

Exploring the Sacred Mountains of Japan

Spend an active ten days exploring some of the sacred mountains and pilgrimage routes of Japan. Our journey begins in Nagano with a visit to the Kumano Kodo in Wakayama. It ends on Shikoku island, home of the world's longest circular pilgrimage.



Nagano:

In Kisoji, life is closely connected with mountain worship and nature.

Wakayama:

The Kumano Kodo is a region of Japan comprised of branching pilgrimage routes that stretch into varying corners of the Kii-Peninsula.

Shikoku:

The Shikoku Pilgrimage originated on Mt. Ishizuchi, the highest mountain in western Japan.

In Kisoji, life is closely connected with mountain worship and nature. On the tour we experience what life was like 300 ago. We experience the self-meditation that Japanese have been doing and the philosophy of learning from everyday life. Wash yourself off in a waterfall and stand at the summit of a sacred mountain. We enjoy shojin ryori, vegan food conceived to purify the body and mind.

The Kumano Kodo is a region of Japan comprised of branching pilgrimage routes that

stretch into varying corners of the Kii Peninsula. The pilgrimage itself dates back more than 1000 years and its routes have been walked by all levels of society; from commoners and artisans, to aristocrats and retired emperors, standing as a symbol of inclusivity for all seeking worship. The trails that comprise the region sprawl over mountain ranges and weave through lush valley greenery, each dotted with quiet hamlets and bustling hot-spring towns famous for their rejuvenating waters.

Mt. Ishizuchi is the highest mountain in Shikoku and western Japan. Over a thousand years ago, shamans and holy men travelled to practice austerities on its dramatic peak. The temples they used on their journeys coalesced into today's Shikoku Pilgrimage route, which circles the island with Ishizuchi-san at its centre. On this leg of the journey, we hike one of the most beautiful sections of the pilgrimage route, visiting two of the eighty-eight Buddhist temples. We climb to the peak of Mt. Ishizuchi using the chains hanging from its cliffs, and cycle the spectacular road along its shoulder. Then we descend to the town of Saijo, where the waters of Mt. Ishizuchi bubble up in abundant fresh springs.

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Itinerary at a glance

- Day 1: Experience Japanese life in Kiso
- Day 2: Trek Mt. Ontake
- Day 3: Trek the Nakasendo road and travel to the Kii Peninsula
- Day 4: Hike from Chikatsuyu to Hongu Grand Shrine
- Day 5: Hike to Nachi Grand Shrine and waterfall
- Day 6: Fly from Osaka to Matsuyama
- Day 7: Hike the pilgrimage trail on Kuma Highland
- Day 8: Climb Mt. Ishizuchi
- Day 9: Cycle the UFO Line and hike a subsidiary peak

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Day 10: Discover the natural springs of Saijo

Location: Nagano

Wakayama

Ehime in Shikoku

Main Activity: Mountaineering, cycling, trekking

Difficulty: 3

Availability: April to November

Tour Duration: 9 Nights 10 Days

Pax: Minimum: 4 Maximum: 8

Price: JPY 522,800 per person with 8 people incl. tax

JPY 570,800 per person with 6 people incl. tax

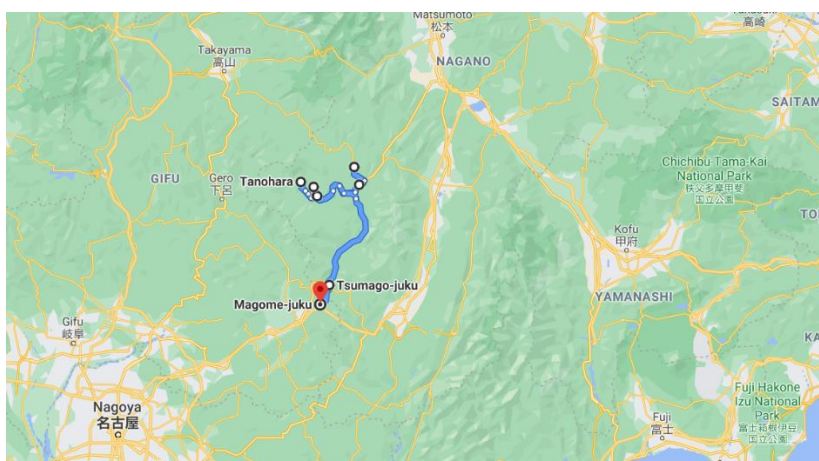
JPY 700,800 per person with 4 people incl. tax

