

Japan - Shikoku (Tour number NW241)

Wednesday 27th March to Friday 12th April 2024

Japan continues to be a prime destination for cycle tourists, many of whom return again and again. It is a wonderful introduction to the Far East with amazingly polite people and with so much well preserved history. The scenery is stunning with mountains, terraced rice paddies, lakes, fishing villages, temples, and castles. We will visit traditional Japanese Hotels with natural hot water Onsen and much more. Apart from the three main islands there are many smaller islands each with their own unique character. The island of Shikoku lies to the south of the largest island of Honshu and to the east of the island of Kyushu, reached by ferries and bridges across smaller islands to the mainland. Shikoku contains 88 temples which are the subject of a 'Shikoku Pilgrimage'.



Itinerary

Wednesday 27th March - Arrive in Kyoto

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel

Thursday 28th March - Arrive in Kyoto

Time to explore this magical city

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Friday 29th March - Kyoto to Nara

Our first riding day is a gentle introduction to cycling in Japan. Starting from the centre of Kyoto we head west past the aquarium arriving at the Katsura River. Heading south we follow the east bank along cyclepaths for 18km until we cross the Kizu River and follow it for another 15km sticking mostly to cyclepaths. Having entered Nara the one climb of the day at 70 metres takes us to our overnight stop in a hotel near the station.

- Route distance: 53.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 180.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Saturday 30th March - Sakurai to Koyasan

Starting from Sakurai station we head south out of Sakurai heading for the first climb of the day at 502metres. Descending to Yoshino, we cross the Yoshino River, which we will follow for the next 30km passing Shrines and parks. The final part of the day takes us over 2 summits as we climb our way to the finish at Koyasan

- Route distance: 76.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1479.0 m
- Accommodation: Temple
- Meals: (B, D)

Sunday 31st March - Koyasan to Wakayama

We start today with an optional Buddhist service before breakfast after which we will visit Kongobuji Temple, which is the main temple of the 3600 Shingon temples throughout Japan. The cycling is predominantly downhill today as we descend from the mountains heading westwards to the Kinokawa River. Here we join a cyclepath that skirts the northern edge of

the river all the way to the ferry terminal at Wakayama to sail across the Seto Inland Sea. A comfortable 2-hour ferry takes us to Tokushima in Shikoku Island.

- Route distance: 60.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 266.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Monday 1st April - Tokushima to Hiwasa

Starting from Tokushima, we head south through the city in the shadow of Mount Bizan around which the city is built. Much of the day is spent following two river valleys . The first , the Katsura River takes us through Jorokucho before heading for the countryside. We pass over a small rise to the Naka River which we follow upstream as we wind our way towards the Pacific Ocean. A final climb to a 190 metre summit, then a fast descent leads to Hiwasa on the coast where we will spend two nights.

- Route distance: 66.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 0.0 m
- Accommodation: Ryokan
- Meals: (B, D)

Tuesday 2nd April - Rest day in Hiwasa

Free day in Hiwasa to explore the local area. Perhaps you would like to visit Temple 23 to add to your collection of temples or maybe you'll head to the Sea Turtle Museum to see rescued turtles and understand these fascinating creatures. You could of course simply relax or take in the Hiwasa beach to see where the turtles lay their eggs.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Ryokan
- Meals: (B)

Wednesday 3rd April - Hiwasa to Muroto

The climbing comes early today as we head down the coast, with an undulating ride over the first 20km , however there are some lovely views. From Mugi the ride stays closer to sea level and we pass through Shihohara before hugging the coast through to our hotel close to Muroto Cape. There are a number of tunnels today from 100 – 300 metres in length.

- Route distance: 81.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 614.0 m
- Accommodation: Ryokan
- Meals: (B, D)

Thursday 4th April - Muroto to Kochi

Heading around Muroto Cape, we cycle north and along the coast with its associated sea views. Passing through Muroto we can admire Temple 25, part of the trail of 88 temples in the area. Onwards and through Kiragawa whose buildings have survived the typhoons, leaving heritage architecture of stonewalls and tiled roofs. We continue with coastal views and ride the last 15km to Kochi on a designated cyclepath that used to be a railway.

