

BASIC TOUR OUTLINE

2026 ARCHITECTURE AND CULTURE TOUR OF SHIKOKU JAPAN (SIGNATURE)

Start: Wednesday, 18 November 2026 from Tokyo
Finish: Wednesday, 2 December 2026 at Takamatsu
Duration: 15 days
Group size: 6 people
Cost estimate: AUD \$13,570 per person
Single supplement: AUD \$0 per person
Ref: GRS-26

TOUR OVERVIEW

The 2026 Architecture and Culture Tour of Shikoku, Japan has been specifically designed to showcase Japanese architecture - both traditional and contemporary - on the enchanting island of Shikoku, the smallest of Japan's four main islands.

Shikoku's relative isolation has meant that old traditions and ways of life are still visible today, making it the perfect place to discover a more traditional Japan. You will learn how culture and climate have influenced the built environment, as well as see the works of Japan's modern-day architects such as Kengo Kuma, Tadao Ando and Kenzo Tange. You will tour through areas of great natural beauty – misty mountains and river valleys, charming historical towns, and the islands of the spectacular Seto Inland Sea.

This special 15-day tour of Shikoku is offered to only 6 people due to the limited availability of the unique experiences and accommodation selected, as well as the accessibility of the remote locations.

*Please note this tour is unable to accept solo travellers due to rooming constraints.

*Accommodation will be as planned below or similar.

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
1	Wed 18/11/2026	Airport meet and greet on arrival	Welcome to Japan! On arrival at Tokyo's Haneda International Airport, you will be met by a Journey to the East guide and escorted to your airport hotel. Those landing at Tokyo's Narita Airport will also be met on arrival and escorted to your hotel at Haneda by airport bus. Today is an arrival day and no group program is scheduled. Your hotel is located at Haneda International Airport given the early start of the tour on Day 2. However if you have time, you might like to consider a short trip into central Tokyo before the start of your 2026 Architecture and	No meals	Villa Fontaine Grand Haneda Airport [Superior King/Twin]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
			<p>Culture Tour of Shikoku, Japan.</p> <p>*Many of our guests arrive a day or so early to settle in before the tour starts. Please contact us if you'd like us to arrange additional nights' accommodation in the same room as the tour or in central Tokyo.</p>		
2	Thu 19/11/2026	Fly to Takamatsu and guided tour and transfer to Iya Valley	<p>You meet your guide at the hotel lobby and leave Haneda this morning to fly to Shikoku island, the smallest of Japan's four main islands and the fascinating base for your island adventure. On arrival at the regional centre, Takamatsu, you'll travel by private vehicle to the old shrine town of Kotohira. Here you stop for a traditional lunch of Sanuki udon noodles, the region's most famous dish.</p> <p>You will see other pilgrims and walk with them on the well-worn path up 785 stone steps to Konpira-san, Shikoku's beloved shrine dedicated to the god of seafarers. Here you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learn about traditional Shinto shrine architecture and the etiquette of visiting a shrine, - See the magnificent painted door screens by famous artist Maruyama Okyo in the shrine's Reception Hall, a nationally designated Important Cultural Property, and - Admire impressive views all the way to the Seto Inland Sea! <p>Back in your private vehicle, you head to the magical Iya Valley, deep in the heart of the Shikoku mountains. Here you enjoy a truly unique experience for two nights, staying at an authentic onsen ryokan. You'll be instantly calmed by the stunning autumn views down the valley and hovering mist, the warmth of the traditional interiors and the welcoming irori hearth. Enjoy an onsen bath house up on the hill, accessed by cable car and dinner of local cuisine before a long and comfortable sleep on a futon bed.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Hotel Kazurabashi [Japanese style room]

