



# **SAMURAI TOURS**

*Adventures in Discovering Traditional Japan*

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## **Best of Shikoku**



15 Days / 14 Nights

## Best of Shikoku

### Tour Overview

With its mild climate, tranquil gardens, famous hot springs, historic castles, beautiful countryside, and warm-hearted people, Shikoku offers a dramatic experience that will create travel memories for a lifetime.

#### Destinations

*Tokyo, Kirishima Onsen, Kagoshima, Ibusuki Onsen, Kumamoto, Yufuin Onsen, Beppu Onsen, Usuki, Dogo Onsen, Matsuyama, Iya Valley Onsen, Iya Valley, Arima Onsen, Kinosaki Onsen, Kyoto*

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### Tour Details

Visiting an onsen is the Japanese version of the good life. At Japanese onsens, you will enjoy excellent food and experience the famous Japanese hospitality. And don't forget the Japanese baths. The Japanese have raised bathing to a whole new level, and they are an important experience that should be included in every visit to Japan. And in between all of this, we will be visiting some of Japan's most remote sightseeing destinations. If you like Japanese food and enjoy the Japanese baths, this tour should not be missed.

At Ibusuki Onsen, you will experience “sunaburo” (sand baths) where you are covered up to your chin with thermally-heated sand. Explore the many cafes, shops and restaurants at the rural Yufuin Onsen. Visit the many “hells” at Beppu, and the nearby statues of Buddha carved from rock cliffs in Usuki.

Soak in the waters of Dogo Onsen, one of the oldest onsen in Japan with more than a 1,000 year history. Visit Iya Valley Onsen and Iya Valley, one of the most remote regions of Japan. Sample the two types of water at Arima Onsen. The brown “kinsen” (Gold spring) with its high concentrations of iron is said to be good for skin ailments and muscle pain. The clear “ginsen” (Silver spring) contains radium and carbonate and is said to cure various muscle and joint ailments.

And last, but not least, Kinosaki Onsen was discovered around the 8th century and since then the town has developed into a charmingly old-fashioned onsen town. In the evenings guests of the local ryokans stroll about town in yukata (cotton kimon) and geta (wooden clogs), visiting the numerous public baths and nostalgic game arcades.

PLEASE NOTE: Tattoos in Japan are stigmatized, and therefore tattoos are not widely accepted at onsen baths in Japan. If you have tattoos, you may not be allowed to use the baths.

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## Map



## 📍 Destinations



### **Kirishima Onsen**

*Kirishima Onsen*



### **Kagoshima**

Senganen Garden, Shiroyama Park,  
Black Pork Katsu Lunch



### **Ibusuki Onsen**

*Sand Baths*



### **Kumamoto**

*Kumamoto Castle, Suizenji Garden,  
Kumamoto Ramen Lunch*



### **Yufuin Onsen**

*Free Day*



### **Beppu Onsen**

*Shiraike Hell, Oniyama Hell, Kamado  
Hell, Umi Hell, Oniishibozu Hell*



### **Usuki**

*Usuki Stone Buddhas, Usuki Samurai  
District, Fugu (Blowfish) Lunch*



### **Matsuyama**

*Matsuyama Castle*



### **Dogo Onsen**

*Free Afternoon*



### **Oboke Gorge**

*Oboke Gorge Sightseeing Boat Cruise,  
Lapis Oboke Museum*



### **Iya Valley Onsen**

*Free Time*



### **Iya Valley**

*Peeing Boy Statue, Kazurabashi Vine  
Bridge*



### **Arima Onsen**

*Free Time*



### **Kinosaki Onsen**

*Free Time*



### **Kyoto**

*Free Time*



# Itinerary

## **Day 1 Arrive in Osaka**

You will be staying overnight in the city of Osaka. You will be met at Osaka's Kansai Airport or Osaka's Itami Airport, and escorted to the hotel in Osaka. We will leave a message for you at the hotel informing you of the meeting time for the next day. If you would prefer to arrive in Tokyo, contact us for the details. No meals included.