- Route distance: 88.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 296.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Friday 5th April - Kochi to Matsubagawa

We start the day with the sounds of the Pacific Ocean to our left as we cycle along the coast to Usacho. More water after that as we head along the northern shore of a huge inlet, after which we head to Susaki which will be the largest town today. There are a few tunnels on this section that create a few spikes on the elevation, the longest being 800 metres long. They are lit and there is a pavement running through the longer one. After Susaki we follow the Shinjo River before starting the climb of the day of 453metres. We then descend to follow the Kudaru River and then the Shimanto River before a gradual climb of 4km to our accommodation at an Onsen Resort.

- Route distance: 87.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 698.0 m
- Accommodation: Ryokan
- Meals: (B, D)

Saturday 6th April - Matsubagawa to Shimanto river

A day that is predominantly downhill as we follow the Shimanto River to Honmachi where we can visit Temple 37. The Iwamotoji temple has a series of paintings on the ceiling of the temple which are particularly interesting to see. We continue to follow the Shimanto River for most of the day, a river famous for its tranquil water running from riverhead to ocean without any dams to check its progress. Finishing at Shimanto River, where we will stay for our second rest day.

- Route distance: 80.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 445.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Sunday 7th April - Rest day in Shimanto river

Time to relax

- No cycling

- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Monday 8th April - Shimanto river to Cape Ashizuri

We continue our trip down the Shimanto River. There are a number of bridges with no guardrails spanning the Shimanto River, so be careful. It is to reduce resistance and to prevent the bridge from being washed away during the times of flood. Through Nakamura and onto the coastal road which undulates as part of the Ashizuri Uwajima National Park. We end our ride at Cape Ashizuri, the southernmost point of Shikoku, where we call in the 38th Kongofukuji temple.

- Route distance: 95.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 848.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Tuesday 9th April - Cape Ashizuri to Ainan

From the cape, we continue our journey through the Ashizuri Uwajima National Park and head inland for a change on a delightful countryside road. Having passed through Sukoma, we pass the John Mung Museum. Over a climb to descend to the Pacific again and ride along a quiet road above the Ocean culminating in a couple of climbs. Finishing in Ainan, stroll the streets and sample the locally caught bonito fished locally.

- Route distance: 93.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 938.0 m
- Accommodation: Guest House
- Meals: (B, D)

Wednesday 10th April - Imabari to Omishima

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 connecting Imabari and Onomichi in 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 a number of cycle tourists from other regions of Japan. Today we cycle across two islands and end up in the third island Omishima in the heart of Seto Inland Sea.

- Route distance: 54.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 539.0 m
- Accommodation: Ryokan
- Meals: (B, D)

Thursday 11th April - Omishima to Onomichi

Today we cycle across three more islands and finally land in Onomichi in mainland Honshu. Before leaving Omishima Island we pay a visit to the Oyamazumi Shrine that enshrines the

gods of the ocean and mountains. For people interested in Samurai culture, the neighboring museum displays Japanese swords registered as national treasures. We stay with a coastal and island theme all day long, admiring the construction of bridges connecting the islands and the purpose built cycling roads.

- Route distance: 73.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 729.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Friday 12th April - Finish in Onomichi

Breakfast and the end of the holiday. I hope you enjoyed Japan.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: None
- Meals: (B)



Dates and Prices

Cost

- Land only price: £4000.0

Payment Schedule

A deposit of £400 per person is payable upon booking, an interim payment of £2000 to be paid by November 24th 2023 with the final balance of £1600 per person to be paid by 15th January 2024 (10 weeks before departure)

Price includes:

- 16 nights accommodation on a twin share basis
- 11 dinners and 16 breakfasts
- Rental bike (Hybrid or Road bike)
- English speaking cycling guide
- 2 support vehicles and 2 drivers
- All transport described in the itinerary
- Snacks and water on cycling days

Price does not include:

- Travel to and from Kyoto in Japan
- Any other meals or refreshments
- Single supplement £400 (if available)
- Entry fees at any attractions
- Any other personal expenses
- Travel Insurance

Cancellations

Written Notice Received: Cancellation Charge:

- Before 24th November 2023: £400 (deposit)
- Before 15th January 2024: £2400 (deposit and interim payment)
- 15th January 2024 through to departure : £4000 Full amount)

Holiday Information

Accommodation

- This will be a mix of the equivalent of 2- and 3-star Western hotels, some Business hotels and Ryokan (high end traditional inns). In the hotels, twin or double rooms will be used. In the inns, it is traditional for groups to be accommodated in single sex rooms of 2 - 6 people, and we are expected to conform to this tradition. Many have luxurious and natural thermal springs or 'onsen', traditional single sex bathing pools. One night will be spent in a temple. Some accommodation will have shared facilities.

