



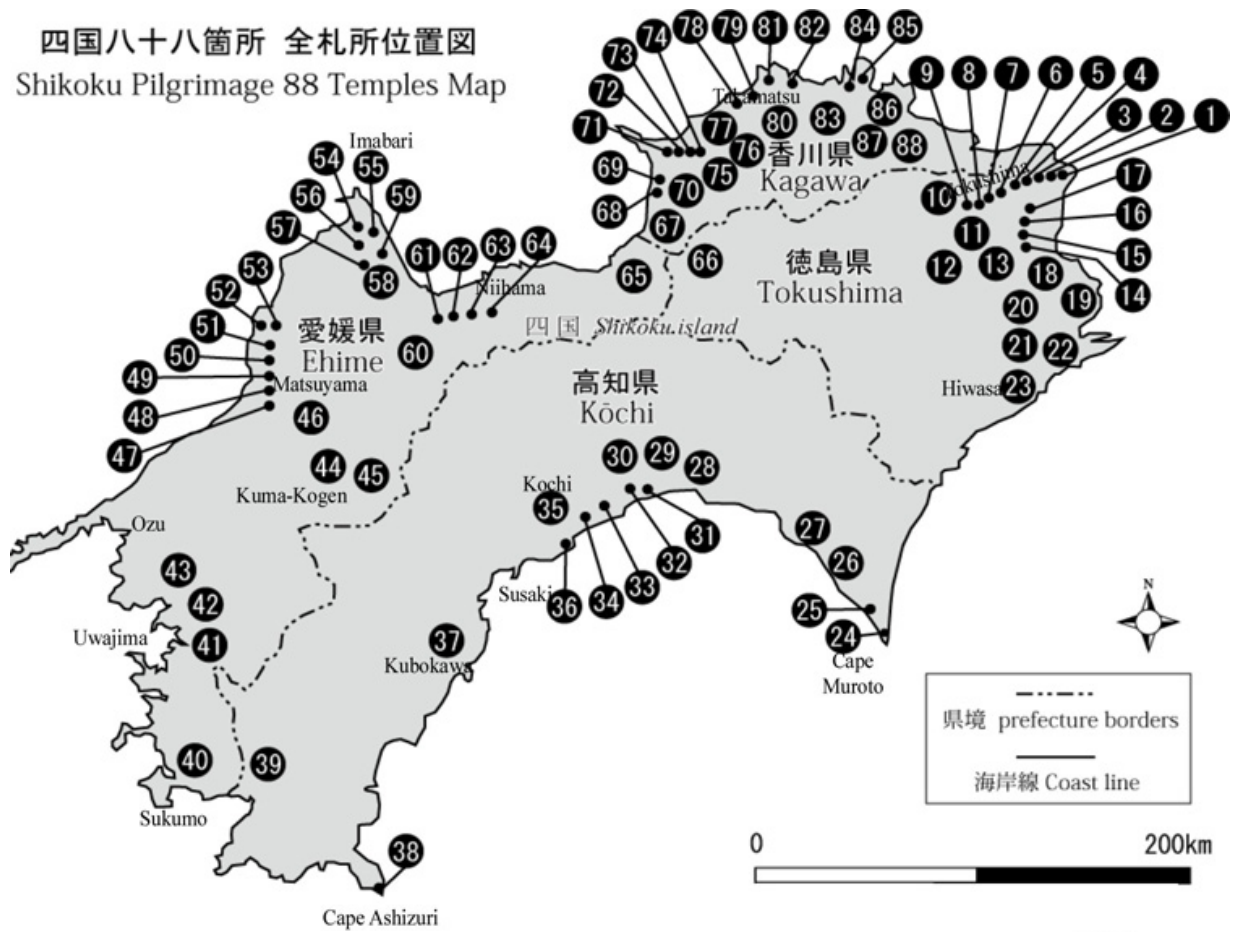
Oliver Dunskus

The 88 Temples of Shikoku

A Guide for the Walking Pilgrim

Archtop Publications

四国八十八箇所 全札所位置図
Shikoku Pilgrimage 88 Temples Map



Index

Preface

The Shikoku Pilgrimage

History

The Pilgrimage Today

Preparations

When to Go

Costs

What to Take Along

How to Get to Shikoku

How to Do the Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage by Public Transportation