Additional
JPY 100,000 for
a single room

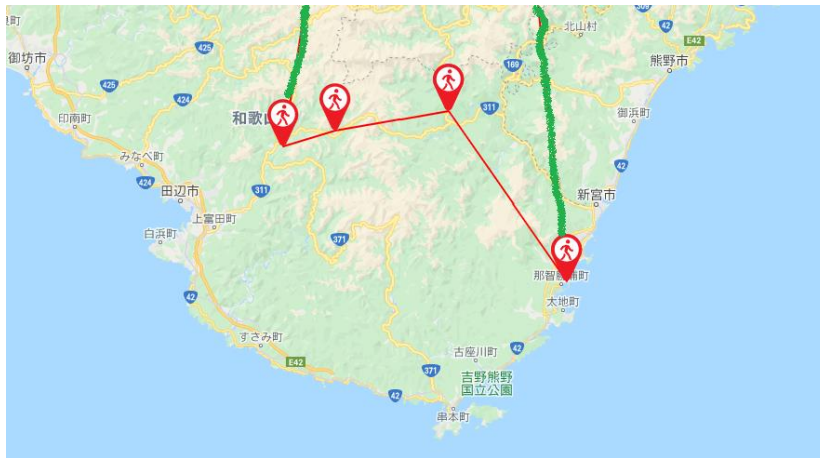
Highlights:

- Walk the Ontake Kodo in pilgrim's attire and visit the shrine
- Trek along the historical Nakasendo
- Village to village walking on enchanting sections of the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage trail
- Bathe in an outdoor hot-spring bath beside the Pacific Ocean
- Climb Mt. Ishizuchi, the highest mountain of western Japan, and cycle the spectacular UFO Line road over its shoulder.
- Hike the most beautiful section of the Shikoku Pilgrimage and discover the abundant springs of Saijo.

