

SHIKOKU PILGRIMAGE TRAIL

8-days / 7-nights inn-to-inn **SELF GUIDED** walk from Tokushima to Ehime – departs from/to Kyoto



Shikoku is Japan's fourth-largest island, home to some of the country's most beautiful and undeveloped scenery. The island is the setting for an ancient walking trail, the challenging **Shikoku 88 Pilgrimage Trail** which connects 88 Buddhist temples associated with the scholar and monk Kobo Daishi, who brought Buddhist teachings from China to Japan and founded the Shingon school of Buddhism.

The full *Shikoku 88* walk covers more than a thousand kilometres, with the journey following a symbolic path to enlightenment through the stages of awakening, asceticism, enlightenment and nirvana. Pilgrims, known as *O-henro*, traditionally covered the journey on foot over many weeks, staying overnight at Shukubo temple lodgings. Most modern pilgrims now travel from temple to temple by car or tour bus, but we have selected portions of the original route which can still be enjoyed on foot as a very unique walking holiday.

Dates: Daily on demand from March to early December, 2023

Cost from: \$3260 per person twin share. Single room supplement on request

Includes: 7 nights' accommodation in traditional Ryokan, Minshuku and Shukubo, which usually have shared facilities; 7 breakfasts, 6 dinners; JR Bus tickets and/or train tickets for travel from Kyoto/Osaka to Shikoku and from Shikoku to Kyoto/Osaka; appropriate route notes and maps; Shikoku Guidebook; 5 x pre-booked and prepaid taxis, local telephone support.

Not Included: Flights or airport transfers, meals not mentioned, drinks, local buses each day, cable car on Day 3, entrance fees not shown and personal expenses. Luggage transfers are not included but can be organised locally at extra cost. *

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Grading: Moderate to challenging. Daily walks are from 5km up to 17km, with average daily ascent/descent of 510m. Much of the walking is on asphalt or paved roads. Some longer walks can be shortened by extending the pre-booked taxi transfers.

Suggested itinerary:

Day 1: Depart Kyoto/Osaka for Tokushima (Temples 1 to 3)

Walking distance @ 6km (2 hours)

From Kyoto travel by long-distance bus (ticket included) to Tokushima Prefecture. If you prefer you can arrange travel to start in Osaka, ask when booking. Begin your pilgrimage with a gentle introduction to the walks on Shikoku through quiet neighbourhoods of Tokushima. Visit three of the most eye-catching temples on whole trail – Temple 1 Ryozen-ji, Temple 2 Gokuraku-ji and Temple 3 Kosen-ji. Spend your first night as all pilgrims should, in a Shukubo (pilgrims' lodge). There is also the option of staying at a city-centre Ryokan (travellers' inn) for this first night.

Day 2: Tokushima (Temples 11 to 12)

Walking distance @ 19km (8 hours)

A transfer by pre-paid taxi to Temple 11 Fujii-dera, a fascinating temple complex at the base of Mount Shosan-ji. From here you hike up the mountain to Temple 12 Shosan-ji (mountain and temple share the same name), then descend to the east. The walk is strenuous but rewarding. You can reduce the walk to 4-5 hours (10.4km) and avoid the first half of the strenuous ascent up Mt. Shosan-ji. Simply pay locally to extend the taxi ride on the day – no need to decide in advance. Travel by bus to Tokushima for your overnight stay in a Ryokan (travellers' inn) or a Western-style hotel.

Day 3: Tokushima (Temples 20 to 21)

Walking distance @ 9km (4 hours)

Travel by pre-paid taxi to one of the more scenic and varied hikes on the entire 88 Pilgrimage route. After a short but steep uphill walk to Temple 20 Kakurin-ji, the trail descends to the hamlet of Anan, crosses the Nakagawa River and climbs again to Temple 21 Tairyu-ji. End the day with a cable car ride with wonderful views over a cedar forest and the small town below. Travel by bus to Tokushima for your overnight stay in a Ryokan (travellers' inn) or a Western-style hotel. The walk can be extended to about 5 hours for clients staying in Tokushima city - please enquire if you would like to undertake this longer option.

Day 4: Kagawa (Temples 82 to 80)

Walking distance @ 14km (5 hours)

Leaving Tokushima, travel by bus and pre-paid taxi to a rewarding walk in northern Kagawa Prefecture. Walk through lovely scenery and visit a fine collection of temples – Temple 82 Negoro-ji, Temple 81 Shiromine-ji and finally Temple 80 Kokubun-ji. The walk can be shortened by 1.5 hours (5.4km) by omitting the return walk to Temple 81 Shiromine-ji. Travel onwards by train for an overnight stay in a Ryokan in the old hot-spring town of Kotohira Spa.

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Day 5: Ehime (Temples 57 to 58)**Walking distance @ 5km (2 hours)**

Travel by train to Imabari in northern Ehime to begin your walk to Temple 57 Eifuku-ji. You gradually pass from urban townscape to rural farming communities before entering a forest with a steady climb to Temple 58 Senyū-ji. Visit Eifuku-ji and Senyū-ji and there is also an optional detour to Temple 56 Taisan-ji. Stay overnight in a Shukubo (pilgrims' lodging) at Senyū-ji, or alternatively in a Western-style hotel in Imabari City.