Pilgrimage Gear

At the Temples

Between the Temples

Where to Sleep

Eating and Drinking

The Route

Getting to Temple 1 - Ryozenji

Temple No. 1 - Ryozenji (Reizanji) 靈山寺

From T1 to T2 - KM 0 to KM 2

Temple No. 2 - Gokurakuji 極楽寺

Temple No. 3 - Konzenji (Kensenji) 金泉寺

From T3 to T4 – KM 5 to KM 10

Temple No. 4 – Dainichiji 大日寺

Temple No.5 - Jizoji 地藏寺

From T5 to T6 – KM 11 to KM 17

Temple No. B1 – Taisanji 大山寺

Temple No. 6 – Anrakuji 安楽寺

Temple No. 7 – Jurakuji 十楽寺

From T7 to T8 – KM 18 to KM 22

Temple No. 8 – Kumadaniji 熊谷寺

From T8 to T9 – KM 22 to KM 25

Temple No. 9 – Horinji 法輪寺

From T9 to T10 – KM 25 to KM 29

Temple No.10 – Kirihataji 切幡寺 (Kiritaji)

From T10 to T11 – KM 29 to KM 38

Temple No. 11 – Fujiidera 藤井寺

From T11 to T12 – km 38 to km 50

Temple No. 12 – Shosanji 焼山寺

The Legend of Emon Saburo

From T12 to T13 – KM 50 to KM 72

Temple No. B2 – Dogakuji 童学寺

Temple No. 13 – Dainichiji 大日寺

From T13 to T17 – KM 72 to KM 80

Temple No. 14 – Jorakuji 常楽寺

Temple No. 15 – (Awa) Kokubunji 國分寺

Temple No. 16 – Kannonji 観音寺

Temple No. 17 – Idoji 井戸寺

From T17 to T18 – KM 80 to KM 100

Temple No. 18 - Onzanji 恩山寺

From T18 to T19 – KM 100 to KM 103

Temple No. 19 - Tatsueji 立江寺
From T19 to T20 - KM 103 to KM 116
Temple No. B3 - Jigenji 慈眼寺
Temple No. 20 - Kakurinji 鶴林寺
From T20 to T 21- KM 116 to KM 122
Temple No. 21 - Tairyuji 太龍寺
From T21 to T22 - KM 122 to KM 132
Temple No. 22 - Byodoji 平等寺
From T22 to T23 - KM 132 to KM 152
Temple No. 23 - Yakuoji 薬王寺
From T23 to T24 - KM 153 to KM 228
Temple No. B4 - Yasakaji (Saba Daishi 鯖大師)
Temple No. 24 - Hotsumisakiji 最御崎寺
From T24 to T25 - KM 228 to KM 235
Temple No.25 - Shinshoji 津照寺
From T25 to T26 - KM 235 to KM 239
Temple No. 26 - Kongochoji 金剛頂寺
From T26 to T27 - KM 239 to KM 268
Temple No. 27 - Konomineji 神峯寺
From T27 to T28 - KM 268 to KM 306
Temple No.28 - Dainichiji 大日寺
From T28 to T29 - KM 305 to KM 315
Temple No. 29 - Kokubunji 国分寺
From T29 to T30 - KM 315 to KM 322
Temple No. 30 - Zenrakuji 善楽寺
From T30 to T31- KM 322 to KM 329
Temple No.31 - Chikurinji 竹林寺
Kochi
From T31 to T32 - KM 329 to KM 335

Temple No. 32 - Zenjibuji 禅師峰寺
From T32 to T33 - KM 335 to KM 343
Temple No. 33 - Sekkeiji 雪蹊寺
From T33 to T34 - KM 343 to KM 349
Temple No. 34 - Tanemaji 種間寺
From T34 to T35 - KM 349 to KM 359
Temple No. 35 - Kiyotakiji 清瀧寺
From T35 to T36 - KM 359 to KM 374
Temple No.36 - Shoryuji 青龍寺
From T36 to T37 - KM 375 to KM 430
Temple No. B5 - Daizenji 大善寺
Temple No. 37 - Iwamotoji 岩本寺
From T37 to T38 - KM 430 to KM 512
Temple No. 38 - Kongofukuji 金剛福寺
From T38 to T39 - KM 512 to KM 568
Temple No.39 - Enkoji 延光寺
From T39 to T40 - KM 568 to KM 595
Temple No.40 - Kanjizaiji 観自在寺
From T40 to T41 - KM 595 to KM 645
Temple No. B6 - Ryukoin 龍光院
Temple No. 41 - Ryukoji 龍光寺
Temple No.42 - Butsumokuji 仏木寺
From T42 to T43 - KM 648 to KM 659
Temple No.43 - Meisekiji 明石寺
From T43 to T44 - KM 659 to KM 729
Temple No. B7 - Shussekiiji 出石寺
Temple No. B8 - Eitokuji 永徳寺
(Toyogahashi 十夜ヶ橋)
Temple No.44 - Daihoji 大寶寺