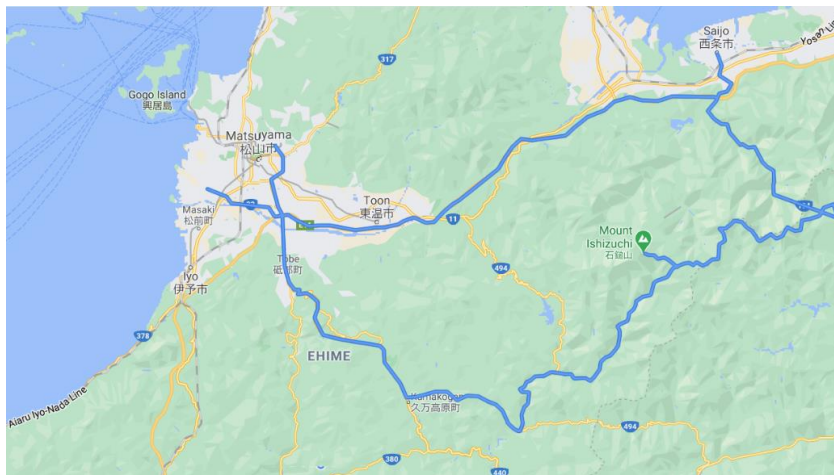
Nagano Route Map



Wakayama Route Map



Shikoku Route Map



Day-by-Day Itinerary

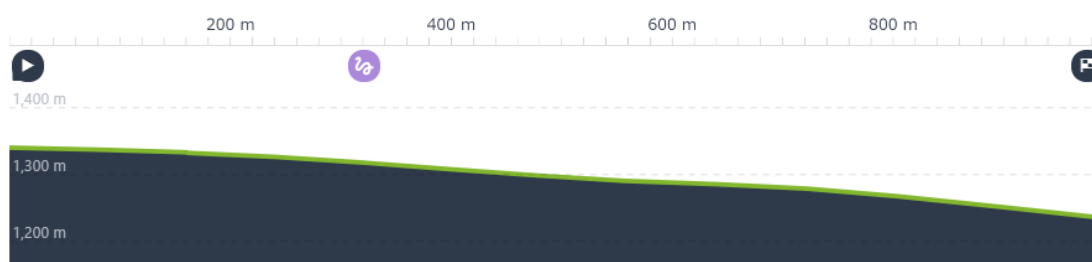
Day 1: Experience Japanese life in Kiso

We harvest seasonal vegetables like potatoes, corn, and red radish. Then we cook rice on a Kamado stove and eat it with original miso soup and Japanese pickles. After lunch, we drive to Junisho Gongen and trek to Kiyotaki falls, where we learn about waterfall meditation and try it. This was one of the rituals that ascetic monks performed to purify their bodies and minds before entering Mt. Ontake.

Trekking

Distance: 1 km | Time: 1:00 | Up: 280 m, Down 280 m

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▲ Highest Point 1,340 m

▼ Lowest Point 1,230 m

Included meals: Lunch of rice and vegetables cooked on a kamado stove

Dinner of shojin ryori at Kurumizawa Ryokan

Accommodation: Kurumizawa Ryokan



Day 2: Trek Mt. Ontake

After breakfast at the ryokan, we visit Ontake shrine, then take a local bus to Otaki and trek to Tanohara on the slopes of Mt. Ontake, with lunch on the trail. At the end of the trek, we take the bus back.

Trekking

Distance: 6 km | Time: 5:00 | Up: 756 m, Down 756 m



▲ Highest Point 800 m

▼ Lowest Point 430 m

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Included meals: Breakfast at the ryokan
Lunch of rice balls wrapped in bamboo
Dinner of shojin ryori at Kurumisawa Ryokan
Accommodation: Kurumizawa Ryokan

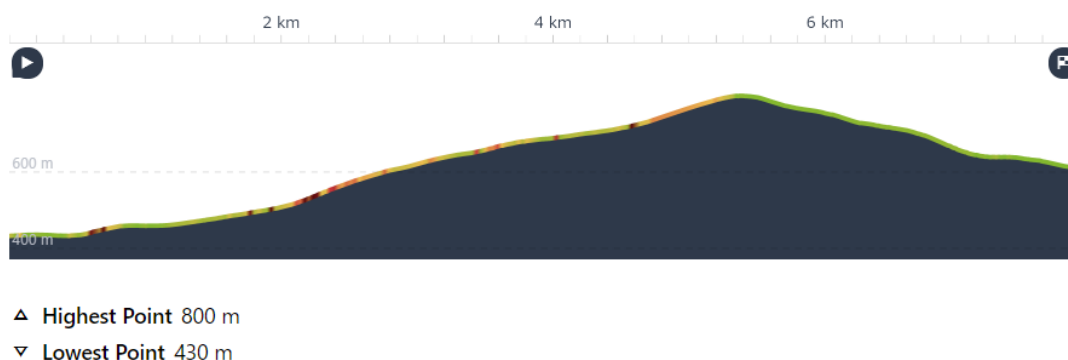


Day 3: Trek the Nakasendo road and travel to the Kii Peninsula

After checking out of the ryokan, we trek the Nakasendo road, stopping at shrines along the way and getting a sense of the ancient faith of the local people. We enjoy lunch around the hearth at Tateba tea house of the local food of Kiso – a lunch box featuring chestnuts in sticky rice. At Magome Juku, the last post town in Kisoji, you can feel that you're approaching urban civilization again. This leg of the tour ends at Nakatsugawa Station.

