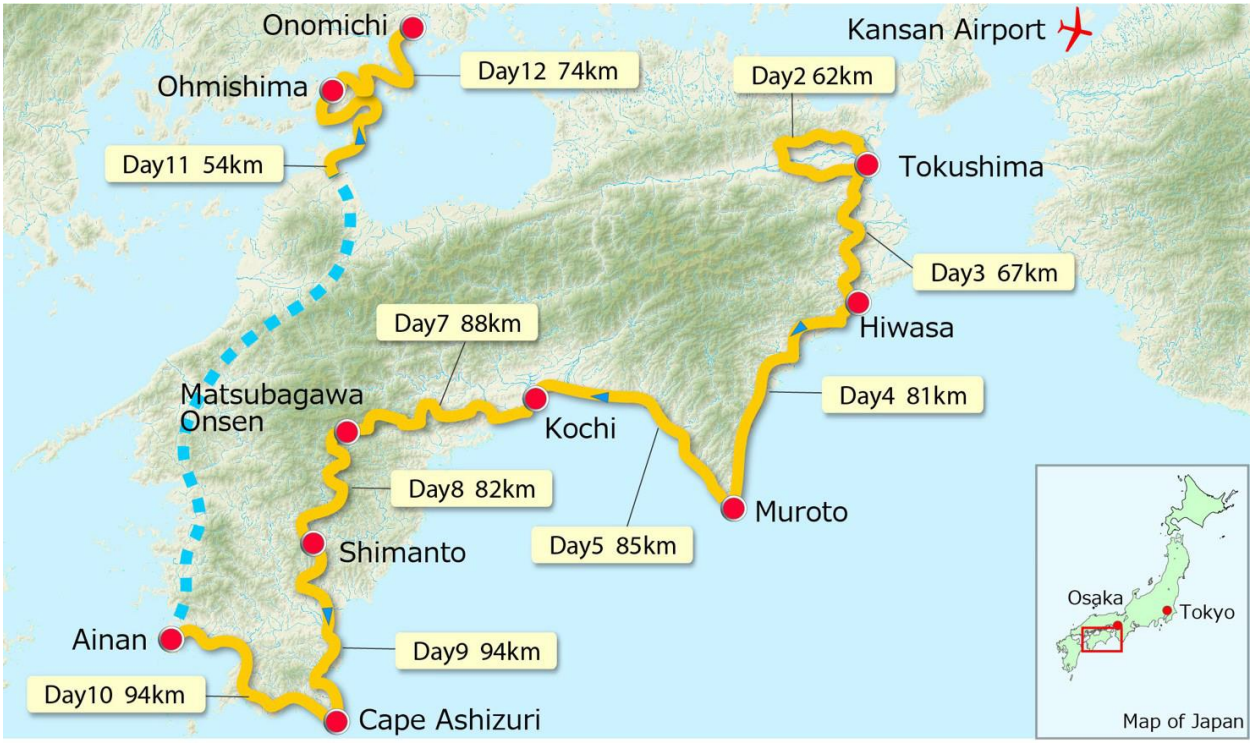
HeartCycle Bicycle Touring Club
Shikoku Pilgrimage, Japan – #3

Dates:	Orientation meeting Sunday, October 17, 2027. Riding Monday, October 18 –Thursday, October 28, with departure on Friday, October 29 (lodging last ride day included as well as breakfast the next morning).
Coordinator:	Janet Slate
Rating:	Intermediate heartcycle.org/tour-ratings
Distance/gain:	Approximately 485 miles with up to 19,300 feet of elevation gain; 10 days of riding and 1 rest day
Riders:	14 (including tour coordinator)
Price:	$4,500 (double occupancy). $1,100 at registration. Balance due by July 19, 2027. Single supplement $4,900 (only three single supplements available). Non-motorized bicycle included; e-bike +$200.
Cancellation:	Standard cancellation policy

Travel insurance is strongly recommended.



OVERVIEW

Cycle Shikoku Island, the smallest of Japan's major islands, a hidden gem, where you'll visit ancient temples and ride through green landscapes and terraced gardens. The island is encircled by a 1,200-km, Buddhist pilgrimage route (henro) honoring the 9th century monk, Kukai. 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 (and 1 rest day), 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 Tokushima, which is easily accessed from Kansai airport (KIX) or Osaka via a scenic bus ride. Or take a domestic flight directly to Tokushima from Tokyo.

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. All accommodations have Wi-Fi.

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—where we'll go beyond a touristic experience of Japan.

ITINERARY

Day 1: Sunday, October 17, 2027

Meet the group at our hotel near Tokushima Station at 5:00 PM, which is easily reached by direct highway bus from Osaka, Kyoto, and Kansai International Airport, or by a domestic flight from Tokyo.

If you arrive early, we recommend visiting Tokushima Castle Park, strolling along the Shinmachi River, or experiencing the famous Awa Odori Kaikan. In the evening, we will have a tour briefing followed by a welcome dinner before beginning our cycling journey around Shikoku.

Our 3-star hotel for the first two nights has private baths, an onsen hot spa, and laundry. (See table on final page for more information about accommodations on the tour.)