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3	Fri 20/11/2026	Guided tour of Iya Valley	<p>Breakfast is a traditional Japanese style with a bowl of rice, miso soup, grilled fish and other condiments.</p> <p>Today is a day of full immersion into local rural life. It begins with a tour of Ochiai Village with a local guide who will give an insight into village life and how these villages are disappearing due to difficult terrain and loss of population.</p> <p>For lunch, you will be introduced to a local specialty, soba (buckwheat) noodles and how to properly slurp these delicious noodles! After lunch, you head deeper into the valley by private vehicle to visit the spectacular Niju-Kazura Bridge, a unique pair of twisted vine bridges constructed hundreds of years ago across a deep river gorge. Then it's on to the "scarecrow village" of Nagoro, where an enterprising local has playfully recreated her fellow residents in surreal lifelike form.</p> <p>Going back to your ryokan for another night.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Hotel Kazurabashi [Japanese style room]
4	Sat 21/11/2026	Guided tour of Iya Valley and Kochi	<p>If you like to rise before dawn, you will be rewarded by unkai, a natural phenomenon found in mountainous regions and known as "sea of clouds" (if you are lucky!).</p> <p>Today, you spend the day exploring central Shikoku as you travel along scenic mountain roads from Iya into neighbouring Kochi. Along the way you will;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drive through Hinoji Iya Valley Observation Point, - Visit Oboke Gorge and see the unique 'Peeing Boy' statue, and - Experience by candlelight the richly decorated folding screens depicting local folklore at Ekin Museum. <p>For the next two nights, you stay in Kochi City – the prefecture's vibrant capital on the Pacific Ocean coast. You will stay at a popular city hotel and enjoy the vibrant atmosphere.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	OMO7 Kochi by Hoshino Resorts [Utage Superior Room]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
5	Sun 22/11/2026	Guided tour of Kochi	<p>Kochi is home to one of Japan's last surviving original castles, and this morning you visit this authentic example of feudal architecture. Kochi Castle functioned as both a military fortress and a residence for the daimyo lords who once ruled the region. Its design is therefore unique, as most lords lived in palace buildings separated from their castles.</p> <p>After a morning steeped in Japan's military past, you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tour Kochi's iconic Sunday Market, popular amongst Kochi residents and visitors in the central city. You can find anything from their snacks, fresh food and produce, to craft and kitchen knives (Kochi's specialty craft), - Visit revered Chikurin-ji, one of the 88 temples on the Shikoku Pilgrimage, to learn about Buddhist temple architecture and engage in a Zen meditation session in a beautiful autumn coloured garden, and - Stroll through one of Japan's best Botanical Gardens, Makino and find out more about sustainable architecture. <p>Tonight, you have a free evening to relax or perhaps seek out a tasty izakaya in Kochi's central town area. Why not head to the city's ever-popular Hirome Ichiba, a marketplace full of food stalls and restaurants open all hours, a great place to sample the freshest seafood and other local specialties!</p>	Breakfast	OMO7 Kochi by Hoshino Resorts [Utage Superior Room]
6	Mon 23/11/2026	Guided tour of Nakatsu Gorge and Shikoku Karst	<p>You leave the coast this morning to explore Kochi's scenic interior region. One of the rivers in this part of Kochi is ranked as one of Japan's most beautiful, famous for its vivid cobalt-blue colour. You walk along Nakatsu Gorge to experience the river's crystalline waters. On the way, you tour some unique "chinkabashi" submersible bridges which have been ingeniously designed to cope with heavy seasonal rains.</p> <p>The abundance of pristine water in this region has also fostered a strong washi paper-making culture, and you enjoy an authentic hands-on experience in a lovely rural setting.</p> <p>After an active day, you arrive at Yusuhara - a small mountain town which has become famous for its innovative public buildings, constructed as part of a regional revitalization project. Designed by architect Kengo Kuma (who designed Tokyo's 2020 Olympics Stadium), the buildings feature wooden exteriors using repurposed cedar and have a strong eco-friendly focus. You are given a guided tour of the town's most notable buildings.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Marche Yusuhara [Twin Room]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
7	Tue 24/11/2026	Guided tour of Yusuhara and Uwajima	<p>This morning, you leave the mountains behind and head for the charming historical towns of Ehime Prefecture on the west coast of Shikoku. Your main destination today is the castle town of Uwajima. On the way, you'll also make a brief stop at Kihoku Town Hall. Originally built in 1958, this building has received acclaim in recent years for the integrity of its 1950s-style architecture.</p> <p>Uwajima is a former castle town, but also well-known for its pearl-farming. Today, you will have a rare opportunity to see the pearl culture first-hand.</p> <p>Tonight's accommodation ranks as a highlight of your tour. Kiya Ryokan is a century-old ryokan inn that has been painstakingly restored to combine stylish modern amenities within a traditional aesthetic. It has been selected as a nationally registered Tangible Cultural Property, and you will meet with the manager for a personal tour of the property and insights into the renovation process.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Kiya Ryokan [Japanese style room]
8	Wed 25/11/2026	Guided tour of Uchiko and Ozu	<p>This morning, you travel by private vehicle to delightful Uchiko, a former merchant town which flourished during the Edo period (17th-19th centuries). Wealth from the Japanese wax trade led to a building boom and its elegant streetscape is now a preservation district - Uchiko was one of Japan's first towns to receive this designation. You will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visit the Kamihaga Residence and the attached wax museum to get a sense of a typical merchant house, and - Tour the charming Uchiko Kabuki Theatre (one of the last remaining in Japan) with its ingenious revolving stage and hidden trapdoors. <p>The picturesque castle town of Ozu is our next destination. Ozu Castle dates back to the 1300s and was authentically restored by its townsfolk in recent times. The town pride, which mobilised its citizens, led them to subsequently save their dilapidated samurai residences and merchant houses. These have now been transformed into premium accommodation, craft shops, cafes and restaurants in an impressive community-wide project. You have the rare opportunity tonight to stay in one of these houses at Nipponia, the boutique hotel group collaborating with the community to renovate around 25 of the town's heritage properties.</p> <p>This afternoon, led by a local specialist guide, you tour Garyu Sanso, a beautiful riverside villa with a garden at its autumn peak and teahouses built 120 years ago using the best carpentry and craft skills at the time.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Nipponia Hotel Ozu Castle Town [Grand or Comfort Room]