Trekking

Distance: 6 km | Time: 3:00 | Up: 250 m, Down 0 m



Included meals: Breakfast at the ryokan
Lunch of rice balls wrapped in bamboo
Dinner of shojin ryori at Kurumisawa Ryokan
Accommodation: Kurumizawa Ryokan



We transfer at Nagoya and Shin Osaka, and travel south along the coast by train to Tanabe at the beginning of the Nakahechi, part of the network of ancient pilgrimage trails known as the Kumano Kodo. Now a UNESCO World Heritage site, the route became popular from the 11th century as a place of pilgrimage from Kyoto by emperors. The Kii Peninsula, which extends south from Nara and Osaka, has long been considered sacred in Japan, the entrance to the land of Yomi, the mythical afterworld. It's also the site of the three sacred shrines of Kumano, the Kumano Sanzan.

Included meals: Breakfast at Kurumizawa Ryokan
Boxed lunch on the train
Dinner at Akizuno Garden
Accommodation: Akizuno Garden



Day 4: Hike Chikatsuyu to Hongu Grand Shrine

Today we hike two scenic sections of the Kumano Kodo trail, passing ridge-top villages and oji shrines. Nobles would rest at these sub-shrines to refresh themselves and compose poems. From Chikatsuyu we walk first to Kobiro, then take a local bus to Hoshinmon-oji. From Hoshinmon-oji we descend to Hongu Grand Shrine. The symbol of the shrine is the mythological three-legged raven, representing the Hongu, Nachi, and Hayatama shrines – the same motif used by the Japan Football Association. In mythology, the three-legged crow was sent to guide Emperor Jinmu on his journey from Kumano to the Yamato Plain.

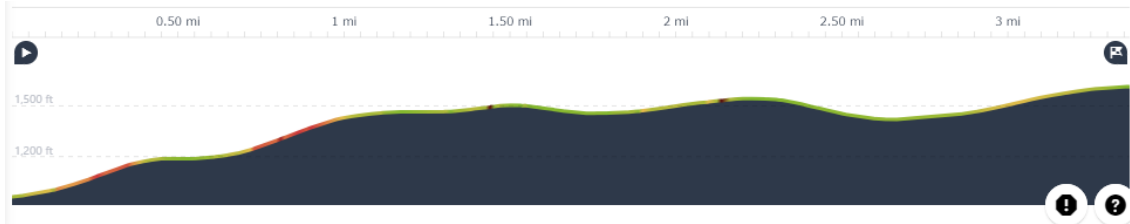
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After visiting the shrine, we transfer by local bus to Yunomine Onsen, one of the oldest hot springs in Japan. We stay overnight in a comfortable Ryokan with its own hot spring bath or rotenburo.

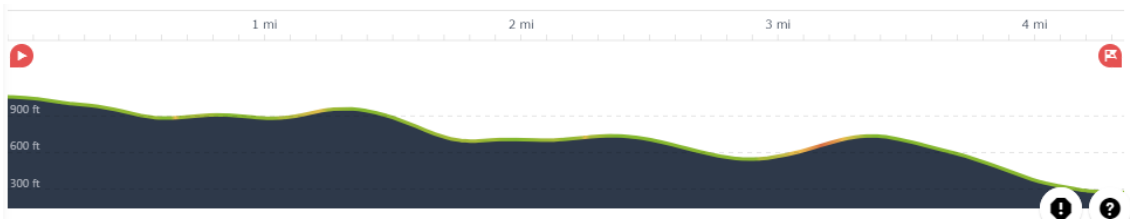
Hiking

Distance: 11.3 km | Time: 4:00 | Up: 350 m, Down 3600 m

From Chikatsuyu to Kobiro

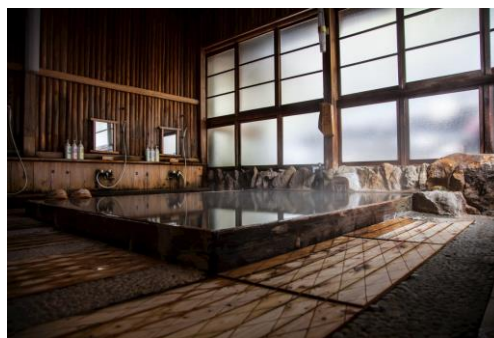


From Hosshinmon to Kumano Hongu Shrine



Included meals: Breakfast buffet at Akizuno Garden
Boxed lunch on the trail
Dinner at Yunomine so

