



Japan Shikoku Pilgrimage & Inland Sea Islands Hiking

88 Temple Trail, Naoshima Art & Miyajima Floating Torii

Thank you for checking out our adventures and for downloading this itinerary. Please note that this itinerary and accommodations may be subject to change depending on the specific departure date. Be sure to check with us before scheduling any flights.

We love talking travel!
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or call **800-974-0300**



Feel the difference

with **Mountain Travel Sobek**

Unrivalled Expertise

MT Sobek started it all! Since our first Everest Base Camp trek in 1969, we've been leading award-winning adventures and building authentic connections in far-flung locations around the world. We were named Best Adventure Travel Company by Newsweek Readers' Choice Awards.

Unique Trip Design

Our adventures are perfectly paced, with incredible attention to detail — the right mix of fun, learning, and challenge that guarantees lifelong memories. Plan nothing, enjoy everything. We take care of all of the logistics so that you can have more time to do what's most important: relax, take in the experience, and enjoy!

Small Groups

We keep our groups intentionally small — usually fewer than 10 people. This allows you a more intimate experience with the people and wildlife you encounter. With a smaller group size, we can take advantage of many unexpected invitations and opportunities that would be impossible with larger groups.





Leading the Way

World-Class Local Guides

Our knowledgeable and passionate expert guides effortlessly create an immersive local experience for you. They are trained to the highest professional standards and are at the heart of everything we do. They make it possible to meet the challenges of adventure travel, and help create lasting memories and lifelong friendships... we can confidently say our guides are the best in the business.





Why take this trip with us?

REASON 1

MT Sobek has been operating award-winning adventures in Asia since 1969, crafting a wide choice of exciting hiking and cultural journeys.

REASON 2

This exclusive MT Sobek Shikoku Pilgrimage adventure includes explorations into lush Iya Valley and culturally rich Inland Sea islands.

REASON 3

Our expert local guides provide an immersive experience, deepening your understanding of Japanese history, traditions, and current culture.

At A Glance

ACTIVITIES

Hiking on easy to moderately challenging mountain trails with many stone and log steps. Enjoy ferry rides, hot spring soaks, and easy cultural walking tours between hikes.



LODGING

Enjoy stays in traditional ryokans (inns) - many with onsen (hot springs) - and comfortable hotels with modern amenities.



CLIMATE

Spring and fall temperatures range from 50F to the high 70s F, and there is a fair chance of rain.



KNOW BEFORE YOU BOOK

Meals

Meals are usually Japanese cuisine, including many breakfasts, and seating is often on cushions on the floor. We're not able to arrange 100% fish-free or 100% gluten-free meals.

Transportation

Most of your transportation will be by private van, with transportation between islands by shared public ferry. In Kyoto you will get to experience a slice of daily life, riding public transportation with your guides.

Accommodation

6 nights are at traditional Japanese inns known as ryokans. All have ensuite private bathrooms, and just 2 nights of the trip involve futon beds. At hotels, most rooms have two beds rather than one double bed. Solo travelers who have a single room at hotels may be asked to share a room with a same-gender traveler at the ryokans.



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Shikoku, the smallest of Japan's main islands, is also its least visited. Its rugged mountains and secluded river valleys hold a sacred route that encircles the enchanting island. On this journey, you will hike centuries-old forest paths and rural byways on the 88-temple Shikoku pilgrimage. Walking alongside white-robed pilgrims in their conical hats, discover 12 of the route's stunning Buddhist temples. Venture into the lush heart of the island to explore Iya Valley's thatched Edo-period houses, magical vine bridges, and traditional hot spring baths. Then island-hop through the Inland Sea, with time spent on Naoshima for marvelous contemporary art and on Miyajima to witness the vermilion "floating" torii.

12 Days

Start: Kyoto, Japan

End: Osaka, Japan

Departing: September, October

Activities: Hiking & Trekking, Cultural Discovery

Lodging: Comfortable Hotels, Rustic Lodging

Group Size: 5-12 Guests

ACTIVITY:



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If you want adventure with well informed guides and an incredibly helpful staff, look no further. MT Sobek lives up to its reputation as the best in the adventure travel market. I certainly enjoyed the experience. You will not be disappointed.

