

BASIC TOUR OUTLINE

2027 SCENIC TRAINS AND PILGRIMAGE WALKS OF SHIKOKU JAPAN

START: (Refer to website for date) from Tokyo (Haneda)

FINISH: at Matsuyama

DURATION: 14 days

PRICE: AUD \$11,240 per person

GROUP size: 8 people

SINGLE SUPP: AUD \$1,800 per person

REF: GHS-27

TOUR OVERVIEW

The 2027 Scenic Trains and Pilgrimage Walks of Shikoku, Japan, is staged on Shikoku, the smallest of the four main islands of Japan, and still largely untapped by international tourists. As well as the pristine nature and unique regional traditions, this tour follows some sections of the Shikoku Pilgrimage Route of 88 Temples. The route was established by the great Buddhist monk, Kukai (Kobo Daishi), over 1,200 years ago on Shikoku Island, and it is one of the world's longest circular pilgrimage routes.

In addition, the tour includes train rides through most scenic parts of Shikoku, running across its spectacular valleys and coastlines. During the train ride, guests enjoy a lunch box of local cuisine, just like Japanese travellers do, all while admiring gorgeous autumn colours and coastal villages through the windows. Altogether, the tour promises unforgettable experiences for those who love nature and an active experience while discovering the hidden corners of Shikoku.

Like other Journey to the East Small Group Tours, this tour is limited to only 8 guests, fully escorted and locally supported. It offers great value with a variety of comfortable accommodations and transport, and inclusions of exclusive and interesting activities such as a udon-making class and a meditation experience at a zen temple.

*Accommodation will be as planned below or similar.

DAY	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
1	Airport meet and greet on arrival	<p>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.)</p> <p>Today is an arrival day, and you will have a short orientation session and welcome drink in the evening. Your hotel is located at Haneda International Airport ready for the early start of the tour on Day 2. If you have time, you might like to consider a short trip into central Tokyo before the start of your 2027 Scenic Trains and Pilgrimage Walks 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 at the same hotel as</p>	No meals	Haneda Excel Hotel Tokyu [Standard Twin]

DAY	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
		the tour or in central Tokyo.		
2	Transfer to and guided tour of Takamatsu	<p>A domestic flight takes you to Takamatsu City in Kagawa Prefecture, the second biggest city and a gateway to Shikoku Island. You begin your exploration of the city with a visit to Yashima Temple, one of the 88 Temples of Shikoku Pilgrimage (temple no. 84) atop Mt Yashima, a uniquely shaped lava plateau and a landmark of Takamatsu City. The temple and surrounding historic monuments form a lovely circuit trail offering a great view of the Seto Inland Sea and Takamatsu City.</p> <p>In the afternoon, you will visit another icon of Takamatsu, the magnificent Ritsurin Japanese Garden. Regarded as one of the best in Japan, the garden consists of 6 ponds and 13 artificial hills that have been skillfully positioned, blending perfectly with Mt Shiun behind. November is also one of the best times to visit the garden as it glows with autumn leaves.</p> <p>In the evening, you enjoy "a welcome to Shikoku" dinner at a local restaurant.</p> <p>Today's walking distance: 7 km (4.4 miles) Elevation: mostly flat Terrain: well-maintained walking path</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	JR Clement Inn Takamatsu [Twin Room]
3	Guided tour of Shodoshima	<p>A 35-minute high-speed ferry ride will take you to the island of Shodoshima off Takamatsu for a lovely day out. Historically and culturally rich Kankakei Gorge is considered one of the most spectacular gorges in Japan, especially in autumn when the leaves turn a myriad of different colours. You will go up by a ropeway from 295m to 612m above sea level, and walk down through the mountain trail for a couple of kilometres, passing by some great photography spots.</p> <p>Shodoshima is famous for soy sauce production, where you can learn the traditional production method as well as taste some samples, including soy sauce ice cream! After lunch, you will visit Angel Road, a photogenic sand bar that appears as the tide goes out. The day ends at the Maze Town, an area with super narrow roads built to defend the island from the intruders in the 14th century. Today, it is a functioning suburb of Shodoshima with some residences, businesses, temples and galleries, providing an opportunity for a fascinating guided walk.</p> <p>Back to Takamatsu by ferry, the evening is free to try the lively restaurant scene of Takamatsu.</p> <p>Today's walking distance: 9 km (5.6 miles) Elevation: 377 m (1,236 feet) descent at Kankakei, mostly flat for the rest Terrain: sealed road and some mountain path at Kankakei</p>	Breakfast	JR Clement Inn Takamatsu [Twin Room]