Meals

- Meals are generally provided on a half board basis, but evening meals on five nights are not included. Traditional Japanese meals always include a selection of tofu, seaweed, vegetables and fish. Those eat fish will be able to enjoy a wide range of excellent meals. Those who do not will have to accept a limited selection. Vegetarians should indicate their needs at the time of booking to enable suitable arrangements to be made. In previous tours many vegetarians have been catered for

Rides and Rest days

- Daily distances vary between 50 and 90km, and some days are hilly. It is important to understand that this trip is classified as experienced and is suitable for regular cyclists capable of riding 30 - 60 miles every day in hilly terrain. Traffic on rural roads should be light. You will be issued with route sheets and instructions about the route each day. There will be no obligation for participants to keep together in one large group whilst on the road. You will be free to ride at your own pace, with or without company, and to stop where you wish for photographs etc. We will regroup at intervals and for snacks mid- morning and afternoon, as required. Our guide and backup driver speaks excellent English and will be on hand to help at lunch times and to assist with translation and provide information and advice as necessary. He will carry our bags and arrange our accommodation and evening meals. On the road I do not maintain a regular position in the group but try to keep informed of the location of all the members and will be carrying a mobile phone for this purpose.

Route Sheets

- Details of routes and further tour information will be distributed approx four weeks before the tour departs. For those with digital routing devices, our guides will load up the routes for you. Garmin's are supplied that are already loaded with your ride for the day.

Getting to Japan

- As this is a land only holiday, it is very important that you note that neither your leader, nor Bikexplore are responsible for you in any way until the appointed time at the designated meeting point. Should you fail to arrive at the appointed meeting point, for whatever reason, we will not be responsible for any additional costs you may incur in order to meet up with the tour group. Before finalising travel arrangements to meet the

tour you should ensure that you have read and understood our booking conditions. Should this tour not attract sufficient bookings to reach the minimum operating size, we may cancel the tour at any time up to 10 weeks before departure. It is therefore recommended that you book fully flexible and refundable transport and accommodation, or wait until you have been informed that the tour will go ahead, as in the event of the tour being cancelled we will not be responsible for any losses incurred.

Group information

- The maximum group size will be 14 (including the Tour Leader).

Weather and Clothing

- At this time of year it should be pleasantly warm with an average daytime temperature of 17C with 40% chance of sunshine. However, it will undoubtedly rain at some time during our visit, with a drop in temperature, so ensure that you have rainproof clothing and layers to keep warm on high ground.

Cycles / Equipment

- You are welcome to take your own bike at your own expense, but bikes will be available from the guides at no extra charge and in very good condition, maintained by them on the tour. The cost is usually less than the excess baggage charge by the airline, so I would seriously recommend you hire. Each bike has a bar bag, or large seatpost bag, including basic tools and spares, and is fitted with water bottles and lights. It is recommended that you bring your own helmet and saddle along with pedals if you use SPD's or like. Our guides insist on our wearing helmets, and a limited number are available to hire from them. Several weeks before the tour they will want to know which type of bike you need, your height and/or frame size required and if you will be bringing your own saddle and pedals. Please note, though, that neither Neil Wheadon or Bikexplore accept any liability for participants using hire bikes. You are entirely responsible for the safety and suitability and maintenance of the bike you ride. Cycle hire is not part of your holiday contract.

Maps

- You will be given daily maps and enough information to navigate during the tour. Our guide will also download the routes each day onto a Garmin, if you bring one. Several maps of Japan are available through the internet (try www.mapsworldwide.com or www.stanfords.co.uk). If you want more information, try the JAPAN - Lonely Planet series.

Money

- The currency is the Japanese Yen (JYN). ATMs are available in towns, and cards can be used for purchases, but it is advisable obtain some currency before you set off on the tour, perhaps £250 worth.

Travel Insurance and Advice

- Please ensure that your insurance covers you for medical emergencies and also repatriation of your bike, should this be necessary, and ensure that the single item limit on your luggage is adequate to cover your camera or similar item you bring. You should bring your insurance documents with you. Before booking you should check the Foreign Office 'Travel Advice by Country' at www.fco.gov.uk/ or on 0845 850 2829.