



Hiroshima, Shimanami Kaido, & Shikoku Self-guided 8 days

Introduction

Hiroshima, Shikoku and the Seto Inland Sea are some of the most scenic areas of Japan. This tour offers a complete exploration of the wonderful variety of towns, villages and islands through excellent cycling and hiking in the region. Explore the seaside town of Tomonoura and UNESCO World Heritage island Miyajima (famous for its friendly deer and the iconic 'floating' Torii gate off Itsukushima Shrine), walk through the emotional history of Hiroshima and timeless hilltop communities of Onomichi. From here, continue on with our version of the varied and scenic island-hopping cycling course Shimanami Kaido. Pass over the Setouchi Inland Sea visiting remote islands, which together with deliciously fresh seafood cuisine, offer a uniquely modern cafe culture, before arriving in Ehime prefecture on Shikoku Island; the perfect entry point of our 4-day Shikoku 88 Pilgrimage tour. As Japan's fourth-largest island, Shikoku is home to some of the country's most spectacular and undeveloped scenery. The island is also the setting for an ancient walking trail, the challenging Shikoku 88 Pilgrimage. The trail connects 88 Buddhist temples and the full walk covers more than a thousand kilometres. Pilgrims, known as O-henro, traditionally covered the journey on foot over many weeks, staying

overnight at Shukubo temple lodgings. Most modern travellers now travel from temple to temple by tour bus, but we have found sections of the original route which can still be enjoyed on foot.

This tour offers the opportunity to spend a leisurely extra night in the port town of Onomichi where the Shimanami Kaido cycle begins. Please ask for information about tour extensions to the mountain-top temple town of Mount Koya with its monastery lodgings, the art island of Naoshima on the Setouchi inland sea or the historic ancient capital of Nara.

This tour offers gentle walking and cycling and hiking suitable for children of 12 and up. All activities are optional, so please enquire for alternatives if travelling with younger passengers.

DETAILS

TOUR LENGTH AND PRICES

8 days

Please see the website for the prices we offer in each currency.

TYPE AND LEVEL OF TRIP

This trip features leisurely walking and hiking, along with gentle cycling and kayaking. Each element can be removed or adjusted to suit different levels of fitness. All

activities are suitable for children 12 and up.

SEASON

Recommended from March until November.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

7 nights at Japanese inns; 7 breakfasts and 5-7 dinners; Round-trip train tickets from Kyoto or Osaka; Return

ferry tickets between Hiroshima and Miyajima; Detailed day-by-day itinerary, walking directions in Hiroshima, Miyajima, Tomonoura, Onomichi and on Shikoku and our Shikoku Island guidebook; Bicycle rental and cycling maps along the Shimanami Kaido; Local support by telephone and email

ITINERARY

Day 1 > Arrive in Hiroshima

Travel by bullet train to central Hiroshima. This well-known city was the first in history to bear the impact of the use of atomic weapons. The city never forgets its past, and there are memorials to the bombing of 6 August 1945 including the Atomic Bomb Dome, and the Peace Memorial and Museum.

You stay overnight in Hiroshima at a western-style hotel or travel by ferry to the UNESCO World Heritage island of Miyajima and stay at a traditional Japanese inn here.



Accommodation: Overnight in Hiroshima or spend a night on Miyajima Island

Meals: Breakfast (Dinner is included for guests staying at a Japanese inn)

Typical Accommodation

As standard, we offer a comfortable, centrally-located hotel in Hiroshima city, enabling you to enjoy the vast range of meal options this evening.

We can also provide an historic Ryokan located on Miyajima island, offering excellent rooms, meals and the opportunity to take a relaxing evening stroll once

day-visitors have left the island. Please let us know on booking if you would like us to arrange this traditional option and please note that availability with this option may be scarce during peak seasons, which can sometimes require a date change or supplemental fee.