Travel: 1-1/2 Hours; Walking: Light

## **Day 2 Travel to Tokushima; Awa-Odori Kaikan, Mount Bizan Ropeway**

Before breakfast you will prepare your luggage for transfer to Tokushima. Your overnight bag will need to be packed for 2 days and 1 night. You will bring your luggage to the lobby of the hotel for transfer. After breakfast, we will start the day with a welcome/orientation meeting. We begin our adventure by traveling to Tokushima on the island of Shikoku by public bus. Tokushima is best known for its Awa Odori festival and dance held every year in mid-August. Over a million people visit Tokushima during the 4 day festival to watch the eighty-thousand dancers dressed in colorful yukatas and half-moon shaped straw hats who parade through the city waving their hands and shuffling their feet to an insistent two-beat rhythm played on taiko drums, flutes, and shamisen. The festival started in 1587 when the first daimyo (feudal lord) of Tokushima is said to have initiated the celebration on completion of his castle. The people enjoyed it so much that they held the celebration the next year, and so on for the centuries that followed. Since we will not be in Tokushima during the festival, we will do the next best thing by visiting the Awa Odori Kaikan. This museum chronicles the history of the festival and features numerous exhibits relating to the dance. Best of all, we will attend a one hour live performance demonstrating the dances performed during the festival. And then we will enjoy a ride up the ropeway to enjoy the view of Tokushima. Breakfast at the hotel and lunch and dinner at a local restaurant are included.

**Travel: 4 Hours; Walking: Light**

## **Day 3 Walk Along the 88 Temple Pilgrimage**

In addition to the Awa Odori festival, Tokushima is also famous as the start and the end of the 88 Sacred Temples Pilgrimage. These 88 temples were founded by Kobo Daishi, one of the most influential Buddhist Monks in Japanese history. The route of this pilgrimage takes one all the way around the island of Shikoku. If you are walking the entire route, as was done for hundreds of years, the pilgrimage would take about two months. Today, tour buses whisk pilgrims around the entire route in about two weeks. Today we will be a "henro" (pilgrim) for a day by following a section of the pilgrimage and visiting 5 of the 88 temples on our path to enlightenment. Breakfast at the hotel is included.

**Travel: 1 1/2 Hours; Walking: Heavy**

## **Day 4 Tokushima Bunraku; DMV (Dual Mode Vehicle); Overnight at Shishikui Onsen**

We will start the day by visiting the Awa Jurobe Yashiki. This small museum documents the local Bunraku, and also includes a short performance. After lunch, we will enjoy a ride on Japan's only DMV (Dual Mode Vehicle). This small bus is able to navigate both highways and railroad tracks. After checking into the accommodations at Shishikui Onsen, we will enjoy a kaiseki dinner at the

accommodation. Breakfast and dinner at the accommodations are included.

**Travel: 4 Hours; Walking: Medium**

### **Day 5 Cape Muroto; Aki Samurai District; Ioki Cave; Kochi**

After breakfast, we will drive to Mikurodo cave. It is said that Kobo Daishi, the famous Buddhist monk in the 9th and 10th centuries, meditated here for months until reaching enlightenment. Next we will take a short walk around the Muroto Geopark. After stopping for lunch, we will visit the city of Aki to visit the former Samurai District located next to Aki Castle. The castle is gone now, but a few of the buildings from that time still remain. Next, we will visit Ioki Cave and Gorge. The short, 40 meter cave is lined with fossilized shells embedded in the rocky walls. Erosion from ocean waves carved this cave years ago when the area was surrounded by the sea. The canyon walls that extend beyond the cave are cloaked with a thick carpet of ferns. Later in the afternoon, we will finish our drive to the city of Kochi, where we will be staying for the next two nights. Breakfast and dinner at the accommodations and lunch at a local restaurant.

**Travel: 4 Hours; Walking: Heavy**

### **Day 6 Kochi - Kochi Castle, Katsurahama Beach**

After breakfast, we will visit the nearby Kochi Castle. Kochi Castle is one of the remaining 12 original castles in Japan. A unique feature of Kochi's castle is that its main tower was not only used for military purposes, but also as a residence. In most other castles, the lords usually resided in separate palace buildings rather than in the castle keep. Next, we will visit Katsurahama. A famous statue of Kochi's favorite son, Sakamoto Ryokma stands near the beach. Sakamoto was one of the architects of modern Japan. He was instrumental in negotiating an alliance between the Choshu and Satsuma clans that helped to bring an end to Japan's feudal age in 1868. Breakfast at the lodging and lunch at a local restaurant is included.