- Anthony G.

Check mtsobek.com for date-specific pricing.

The Itinerary

DAY 01

Arrive in Kyoto

Welcome to Japan! Meet the group and your guides at your hotel in Kyoto. This evening, stroll the winding cobbled streets of Gion, a district known for its historic charm and enigmatic geisha culture. Marvel at traditional wooden machiya architecture, crafted in minimalist style with latticed windows and sliding doors. Settle in for a sumptuous welcome dinner joined by a maiko (apprentice geisha).

ACCOMMODATION: Nohga Kiyomizu

MEALS: Dinner

DAY 02

Explore Kyoto's Mystical Temples & Ancient Paths

Immerse yourself in daily life with a typical ride on public transportation—along with your guides, of course—to Nanzen-ji, a serene Zen temple in the Higashiyama foothills. Pause to cross through the towering gate to its beautiful structures and gardens, then follow the Philosopher's Path, a contemplative ramble along a peaceful cherry tree-lined canal through a quiet Kyoto neighborhood. Time permitting, visit Heian Jingu, a Shinto shrine with a blazing red torii gate. This afternoon, visit To-Ji, a Buddhist temple and UNESCO World Heritage Site. This temple was founded by Kukai (Kobo Daishi)—the monk who established the Shikoku Pilgrimage—and continues to be the headquarters of the Shingon sect of Buddhism. While there, he built the landmark five-story wooden pagoda, the tallest in Kyoto and a symbol of the city. Enjoy dinner at a local restaurant and discuss your plans for the journey to Shikoku Island.

ACCOMMODATION: Nohga Kiyomizu

MEALS: Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

TRANSPORTATION: Public train, bus, and subway transfers within Kyoto

ACTIVITY: 8 hours/5-6 miles city walking with negligible elevation gain or loss

DAY 03

Travel to Shikoku & Step onto the 88 Temple Trail

Depart Kyoto for the coast, then cross a series of bridges across Awaji Island and the bay to Tokushima, the traditional starting point of the Shikoku Henro (pilgrimage). The 750-mile route is centered around the monk Kukai (Kobo Dashi), who was born on the island and later founded the Shingon sect of Buddhism. Walk in the afternoon light, following rural roads linking the first three temples on the route—Ryozen-ji, Gokuraku-ji, and Konsen-ji. Each has its own charms, from weathered pagodas and moss-covered stone paths to lantern-lit halls rich with incense and history. You will walk alongside pilgrims beginning their months-long journey around the island, dressed in white, shaded by conical hats, and carrying distinctive wooden staffs. Mark the start of your hiking adventure with a staff of your own, available at Ryozen-ji, your first stop on the legendary trail.

ACCOMMODATION: Awa Kanko Hotel Tokushima

MEALS: Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

TRANSPORTATION: 3-hour private van transfer

ACTIVITY: 2 hours/4 miles walking (negligible ascent and descent)



Visit Fujii-dera Temple & Climb the Path to Shosan-ji Temple

After a morning visit to temple 11, Fujii-dera (Wisteria Temple), a collection of atmospheric weathered-wood structures tucked at the base of Mount Shosan-ji, head into the mountains by private van to rejoin the route at Ryusui-an Temple. Hike one of the more challenging sections of the trail, which are known as henro korogashi (pilgrim tumbler). The path winds up stone and log steps through a magical landscape of ferns, moss, and forest. Crest two hills and pass through stands of bamboo and camelias with stone pilgrimage guardians cheering you on to temple 12. Ascend to stunning Shosan-ji (Burning Mountain Temple), perched in a lush grove of cedars. Depending on the weather, the temple may be beautifully enveloped in clouds, or if the sun is out, look outward for a breathtaking view over the valley.

