

## The Unique Sustainable Living of the Deep Iya Valley

Shikoku is an island in southwest Japan. It's the smallest, least developed of Japan's main islands. Nishi-Awa is a region in Tokushima Prefecture, encompassing the great Yoshino River rift valley. The region includes the Iya Valley, known for its mountainside hamlets that have survived for over a thousand years, thanks to a unique, sustainable farming system suited to steep slopes.



On this adventure, we learn about the symbiosis between the towns beside the Yoshino River, and the remote villages of Iya, exploring the towns on Brompton bicycles and walking around the villages.

As we potter through the dramatic, traditional landscape, we meet the people who cherish and maintain this idyllic living. They're the ancestors of the Heike, a clan of warriors who took refuge in Iya after a disastrous defeat in the Genpei War in 1185.

The method of farming suited to steep slopes is recognised as Globally Important Agricultural Heritage. Grass mulch is used to nourish and stabilise the soil, and the stooks of cut grass stand like natural monuments on the hillsides. The vegetables grown are different from the rest of Japan, and we join local people in preparing meals using these heirloom varieties.

**Highlights:**

- Potter through streets of old merchant’s home on Brompton bicycles
- Learn about sustainable social systems and farming on steep mountain slopes, that maintains soil and water quality
- Taste the traditional local cuisine unique to the region in the community of the village
- Experience the resource-recycling lifestyle and the value of traditional farming in the villages scattered over the mountains
- Discover the world view of residents through interaction with local people

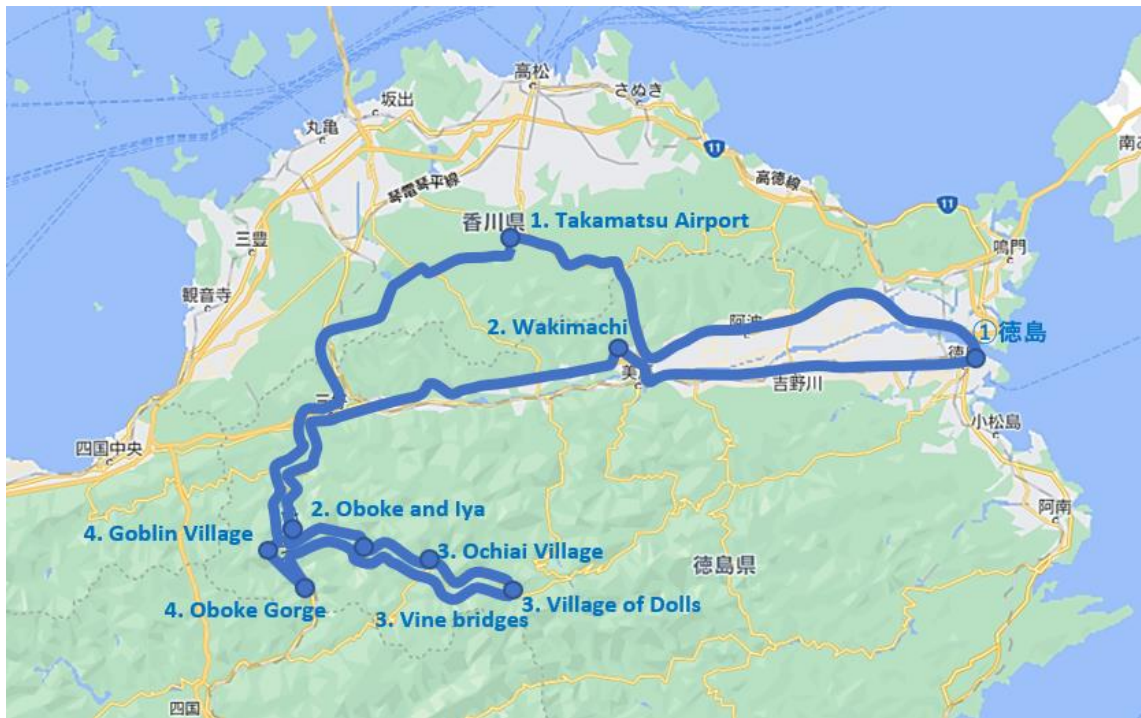
**Location:** Tokushima Prefecture, Shikoku Island  
**Main Activity:** Pottering by bicycle and on foot  
**Difficulty:** 2  
**Tour Dates:** April to November  
**Pax:** Minimum: 4                      Maximum: 8  
**Price:** JPY 240,000 per person incl. tax



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## Route map



## Day-by-Day Itinerary

### Day 1: Orientation

We pick you up from Tokushima Airport and take you to Hotel Clement in Tokushima for a short orientation.

