

Hatsumoude is the ritual of visiting a shrine or temple for the first time following the beginning of a new year. January 1 is called *Ganjitsu* in Japan, and many people around the country flock to shrines and temples from late December 31 to welcome the new year. The method of prayer differs at shrines and temples, but during hatsumoude, people offer thanks for the past year and pray for safety and peace in the new year.



Hatsumoude crowds at Toyokawa Inari shrine in Aichi Prefecture



People pray for health and happiness at the start of the new year

Meiji-jingu in Tokyo is a popular destination for many hatsumoude visitors from Ganjitsu until January 3 and is known to attract the most visitors in Japan, with over 3 million visiting the shrine during this time. Narita-san Shinsho-ji in Chiba Prefecture and Kawasaki Daishi in Kanagawa Prefecture are also temples that attract numerous hatsumoude visitors.

HATSUMOUE

After praying during hatsumoude, many people buy a talisman or an evil-warding arrow called a *hamaya*. Another custom is to return one's old talisman and hama-ya that were bought the previous year. Some shrines and temples distribute sake to their visitors, which is claimed to keep misfortune away when consumed.



Hamaya demon-breaking arrows



1: Many temples in Japan do a certain thing from midnight on December 31. What do they do?



- A:** Water the ground
- B:** Launch fireworks
- C:** Toll a bell



2: Many people also purchase an *omikuji* paper strip at the shrine or temple during their hatsumoude visit. What is an omikuji for?



- A:** A donation to the local shrine
- B:** To read one's fortune
- C:** A form of raffle ticket