ACCOMMODATION: Hotel Shikinosato Kamiyama Onsen

MEALS: Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

TRANSPORTATION: 1-hour private van transfer

ACTIVITY: 5-6 hours/8 miles hiking with 2,215' elevation gain and 3,315' elevation loss



Hike from Kakurin-ji to Tairyu-ji & Journey to the Iya Valley

Start the day at temple 20, Kakurin-ji (Crane Forest Temple), immersed in ancient cedar, hinoki, and pine trees. Walk through the mountaintop temple's impressive gate to gaze up a rare three-storied pagoda before starting your hike for the day, another challenging henro korogashi. Walk along narrow paved paths and rock staircases through endless shades of green, descending to curving Naka River. Now it's time to climb! Trace a burbling brook through towering groves, climbing the last section on log steps. At temple 21, Tairyu-ji (Great Dragon Temple), the scent of burning incense wafts below intricately carved woodwork. Ride down the mountain by cable car, gliding over the cedar canopy with views out to the sea. Meet your waiting vehicle and travel into remote Iya Valley, soaking in outdoor hot spring baths at your onsen hotel this evening.

ACCOMMODATION: Hotel Hikyonoyu

MEALS: Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

TRANSPORTATION: 3-hours private van transfer

ACTIVITY: 3 hours/5 miles hiking with 1,510' elevation gain and 1,540' elevation loss



Marvel at Ancient Vine Bridges & Explore Traditional Villages in Iya Valley

This morning, set off into the mountains and gorges of Iya, a place where little has changed over the centuries. Walk across two massive vine bridges (kazurabashi) spanning the river valley, said to have been built by exiled samurai in the 12th century. Peer down at the rushing river below and stunning valley on either side, as the bridge gently sways, the knotted vines securely lashed to hardwood beams—a thrilling look into the region's past. Visit one of the oldest farmhouses in the valley, its thick thatched roof and dark pine floors have endured for 300 years, preserving the tradition of rural Japanese architecture through the Chiiori Trust. Explore the small village of Ochiai, guided by members of this traditional community. This evening, relax in the thermal waters at your hotel and complete your day of Japanese traditions with a delicious dinner of local dishes.

ACCOMMODATION: Hotel Hikyonoyu

MEALS: Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

TRANSPORTATION: 2-hour private van transfer

ACTIVITY: 4 hours/4 miles walking with 500' elevation gain & 500' elevation loss



Walk a Three-Temple Trail into the Goshikidai Mountains

Start the day with a drive through the countryside to reconnect with the pilgrimage trail. Begin at magnificent temple 80, Kokubun-ji. Have a look at its legendary bell, then follow a sloping path through dense forest and ascend log stairs to the peak of Mount Shiromine. Discover beautiful architecture at temple 81, Shiromine-ji (White Peak Temple), surrounded by maple trees. Descend back into the forest, walking on rock and dirt trails to the lantern-filled halls of temple 82, Negoro-ji (Fragrant Root Temple), on the slopes of Mount Aomine. Drive to Kotohira, a delightful onsen town known for its large Shinto shrine dedicated to sailors and seafaring, Kōmpira-san. Settle into your inn and soothe any sore muscles at the onsen baths.

ACCOMMODATION: Onyado Shikishimakan

MEALS: Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

TRANSPORTATION: 3-hour private van transfer

ACTIVITY: 5 hours/8.4 miles hiking with 2,150' elevation gain and 1,100' elevation loss



Follow the Path Between the Pilgrimage's Final Two Temples

After breakfast, begin your final day of walking on the Shikoku Pilgrimage. Begin with a visit to temple 87, Nagao-ji (Long Tail Temple), tucked into a suburban neighborhood and the penultimate temple for pilgrims. Drive to the Shikoku Henro Pilgrimage Exchange Salon, then hike the final leg of the pilgrimage to temple 88, Okubo-ji (Great Hollow Temple), on the slopes of Nyotai-san Mountain. You can feel the emotion as the journey nears its goal on this last ascent. As the final stop on the pilgrimage, wooden staffs are traditionally discarded at the understated temple to mark the completion of the journey. Celebrate your achievement together before leaving the trail for the coastal city of Takamatsu.