#### Dinner

Dinner at Hotel Clement features dishes typical of Shikoku's Setouchi region.

### Day 2: Wakimachi pottering

#### Breakfast

The buffet offers an extensive choice of soups, breads, and salads to suit both Japanese and western palates.

We pick you up at Hotel Clement in Tokushima for the drive to Wakimachi, a town on the Yoshino River with streets of old merchant's houses. Your local guide explains how Wakimachi grew rich and elegant by serving as a distribution centre for valuable goods from the remote valleys – timber, indigo, and tobacco.

## Walk around Wakimachi

Distance: 2 km | Time: 2:00 | Up: 0 m, Down: 0 m

### Lunch

Lunch is at Sairai, a modern izakaya in Wakimachi.

After lunch, we ride Brompton bicycles along the Yoshino River and through the nostalgic town of Anabuki, visiting Kosen-ji Temple. From here, we drive to Iya in the mountains.

### Dinner

Our accommodation is the ryokan Iya Onsenkyo. Dinner features locally sourced foodstuffs and sake.

Iya Onsenkyo has a choice of Japanese or Western-style rooms with ensuite bath and toilet and a shared onsen bath.

**Activity:** Town walking and cycling

**Difficulty:** 2

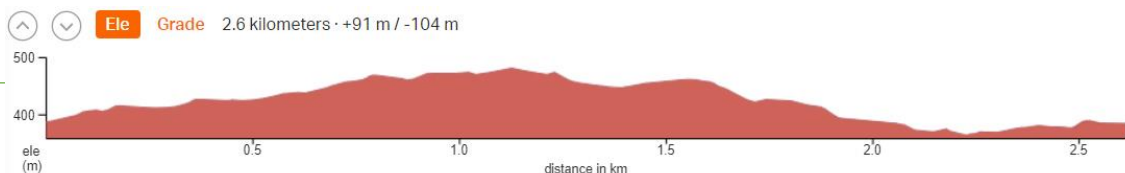


## Day 3: Iya Vine Bridge and Village of Dolls

### Breakfast

Breakfast is the traditional ryokan repast of rice, fish, and pickled vegetables.

We depart from the onsen and drive to the Iya vine bridge. Our local guide leads us on a walk over the swaying vine bridge, through the forest where the vines grow, and around a hillside village.





### Lunch

We visit the Tsuzuki Shoten farmhouse restaurant for an introduction to the unique foods produced in Iya.

Our hostess for lunch sings some of the many folk songs of the area. In the afternoon, we drive to Nagoro, the Village of Dolls, which resident artisan Ayano Tsukimi has populated with her lifelike dolls. Our guide shows us around the village.

### Dinner

We stay at Tougenkyo Iya in Ochiai Village, in old, thatched roof cottages. Local women visit the cottages to prepare a delicious meal featuring the soba, potatoes, vegetables, and wild meats of Iya.

**Activity:** Walking

**Difficulty:** 2



## Day 4: Forest adventure and river rafting

### Breakfast

Breakfast is rice balls and miso soup.

We drive to Forest Adventure Iya where you can choose to paddle down the Iya River by packraft, or scramble over the course of nets and walkways strung high up in the trees at Forest Adventure. The highlight of this experience is the two long ziplines over the river.

### Lunch

We enjoy a bowl of healthy Iya soba.

After lunch, we drive to Momonga Village to raft down the Yoshino River. This is a course for beginners, so there's no white water to navigate.

### Dinner

We stay at Hotel Obokekyo Mannaka. Dinner is 'Iya Nouvelle', a fusion of local produce prepared in French style.

Our accommodation is a Japanese-style ryokan with ensuite bath and toilet and shared onsen bath.