Accommodation: Yunomine so



Day 5: Hike to Nachi Grand Shrine and waterfall

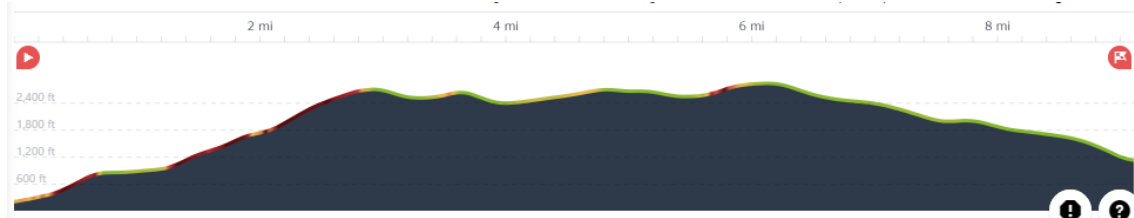
We transfer by local bus to Koguchi and hike the final section of the trail over the Ogumotori-goe Pass, to glimpse the Pacific Ocean and then descend to Nachi waterfall and Nachi Taisha (Grand Shrine), one of the three Grand Shrines of Kumano.

From there we take a short bus ride to the fishing port of Katsuura and to our hotel.

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Hiking

Distance: 14.5 km | Time: 6:00 | Up: 980 m, Down 920 m



Included meals: Breakfast buffet at Yunomine so
Boxed lunch on the trail
Dinner at Hotel Urashima

Accommodation: Hotel Urashima



Day 6: Fly from Osaka to Matsuyama

Fly from Osaka Itami to Matsuyama, and stay in Dogo, the oldest hot spring in continuous use in Japan.

Included meals: Breakfast at your Hotel Urashima
Buy your own lunch
Dinner at a local izakaya

Accommodation: Dogo Hakuro

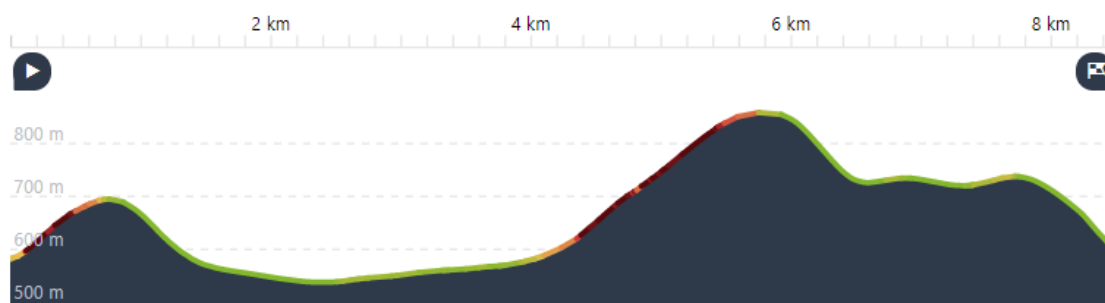


Day 7: Hike the pilgrimage trail on Kuma Highland

Kukai was a Buddhist holy man who was born in Shikoku. He undertook ascetic training on Mt. Ishizuchi and went to study Buddhism in China. When he returned to Japan, he founded the esoteric Shingon sect and worked to establish the Shikoku Pilgrimage. Today, we drive from Dogo to walk in his footsteps on the beautiful trail between Daiho-ji and Iwaya-ji, temples 44 and 45 on the pilgrimage. These temples stand amid the deep forest and weird rock formations of the Kuma Highland.