From T44 to T45 and back to Kuma-Kogen -KM 727 to KM 750

Temple No.45 - Iwayaji 岩屋寺

From Kuma-Kogen to T46 and T47 - KM 750 to 765

Temple No.46 - Joruriji 浄瑠璃寺

Temple No.47 - Yasakaji 八坂寺

From T47 to T51 and Matsuyama - KM 765 to 777

Temple No.48 - Sairinji 西林寺

Temple No.49 - Jodoji 浄土寺

Temple No.50 - Hantaji ("Bantaiji") 繁多寺

Temple No.51 - Ishiteji 石手寺

From T51 to T52 and T53 - KM 777 to 791

Temple No. 52 - Taisanji 太山寺

Temple No. 53 - Enmyoji 圓明寺

From T53 to T54 - KM 791 to 825

Temple No.54 - Enmeiji 延命寺

Temple No. 55 - Nankobo 南光坊

Temple No.56 - Taisanji 泰山寺

Temple No. 57 - Eifukuji 栄福寺

Temple No. 58 - Senyuji 仙遊寺

From T58 to T59 - KM 839 to KM 845

Temple No.59 - (Iyo) Kokubunji 国分寺

From T59 to T60 - KM 845 to KM 873

Temple No. B10 - (Nishiyama-)Koryuji 興隆寺

Temple No. B11 - Ikiki Jizo 生木地藏

Temple No.60 - Yokomineji 横峰寺

From T60 to T64 - KM 872 to 888

Temple No. 61 - Koonji 香園寺

Temple No.62 – Hojuji 宝寿寺
Temple No.63 – Kichijoji 吉祥寺
Temple No.64 – Maegamiji 前神寺
From T64 to T65 – KM 889 to 934
Temple No. B12 – Enmeiji 延命寺
Temple No.65 – Sankakuji 三角寺
Temple No. B13 – Senryuji 仙龍寺
From T65 to T66 – KM 934 to 952
Temple No. B14 – (Tsubakido) Jofukuji 椿堂常福寺
Temple No. B15 – Hashikuraji 箸蔵寺
Temple No.66 – Unpenji 雲辺寺
From T66 to T67 – KM 952 to 962
Temple No. B16 – Hagiwaraji 萩原寺
Temple No.67 – Daikoji 大興寺
From T67 to T68 and T69 – KM 962 to 972
Temples No.68 and 69 – Jinne-In 神恵院 and Kannonji
観音寺
From T69 to T70 – KM 971 to KM 976
Temple No. 70 – Motoyamaji 本山寺
From T70 to T71 – KM 976 to KM 988

Temple No. B18 – Kaiganji 海岸寺

The Mairi Path (T71-77), Kotohira, B17 and B18
Temple No. 71 – Iyadaniji 弥谷寺
Temple No.72 – Mandaraji 曼荼羅寺
Temple No.73 – Shusshakaji 出釈迦寺
Temple No.74 – Koyamaji 甲山寺
Temple No.75 – Zentsuji 善通寺
Kotohira 琴平