ACCOMMODATION: Royal Park Hotel Takamatsu

MEALS: Breakfast | Lunch

TRANSPORTATION: 1.5-hour private van transfer

ACTIVITY: 3-4 hours/6.8 miles hiking with 1,765' elevation gain and 826' elevation loss



Explore the Art Island of Naoshima & Travel to Hiroshima

Depart Shikoku by ferry for Naoshima island, an art-filled jewel in the picturesque Inland Sea. Visit a museum that is a work of art in itself. Designed to minimize its impact on the island's natural beauty, it was ingeniously constructed underground in such a way that the interior is illuminated with natural light, which changes color and angle according to the hour and season. Works by artists such as Claude Monet and James Turrell can be experienced in this unusual space. Next, get outdoors to view installations and sculptures, including Yayoi Kusama's celebrated Pumpkin, set on a pier with the Inland Sea as a striking backdrop. Discover unoccupied homes, now reimagined as works of art through the Art House Project. At the end of the day, hop on a ferry to Honshu and drive to Okayama where you'll board the Shinkansen (bullet train) to Hiroshima and check into your hotel.

ACCOMMODATION: Hotel Granvia Hiroshima

MEALS: Breakfast | Lunch

TRANSPORTATION: 50-minute ferry, 20-minute ferry 1-hour private van transfer 40-minute bullet train ride

ACTIVITY: 4 hours/5 miles walking with 300' elevation gain & 300' elevation loss



Witness the Floating Itsukushima Shrine

This morning the ferry takes you back onto the Inland Sea to the photogenic shores of Miyajima Island, a sacred Shinto site since the 6th century. Visit Itsukushima Shrine, a UNESCO World Heritage Site listed as an excellent example of the Japanese standard of beauty, harmoniously combining architecture with nature—in this case both sea and mountains. Built over the water on stilts, the Shinto shrine features elegant wooden pavilions connected by boardwalks, designed to appear as if floating during high tide. Its iconic vermilion torii gate rises dramatically from the sea, framing the forested mountains beyond. Spend tonight on the island.

ACCOMMODATION: Itsukushima Iroha

MEALS: Breakfast | Dinner

TRANSPORTATION: 30-minute private van transfer, 30-minute ferry ride

ACTIVITY: 3 hours/3 miles walking with 300' elevation gain & 300' elevation loss



Summit Miyajima's Mount Misen for Inland Sea Views

Awake for another day on this gorgeous island. Head out on the trails, first stopping at Buddhist Daisho-in temple. Although Miyajima is known for its Shinto shrine, Mount Misen is also a place where Kukai (Kobo Daishi)—who the Shikoku pilgrimage is dedicated to—practiced Buddhism. Ascend into the hills, walking through enchanting old growth groves with chances to see the resident spotted deer or—if you are very lucky—monkeys. After a final steep climb, reach the summit for breathtaking panoramic views of inland sea islands, forested ridges, and down over the Itsukushima Shrine. Return to the base of the mountain by gondola and gather for a celebratory farewell dinner.

ACCOMMODATION: Itsukushima Iroha

MEALS: Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner

TRANSPORTATION: 20-minute gondola ride down from Mount Misen

ACTIVITY: 3 hours/3 miles hiking with 1,700' elevation gain



Depart from Hiroshima

Rise early to catch the morning ferry from Miyajima to Hiroshima. Board the Shinkansen to Osaka and transfer to Kansai International Airport for flights home, or continue by train to Kyoto to continue your Japan journey independently.

MEALS: Breakfast

ACTIVITY: 30-minute ferry ride, 30-minute private van transfer 1.5-hour train ride



Where You'll Stay

These accommodations may be subject to change depending on your date of travel.

Nohga Hotel Kiyomizu

Stylish with a Japanese aesthetic, this sustainability-forward hotel incorporates elements crafted by local artisans throughout. Sink into a seating nook or stretch out on crisp white bedding. Your room includes a Bluetooth speaker and rain shower. Take in the views over the city nestled around a firepit at the rooftop bar. Historic temples including Kiyomizu and Sanjusangen-do are just a short stroll away.