Hiking

Distance: 9 km | Time: 5:00 | Up: 460 m, Down 450 m



▲ **Highest Point** 860 m

▼ **Lowest Point** 540 m

Included meals: Breakfast buffet at Dogo Hakuro
Boxed lunch on the trail
Dinner at Nikitatsu-an with local sake

Accommodation: Dogo Hakuro

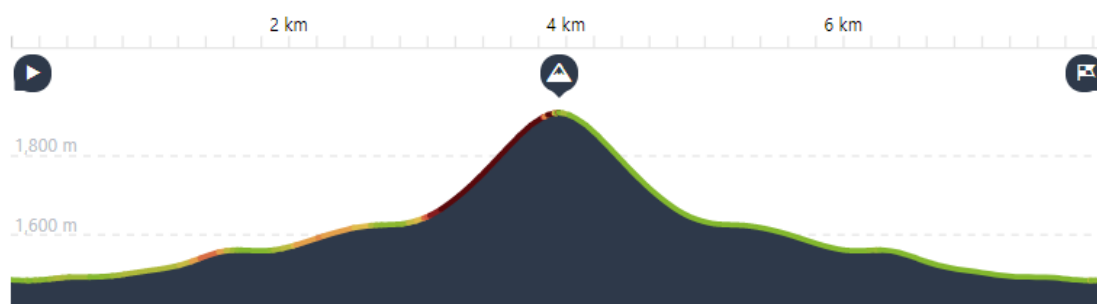


Day 8: Climb Mt. Ishizuchi

We drive from Dogo Hakuro to the start of the trail at Tsuchigoya where we pray for a safe climb at the Shinto shrine and receive a blessing from the priest. Mt. Ishizuchi itself is regarded as deity, and it's also been a place for spiritual training for millennia. The route scales vertical cliffs hung with iron chains, although you can avoid these exciting sections if you wish. The sharp peak of the mountain is the tilted-up edge of an ancient caldera, and from its tip, the views extend all over Shikoku. We stay at Sanso Shirasa, newly built accommodation on the mountainside. If the night skies are clear, expect to see a lot of stars.

Mt. Ishizuchi Mountaineering

Distance: 8 km | Time: 3:00 | Up: 430 m, Down 430 m

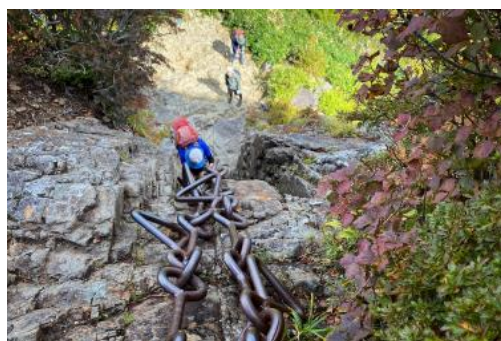


▲ **Highest Point** 1,910 m

▼ **Lowest Point** 1,480 m

Included meals: Breakfast buffet at Dogo Hakuro
Boxed lunch on the trail
Dinner at Sanso Shirasa