B17 Kannoji 神野寺 (Jinnoji)
Temple No.76 - Konzoji 金倉寺
Temple No.77 - Doryuji 道隆寺
From T77 to T78 - KM 1004 to KM 1011
Temple No.78 - Goshoji 郷照寺
Temple No. 79- Tennoji 天皇寺
Takamatsu and T80-T88
From T79 to T80 - KM 1018 to KM 1024
Temple No.80 - Kokubunji 國分寺
From T80 to T81 - KM 1024 to KM 1031
Temple No 81 - Shiromineji 白峯寺
From T81 to T82 - KM 1031 to KM 1036
Temple No.82 - Negoroji 根香寺
From T82 to T83 - KM 1036 to KM 1049
Temple No. B19 - Kozaiji 香西寺
Temple No.83 - Ichinomiyaji 一宮寺
From T83 to T 84 - KM 1049 to KM 1062
Temple No.84 - Yashimaji 屋島寺
From T84 to T85 - KM 1062 to 1068
Temple No.85 - Yakuriji 八栗寺
Temple No.86 - Shidoji 志度寺
Beyond T86 and Finishing the Pilgrimage
From T86 to T 87 - KM 1075 to KM 1082
Temple No.87 - Nagaoji 長尾寺
From T87 to T88 - KM 1082 to KM 1095
Temple No. T88 - Okuboji 大窪寺
Temple No. B20 - Otakiji 大瀧寺
From T88 to T1 - KM 1095 to KM 1139
Koya-San 高野山

Historical Timeline

Some Japanese Terms

Links

Sources and further Reading Suggestions

Preface

The Shikoku pilgrimage is one of the oldest pilgrimage paths in the world. Located on the fourth largest island of Japan, its history goes back by over 1,200 years to the time when a monk named Kukai travelled to Shikoku to seek enlightenment by meditating in some remote parts of the island.

The pilgrimage movement started much later, approximately 300 years ago, when it became popular to walk a series of 88 temples in a circle around the island in his honor.

The Shikoku pilgrimage is often compared to the Camino de Santiago (which is a much too general term, as there are a number of pilgrimages that lead to Santiago from different directions). However, the Shikoku pilgrimage is different in many ways: It is a loop, so there is no beginning and no end. It may be completed as a whole or in several stages, and there are no official pilgrimage hostels as such, but the overnight stays need to be organized individually.

The purpose of this guide is to provide practical help for planning your pilgrimage, and information on the cultural background of the temples. As this is not a map-book, I often refer to and strongly recommend the English map book *The Shikoku 88 Route Guide* in addition to this travel guide, which offers a complete map of the 1,200 km path to the 88 main temples and 20 secondary temples. This book is less about deeper spiritual or religious aspects and not at all about myths, so many of the popular myths related to

the pilgrimage are not covered. It is only meant as a practical guide.

One of the great pleasures of the Shikoku pilgrimage is the interaction with locals, who are friendly and supportive people, usually ready to help wherever they can. As Shikoku is suffering from a declining and aging population, I strongly encourage pilgrims to support the local economy by making use of local places to stay. Consequently, I will also not focus on how the pilgrimage could be done at lowest possible cost, sleeping outdoors or in free shelter huts. In case your budget is limited, I recommend doing as much as you can and returning some other time.

The places where formerly one could stay free of charge in temples or on the roadside are declining and initially were meant for people in need, stranded in the grey zone between being a pilgrim and being homeless. I believe that most of the readers of this guidebook are not in this situation, so these options are not covered in depth.

Most people who come to Shikoku are impressed by the positive aura of the island and its people. I hope you, too, will enjoy this experience.

How to fill in the „Osame-Fuda“ slips:

The diagram shows a vertical rectangular slip of paper. At the top, there is a small illustration of a person sitting in a chair, with the text "家内安全" (Family Safety) on the left and "先祖供養" (Ancestor供养) on the right. Below this, the slip is divided into sections. The first section is labeled "姓名所" (Name and Address) and contains the characters "奉納" (Offered) and "所" (Place). The second section is labeled "年" (Year), "月" (Month), and "日" (Day). The third section is labeled "霊場" (Spiritual Site) and contains the characters "順" (Follow) and "拜" (Worship). The fourth section is labeled "同拜" (Worship together) and contains the character "入" (Enter). Arrows point from the labels to the corresponding sections: "Name" points to the "姓名所" section, "Address" points to the "所" character, "Year" points to the "年" character, "Month" points to the "月" character, "Day" points to the "日" character, and "Backside: Anything about yourself, words of appreciation or motivation" points to the bottom of the slip.

(Current Date)

Name

Address

Year

Month

Day

Backside: Anything about yourself, words of appreciation or motivation

The blank ones are sold at the temple shops. Prepare them to have them ready, 2 for each temple and also as an appreciation to anyone who helps you e. g. with a food gift, a place to sleep, a lift by car

The Shikoku Pilgrimage

History

It is not quite clear whether the Shikoku pilgrimage was founded by a Buddhist monk named Kobo Daishi, also referred to as Kukai. In old times, people always wandered to visit sacred and spiritual places, even before Buddhism came to Japan in the 6th century AD. There is evidence of Kukai's stays at three of the temples. But actually, the oldest documentation of a pilgrimage trail in Shikoku dates back to the 17th century in Edo era, when a monk named Shinnen described a walk to 88 temples in Shikoku. Today Kukai is the omnipresent figure in the temples and along the way.