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9	Thu 26/11/2026	Guided tour of Matsuyama and Dogo Onsen	<p>Enjoy a delicious Japanese-style breakfast at Nipponia, and perhaps step out to enjoy the town's relaxed vibe and a quick expresso before departing mid-morning by a private minivan.</p> <p>Your next stop is Matsuyama, Ehime's attractive provincial capital and a former castle town steeped in feudal culture. Not well known outside Japan, Matsuyama boasts some notable modern architecture such as Ehime Prefectural Government building, Bansuiso Villa, both designed by architect Shichiro Kigo, and Ando Tadao's Saka no Ue no Kumo Museum nestled into the hillside beneath Matsuyama Castle.</p> <p>Matsuyama is also home to venerable Dogo Onsen, believed to be the site of Japan's oldest onsen (natural mineral hot springs) with a history spanning some 3,000 years! Later in the afternoon, you will stroll the charmingly retro arcades at Dogo Onsen with your guide, stop for a refreshing Dogo beer or freshly squeezed mikan (mandarin orange, specialty of Ehime) juice.</p> <p>Your accommodation tonight is an exquisite traditional ryokan inn, located near Dogo Onsen's historic main building. You can soak in the onsen baths within your hotel or don your yukata robe and head to the public onsen. Bliss!</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Dogo Yumekura [Room with western bed and onsen bath]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
10	Fri 27/11/2026	Guided tour of Shimanami Kaido (Omishima)	<p>Leaving Shikoku's mainland behind, you island-hop across the Seto Inland Sea to explore the relaxed pace of island life in this special part of Japan. Your first stop is Kirozan Observatory for sweeping views of the sparkling Inland Sea with its stunning bridges and islands as far as the eye can see. The observatory was designed by Kengo Kuma and is a notable sight in itself.</p> <p>Passing by traditional fishing villages and citrus groves, you arrive at tonight's destination, a contemporary boutique-style accommodation located right on the waterfront of Omishima Island.</p> <p>You then hop on a bike (optional) for a guided cycling tour to beautiful Oyamazumi Shrine, one of the oldest shrines in western Japan. You'll find a 2,600-year-old camphor tree in its sacred grounds and one of Japan's best collections of samurai armoury, harking back to the time when powerful warlords and pirates controlled sea passage and trade.</p> <p>In the afternoon, you head to the Ito Toyo Museum for Architecture on the island just in time for a beautiful sunset.</p> <p>Enjoy a Japanese style BBQ or bouillabaisse dinner on the terrace of your accommodation, with a splendid background of views over the bridges and Inland Sea.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Wakka [Cottage]

