

From the Source to the Mouth of the Great Shimanto River

Shikoku is an island in southwest Japan. It's the smallest, least developed of Japan's main islands. The mountains in the centre of Shikoku are the source of several great rivers. One of these, the mighty Shimanto River, is celebrated as Japan's last undammed river.



On this adventure, we use e-bikes to explore the karst highland where the river rises, hiking to the very spot where the Shimanto emerges from under a rock. We stay in a lodge beside one of its many tributaries and canyon through the beautiful valley gorge, playing in the clear water.

The middle part of the river meanders through idyllic valleys. We follow the river by local train, crossing the picturesque truss bridges. We visit a museum where an expert helps to bring the entirety of the river system into focus, from its geology and wildlife, to its varied seasonal industries, including fishing. Then it's time to get into Canadian canoes to descend and explore the lower reaches of the Shimanto. We drift down the broad stream, passing riverside hamlets and jumping off the simple bridges built to withstand the annual floods.

The river is a major source of food, including eel, sweetfish, shrimp, crab, and water weed. A local fisherman shows us how to set traps, and the next day we return by canoe to see what we've caught. Our catch is cooked for us at a riverside restaurant close to where the Shimanto pours into the Pacific Ocean.

Highlights:

- Canyon through the beautiful Nametoko Gorge carved by a tributary of the Shimanto River.
- Explore the vast highland landscape of the Shikoku Karst by e-bike where the river originates.
- Hike to the source of the Shimanto where it springs from the rocks.
- Take a local train over the river’s trestle bridges.
- Paddle down the wide lower reaches in Canadian canoes, and enjoy the varied produce of the river.

Location: Ehime and Kochi Prefectures, Shikoku Island

Main Activity: E-bike cycling and Canadian canoe

Difficulty: 3

Tour Dates: April to October

Pax: Minimum: 4 Maximum: 8

Price: JPY 287,000 per person with 8 people incl. tax
 JPY 330,000 per person with 6 people incl. tax
 JPY 389,000 per person with 4 people incl. tax

Additional
 JPY 50,000
 for a single
 room



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Route map



Day-by-Day Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Dogo, Matsuyama

You arrive in Dogo, Matsuyama, and check into your single room at the new Dogo Hakuro hotel. The hotel has its own hot spring bath, and is located close to the famous Dogo Onsen Honkan, Japan's oldest spa. After dinner, we have a short orientation covering what to expect during the adventure. Then you can have a relaxing soak at the hotel, or one of the local hot spring baths.

Dinner

Your guide, Rod Walters, will meet you at the hotel and take you to a local sake brewery to enjoy a sake tasting, followed by dinner featuring specialties of the Seto Inland Sea at Nikitatsu-an, the brewery restaurant.

Day 2: Canyon through the Nametoko Gorge

The local baths in Dogo are open early, so if you fancy a dip, the opportunity is there.

Breakfast

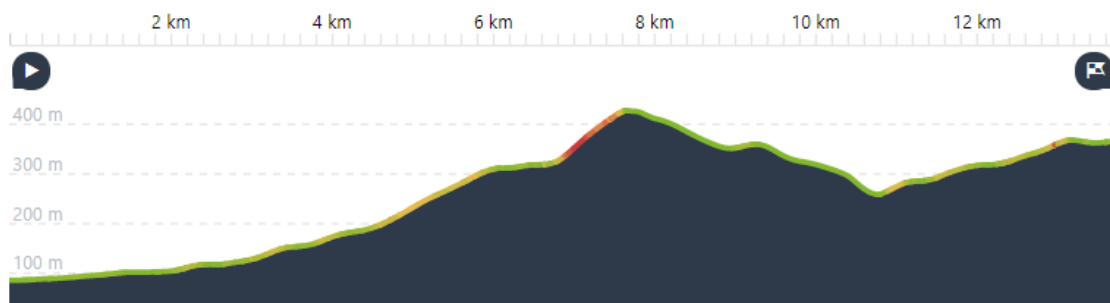
The buffet at Hakuro offers an extensive choice of soups, breads, and salads to suit both Japanese and western palates.

From Dogo, we drive to Matsuno where we meet our e-bikes for a scenic ride up to Nametoko Gorge. The Meguro River is one of the many tributaries of the vast Shimanto River system. In Ehime, it flows through dramatic Nametoko.



E-bike to Nametoko Gorge

Distance: 13.7 km | Time: 1:50 | Up: 470 m, Down: 190 m



▲ **Highest Point** 430 m

▼ **Lowest Point** 80 m

Lunch

We enjoy a packed lunch of hot venison sandwiches beside the Meguro River where it emerges from the gorge.

After lunch, we change into wetsuits and immerse ourselves for the first time in the river. We climb up through the gorge where sunlight streams down through the trees into calm pools and rushing white water. If we're lucky, we'll see some of the monkeys that inhabit the pristine forest. In the gorge are huge water slides and several spots where you can jump off boulders into deep pools.