**Activity:** Forest adventure and river rafting

**Difficulty:** 2

## Day 5: Walking the goblin trail

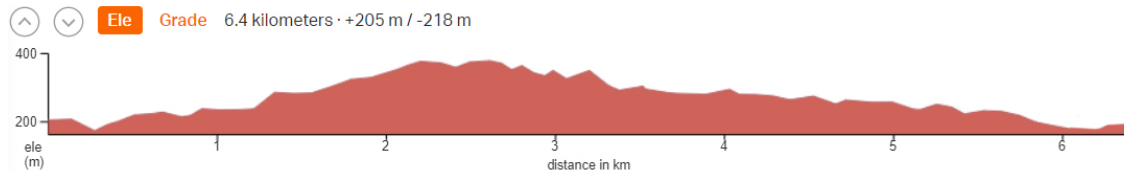
### Breakfast

Breakfast is the traditional ryokan repast of rice, fish, and pickled vegetables.

From the hotel, we hike the Fujikawa Valley, known for its legends of strange and imaginative goblins, which represent the natural hazards of the regions. Some of the goblins are brought to life in dramatic sculptures along the trail.

### Walk the Fujikawa Valley

Distance: 6.4 km | Time: 3:00 | Up: 205 m, Down: 218 m



### Lunch

Lunch is a soup with the deep-fried tofu of the region and wild vegetable tempura.

After lunch, we drive to Tokushima or Takamatsu and go our separate ways. You've seen some of the best of Shikoku and learned about the history and traditions that set the island apart from other regions of Japan. We hope you've enjoyed the expansive scenery, the delicious food and sake, and the simple hospitality of the people. And we hope you'll be back some day to experience some of the many other adventures that remain to be discovered here.

**Activity:** Valley hiking

**Difficulty:** 2

### **Accommodation:**

Day 1: Hotel Clement, single room with bath + toilet

Day 2: Iya Onsenkyo, Japanese or Western room with bath + toilet, onsen

Day 3: Tougenkyo Iya, shared Japanese rooms, shared bath + toilets

Day 4: Hotel Obokekyo Mannaka, Japanese room with bath + toilet, onsen

All accommodation is non-smoking, with free Wi-Fi and coin laundry.

## What's included

- All road transport during the trip.
- A professional tour guide for the duration of the trip, and qualified, experienced activity guides.
- All accommodation, meals, and drinks, including alcoholic drinks.
- All cycling and rafting equipment.

## We provide & What to bring

### **We provide**

For cycling:

- Rental Brompton bike (tell us your height in advance)
- Helmet (1 size)
- First aid kit
- Support car

For rafting:

- Necessary equipment such as raft and paddle
- Life jacket

### **What to bring**

For cycling and walking:

- Clothing suitable for easy cycling, change of clothes (quick-drying, highly visible)
- Shoes suitable for both cycling and light hiking
- Breathable rainwear (upper and lower)
- Water bottle
- Sunscreen, sunglasses
- Knapsack or rucksack

For rafting:

- Clothing that can get wet
- Waterproof jacket and trousers

- Swimsuit
- Sports sandals or water shoes
- Towels
- Sunscreen
- A strap or string if you wear glasses

Nice to have:

- A compact, waterproof camera with a robust strap for attaching to a life jacket. This could be a smartphone with a suitable case.
- A map app that works in Japan.

## About us

Shikoku Tours was established with the goal of introducing adventurous people to the wonders of the smallest of Japan's main islands, and to help preserve its unique heritage and culture. We work closely with local stakeholders to craft tours that satisfy our international customers while contributing to regional economies.

We're constantly learning, from our partners and friends in Shikoku, and from the feedback that we receive from our customers. Our website is the most comprehensive library of Shikoku travel content, reflecting our decade-long effort to document and promote the island we call home.