With Buddhism being something “imported” from Korea and China, preaching outside temples and monasteries was forbidden, but in the 7th century, a mystic named En-no-Gyoja (634-701) travelled across the country and preached a mix of nature religion and early Buddhism with elements of Taoism called Shugendo. Slightly later, it was Gyoki (649-749) an ascetic monk, who became the first person to teach Buddhism in Japan, supported by Emperor Shomu. Like Kukai, Gyoki was well-educated in civil engineering. Gyoki passed away 25 years before Kukai was born, and his achievements are possibly underrated.

But who was this Kukai, who is like a permanent companion, whom we see in every temple and on many spots along the way, with his backpack, his sleeping mat, his walking stick and his hat? He was born in 774 near Zentsuji (Temple 75) as a descendant of the noble Saeki family and given the

name Mao. The family was impoverished, but Kukai was able to study religion and philosophy in Kyoto, which would soon become Japan's new capital. Mao was more fascinated by Buddhist teachings and its ascetic practices than by the widespread Confucian doctrine. He spent much time meditating in remote parts of Shikoku, first on a mountain peak near Temple 21, and later in a cave near Temple 24 close to cape Muroto, where he found enlightenment. From then, he called himself Kukai, after the two elements he first saw stepping out of his cave – the sky and the sea. By then he was in his mid-twenties.

Aged 30, Kukai travelled to China with a group of other monks, after a troublesome trip during which some of his companions were lost in a storm. After his arrival in Fujian, he was allowed to continue to the capital of Xi'an where he studied esoteric Buddhism for two years. He returned to Kyoto, and after some time at Jingo-Ji, in 810 he was given the position of the head priest at Todai-Ji, the largest temple of Nara. Finally, in 816 emperor Saga accepted his request to build a retreat on mount Koya which was only completed in 835, due to major delays in fundraising. Kukai passed away the same year, his remains are kept in his Mausoleum at Mt. Koya. Kukai founded Shingon Buddhism, today the largest Buddhist sect in Japan today. One of the key elements of Shingon is the belief that human beings have the opportunity to be enlightened already in their current life through esoteric practice.

It roughly took another 900 years until in 1687 Shinnen described a pilgrimage path across 88 temples in Shikoku in his book *Shikoku Henro Michishirube*, at that time still without any particular order. Shinnen organized sign posts, rest huts and measured the distance between temples, creating a minimal infrastructure for the pilgrims. This started a pilgrimage movement also among common

people, for whom pilgrimage was often the only trip they ever made. Often, a village would collect money and send one person on the pilgrimage with the mission to pray for those who stayed at home.

Until the 20th century, undertaking the pilgrimage was a hard and dangerous thing to do. Pilgrimage was done in straw sandals in an area with minimal infrastructure (think of not walking in hiking shoes on pavement over bridges, but instead in straw sandals on mud roads and across rivers). Malaria and leprosy were common and the fact that pilgrims carried along plenty of cash made them an easy target for robbers. All of this led to a high death toll, in addition, pilgrims were not welcome especially on the remote and poorly developed south side of the island. One of the reasons for having a defined pilgrimage path was also that pilgrims were forced by the authorities in some places to pass the areas without delay and on a fixed route, as they were considered being homeless, contagious and were not welcome to settle. Between 1844 and 1866, pilgrims were generally banned from passing the cities of Tosa (Kochi) and Uwajima.

The Pilgrimage Today

Shi-koku means “Four Countries” and refers to the four prefectures of the island: Tokushima, Kochi, Ehime and Kagawa. Today, the route leads along the 88 main temples across the four prefectures. Shikoku has four major cities: Tokushima in the east, Kochi in the south, Matsuyama in the northwest and Takamatsu in the northeast. Each of these cities is interesting to visit and offers excellent choices for shopping in case you might need some gear. It is not mandatory to begin with Temple No. 1, nor is it mandatory to visit all of them in one trip. Anything is possible and left to the individual to organize according to his or her own means. Pilgrimage in organized bus tours is common among

Japanese, just like individual pilgrimage by car on weekends. Apart from some etiquette and general guidelines for behavior there are no rules on how the pilgrimage must be done. Each of the prefectures has its own character which also reflects in spiritual stages, that pilgrims might experience as they walk.