Awa Kanko Hotel

Ideally located in the urban center of Tokushima, this hotel is easily identified by its distinctive geometric architecture. Stay in simple guest rooms offering Western bedding with fluffy duvets, ensuite baths, and city views. The warm friendly staff are ready to help, and the soothing public bath is a welcome escape after a day of exploration.

Hotel Shikinosato

On the same site as the original 1868 bathhouse, this 20-room ryokan offers delightful indoor hot spring baths. One built with local Kamiyama bluestone and cedar fed by the original spring and another with cobbled stone walls and water from a mineral-rich salt spring, both with views of the surrounding hills. Our reserved rooms feature the comfort of a Western bed and full en-suite bathroom.



Where You'll Stay

These accommodations may be subject to change depending on your date of travel.

Hikyonoyu

In the spirit of hikyou (an unexplored place), this modern ryokan takes you on culinary adventures and hot spring rituals. Light-filled rooms look out on mountain scenery and include traditional features such as futon beds, sliding shoji screens and tatami mats. Our reserved rooms all include full-ensuite bathroom. The mineral-rich public baths include a therapeutic mugwort bath, salt sauna, and a large indoor pool and small outdoor bath surrounded by maple trees—both crafted with Tokushima bluestone.

Onyado Shikishimakan

Stay in carefully renovated Shikishimakan—a Meiji-era wooden inn. The interior blends classic Japanese design with modern comforts. Stay in a neatly organized room, with a shoji-screened window, wooden furnishings, and comfortable Western twin beds, as well as en-suite shower and toilet. Wear your yukata to the bathhouse, which includes a large cypress-edged indoor pool, two outdoor cypress barrel baths and a stone-lined pool. Watch life pass by from the soothing foot bath out front.

Royal Park Hotel, Takamatsu

The rich materials, geometric shapes, and soft colors of Art Deco style welcome you in, and quiet, cozy rooms with plush bedding and compact baths invite you to stay. The staff here are warm and welcoming, ready to assist you, and the hotel is convenient to the ferry port. Begin your day with a delicious breakfast and end it with a cocktail and complimentary appetizers in the dark wood library lounge.

Hotel Granvia Hiroshima

With a prime location next to the train station, this hotel is perched in a modern high-rise building, overlooking the city and station below, allowing you to watch the shinkansen zip by. Thoughtfully designed rooms with soothing interior décor and large windows. Enjoy Western and Japanese dishes made with local Inland Sea and Hiroshima ingredients at the restaurant and unwind at the bar in the evening.

Itsukushima Iroha

Established in 1867, this ryokan has evolved over the decades yet maintains a traditional Japanese aesthetic. Stylish rooms include a sleeping area (most with western beds - one room has futons instead, for those that prefer), and a traditional tatami mat area with Japanese style floor seating and low table. All rooms have ensuite bath and toilet facilities. On the roof you will find an indoor onsen bath and an open-air bath with spectacular views of the mountains, sea and Itsukushima torii gate.

Departure Dates

This trip is available to run in: September, October

Book early for a greater choice of available dates.
Once you book, your price is GUARANTEED!

September 30-October 11, 2026

October 31-November 11, 2026

What's Included

PRICE INCLUDES

- Expertise and services of our experienced adventure guides
- All accommodations as noted in the itinerary
- All breakfasts, almost all lunches and dinners as noted in the itinerary
- Snacks and water between meals
- Additional regional guides and experts on many trips
- Comprehensive Trip Planner with detailed pre-trip information
- Private guided tours at historic sites, museums, wineries and other select attractions as noted in the itinerary
- Special events and other select attractions as mentioned in the itinerary
- All gratuities at hotels and restaurants
- Equipment and experienced guides for activities as described in the itinerary
- Park and other entry fees (unless otherwise noted)
- Fares for trains, ferries and other modes of travel as listed in the itinerary
- Select transfers as mentioned in the itinerary
- Baggage transfers and portage

PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE

- International airfare, airport taxes, and excess baggage fees
- Alcoholic beverages (MT Sobek provides wine at select events)
- Gratuities for MT Sobek guides and guide-drivers
- Travel Protection Program
- Personal expenses



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