DAY 2 > Travel to Miyajima Island

Explore Miyajima Island where wild deer roam free. Experience the amazing close-up view of the iconic red Torii Gate of Itsukushima Shrine which appears to float in the water at high tide. You might want to try the Miyajima oysters or the local dish of Anago Meshi grilled eel.

During the afternoon, you have time to climb Mount Misen, the highest peak of the island, offering spectacular views of the Seto Inland Sea via the returning cablecar. Please let us know if you would like to include a sea kayak experience around the Torii Gate of Itsukushima Shrine to compliment the kayaking you will undertake later on the trip.

Walking distance: 4.7km / 3 miles of optional hiking

Elevation gain: 810m / 2,660 feet of ascent, negligible descent

Time required: About 2-3 hours

A longer 12.1km / 7.5 miles hiking option, with an ascent of 1,030m and descent of 1,015m, foregoing the descending cablecar ride, is available. A gentler, flat 2.4km / 1.5 miles sightseeing route covering the islands main attractions is also possible for a more leisurely day.

Accommodation: Overnight in Hiroshima or spend a night on Miyajima Island

Meals: Breakfast (Dinner is included for guests staying at a Japanese inn)

Typical Accommodation

As standard, we offer a comfortable, centrally-located hotel in Hiroshima city, enabling you to enjoy the vast range of meal options this evening.

We can also provide an historic Ryokan located on Miyajima island, offering excellent rooms, meals and the opportunity to take a relaxing evening stroll once day-visitors have left the island. Please let us know on booking if you would like us to arrange this traditional option and please note that availability with this option may be scarce during peak seasons, which can sometimes require a date change or supplemental fee.



DAY 3 > Sea Kayaking around Sensui-jima Island

Travel to Tomonoura Bay, the lovely thousand year-old port town which inspired Studio Ghibli director Hayao Miyazaki when he created the animated film "Ponyo". Tomonoura is recognized as Shiomachi-no-minato "port awaiting a favorable tide" and this town preserves its old-fashioned fishing townscape. Enjoy a morning sea kayak tour around Sensui-jima Island. Later in the afternoon continue to Sensui-jima island by ferry for your overnight stay at a traditional Japanese inn.

Kayaking time: About 2-3 hours

Walking distance: 2km / 1.2 miles of optional sightseeing

Elevation gain: negligible ascent and descent

Time required: About 1-2 hours

Please note that if kayaking is not possible due to poor weather, further exploration time on Sensuijima Island and in the quiet and relaxed village of Tomonoura with our two optional sightseeing walks are possible.

Accommodation: Ryokan inn

Meals: Dinner

Typical Accommodation

Stay at a wonderful traditional Japanese inn, experiencing unique detox baths. Here you enjoy a gourmet dinner featuring the fresh catch of the day. Lovely traditional Japanese artwork adorns the rooms and public spaces and it is possible to take a relaxing beach-side stroll this evening.

DAY 4 > Onomichi and the Shimanami Kaido

Depart this morning for the romantic seaside town of Onomichi - the entry point on the mainland side of the Shimanami Kaido cycling course. Spend the morning exploring Onomichi's wonderfully old-fashioned shopping arcades and quiet hilltop back streets with our gentle sightseeing course before selecting your bikes for the first day of island hopping along the Shimanami Kaido.

Overnight on a remote island part-way along the cycling route.

Cycling distance: 35-65km / 20-40 miles (up to 80km / 50 miles)

Elevation gain: negligible ascent and descent (with some very brief ups and downs to reach each bridge)

Time required: 3-6 hours (up to 8 hours)

Cycling distances vary based on the inn you stay at and how many of our optional side-trips along the islands you wish to undertake. For less confident cyclists, don't hesitate to enquire with us about alternative arrangements.



Accommodation: Ryokan inn

Meals: Dinner, Breakfast

Typical Accommodation

Stay at a lovely Ryokan located part-way along the

Shimanami Kaido. Originally a wealthy merchant's house, the inn has a long history dating back over 100 years, providing excellently fresh seafood as part of the Kaiseki meals, together with relaxing sea views from your room.