DAY	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
4	Guided Pilgrimage Walk in Takamatsu	<p>Today, you will walk on the pilgrimage route between Shiromineji Temple (temple no. 81) and Negoroji Temple (temple no. 82). This is a scenic and interesting section with many historical monuments along the way, ideal for a slow-paced guided walk.</p> <p>While in the area, you will also visit Zentsuji Temple, where Kukai was born. In the basement of Miedo, one of the buildings in the temple complex, is the "Kaidan Meguri" - a 100-meter-long, pitch-black tunnel which connects a visitor with Kukai by chanting his name.</p> <p>Tonight, you will stay at a temple lodge at Zentsuji. As well as experiencing the journey of the pilgrims, with a simple room, dinner and breakfast, you will have an opportunity to observe a morning prayer at Zentsuji temple.</p> <p>Today's walking distance: 5 km (3.1 miles) Elevation: 120 m (394 feet) descent and 80 m (262 feet) ascent Terrain: mostly sealed road</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Iroha Kaikan [Temple lodging - Japanese style room with futon beddings and shared bathroom]
5	Guided tour of Kotohira	<p>Today, you will visit another landmark of Shikoku, the Kotohiragu Shrine, fondly called "Kompira san" by locals. You will need to go up 785 steps to the main hall and a total of 1,368 steps to reach the inner hall at the top. Once you arrive, you will be rewarded with a great view of the Seto Inland Sea dotted with islands. A 17th-century shoin building in the complex displays screen paintings by an Edo period master artist, Maruyama Okyo, and it is a rare opportunity to view the masterpieces while in the area.</p> <p>Udon noodles are the most loved food of Kagawa prefecture, and you will try your hand at making the popular noodle today for lunch.</p> <p>Tonight's accommodation is a restored old ryokan, which comes with an onsen hot spring bath and kaiseki dinner.</p> <p>Today's walking distance: 6 km (3.7 miles) Elevation: 421 m (1,381 feet) ascent and descent Terrain: 1,368 stone steps</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Onyado Shikishima-Kan [Twin room]

DAY	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
6	Guided tour of Iya Valley	<p>Today, you will ride on the first scenic train. This trip is from Kotohira to Oboke in the Iya Valley, running through some of the most secluded parts of Shikoku, and indeed Japan. Along the way, you will be treated to gorgeous autumn colours.</p> <p>Upon arrival at Oboke Station, you will enjoy the autumn mountains from the Oboke Ravine pleasure boat. Oboke Gorge has unusual geological strata, where the upper layer is older than the lower layer. And it has been confirmed that the place was once a seabed. Extreme pressure and high temperature a long time ago caused the current rock formation.</p> <p>Once again, you will stay at an onsen ryokan, but this time deep in the valley.</p> <p>No substantial walking today.</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Hotel Kazurabashi [Japanese style room]
7	Guided tour of Iya Valley	<p>You stretch your legs this morning by walking in the Ochiai Village with your guide on a steep hillside. Along the way, you will see original farmhouses, shrines and community buildings that are fast disappearing from villages like this. You will hear about the issues that remote villages like this are facing from your local guide.</p> <p>In the afternoon, you will continue exploring deep in the valley, visiting the historic Double Vine Bridge and the intriguing scarecrow village of Nagoro.</p> <p>Back at the ryokan, enjoy another soak in the onsen bath after an active day.</p> <p>Today's walking distance: 5 km (3.1 miles) Elevation: 205 m (673 feet) ascent and descent Terrain: well-maintained trail</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Hotel Kazurabashi [Japanese style room]

