What's the Difference Between a Shrine and a Temple in Japan?

日本的神社和寺廟差在哪？



Start at the gate

從入口辨認



Illustrative scene · 情境示意

Torii
鳥居

A torii, often two upright posts with crosspieces, marks a Shinto sacred boundary. It may be plain wood, stone or a painted structure.

鳥居常見兩柱與橫木，標示進入神道的神聖空間；材質、顏色各異。

Temple gate
山門

A Buddhist temple often has a substantial roofed entrance gate. A gate may contain guardian figures, but an individual building can look different.

佛寺常有帶屋頂的山門，有些設有守護神像，各寺院的建築形式不同。

Site name
正式名稱

Look for the full name on the visitor map before deciding. A photograph showing only a gate gives you just one clue.

先看導覽圖上的全名。照片如果只拍到一道門，還需要其他線索佐證。

[1] [2]

Who is honored here?

供奉的對象



Illustrative scene · 情境示意

Shinto

神道

A shrine enshrines one or more kami. English descriptions may use “deities” or “spirits”; look for the site's own account of its kami.

神社祭祀一位或多位「神（かみ）」。英文可能寫 deities 或 spirits，可看該社如何介紹祭神。

Buddhism

佛教

A temple belongs to a Buddhist tradition. Its main hall may honor a Buddha or bodhisattva, identified in the temple’s own guide.

寺院屬佛教傳統，本堂可能供奉佛或菩薩；本尊名稱可查該寺導覽。

Shared grounds

共存

Shrines and Buddhist buildings can stand near each other, sometimes within the same grounds. Check the name of the building directly in front of you.

神社和佛教建物可能相鄰，甚至同在一處境內。要看的是眼前這棟建築的名稱。

[1] [2]

At a shrine

神社的參拜順序



Illustrative scene · 情境示意

Before you begin

先確認

Look near the worship area for a sign showing the local sequence. You may quietly observe if you prefer to watch.

先看拜殿旁是否標示當地參拜順序。如果想先了解，在旁安靜觀察也可以。

Common sequence

常見順序

Many shrines use two bows, two claps and one final bow. Pray with your hands together after clapping, before the final bow.

許多神社採二拜、二拍手、一拜。拍手後雙手合十祈願，最後再鞠躬。

Local practice

依現場

Some shrines use a different number of claps. Follow the local instructions and let the person in front finish before stepping forward.

部分神社拍手次數不同。依現場指示行禮，等前一位完成再上前。

[1] [2]

At a Buddhist temple

佛寺內如何行禮



Illustrative scene · 情境示意

Main hall

本堂

Approach the designated public worship space. Some temples restrict entry into inner rooms or areas set aside for services.

走向開放參拜的區域。有些內殿或法會使用的空間會限制進入。

Quiet prayer

合掌

At many temples, join your hands in front of your chest and bow quietly. The clapping common at Shinto shrines is generally omitted.

在許多佛寺，雙手合十、安靜行禮即可。常見於神社的拍手在佛寺通常省略。

Camera

攝影

Check the camera notice before raising your phone. Photography in the courtyard and photography inside a hall may have different rules.

舉起手機前先看攝影標示，庭院與殿內可能各有不同規定。

[1] [2]

Compare the clues

三組線索一起看

Torii

鳥居：神道空間的入口線索

A torii suggests a shrine, while a roofed gate can suggest a temple. Neither clue tells you every rule inside the grounds.

鳥居常見於神社，山門常見於佛寺；光看門還不能判定境內所有建物的規矩。

Temple gate

山門：常見於佛寺

Jinja is commonly written 神社. The character 寺, read in different ways within a name, often identifies a Buddhist temple.

「神社」常讀 jinja。「寺」在不同名稱裡有不同讀音，是辨識佛寺的一項線索。

Site map

正式名稱：確認眼前建築

When the gate and nearby buildings seem mixed, compare their names on the map and follow instructions at the specific place of worship.

若境內的門與建築看起來混合，先核對圖上名稱，再看該參拜處的說明。

Your visit from start to finish

從抵達到離開

Map

找正式名稱與開放路線

Find the place name, public route and main worship building. If two sites share an approach, note where their paths separate.

在圖上找名稱、可通行路線和主要參拜建築；若共用參道，留意路線在哪裡分開。

Doorway

看鞋履、攝影與入內標示

Look for signs about shoes, photographs and entry. If visitors are waiting, stand aside while reading so others can pass.

殿門前看鞋履、攝影和開放範圍標示。有人排隊時先靠邊讀，不擋通行。

Worship space

依指示參拜，或在旁觀察

Choose whether to pray or observe. Leave space for worshippers, keep your voice low and follow any instructions given by the staff.

依意願參拜或觀察，留出參拜空間，輕聲交談並依工作人員引導。

[1] [2]

Clap or put your hands together?

參拜時，拍手還是合掌？

A common shrine form

神社常見做法

The Association of Shinto Shrines describes two bows, two claps and one bow as the common form. Some shrines have their own form.

神社本廳說明，常見做法是二拜、二拍手、一拜，個別神社可能有不同做法。

A temple example

寺院參拜的例子

At Sensoji's main hall, put your palms together when you pray. Follow the instructions posted where you are visiting.

在淺草寺本堂參拜時合掌。到其他寺院則讀當地的參拜指引。

Read the sign first

看現場標示

If you are unsure of the form, pause out of the line and read the sign or ask staff before approaching the worship area.

還不確定做法時，先站到不擋排隊處看告示或問工作人員，再往參拜區移動。

[3] [4]

REFERENCES

Sources & links

資料來源與原文連結

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Diagrams redrawn for this edition. Scene images are illustrative.
圖解依資料重新編排。內頁影像用於說明情境。