[ShikokuTours.com](http://ShikokuTours.com)

## Guides

### Sakae Takashi

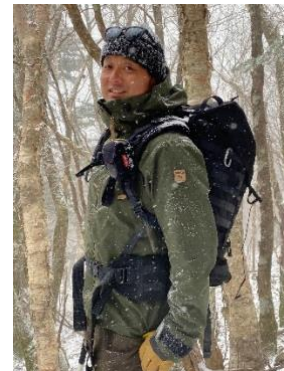
Originally from Osaka, Takashi went to America to study acting. He worked as an actor in Tokyo. After the Tohoku Earthquake, looking for a new path, he came to Tokushima and started the Brompton Pottering Association with the goal of revitalising the area through sustainable tourism. The Association provides people from all over Shikoku with the opportunity to improve their cycle guide skills, while providing much needed visitors to off the beaten track areas.





## Ushio Takeshi

Takeshi is originally from Hyogo. From his early youth, he's been involved in fishing, cycling, kayaking, hiking – basically all outdoor activities, and he's pursued this interest all over Japan and in some thirty countries around the world. Today he's a Nishi-Awa tourist area community development manager, and representative of the Tsurugi Local Guides Association. He leads rafting and canoeing trips on the Yoshino, Shimanto, and Niyodo Rivers, kayaking on the Seto Inland Sea, and trekking and snowshoeing in the Tsurugi mountain area.



We look forward to seeing you Shikoku!

## Information and Requirements

### Dietary Restrictions

We may be able to accommodate allergies to specific foods, but we're unable to accommodate vegans and vegetarians on this tour. Please note that uncooked fish is a major element of Shikoku eating and it features in many of the planned meals. It's a taste that most people acquire very quickly.

### Emergency Response Plan

The tour activities are conducted in areas with road access and cell phone reception. Support vehicles are also on hand. The guides are trained to handle rescue and emergency medical situations, and they can respond to any equipment issues that may occur.

### Information about you required in advance

Please provide us with the following information when you book:

- Level of experience with cycling and canoeing
- Nationality, passport number, date of birth
- Height, weight
- Emergency contact information
- Chronic conditions, medications taken, allergies, dietary restrictions, etc.

## Reservation & Cancellation Policy

### Payment Methods

We will send a booking confirmation by email with an invoice for full payment by 30 days before the start of the tour. If we do not receive the payment by the due date, the booking will be cancelled. We accept payment by all major credit cards and by TransferWise.

### Cancellation

If you must cancel, please let us know by email. The following fees apply.

- 20 days before the day of the start of the tour: 20% of the total fee
- 7 days before the day of the start of the tour: 30% of the total fee
- The day before the day of the start of the tour: 40% of the total fee
- The day of the start of the tour: 50% of the total fee
- After the start of the tour or no-show without notice: 100% of the total fee

### Disclaimer

Shikoku Tours reserves the right to cancel or change the itinerary of a tour. In the event of the tour being cancelled due to exceptional or unavoidable circumstances, we will refund all your costs. Shikoku Tours is not responsible for compensating any additional costs such as flights.

### Our liability, and compensation for damages

In the performance of the travel contract, we will compensate you for any damage caused to you intentionally, or due to a mistake by us or our agents. However, you must notify us of the damage within two years from the day after the damage occurs.

Regarding damage to baggage, if you notify us within 14 days from the day after the damage occurs, we will pay compensation with a limit of JPY 150,000 per traveler (except in cases of damage caused intentionally or due to serious negligence by us).

We are not liable for compensation if you suffer damage due to the following reasons.

- i. Damage caused by natural disasters, wars, riots, government decrees, fires, and suspension of accommodation services
- ii. Food poisoning
- iii. Damage caused by your own wilfulness or negligence
- iv. Damage due to other reasons beyond our control or of our agents

### **Tour Operator / Contact**

Shikoku Tours, Co., Ltd.

License No. 2-217 Ehime Prefecture

12-23-1202 Dogo Yunomachi, Matsuyama, Ehime 790-0842, Japan

[info@shikokutours.com](mailto:info@shikokutours.com)

Please address enquiries to Rod Walters, CEO.

### **Partner Companies**

Sora no Sato

The regional tourism organisation for Nishi-Awa. [Website](#)

Awa-Re

Brompton bicycle rental and guides. [Website](#)

Waku Waku House Matba

Local guides. [Website](#)

Forest Adventure

Forest adventure course and rafting. [Website](#)

Trip

River guides of Shikoku. [Website](#)