DAY 5 > Complete the Shimanami Kaido and begin the Shikoku 88 Pilgrimage

Continue along the Shimanami Kaido cycling route, passing through small island settlements with some of the most scenic sections of the route before arriving into Imabari town on Shikoku Island. Drop off your bikes at Imabari Station head inland by bus to reach the trailhead of our 4-day Shikoku 88 Pilgrimage Self-guided walking tour to begin your hike to Temple 57 Eifuku-ji. The walk gradually passes 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. Overnight at Senyū-ji, which offers pilgrim lodgings, or alternatively stay in a western-style hotel in Imabari City.



Cycling distance: 20-45km / 13-28 miles

Elevation gain: negligible ascent and descent (with some very brief ups and downs to reach each bridge)

Time required: 2-4 hours

Cycling distances vary based on the inn you have stayed at and how many of our optional side-trips

along the islands you wish to undertake. Most guests will undertake the 45km, 4-hour cycle today.

Walking distance: 4.4km / 2.7 miles

Elevation gain: 250m / 820 feet ascent and negligible descent

Time required: About 1.5 hours

Accommodation: Shukubo (Pilgrims Lodging) or Hotel

Meals: Dinner

DAY 6 > Shikoku 88 Pilgrimage (Temple 58 onwards)

The hike continues with a gentle walk down the mountain from Senyū-ji, with the opportunity to explore small village settlements on the way. Return to the town of Imabari, with an optional paved hike on to Temple 59 Iyo Kokubun-ji and continue onwards to Matsuyama by train and overnight in Dogo Onsen.

Walking distance: 4.4km / 2.7 miles

Elevation gain: Negligible ascent and 250m / 820 feet descent

Time required: About 1 hour

An optional paved walk of 4.1km (2.5 miles) can extend the hike by a further 1.5 hours.

Accommodation: Hot-spring Ryokan (Travellers Inn)

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Typical Accommodation

This charming inn in the heart of Dogo Onsen is run by a friendly family with exceptional service, beautiful Japanese rooms, exquisite cuisine and lovely thermal baths.

DAY 7 > Shikoku 88 Pilgrimage (Temples 45 to 44)

Head south by bus and pre-paid taxi from Matsuyama to Temple 45 Iwaya-ji, a temple closely linked to Kōbō Daishi - the priest who founded Shingon Buddhism and Mount Koya. Climb the iconic ladder to his meditation spot, with its spectacular 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. Overnight in Dogo Onsen.

Walking distance: 11.7km / 7.3 miles

Elevation gain: 650m / 2,130 feet ascent and 580m / 1,900 feet descent

Time required: About 4 hours

Accommodation: Hot-spring Ryokan (Travellers Inn)

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Typical Accommodation

This charming inn in the heart of Dogo Onsen is run by a friendly family with exceptional service, beautiful Japanese rooms, exquisite cuisine and lovely thermal baths.

DAY 8 > Shikoku 88 Pilgrimage (Temples 60 to 62)

The tour ends with a rewarding hike in the east of Ehime Prefecture. Travel by bus and pre-paid taxi from Matsuyama to reach the trail and walk to Temple 60 Yokomine-ji, Temple 61 Kōon-ji and onwards to Temple 62 Hoju-ji. The walk passes through a rural area of Shikoku and the temples are in lovely natural settings. After the hike, travel onwards by train to the Kansai area, arriving mid-evening.

Walking distance: 13.7km / 8.5 miles

Elevation gain: 620m / 2,050 feet ascent and 870m / 3,850 feet descent

Time required: About 4-5 hours

You can reduce the hike by about one hour to 11.3km / 7 miles, avoiding the first uphill section. Simply pay locally to extend the taxi ride to Temple 60 Yokomine-ji. Choose on the day - no need to decide in advance.

Meals: Breakfast