DAY	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
8	Transfer to and guided tour of Kochi	<p>You travel to the third prefecture of Shikoku, Kochi Prefecture, by private minivan this morning. The first stop here is another temple on the Shikoku 88 Pilgrimage trail, Sekkeiji Temple (temple no. 33). Originally founded in 815, the temple is famous for hosting the master Kamakura-period sculptor Unkei and his son Tankei. They hand-carved several of the temple's prized Buddhist statues, many of which are designated as Important Cultural Properties of Japan. From here, you will walk along a quiet seaside backstreet, dropping by a sake brewery and crossing a river by a barge.</p> <p>After lunch, you walk up a short but steep section to the next temple, Chikurinji Temple (temple no. 31). It is a magnificent temple holding many treasures and gardens. Today, you will experience meditation, led by a Zen monk, in a building surrounded by spectacular autumn trees.</p> <p>In the afternoon, you will continue your sightseeing of this charming regional city of Kochi. Makino Botanic Garden is a tranquil oasis created in honour of a plant taxonomist, Dr Tomitaro Makino, from Kochi. After exploring the mighty Kochi Castle complex, originally completed in 1603, you will finish the day with a visit to a lively local food market, Hirome Ichiba Market, with over 60 vendors from which you can choose your dinner.</p> <p>Today's walking distance: 7 km (4.35 miles) Elevation: 100 m (328 feet) descent, 130 m (427 feet) ascent Terrain: sealed road and unsealed steep path</p>	Breakfast	Richmond Hotel Kochi [Standard Twin]
9	Guided tour of Kochi	<p>Today, you make a day trip to the west of Kochi City to visit yuzu-producing villages. Yuzu is a Japanese citrus fruit very popular for cooking the world over. Japan is the No. 1 producer of yuzu, and Kochi accounts for 50% of Japan's yuzu production. November is the harvesting season of yuzu, and you will be able to see the golden fruit heavy on tree branches, hill after hill, ready to be harvested. A visit to a yuzu sorting and packing facility, and then a chance to buy all sorts of yuzu products from the nearby co-op.</p> <p>In the afternoon, you will continue enjoying Kochi's countryside and forest surrounded by the autumn colours. Back in Kochi, the evening is free tonight.</p> <p>Today's walking distance: optional light walking only Elevation: flat Terrain: rural and forest path</p>	Breakfast, Lunch	Richmond Hotel Kochi [Standard Twin]

DAY	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
10	Guided tour of Shimanto River	<p>Before leaving a vibrant Kochi, you will pay homage to the great Kochi Castle. Constructed at the beginning of the 17th century, it survived wars, fires, and other catastrophes, and is now one of the last twelve original castles in Japan, and is designated an Important National Cultural Property.</p> <p>Another train ride from Kochi to Kubokawa will take you to the Shimanto River. The 196 km river is said to be the last remaining free-flowing stream in Japan. The Agency for Cultural Affairs has designated the entire Shimanto River basin as an Important Cultural Landscape. Together with chinkabashi (submersible bridges), it is the symbolic landscape of Kochi. Local people take great pride in living in harmony with nature. After arrival, you will stay at a riverside accommodation tonight.</p> <p>Today's walking distance: 3 km (1.86 miles) Elevation: 63 m (206 feet) ascent and descent Terrain: many steps in the ground and inside the Kochi Castle</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Hotel Seira Shimanto [Twin Room on Riverside]
11	Guided tour of Ozu and Uchiko	<p>This morning, an exhilarating experience of canoeing the Shimanto River awaits. You will float on this most pristine river with a nature guide, appreciating the surrounding flora and fauna.</p> <p>Then, changing the scenery from natural landscape to heritage built environment, your minivan drives across the border to Ehime, the last of the four prefectures of Shikoku. In the next two days, you will visit the towns of Ozu and Uchiko, two townships whose heritages are affectionately preserved by locals.</p> <p>This afternoon, a guided walking tour of Ozu includes the magnificent Japanese garden at Garyu Sanso, where you can learn the principles of Japanese traditional architecture and the outstanding devotion to aesthetic beauty.</p> <p>Tonight, you will stay at a special accommodation, beautifully renovated old merchant houses. Together with a superb dinner with a modern twist, it is sure to be a memorable night.</p> <p>Today's walking distance: 6 km (3.7 miles) Elevation: mostly flat Terrain: sealed road *you will need to take your shoes off to enter some heritage buildings.</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Nipponia Hotel Ozu Castle Town [Deluxe Twin Room]