Dinner

Our accommodation is the beautiful Riverside Lodge at the bottom of the gorge. Dinner is a hearty selection of pizza and pasta featuring local ingredients.

There's time to relax around a fire beside the river, and we may see wild deer coming down to drink.

Activity: E-bike cycling and canyoning

Difficulty: 3

Day 3: Cycle and hike to the headwater on the Karst

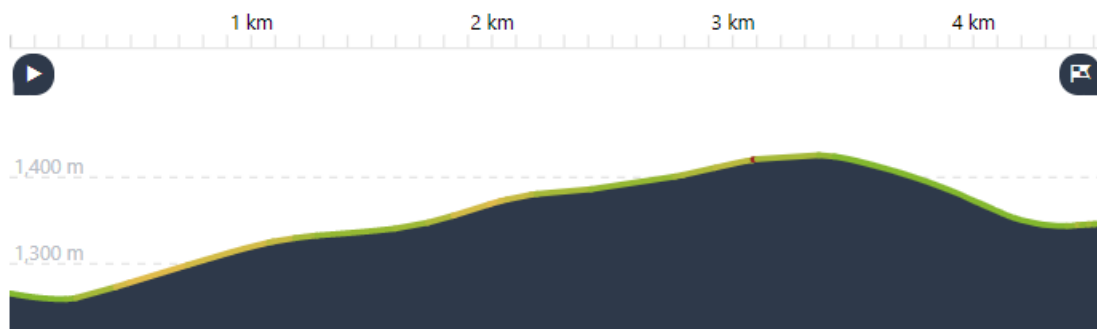
Breakfast

Breakfast at the lodge is a choice of soups, breads, and salads using locally sourced produce.

We depart from the lodge and drive to Shikoku Karst. This rolling highland area in the middle of Shikoku island is dotted with strangely shaped limestone outcrops. We ride our e-bikes through this unique landscape, enjoying uninterrupted views in all directions.

E-bike on the Shikoku Karst

Distance: 4.55 km | Time: 1:00 | Up: 170 m, Down: 90 m



▲ **Highest Point** 1,420 m

▼ **Lowest Point** 1,260 m

Lunch

We eat lunch at Tenguso, a lodge perched on the highest point of the Karst.

After lunch, we drive to a hiking trail that takes us to the headwater of the main stream of the Shimanto River, which emerges from under a stone monument.

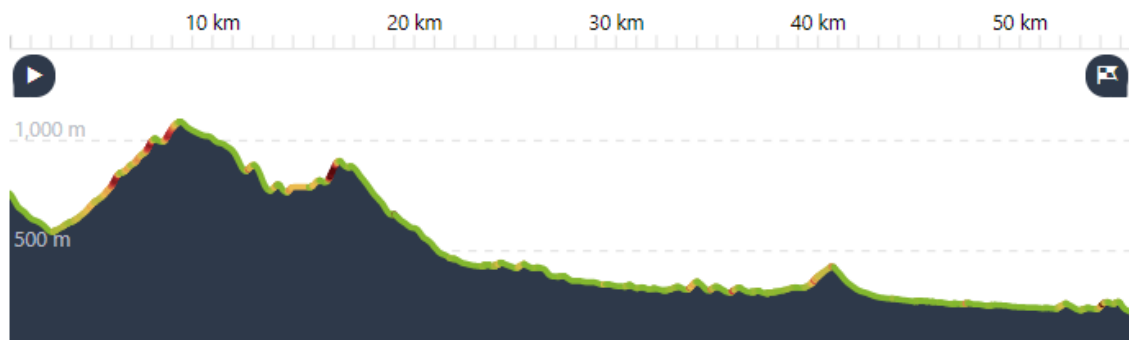
Hike to the source of the Shimanto River

Distance: 3 km | Time: 1:00 | Up: 180 m, Down: 180 m

Then we cycle down to Kubokawa train station to catch a local train. After descending from the Karst, the river is already a broad stream.

Cycle down from the source of the Shimanto River

Distance: 55.5 km | Time: 3:50 | Up: 1,180 m, Down: 1,640 m



The train runs beside the Shimanto, passing through tunnels and over trestle bridges, revealing scenes of riverside life.



Dinner

Our accommodation is Seira Shimanto, a riverside hotel with a rooftop deck where we cook a local autumn favourite, a delicious stew featuring yams.

At dinnertime, we're joined by Shinya Kawamura, known as 'Professor Shimanto' for his expert knowledge of the river. This is an opportunity to learn about the unique natural history and human culture of the river system. At night when the weather is clear, there's a fantastic view of the Milky Way, known in Japanese as 'the Heavenly River'. After dinner, the hot spring baths await.