Tokushima Pref., formerly Awa (T1-T23, 190 km)

Probably because it is nearest to Kyoto and Koyasan, Tokushima is the first prefecture and this is where the numbering begins. The prefecture stands for “spiritual awakening”, and the pilgrim has an easy start: After a 20-minute train ride from Tokushima Station, T1 is just a 15-minute walk from Bando Station. The route begins flat, temples coming every few kilometers as the challenge gradually increases with longer distances and more climbs. After 153 km, the prefecture’s last temple (T23) is reached and the route reaches the seaside.

Kochi Pref., formerly Tosa (T24-T39, 390 km)

The route across Kochi Prefecture mostly goes along the southern coast of the island. The pilgrim is challenged by long stretches with minimal infrastructure; the 16 temples being spread over a distance of 455 km. Consequently, this prefecture stands for ascetic training. Ehime Pref., formerly Iyo (T40-65, 365 km)

The route becomes more colorful and the landscape more diverse in Ehime, the prefecture of enlightenment. In Matsuyama, after passing the Kuma Kogen mountain range, pilgrims can enjoy themselves in the hot springs of Dogo Onsen and look forward to a couple of easier days walking along the beautiful rock coast on the west side of the island.

Kagawa Pref., formerly Sanuki (T66-T88, 150 km)

After 945 kilometers, the pilgrims enter Kagawa Prefecture, which represents Nirvana. They will visit 22 beautiful temples over a distance of only 150 km, enjoy local noodles, the bustling city of Takamatsu and receive their certificate of completion before visiting T88 and closing their loop by returning to T1.

In the 20th century, it became common practice to visit Koyasan, after finishing the pilgrimage, the center of Shingon Buddhism, a city of temples which is not located in Shikoku, but two hours by south of Osaka in Wakayama prefecture.

There are over 1800 sacred places in Shikoku. Apart from the 88 main temples (named T1 to T88 in this book), we find other categories of temples:

- There are 20 *Bekkaku* Temples (named B1 to B20), the term *Bekkaku* meaning “counted separately”. Many of these temples are just as splendid as the main. The numbering of the Bekkaku-temples was only introduced in 1966. The 88 main temples and 20 Bekkaku temples add up to 108 temples, 108 being a holy number in Buddhist numerology.
- Most of the main temples have remote temples or inner sanctuaries allocated to them, these locations are called *Okunoin*. They could be the original holy places which started the temple, places of particular spirituality, or remote locations for ascetic training. When they are connected to any of the main temples, this guidebook uses the letter O- followed by the main temple. For simplification, I have called all associated sacred spots *Okunoin* although strictly speaking, it may not be correct.
- Another group of temples is called *Bangai*, which means “unnumbered” meaning they are not related to any of the main temples, but they, too, may be impressive in

size or appearance, just as some of the 88 main temples may be rather small and modest.

- Apart from the different types of Buddhist temples, Shikoku also has a vast number of Shinto-shrines named *Jinja*, often on the same property as the Buddhist temples.

Temples and shrines can easily be distinguished by their gates: While Buddhist temple gates are often built like small buildings with walls and roofs, Shinto shrines have the typical Torii gates made of two vertical and two horizontal pillars, the upper one bent.

In many cases, temples and shrines can be found on the same area, sharing common history. Historically, Shintoism, before it was called like this, was the original nature religion of Japan, the Emperor being the head priest. Buddhism was considered something foreign, imported, un-Japanese to some. The Emperor was without political power for most of that times (the period between the Meiji era from 1868 and the end of WWII 1945 being one of the few exceptions) as the country was ruled by Samurai clans. Throughout the Edo era (1603-1868), Temples often shared their grounds with Shinto shrines, while the Meiji reformation 1868, in which the Emperor took power, brought a phase of strong confrontation between the two religions, during which many Buddhist temples were destroyed and the grounds later divided. The phase of destruction ended suddenly in 1872 and temples were rebuilt.