Accommodation: Sanso Shirasa

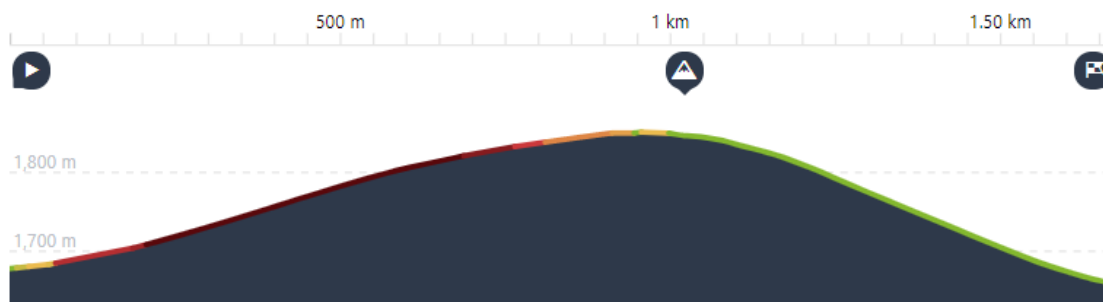


Day 9: Cycle the UFO Line and hike a subsidiary peak

After breakfast, we set off on e-bikes to ride the UFO Line road that winds along the shoulder of Mt. Ishizuchi offering dramatic views over Shikoku. There are several peaks along the route, and we hike two of them.

Mt. Kamegamori Hike

Distance: 1.7 km | Time: 1:00 | Up: 170 m, Down 190 m

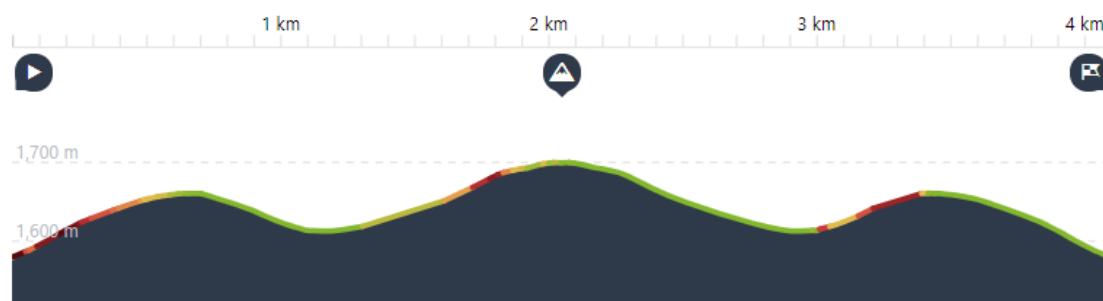


▲ **Highest Point** 1,850 m

▼ **Lowest Point** 1,660 m

Mt. Iyo Fuji Hike

Distance: 4.10 km | Time: 1:30 | Up: 220 m, Down 220 m



▲ **Highest Point** 1,700 m

▼ **Lowest Point** 1,580 m

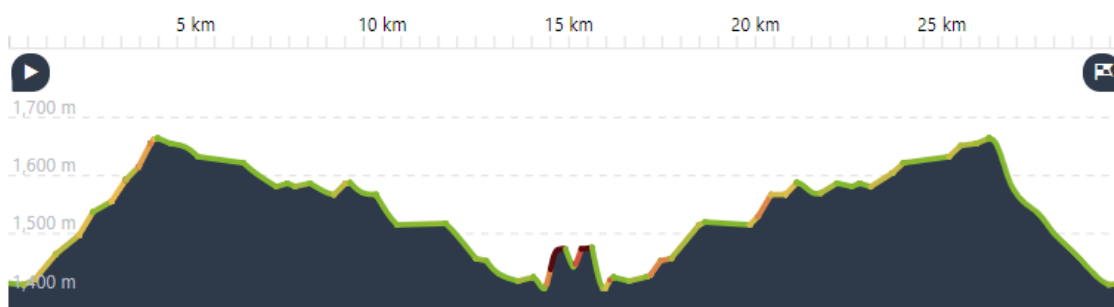
Included meals: Breakfast at Sanso Shirasa
Boxed lunch on the trail
Dinner at Sanso Shirasa