Activity: E-bike cycling and hiking

Difficulty: 3

Day 4: Canadian canoe down the Shimanto River

Breakfast

Breakfast is a hearty Japanese spread with fish, miso soup, rice, and pickled vegetables.

We walk the short distance from the hotel to the river, where we have a short introduction to piloting a Canadian canoe on the river. Then we began our leisurely paddle down the middle reaches of the Shimanto, observing what we learned about the night before. We may want to jump off some bridges.

Lunch

We set up temporary camp beside the river to make a lunch of ramen or pho.



After continuing down the river by canoe, we then drive to Sada submersible bridge where a fisherman shows us how to set traps for shrimp and other edible river creatures.

Dinner

Kochi is known throughout Japan for the high quality of its izakaya food. We visit one of the best of these pubs for a demotic dinner with the excellent sake of Kochi.

Our accommodation is the New Royal Hotel Shimanto, a modern, Western-style hotel with an onsen bath.

Activity: Canadian canoeing

Difficulty: 3

Day 5: Enjoy the produce of the Shimanto River

Breakfast

A choice of Western and Japanese breakfast foods.

We drive to the Shimanto City Folk Museum, housed in a castle overlooking the river. Joined again by Professor Shimanto, we review our experiences. Then we drive to Sada bridge to recover the traps with our fisherman friend and see what we've caught.

Lunch

We take our catch to a riverside restaurant where the produce is served up with natural eel caught in the river.

After lunch, we take the train into Kochi city and check into the Western-style Orient Hotel Kochi.

Dinner

Hirome Market is the place where the people of Kochi gather to enjoy the delicious produce of the Shimanto River and Pacific Ocean. You can watch bonito being seared over flaming rice straw to produce Kochi's signature dish, katsuo no tataki. The locals are always happy to chat with visitors.

Activity: Fishing and eating

Difficulty: 1



Day 6: Onward travel

The morning finds you on the southern edge of Shikoku near the vast Pacific Ocean.

Breakfast

A choice of Western and Japanese breakfast foods.

Now it's time to say goodbye to your guide and travel to your next destination. 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.

Accommodation:

Day 1: Dogo Hakuro, hotel, single room with shower + toilet, onsen

Day 2: Riverside Lodge, double room, shared bath + toilets

Day 3: Hotel Seira Shimanto, twin room with shower + toilet, onsen

Day 4: New Royal Hotel Shimanto, single room with shower + toilet, onsen

Day 5: Oriental Hotel Kochi, single room with shower + toilet, onsen

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

What's included

- 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 canoeing equipment.

We provide & What to bring

We provide

For cycling:

- Rental e-bike (tell us your height in advance)
- Helmet (2 sizes)
- Spare parts and tools
- Saddle cover if desired
- First aid kit
- Support car

For canyoning:

- Wetsuit
- Life jacket
- Helmet
- Water shoes

For canoeing:

- Necessary equipment such as canoe and paddle
- Life jacket

What to bring

For cycling:

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

For canyoning:

- Swimsuit
- Towel

For canoeing:

- Clothing that can get wet
- Waterproof jacket and trousers
- Swimsuit
- Sports sandals or water shoes
- Towel
- 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

Guides

Rod Walters – Tour guide

Rod has spent 30 years in Japan, 20 of those in Shikoku. A regular outdoorsman, he loves cycling, hiking, and just about anything involving water. He's scared of heights but likes to jump off high places nonetheless.

Rod regularly travels all over Shikoku, consulting to local government on inbound tourism, researching and planning tours, and of course guiding visitors. His interests include history and culture, the natural sciences, and food. He's qualified as a Sake Sommelier and Educator by the Sake Sommelier Academy.

Having developed a particular affinity with the heroic maritime clans of the Inland Sea, he could be accused of a bit of regional nationalism.



Ochi Kenji – Cycling guide

Kenji owns a popular bicycle shop in Saijo and is certified as a guide by the Ehime Cycling Guide Association.

Based on the experience of attending cycling events for 35 years as a bike shop owner, he started developing guided cycling tours around the Ishizuchi mountain range. Although the slopes are many and steep, using e-bikes allows you to enjoy dynamic cycling in nature regardless of your physical fitness level.



Horikawa Ken – Canoe guide

Ken has always been fascinated by canoe travel – the sensation of the water through the hull of a tiny boat and the freedom to roam at will. He loves the scenery of the Shimanto River, which changes constantly with the seasons and the height of the water. Ken has years of experience leading and feeding groups. He's a highly accomplished outdoor cook. When not working on the Shimanto, he visits other regions to hone his watercraft and cooking skills.



We look forward to seeing you in 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 traveller (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

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info@shikokutours.com

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Partner Companies

B-Shop OCHI

Bicycle rental, support vehicles and staff. [Website](#)

Good River

Canyoning equipment and guides. [Website](#)

Shimanto Juku

Canadian canoes and staff. [Website](#)