Traditionally pilgrims follow ten commandments:

1. Do not harm life
2. Do not steal
3. Do not commit adultery
4. Do not lie
5. Do not exaggerate

6. Do not speak abusively
7. Do not cause discord
8. Do not be greedy
9. Do not be hateful
10. Do not lose sight of the truth

Preparations

When to Go

If you do not live in Japan, it is a good idea to start with the flight booking. This will set the time for your trip and avoid further postponement. 3-6 months before the trip is a good time for preparation. The best, and most popular seasons for the walking pilgrimage are March and April before April 23rd (which marks the beginning of the Golden Week, a major holiday in Japan where traffic is heavy and many places are booked out). The summer months are not recommended – too much rain, too humid, typhoons, but October is another good month, and later, the winter months in Japan are usually bright and dry. Avoid the period of New Year's Eve and the first week of January. This is a time when the entire country comes to a standstill and accommodation might be difficult.

The walking pilgrim will need 8 to 10 weeks depending on detours and rest days. In any case, part of the trip will fall into a difficult month. The temperatures are the same across the island, but the south has more rain.

Let us look at the weather you might expect every month:


January	Temps between 0 and 10°C, month with little rain, with dry air and bright days. First week is New Year's holiday period, many places might be closed. Mountain areas might be cold and snowy.
February	Temps between 5 and 15°C, good month to go but not warm Mountain areas might be cold and snowy, occasionally rainy.
March	Temps 5-20°C, good month to go, be prepared for occasional cold and hot moments, occasional rain.
April	Good month to go. Temps between 10 and 20°C, Golden Week starts April 23, so be sure to be done or at least to have a confirmed stay early enough in that period. Expect some days of rain.
May	More occasional rain, weather becomes warmer with 15-25°C and higher humidity
June	Rainy season, rain approx. every second day, very humid, temps up to 30°C, not recommended for walking. August is hottest month. September is typhoon season
July	
August	
September	
October	Good month to go. Less rainy, sunny but with lower humidity.
November	Good month to go but might occasionally be cold, jacket needed.

December	Clear skies and dry weather, good month to go but jacket and gloves needed.
----------	---

Costs

The costs of the trip can be calculated by adding one-time costs for the trip to Shikoku plus an estimation of costs per day depending on your requested level of comfort and length of stay.

Estimated one-time costs

One-Time Costs	Yen	€ (= 125 Yen)
Flight to Kansai		700.00
 to Tokushima and back	8,400	67.00
Hotel 1 st night	3,500	24.00
Dinner 1 st night	2,000	16.00
Shikoku 88 Route Guide	1,600	13.00
Walking staff	2,000	16.00
Vest	4,000	32.00
Hat	3,000	24.00
Stamp book	2,400	19.00
Total one-time costs		€874.00

To the one-time costs, you need to add estimated costs per day

Costs per day	Yen	€ (= 125 Yen)
Hostel per night	3,500	
Food & beverages	2,500	
Average 3 temple stamps	900	
Spending money	1,000	
Total costs per day	¥7,900	€63.00

These estimations are based on a reasonable level of comfort. That would include a nightly hostel or guesthouse stay in shared rooms, eating meals in basic restaurants, and collecting stamps at the temples.

A 2-week pilgrimage to Shikoku will allow you to visit the temples of one of the four prefectures on foot:

One-time costs	€874.00
13 x €66.00	€858.00
Total costs for the trip	€1,732.00

It takes 8-10 weeks to walk the entire route. An 8-week pilgrimage visiting the 88 temples on foot will cost about

One-time costs	€874.00
56 x €63.00	€3,528.00
Total costs for the trip	€4,402.00

Hostels are usually paid in cash. Supermarkets accept credit cards, but I recommend carrying money for the trip in case

card payment does not work. Japan is a very safe country and the risk of the money being stolen is close to zero.

Cash can be withdrawn at ATMs in post offices and 7-Eleven convenience stores. However, some of the other ATMs do not accept foreign credit cards, even if they carry the Visa- or Mastercard logo.

What to Take Along

You do not need much. Every hostel or guesthouse offers laundry. I have been on the Shikoku pilgrimage 5 times and managed to reduce the weight of my backpack down to 6-7 kg, including the backpack and a jacket. Everyone is different, but you might take this adventure to find out how light you can really travel.