DAY	DATE	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
11	Sat 28/11/2026	Transfer to and guided tour of Takamatsu	<p>Enjoy a relaxed morning on the island before heading back to the Shikoku mainland, where you make a brief stop at Imabari, the first town after crossing the impressive Kurushima Kaikyo suspension bridge, one of the world's longest. In Imabari, you have an exceptional opportunity to hear from a local architect about some noteworthy civic buildings designed by world-famous architect Kenzo Tange, winner of the 1987 Pritzker Architecture Prize.</p> <p>Then it's on to Takamatsu by train, catching glimpses of the Seto Inland Sea on the way. Your first stop in Takamatsu is Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum, which houses the works and studio of Isamu Noguchi, the influential mid-20th century sculptor, artist and landscape designer. Among other notable works, Noguchi designed the garden at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris.</p> <p>For inspiration of a different kind, you head to the George Nakashima Memorial Gallery to see how the world-renowned furniture designer reshaped natural timbers into stunning pieces, such as his classic cantilever chair. Don't miss the display of his famous "chigiri" butterfly joinery.</p> <p>End the day with Takamatsu's most popular soul food - succulent roasted chicken thighs!</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	JR Hotel Clement Takamatsu [Standard Twin]
12	Sun 29/11/2026	Morning guided tour of Takamatsu and free afternoon	<p>At the top of the list for anybody who visits Takamatsu is the superb Ritsurin Garden, one of Japan's absolute best, especially in autumn. A classic landscape garden from Edo times, enjoy the varied scenery provided by ponds, bridges and teahouses, superbly set against the backdrop of Mt Shiun. You take a leisurely guided tour in the park's beautiful autumnal setting.</p> <p>The rest of the day is yours to relax or explore. You may like to stroll through pleasant Tamamo Park, where the seawater moat walls of Takamatsu's former castle can still be seen, wander the city's retro shopping arcades or visit more of the city's wonderful museums and galleries. Please ask us for more information.</p>	Breakfast	JR Hotel Clement Takamatsu [Standard Twin]

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13	Mon 30/11/2026	Transfer to and guided tour of Teshima and Naoshima	<p>The art islands of the Seto Inland Sea have led to a revitalisation of the region's islands over the last decade. Now populated with galleries, outdoor installations, hotels and restaurants, the islands attract a steady stream of art lovers throughout the year.</p> <p>This morning, you hop on a ferry to tour the picturesque island of Teshima to see the Teshima Art Museum. Designed as a monumental concrete shell, it is shaped as a large tear-drop hugging the side of one of the island's forested hills. You also visit Les Archives du Coeur for a fascinating experience of a different kind – this unique museum has changed the heartbeat of thousands across the globe.</p> <p>Another Island transfer takes you to your final destination, Naoshima, this afternoon. After an inspiring day spent outdoors on the islands, check into your Naoshima accommodation, a beautifully designed Japanese contemporary-style ryokan. The ryokan features contemporary works of emerging artists, and each suite has its own private open-air bath.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Roka [Deluxe Suite]
14	Tue 1/12/2026	Guided tour of Naoshima	<p>This morning, you are off to Benesse Art Site, including Valley Gallery, Chichu Art Museum, Benesse House Museum and the Lee Ufan Museum. Don't forget to walk around the area between excellent outdoor installations, including Yayoi Kusama's trademark pumpkin sculpture, all superbly blending into the island environment.</p> <p>Before the final day ends, you will visit some of the works of Art House Project as well as Tadao Ando Museum.</p> <p>Tonight, you will gather together one last time and enjoy a sumptuous in-house kaiseki course meal to mark your final night in style!</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Roka [Deluxe Suite]
15	Wed 2/12/2026	Departure	<p>This morning, you check out of your hotel after breakfast and your 2026 Architecture and Culture Tour of Shikoku, Japan concludes.</p> <p>You can take a domestic flight from Takamatsu or return by train to the international airports in Tokyo or Osaka. (You need to book an afternoon flight if you are departing on this day.) If you'd like to linger in Japan a little longer, we would be delighted to plan your personal post-tour extension to show you a different part of Japan. Please see our Sample Extension Itineraries on the Private Tour page for inspiration.</p>	Breakfast	

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		Inclusions for Group Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 14 nights' accommodation (including traditional Japanese inns) ■ Airport meet & greet and hotel transfer by public transport on arrival ■ All local transport (including domestic flight from Haneda to Takamatsu, train and private minivans) ■ Transfer from Naoshima to Takamatsu airport on departure ■ Expert English speaking tour guides (locally licensed) ■ Cultural activities and entry fees included in itinerary ■ Luggage transfers (1 piece per person) ■ Meals as specified 		
		Exclusions for Group Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ International and domestic airfare (unless otherwise stated) ■ Travel insurance ■ Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages (except the 1st drink at each meal) ■ Tips and gratuities ■ Transport during free time ■ Personal expenses (laundry, coin-locker, internet, telephone etc.) ■ Visa (if required) 		