from Indonesia will be preparing martabak manis (Indonesian hotcakes) for everyone. Please bring a dish or drink to share.</p> <p>Fee: Free Notes: Please refrain from bringing alcohol</p>	<p>Tokachi International Relations Center @ Obihiro</p> <p>帯広市観光交流課 0155-34-0122 tirc@city.obihoro.hokkaido.jp</p>
6/16 (Sun) 10:00-14:00	<p>44th Yachiyo Farm Festival 第44回八千代牧場まつり</p> <p>Enjoy a nice day out at Obihiro's public Yachiyo Farm! Free milk and dairy products will be distributed. There will be a number of activities, including pizza making and grass bale rolling,</p> <p>Fee: Free (activities may require payment)</p>	<p>Yachiyo Farm @ Obihiro</p> <p>帯広市農政部農政課 0155-29-2323</p>
6/22 (Sat) 10:00-13:30	<p>Vietnamese Cooking Class ベトナム料理教室</p> <p>Learn how to make traditional and delicious food from Vietnam! The instructor will be Ha, a Coordinator for International Relations in Obihiro. She will teach participants how to make banh xeo and coconut coffee.</p> <p>Fee: 500 yen/person Participants: Max 20 people, middle school age and up Registration: 6/1-6/20 by phone, then go to the TIRC to pay the fee Notes: Bring an apron and a hairnet or hat</p>	<p>Tokachi International Relations Center @ Obihiro</p>
6/29 (Sat) 10:00-14:30	<p>Spring Tea Ceremony 2024 森のお茶会・春2024</p> <p>An event for all foreign and Japanese residents of Tokachi to come together and experience one of the oldest parts of Japanese culture. There will be a skilled instructor to serve you and teach you, even if you don't know anything about tea ceremony. Sessions 1-4 are tea only, sessions 5-6 include a tea serving etiquette lesson.</p> <p>Sessios: 1) 10:00-10:20 2) 10:30-10:50 3) 11:00-11:20 4) 11:30-11:50 5) 13:00-13:40 6) 13:50-14:30</p> <p>Fee/Participants: First 50 foreign residents are free, first 10 Japanese residents pay 300 yen for sessions 1-4 or 500 yen for sessions 5-6 Registration: 6/4-6/28 by phone</p>	<p>Tokachi International Relations Center @ Obihiro</p> <p>帯広市観光交流課 0155-34-0122 tirc@city.obihoro.hokkaido.jp</p>

Obihiro Pioneer is a newsletter published monthly by the Obihiro City Tourism and Goodwill Exchange Section for residents of the Tokachi District and related parties. The contents of this newsletter do not necessarily represent the official views or opinions of the Tourism and Goodwill Exchange Section or the City of Obihiro.

Obihiro Pioneer can be found at the following locations: Obihiro City Hall, Tokachi International Relations Center, JICA Obihiro International Center, and Cinema Taiyo. The digital version can be found on Obihiro City's homepage at www.city.obihoro.hokkaido.jp (search for "Obihiro Pioneer") or by scanning the QR code on the right.



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