Day 2: Monday, October 18

Around Tokushima

62 km (38.5 mi) and 300 m (980 ft) of elevation gain

Today's ride is a gentle introduction to cycling in Shikoku, following quiet country roads and peaceful old roads. Visit Ryozenji Temple, the first temple of the famous 88 Temple Pilgrimage, and discover traditional Aizome (indigo dyeing) at Waza no Yakata. Enjoy a delicious lunch at a local restaurant featuring regional cuisine before continuing through the beautiful rural scenery of Tokushima. This relaxed ride offers the perfect beginning to your Shikoku cycling adventure.

Day 3: Tuesday, October 19

Tokushima to Hiwasa

67 km (41.6 mi) and 403 m (1300 ft) of elevation gain

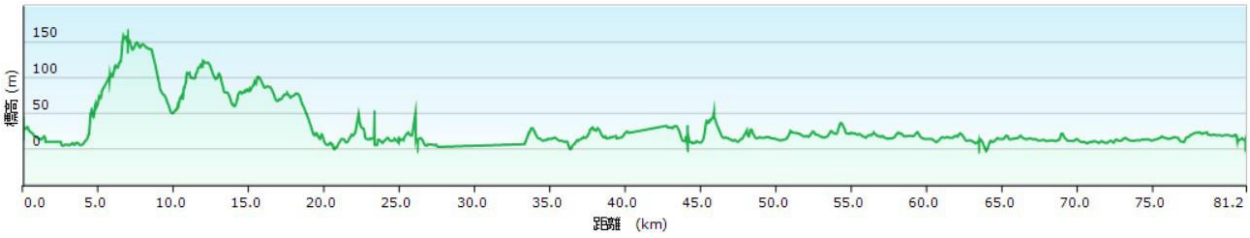
The serene ride along the tranquil Naka River leads us through inland Tokushima and the Anan coastal area, south of Tokushima. The clean seawater—far from cities and factories—attracts abundant marine life where rare sea turtles visit the coast to lay their eggs every summer. We stop at Hiwasa for lunch and visit Yakuou-ji, the 23rd of the 88 temples, where many pilgrims come to pray for protection from evil.

Day 4: Wednesday, October 20

Hiwasa to Muroto

81 km (50.3 mi) and 614 m (2,000 ft) of elevation gain

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. Shared baths in our 3-star ryokan

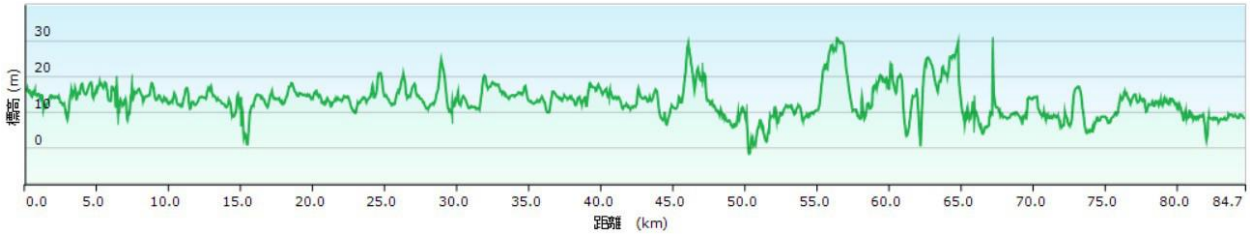


Day 5: Thursday, October 21

Muroto to Kochi

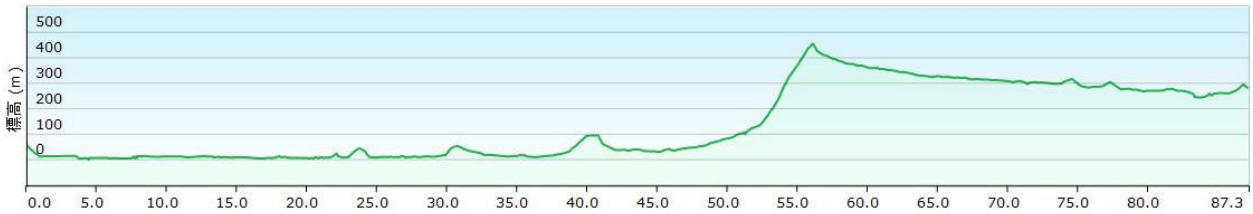
85 km (52.8 mi) and 296 m (970 ft) of elevation gain

On our ride, we come to Shinshouji, the 25th temple of the Shikoku 88, and the old town of Kiragawa, with typhoon-proof architecture, stonewalls, and tiled roofs. The last 15 km (9 miles) to Kochi, we will be riding an old railroad path now designated for cycling.



Day 6: Friday, October 22
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, October 23
Kochi to Matsubagawa Onsen
88 km (54.7 mi) and 698 m (2,290 ft) of elevation gain
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 450-m (1500-foot) mountain pass. After conquering the pass, we will enjoy a gradual descent to our accommodation with an onsen hot spa by the river in Matsubagawa village.