Day 6: Ehime (Temple 58 onwards)**Walking distance @ 5km (1 hour)**

Continue along the pilgrimage trail with a gentle walk down the mountain from Senyū-ji. There is a chance to explore small village settlements on the way. Return to the town of Imabari, with an optional paved walk on to Temple 59 Iyo Kokubun-ji (an extra 4.1km which extends the walk by 1.5 hours) and continue onwards to Matsuyama by train where you stay 2 nights at a Ryokan in the Dogo Onsen area. Dogo Onsen is one of Japan's oldest hot-springs. The timber public bathhouse here, Dogo Onsen Honkan, was built in the late 19th Century and is likely to have been an inspiration for Hayao Miyazaki's film 'Spirited Away'.

Day 7: Ehime (Temples 45 to 44)**Walking distance @ 12km (4 hours)**

Take the bus southwards from Matsuyama to the atmospheric Temple 45 Iwaya-ji (*Rock Cave Temple*), which is closely linked to Kōbō Daishi. Climb the iconic ladder to his meditation spot, with its far-reaching views over the surrounding region. From Iwaya-ji, enjoy a lovely forest hike to Temple 44 Daiho-ji before returning by bus to Matsuyama in the evening. Stay another night at Dogo Onsen.

Day 8: Ehime (Temples 60 to 62), depart for Kyoto/Osaka**Walking distance @ 14km (5 hours)**

The tour ends with a rewarding walk in the east of Ehime Prefecture. Travel by bus from Matsuyama, connect with your pre-booked and pre-paid taxi, then walk from Temple 60 Yokomine-ji to Temple 61 Kouon-ji and onwards to Temple 62 Hoju-ji. You pass through a rural area of Shikoku and the temples are in lovely natural settings. You can reduce your walk to 11.3km, avoiding the first uphill section; simply pay locally to extend the taxi ride. Choose on the day – no need to decide in advance. After finishing the walk, travel by train to Osaka or Kyoto, arriving in the afternoon or early evening. Tour arrangements end and no accommodation is included on this night but it can be arranged at extra cost.



Contact Outdoor Travel for more details and reservations:

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TOUR BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR JAPAN

Accommodation: Tours stay in 3- or 4-star hotels or in traditional Japanese Ryokan, Minshuku and Shukubo. Hotels are European style with ensuite bathrooms, but rooms tend to be smaller than in Europe.

Ryokan and Minshuku are traditional Japanese-style inns. They may be in modern concrete or older wooden buildings but the rooms are always in the Japanese style with tatami (straw) matting and futons laid out in the evening. Dinners are served together, usually in the dining room, and are exquisitely prepared multi-course meals. Some Ryokan have ensuite bathrooms, though older buildings generally offer shared facilities.

Minshuku are usually family-run. They have tatami-mat rooms, with futons laid out in the evening for sleeping. Most Minshuku do not have ensuite bathrooms as they are in older traditional wooden buildings. Compared with a Ryokan, they are usually (but not always) slightly less formal, but the service and food is just as good. Smaller inns offer domestic scale bathing tubs used privately in turn by guests; larger inns offer communal spa-style baths, segregated by gender. They are the classic Japanese experience.

Shukubo are lodgings in Buddhist temples originally meant for pilgrims, but now open to anyone. Rooms are similar to Ryokan or Minshuku, though without ensuite facilities. The food is excellent vegetarian Buddhist 'Shojin-Ryori' cuisine. It is a wonderful experience to stay in a Shukubo and there is the opportunity to join the early morning religious service. Service is provided by Buddhist monks, who are courteous and friendly, but please remember that Shukubo are not full-service hotels. They are attached to temples in sacred places such as Mount Koya and some temples of Shikoku.



Meals: Most meals will be Japanese cuisine. Vegetarian options are available, but limited. Strict vegetarian diets, vegan diets, or gluten free diets will be difficult to accommodate due to the pervasiveness of the fish-based stock dashi and the use of soy sauce and miso in Japanese cuisine. Tips are not required in Japan.

* **A note about luggage transfers:** For **SELF-GUIDED** tours luggage transfers are not included and we recommend you adopt the Japanese way using the reliable *Takkyubin* courier service. During the tour, you can send larger items of luggage ahead by courier so you don't carry too much and to make the long-distance transfers by bus and train more relaxed (avoiding handling larger items of luggage through stations and on trains). Larger items of luggage do not re-join you on the same day, and you will not have access to them on certain nights so bring a daypack to carry your overnight items.

The inns used provide soap, shampoo, towels, slippers and Yukata robes, which are worn inside after check-in. Wear your Yukata for dinner, in your room and when walking about, even outdoors. You do not need extra evening clothes and can travel light. Luggage lockers are often available while walking or sightseeing.

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