Accommodation: Sanso Shirasa



UFO Line E-biking

Distance: 30 km | Time: 1:45 | Up: 730 m, Down 730 m



▲ **Highest Point** 1,660 m

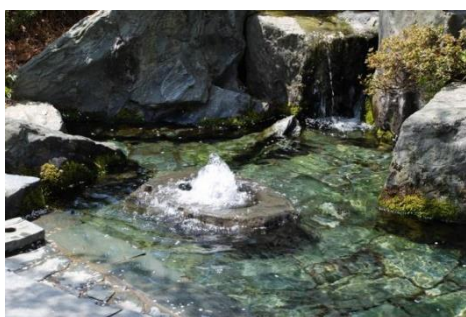
▼ **Lowest Point** 1,400 m

Day 10: Discover the natural springs of Saijo and onward travel

After breakfast, we drive down to the city of Saijo which lies between Mt. Ishizuchi and the Seto Inland Sea. Meltwater and rainfall on the mountain seeps down over centuries and rise in springs all over city. The water is so abundant that tap water is free, and Saijo is known for its sake and beer breweries that rely on this pure, high-quality water. We ride e-bikes around Saijo visiting the various springs, which emerge in some surprising places. After lunch of soba noodles, we drive to Matsuyama Airport where the trip ends.

E-bike around Saijo

Distance: 10 km | Time: 3:00 | Up: 0 m, Down 0 m



Included meals: Breakfast at Sanso Shirasa
Soba lunch

Accommodation

Days 1 – 2: Kurumizawa Ryokan, tatami mat room, shared bath, shower + toilet

Day 3: Akizuno Garden, twin room with shower + toilet

Day 4: Yunomine-so, twin Japanese room with shower + toilet, onsen

Day 5: Hotel Urashima, twin Japanese room with shower + toilet, onsen

Days 6 – 7: Dogo Hakuro, twin room with shower + toilet, onsen

Days 8 – 9: Sanso Shirasa, shared rooms with bunk beds, shower + toilet

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 and meals.
- All activity equipment.
- Airfare from Osaka-Itami to Matsuyama

We provide & what to bring

We provide

For cycling:

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

What to bring

For hiking and mountaineering:

- Hiking boots
- Rainwear
- Hiking poles
- Water bottle
- Sunscreen, sunglasses
- Knapsack or rucksack
- Small flashlight

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

Nice to have:

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

About us

High Mount Associe

High Mount Associe Inc. is proud to offer tours that respond flexibility to individual requirements and give visitors a taste of traditional hospitality. Since 1980, we've been in the hotel business and from the Nagano Olympics of 1998, we've been welcoming visitors from all over the world, providing the best experience available. We're confident of our prompt and sincere response, and we look forward to working with you.

yo98-mail@highmount.com

Oku Japan

Oku Japan operates guided, self-guided and custom tours around Japan. Our main office is in Kyoto, and some of our sales staff are based in the UK. Our guides are professional, trained guides who are bilingual Japanese and English (as well as some who speak German or French) and have a deep knowledge of and passion for Japan's people, culture, and history.

OkuJapan.com

Shikoku Tours

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

Nagano

Daniel Moore

Daniel was born in Atlanta but moved to Nagano at 7 months old when his father entered Shinshu University's graduate school program. Daniel lived in Tokyo and Nagano until 16 years old, going to public Japanese school. After completing high school and university in the United States and living briefly in Kenya, Daniel returned to Japan where he began working as a walking, snowshoeing and outdoor guide for Walk Japan. Since 2018, Daniel has worked as a guide for various tour companies including Oku Japan, running his company pickleball trips, teaching pickleball in Japan and playing professionally. He lives near Shiga Kogen in Nagano, where he runs a guest house, hiking and snowboarding as much as he can. Daniel is a hiking and onsen enthusiast and is looking forward to returning to Hokkaido, where he has guided several times in the past.



Shikoku

Matsumoto Masaru – Mountain guide

Masaru grew up in Saijo in the shadow of Mt. Ishizuchi. After studying business in Ehime, he travelled widely, visiting some of the iconic mountain regions of the world, including Machu Picchu in Peru. On his return to his home region, he's worked as a guide on his local mountain. A keen sportsman and outdoorsman, he cycles and runs marathons.



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.

- 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. In case of cancellation, 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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Ishizuchi Journey

A DMO for the Ehime and Kochi areas of Mt. Ishizuchi. [Website](#)