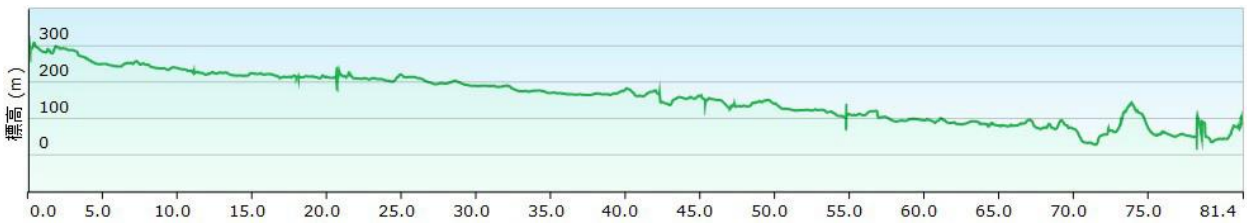


Day 8: Sunday, October 24

Matsubagawa Onsen to Shimanto River

82 km (51 mi) and 445 m (1,460 ft) of elevation gain

After a short morning ride, we visit the 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.

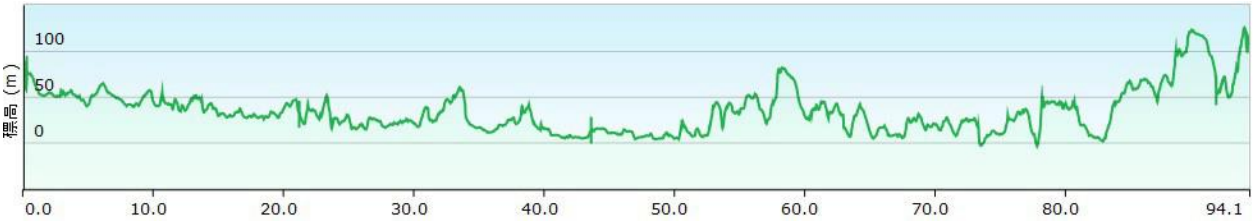


Day 9: Monday, October 25

Shimanto River to Cape Ashizuri

94 km (58.4 mi) and 848 m (2,780 ft) of elevation gain

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, October 26

Cape Ashizuri to Ainan

94 km (58.4 mi) and 938 m (3,080 ft) of elevation gain

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 bordered with neatly built stonewalls and locally fished fresh bonito.

Day 11: Wednesday, October 27

Ainan to Omishima

54 km (33.5 mi) and 539 m (1,770 ft) of elevation gain. 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 on the third island, Omishima, in the heart of Seto Inland Sea.

Day 12: Thursday, October 28

Omishima to Onomichi

74 km (46 mi) and 818 m (2680 ft) of elevation gain

Today, we cycle across three more islands and finally come to 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 ride, admiring the construction of bridges connecting the islands and the purpose-built cycling roads.

Day 13: Friday, October 29

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 accommodation:

We choose ryokans (traditional Japanese inns) as much as possible to support local tourism and the economy. Ryokans are often run by family, and in many cases, they have onsen (natural hot springs) onsite.

- 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—all with Wi-Fi
- 12 breakfasts and 10 evening meals
- Rental bike (cross bike or road bike) **E-bike is available for extra $200**
- 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 cycle computers. Front bag for hybrid bike (8-liter volume). Seat post bag for road bike (6-liter volume).
- All transport detailed in the above itinerary
- Snacks and refreshments
- English speaking guide(s)
- Spare parts and mechanic services
- Support vehicle with seats and bike rack

Does not include lunches, which cost ~1000-1500 yen for each lunch.

ITINERARY (13 days/12 nights)				
Day 1	Meeting at Tokushima	Hotel	TSO	D
Day 2	Cycle 60km around Tokushima (Total ascent 400m)	Hotel	TSO	B
Day 3	Cycle 67km Tokushima to Hiwasa (t.a. 403m)	Guest House	C	B,D
Day 4	Cycle 81km Hiwasa to Muroto (t.a. 614m)	Ryokan	C	B,D
Day 5	Cycle 85km Muroto to Kochi (t.a. 296m)	Hotel	TSO	B,D
Day 6	Rest day in Kochi	Hotel	TSO	B
Day 7	Cycle 88km Kochi to Matsubagawa Onsen (t.a. 698m)	Ryokan	TSO	B,D
Day 8	Cycle 82km Matsubagawa to Shimanto (t.a. 445m)	Hotel	TSO	B,D
Day 9	Cycle 94km Shimanto to Cape Ashizuri (t.a. 848m)	Hotel	TSO	B,D
Day 10	Cycle 94km Cape Ashizuri to Ainan (t.a. 938m)	Hotel	TS	B,D
Day 11	Cycle 54km Ainan to Omishima (t.a. 539m)	Ryokan	TSO	B,D
Day 12	Cycle 74km Omishima to Onomichi (t.a. 818m)	Hotel	TS	B,D
Day 13	Departure after breakfast			B

T – toilet in each room S – shower in each room O – onsen spa C – Communal bathroom and toilet

B – breakfast D – dinner Ryokan – traditional Japanese inn

For more information contact:

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