

HeartCycle Bicycle Touring Club Cycling Japan – Shikoku Pilgrimage

- Dates:** April 6-18, 2025
- Coordinator:** Tina Vessels
- Rating:** Intermediate, Mileage: 485 miles; 19,242 total vertical feet; 10 days of riding & 1 rest day
- Riders:** 14 (includes tour coordinator)
- Price:** \$4,500 (double occupancy). \$1,100 at registration. Balance due by January 7, 2025. Single supplement \$4,800 (only one single supplement available).
- Cancellation:** [Standard cancellation policy](#)

Travel insurance is strongly recommended.



OVERVIEW

Cycle Shikoku Island, a hidden gem nestled in the heart of Japan, where you'll visit ancient temples and ride through green landscapes and terraced gardens. Embark on a journey through time and tradition as we explore many of the 88 Buddhist temples dotting this sacred land, where pilgrims seek protection.

Guided by local experts, for 10 cycling days, we'll traverse the labyrinthine paths and hidden hamlets within Shikoku's mountains. Cycling across islands connected by bridges, we'll pedal through landscapes where the population thins and the roads wind through wilderness.

Our adventure begins in the enchanting town of Koyasan, a mystical enclave founded 1,200 years ago by the visionary Kukai, the main temple of Shingon Buddhism, a World Heritage Site.

We'll stay in ryokans, traditional Japanese inns steeped in familial warmth and hospitality. Here, on the tatami floor mats, we will sleep on freshly made futons. And what better way to rejuvenate body and soul than soaking in restorative onsens, found in many ryokans where natural hot springs bubble forth.

We'll indulge in the freshest bonito from local waters and savor the delicate artistry of sushi-style fish. Each meal is a celebration of Japan's rich culinary heritage.

Amidst the tapestry of food, culture, history, and nature that unfolds before us, we'll discover the true essence of Japan—a land of infinite diversity.



ITINERARY

Day 1: Sunday, April 6, 2025

Meet at Temple in Koyasan at 4:00 pm, the main temple of Shingon Buddhism, a World Heritage Site. We will stay in a Buddhist temple founded 1,200 years ago by Kukai as the main temple of Shingon Buddhism. Here, you can glimpse the daily lives of Buddhist monks by participating in religious services and eating the traditional vegetarian food.



Day 2: Monday, April 7

Koyasan to Wakayama. Cycling: 39 mi / 870 ft; Ferry: 2 hours; Van: 0.5 hours. In the morning, you have an option to take part in the Buddhist service before breakfast. Our cycling journey will begin with a downhill ride (bring warm jacket) to the outskirts of Wakanai while traversing on a traditional pilgrimage route.



Day 3: Tuesday, April 8

Tokushima to Hiwasa. Cycling: 41 mi / 1322 ft.

The tranquil ride along the Naka River leads us through inland Tokushima and the Anan coastal area, south of Tokushima. Rare sea turtles visit the coast to lay their eggs every summer. We stop at Hiwasa for lunch and visit Yakuou-ji, where many pilgrims come to pray for protection from evil.

Day 4: Wednesday, April 9

Hiwasa to Muroto. Cycling: 50 mi / 2014 ft.

We stay on beautiful shorelines throughout the day. Our accommodation is at Cape Muroto, where you can visit Hotsumisakiji temple, or walk on a coastal trail.

Day 5: Thursday, April 10

Muroto to Kochi. Cycling: 52 mi / 970 ft.

On our ride, we encounter Shinshouji, the 25th temple of the Shikoku 88, and the old town of Kiragawa, with typhoon-proof architecture, stonewalls, and tiled roofs. The last 9 miles to Kochi, we will be riding an old railroad path now designated for cycling.

Day 6: Friday, April 11

Rest day in Kochi.

Our accommodation is a 5-min walk to the famous Katsurahama sandy beach. You can enjoy a leisurely walk on the beach and soak in the onsen hot spa. Kochi (population of 340,000) is a 30-min bus ride from our hotel; street shopping in Kochi is another option. In the center of Kochi City is the 400-year-old Kochi Castle.