**Travel: 2 Hours; Walking: Heavy**

### **Day 7 Cape Ashizuri; Overnight in Uwajima**

After breakfast we will be driving from Kochi to Cape Ashizuri, making two stops along the way. After lunch, we will walk along the top of the cliffs overlooking the Pacific Ocean for a short time, and visit Kongofuujii temple, temple #38 of the Shikoku Pilgrimage. We will finish the day by driving to Uwajima where we will be staying the night. Breakfast at the accommodations and lunch and dinner at a local restaurant.

**Travel Time: 5 Hours Walking: Medium**

### **Day 8 Ozu - Ganryu Sanso, Uchiko -, Yokaichi Old Town, Travel to Matsuyama/Dogo Onsen**

We will continue to the city of Ozu, a former castle town. Here we will visit the Ganryu Sanso. It is a subtle yet outstanding villa located by the river. The villa was built around 1907, rustic in appearance and traditional in construction methods but artistic in features. It took ten years to design the villa, four years to build it using 9000 artisans. Next we will travel to Uchiko. Now a vestige of traditional, rural Japan, Uchiko was once a prosperous center of wax and paper production. Yokaichi Old Town is Uchiko's preserved street of houses where most of the town's attractions can be found. This historical district looks just as it did over 100 years ago, when wealth and prosperity came to Uchiko through its wax trade. We will finish the day by traveling to Matsuyama. Breakfast and dinner at the accommodations.

**Travel: 2 Hours and 15 minutes; Walking: Heavy**

## **Day 9 Matsuyama - Matsuyama Castle, Free afternoon at Dogo Onsen**

In the morning, we will tour the Matsuyama Castle. Matsuyama Castle is one of Japan's twelve "original castles", i.e. original castles which were built before the post-feudal era (1868). The castle is located on Mount Katsuyama, a steep hill in the city center that provides visitors with a bird's eye view of Matsuyama and the Seto Inland Sea. Matsuyama Castle was constructed between 1602 and 1628. In 1635, the castle got assigned to a branch of the Matsudaira family, relatives of the ruling Tokugawa, and it remained in their hands until the end of the feudal era. The current three storied castle tower was constructed in 1820 after the original five storied tower was destroyed by lightning. The afternoon is free to enjoy the Dogo Onsen area's shops and restaurants. Dinner and breakfast at the ryokan.

**Travel: 30 minutes; Walking: Medium**

## **Day 10 Travel to Oboke Gorge, Oboke Gorge - Sightseeing Boat Cruise, Iya Valley - Kazurabashi Bridge**

After breakfast, we will travel to Oboke. Oboke Gorge is a narrow, steep sided gorge near the entrance to the Iya Valley. Created by the swirling rapids of the Yoshino River, the name means "big dangerous step". Here we will board the Oboke Gorge Sightseeing boat cruise. On this gentle 30 minute boat ride down the Yoshino River, guides point out interesting rocks, many of which resemble different animals along the way. Later, we will travel to the Kazurabashi Vine Bridge in Iya Valley, a remote mountain valley located in the center of Shikoku. In the past, vine bridges were the only way of crossing the Iya River. History is unclear of their origins. Legends say that Kobo Daishi built the first one, while others say they were first built by Heike refugees hiding in the Iya Valley after their defeat in the Genpei War (1180-1185). The Kazurabashi is one of the few vine bridges that still remain. It has a 45 meter span and is 15 meters above the river. We will overnight in Iya Valley.

Breakfast and dinner at the ryokan is included.

**Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Light**

## **Day 11 Iya Valley - Kazurabashi, Travel to Takamatsu**

We will start the day by visiting the nearby Kazurabashi Vine Bridge in Iya Valley, a remote mountain valley located in the center of Shikoku. In the past, vine bridges were the only way of crossing the Iya River. History is unclear of their origins. Legends say that Kobo Daishi built the first one, while others say they were first built by Heike refugees hiding in the Iya Valley after their defeat in the Genpei War (1180-1185). The Kazurabashi is one of the few vine bridges that still remain. It has a 45 meter span and is 15 meters above the river. Later we will travel to Takamatsu. Takamatsu (高松) is the capital of Kagawa, Japan's smallest prefecture. The city's port used to be the main entry point to Shikoku Island until the opening of the Seto Ohashi Bridge in 1988. The Matsudaira Clan, relatives of the Tokugawa Shogun, controlled Takamatsu and the surrounding area, then known as the Sanuki Province, during most of the Edo Period. Breakfast at the ryokan and dinner at the ryokan included.

**Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Light**

## **Day 12 Zentsuji, Kotohira - Konpira Shrine, Kanamarazu Kabuki Theater**

After breakfast we will travel to Zentsuji. Zentsuji is one of the Shikoku 88 Temples, but it is also said that Kobo Daishi was born here. Because of that, this temple is considered very special and is

always busy with pilgrims and worshippers. Afterwards we will travel to the city of Kotohira. Kotohira is a small town in Kagawa Prefecture, famous for Kompirasan, Shikoku's most popular shrine. Kompirasan is dedicated to seafaring, and is said to have one of the more challenging shrine approaches in Japan. After visiting Konpira Shrine we will visit the Kanamaruza Kabuki Theater. Kanamaruza Theater is Japan's oldest surviving, complete kabuki playhouse. From time to time, it still stages kabuki performances, featuring some of the country's most popular kabuki stars. Later in the day we will return to Takamatsu. Breakfast at the hotel and lunch at local restaurant included.

**Travel: 2 1/2 Hours; Walking: Heavy**

### **Day 13 Yashima Plateau - Shikoku-mura Open Air Museum, Yashima-ji Temple; Travel to Naruto; Overnight Naruto**

In the morning, we will travel to Yashima Plateau near Takamatsu. It was the site of a famous battle during the Gempei War in the 12th century between the Taira and Minamoto clans. Here the Taira were defeated in what was to be the last battle before their final destruction. In addition to the many viewpoints providing views of the Seto Inland Sea and the sights related to the battle, we will visit Yashima-ji temple, one of the temples on the 88 Temple Shikoku Pilgrimage. After visiting the top of the plateau, we will visit the Shikoku-mura Open Air Museum. After that, we will enjoy a Sanuki udon lunch. In the afternoon, we will travel to Naruto. Naruto is known for its swirling whirlpools. These can be seen in the Strait of Naruto underneath the Onaruto Bridge connecting Tokushima to Awaji Island. Breakfast and dinner at the ryokan, and lunch at a local restaurant is included.

**Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Medium**

### **Day 14 Naruto - Naruto Whirlpools; Travel to Osaka**

In the morning, we will observe the whirlpools. The Naruto whirlpools occur along the coastline, and are created by the large volumes of water moving between the Seto Inland Sea and the Pacific Ocean between high and low tide, combined with the unique underwater geography of the narrow strait. In the afternoon, we will travel to Osaka. In the evening we will enjoy an okonomiyaki Sayonara dinner. Breakfast at the ryokan and dinner at a local restaurant.

**Travel: 3 Hours; Walking: Light**

### **Day 15 Return Home**

It's time to say "sayonara" (Goodbye). You will be told when to meet the sending service. They will take you to the appropriate train station, where you will return on your own to Tokyo's Narita airport, Tokyo's Haneda airport or Osaka's Kansai airport by train on your own. (If you are flying out of Narita or Haneda Airport, be sure to schedule a flight after 15:00 to allow yourself enough time to catch your flight. Breakfast at the ryokan is included.

**Travel: 1 1/2 to 4 Hours; Walking: Light**

Walking level descriptions:

Light - 0 to 2 miles on level ground

Medium - 2 to 4 miles on level ground or 0 to 2 miles on hilly ground

Heavy - 4 to 6 miles on level ground or 2 to 4 miles on hilly ground





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## 📅 Dates & Pricing

**Dates**      **Price (land only) / Single Supplement**      **Status**  
**(All prices are per Person)**

### Add-On Tours

Our tours and tour itineraries are the best, but as the saying goes, “you can’t make everyone happy all of the time”. There may a specific destination or a specific experience you may want to include in your visit to Japan that may not be included your tour. Choose from our Add On tours to include your interests and make your Japan tour even better.