DAY	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
12	Guided tour of Uchko and transfer to Dogo Onsen	<p>At Uchiko, which originally prospered through the Japanese wax industry in the 19th century, you will have a guided walking tour visiting the Japanese wax museum and Uchiko-za Kabuki Theatre, built in 1916, as well as other heritage properties.</p> <p>The last scenic train ride on this trip, which runs along the coastline of Ehime, will take you to Japan's oldest and most famous onsen (hot spring) town of Dogo Onsen. The main building of Dogo Onsen was only reopened in 2024 after five and a half years of extensive restoration work. Between the main building and the Dogo Onsen tram station is an old-style arcade filled with souvenir shops and restaurants, typical of onsen towns in Japan. Staying visitors to Dogo Onsen stroll around the town dressed in a yukata, which is a common scene at any onsen town in Japan. After a guided walking tour of the town, why not join the locals dressed in yukata and enjoy local craft beer or local specialty mandarin juice, before soaking in the hot tub. The ultimate onsen experience!</p> <p>Today's walking distance: 3 km (1.9 miles) Elevation: flat Terrain: sealed road</p>	Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner	Hotel Kowakuen Haruka [Superior Twin Room A]
13	Guided tour of Shimanami Kaido	<p>Some strikingly spectacular scenery awaits on the last day of the tour. Today, you will visit Shimanami Kaido or Shimanami Sea Route in the Seto Inland Sea. The route connects 59.4 km between Imabari city on the Shikoku side and Onomichi city on the Honshu (the mainland) side, with 10 long bridges joining the islands on the route. All bridges have bicycle and pedestrian lanes, making it one of the most popular cycling trails in Japan. Historically, it was a playground of the strongest seafarers of Iyo (old Ehime), who had high adventures at sea in ancient times. There are still a lot of legends in this area, and you will find reminders of the past while passing through the islands.</p> <p>Today, you will stop at some vantage points to marvel at the views, have more scenic pilgrimage walks, and visit Oyamazumi Shrine on Omishima Island, a significant religious symbol of Shimanami Kaido. The main shrine was built in the Muromachi Period (1338-1573), representing the nagare-zukuri (wave-style) architecture of Shinto shrines. One of the most notable features of the shrine is the finest collection of armour in Japan. The shrine holds 80% of the existing armour and other equipment designated as National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties.</p> <p>After a day of fresh sea breeze and amazing views, you will be back at Dogo Onsen and share your last dinner with your fellow tour members.</p> <p>Today's walking distance: 3 km (1.8 miles) Elevation: less than 100 m (328 feet) ascent and descent Terrain: sealed road and inside shrine complex</p>	Breakfast, Dinner	Hotel Kowakuen Haruka [Superior Twin Room A]

DAY	PLAN	DETAILS	MEALS	ACCOMODATION
14	Goodbye in Matsuyama	<p>This morning, you check out of your hotel after breakfast, and your 2027 Scenic Trains and Pilgrimage Walks of Shikoku, Japan, concludes.</p> <p>You can take a domestic flight from nearby Matsuyama Airport to Haneda (Tokyo) or travel further by train. We highly recommend the bike ride on the Shimanami Kaido to the mainland if you are a keen cyclist. Matsuyama is well located to travel to Hiroshima or Kyushu, too. Please talk to one of our friendly travel consultants for your travel options.</p> <p>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 Side Tours on our Private Tour page for inspiration.</p> <p>Note: The cost of your transfer to your departure airport is not included in this tour, as we found many guests choose to travel further to other parts of Japan. However, we would be happy to arrange your transfer to your next destination or your departing airport.</p>	Breakfast	
	Inclusions for Group Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 13 nights' accommodation (including traditional Japanese inns) ■ All breakfasts, 4 lunches and 9 dinners ■ Airport meet & greet on arrival ■ All local transport, including a domestic flight from Haneda to Takamatsu, the express trains and private minivans ■ Expert English-speaking tour guides (locally licensed) ■ Cultural activities and entry fees are included in the itinerary ■ Luggage transfers (1 piece per person) 		
	Exclusions for Group Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ International and domestic airfare (unless otherwise stated) ■ Travel insurance ■ Transfers on the last day ■ Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages (except the first drink at each meal) ■ Tips and gratuities ■ Transport during free time ■ Personal expenses (laundry, coin-locker, internet, telephone etc.) ■ Visa (if required) 		