Day 7: Saturday, April 12

Kochi to Matsubagawa Onsen. Cycling: 54 mi / 2290 ft.

Leaving Kochi, we first cycle along the coast, then into a quiet mountain region. Riding upstream of a small river, today's challenge will be a 1500-foot mountain pass. After conquering the pass, we will enjoy a gradual downhill to our accommodation with an onsen hot spa by the river in Matsubagawa village.

Day 8: Sunday, April 13

Matsubagawa Onsen to Shimanto River. Cycling: 50 mi / 1460 ft.

After a short morning ride, we visit 37th of Shikoku 88: Iwamotoji Temple with ceiling art. The rest of the day, we cycle along the Shimanto River, famous for its tranquil water that runs undammed from the headwaters to the ocean, and finish at our hotel with a beautiful river view.

Day 9: Monday, April 14

Shimanto River to Cape Ashizuri. Cycling: 58 mi / 2870 ft.

Several bridges without guardrails reduce resistance to floodwaters and prevent the bridges from being washed away during floods. We cycle today through Ashizuri Uwajima National Park and end our ride at Cape Ashizuri, the southernmost point of Shikoku, where we visit the 38th Kongofukuji Temple.

**Day 10: Tuesday, April 15**

Cape Ashizuri to Ainan. Cycling: 58 mi / 3070 ft.

We continue our journey through the Ashizuri Uwajima National Park and head inland on a delightful countryside road. In the small town of Ainan, enjoy strolling on streets sided with neatly built stonewalls and locally fished fresh bonito.

Day 11: Wednesday, April 16

Ainan to Omishima. Cycling: 33 mi / 1768 ft. Van transfer: 200 km.

We rest our legs this morning while travelling to Imabari by van and have lunch at a seaside restaurant with stunning views of the Seto Inland Sea. The road

connects Imabari and Onomichi to the mainland. Honshu is known as Shimanami-Kaido (highway above the sea). The designated cycling paths and bridges have made the area a cycling mecca of Japan, attracting many cycle tourists from other regions of Japan. Today, we cycle across two islands and end up in the third island, Omishima, in the heart of Seto Inland Sea.



Day 12: Thursday, April 17

Omishima to Onomichi. Cycling: 45 mi / 2683 ft.

Today, we cycle across three more islands and finally land in Onomichi, the mainland Honshu. For people interested in samurai culture, the neighboring museum displays Japanese swords registered as national treasures. We ride along the coast on today's island, admiring the construction of bridges connecting the islands and the purpose-built cycling roads.

Day 13: Friday, April 18

The tour finishes after breakfast in Onomichi, a scenic port town that has thrived as a center for marine traffic over many years. The train station is within walking distance for your continuing travel.



About our accommodations:

We choose ryokans as much as possible to support local tourism and the economy. Ryokans are a traditional Japanese-style inn often run by family and in many cases, they have onsen (natural hot springs) on site. Traditional Japanese

rooms do not have beds, instead, you will sleep on a futon on the tatami floor mats in ryokans. Most of the accommodations provide yukata, a cotton kimono that is a traditional night robe; you can wear it to the hot spring and restaurants onsite. Some of the rooms do not have their own shower and baths. Public onsens have showers to wash yourself. Some ryokans in remote areas do not have toilets in each room. They have a public toilet onsite.

Includes:

- 12 nights' accommodation on twin share basis
- 12 breakfasts and 10 evening meals
- Rental bike (Cross bike or Road bike) *E-bike is available for extra JPY 20,000
- Other equipment comes with bike: spare tube, tire levers, multi-tool, pump, and flat patches are in the bag. All the bikes are equipped with front and rear lights, and Garmin cycle computers.
- All transport detailed in the above itinerary
- Snacks and refreshments
- English speaking guide(s)
- Spare parts and mechanic services.
- Front bag for hybrid bike (8-liter volume). Seat post bag for road bike (6-liter volume)
- Support vehicle with seats and bike rack

Does not include lunches (Cost ~1000-1500 yen/lunch)





For more information contact:

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