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## Inclusions

- Local, licensed, English-speaking, Japanese guides
- **Travel insurance from Travel Guard**, one of the world's largest travel insurance providers, will be provided to everyone from the United States. All others will receive a \$100 per person credit and will be responsible for obtaining their own travel insurance in their own home country. (The insurance provided by Samurai Tours will cover the land portion only. Insurance to cover airfare and other additional expenses is the tour member's responsibility.)
  - Exact coverage dependent on state
    - For residents of the following states please click here for your available plan. FL, KS, MN, MO, MT, NY, and WA
    - For all other states and the District of Columbia click here
  - **Travel Insurance Surcharge:** Depending on your age at the time the travel insurance is purchased, you may be subject to the following surcharge for your travel insurance. Travel insurance surcharges will be due at the same time as your tour deposits. (the surcharge itself is not insured)
    - Up to 69 - \$0
    - 70-74 - \$175
    - 75-79 - \$375
    - 80-84 - \$700
    - 85+ - \$1,175
  - **Travel Insurance Opt-Out:** If you would prefer to opt out of the travel insurance, please note this at the time of registration. You will receive a \$100 credit per person, which will be reflected on your invoice. In the event that you would need to cancel your tour, cancellation penalties may apply. See the Terms and Conditions page for the Cancellation Fees Schedule.
- Domestic airfare from Tokyo to Kagoshima
- Meeting service at Tokyo's Narita Airport or Tokyo's Haneda Airport and transfer to the hotel in Tokyo
  - The meeting service will meet you at the airport and provide you a transfer to the ryokan in Tokyo
  - Meeting service can only be provided between 6am and 9pm. If you arrive at a time outside of these hours, we will need to provide alternative directions for you to get to the hotel on your own.
- Sending service to the Kyoto train station.
  - The sending service will escort you to the Kyoto train station and make sure you board the correct train. The sending service will not accompany you to the airport.
- Reserved seat tickets on the train to Osaka's Kansai Airport (If you will be returning home from one of the Tokyo airports, please contact us for details about returning to Tokyo.)

*For those requiring meeting or sending services on other than the scheduled arrival/departure dates, there will be a \$100 fee for the meeting service from the airport into Tokyo or the sending service to the Kyoto train station.)*

- Lodging for 14 nights in Japanese-style hotels or ryokans and western style hotels
- Meals
  - Japanese-style or Western-style breakfast every morning (Please Note: Some ryokans offer Japanese breakfasts only.)
  - 4 Japanese-style lunches
  - Japanese-style or Western-style dinner every night
- The appropriate amount of free time to allow you to explore and discover your own personal Japan.
- All transportation costs when traveling with the group. (Transportation costs during scheduled



free times are the tour member's responsibility.)

- Admission fees to the destinations and activities (Itinerary specifics subject to change)
- Electronic version of itinerary
- Sayonara dinner at the end of the tour
- Baggage transfer from Tokyo to Yufuin Onsen (one bag only)
- Baggage transfer from Yufuin Onsen to Dogo Onsen (one bag only)
- Baggage transfer from Dogo Onsen to Kinosaki Onsen (one bag only)

Each tour member receives an electronic copy of our tour handbook. This handbook is full of tips and suggestions taken from our Japan travel experiences that allow you to better plan and prepare for your trip, and therefore enjoy your trip even more. The tips and suggestions included cover everything from how to save while exchanging money, what to pack, some basic Japanese-language tips, general etiquette do's-and-don'ts, ryokan customs, etc.

### **Exclusions**

- International airfare is NOT included.
- A printed itinerary is not included
- Alcoholic beverages, soft drinks and desserts are NOT included

Thank you for downloading this PDF version of our tour. Please visit our website at [www.samuraitours.com/tours](http://www.samuraitours.com/tours) for the most current dates, prices and information.

## **Contact Samurai Tours**

### **WEBSITE/EMAIL**

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