To start with, here is a list of what you DON'T really need. Remember, no one cares if you look stylish:

- Too many toiletries
- A third pair of shoes
- Hair spray or gel
- Shaving kit
- A large towel (a tiny one will do)
- Cologne or perfume
- Detergent (It is usually provided when you do the laundry)

Here is what I recommend to take along:

- Trekking poles (much better than the wooden staff and good for steep climbs and descents)
- A soft hat that can easily be squeezed into your luggage and in hot moments you can dip it into water and turn it into an air conditioner
- Walking shoes (Sneakers are good enough, 85% is on pavement, the rest is on trails)
- A lighter second pair of shoes to wear at night

- 3-4 pairs of socks
- A sweater (think of cold airplane cabins)
- A small towel
- A nail trimmer (your nails, at times, will suffer)
- An empty water bottle (any empty plastic bottle will do)
- 2-3 of your oldest T-shirts to throw away by the end of the trip
- Hiking pants (not shorts)
- 2-3 zipper pouches to keep your mobile phone and passport dry during heavy rainfall.
- A waterproof jacket
- Sports tape to protect your feet from blisters
- Sunscreen lotion
- A mini flashlight (it gets very dark very early)
- A red clip light to make yourself visible from the back in the dark or in tunnels
- The “Shikoku 88 Route Guide” map-book
- Charge cable and adapter
- Some tiny souvenirs from home (Key chain, postcards, candy) to give to people who do you favors
- Earplugs to sleep better in case anyone snores.
- Copies of your passport
- A very light bag to take along in case you go on a day trip without your backpack

Should you intend to walk the entire pilgrimage, you should make sure to keep your backpack as light as possible. Check the weight of every item you intend to take along, make a list, including the weight of the backpack itself, check the total weight of your luggage and set yourself a maximum weight limit. It should be possible to get below 8kg.

How to Get to Shikoku

You can start anywhere you want, but most people start in Tokushima which is close to Temple 1.

By plane: The closest international airport is KIX Kansai. From Kansai airport there are direct busses to Tokushima, the 3-hour journey costing 4.200 yen one-way. Tickets are sold outside the airport terminal at vending machines and ticket booths, with English explanations. A more laid-back approach is to take the train from the airport to Wakayama and from there take the ferry to Tokushima. This will be a little longer than going by bus. The long-distance busses are very comfortable with generous seat pitch and Wi-Fi. You can also fly via Tokyo and take a connecting domestic flight (from HND Tokyo Haneda Airport) to any of the four larger cities in Shikoku.

By train: Japan has the world's most dense and reliable railway system. Take the Shinkansen bullet train to Okayama, from there, a limited express (JR Seto Ohashi Line) will take you over one of the bridges onto the Island to Utazu (near T78), once you are here, there are trains that can take you to T1 with a transfer in Takamatsu if that is where you wish to start. Tokushima is a convenient hub to start from. Allow yourself some time to stroll around and visit the Awa-odori souvenir shop to buy your first pilgrimage gear on the first night. After that, a short visit to a hot spring will help you sleep well after the long trip.

How to Do the Pilgrimage

The basic idea is to move from temple to temple but there are no rules, and everyone may choose the mode of transportation, length of trip and direction they wish, according to their abilities. Many locals go in organized tours or by car, many overseas visitors walk or do a mix of walking and public transportation for some of the longer or more difficult stretches. Your daily distance should be in line with your endurance, but remember you are in an interesting place and there will be many reasons to take a break, so do not plan your distances with too much ambition.

Some people manage to walk 40 km a day and do the entire pilgrimage in one month, but I recommend planning 20 km per day which is approximately 5 hours of pure walking with time to rest and to enjoy the most beautiful moments or discover unusual places. Remember this is not a race, on the contrary, one intention might be to let go of the daily pressures of your life and to find your personal flow. Even if at some stage it might become clear that you will not be able to finish (due to lack of time or injury). Take that as a good reason to come back. Some pilgrims also do it by bicycle. I once did T33 to T88 by bike, it was a wonderful experience done on a women's shopping bike which I had purchased locally, but some of the climbs are really tough and some stages cannot be done on the official route. It was a great experience which allowed me to take along more luggage, but my average speed was only 12-14 km/h.

The stages between the Temples can be anything between a few 100 meters and 84 km. At the temple you take a rest,

follow the ritual as you wish, receive a stamp and calligraphy for a small donation, enjoy the marvelous architecture and gardening and visit the rest rooms. (more about the temple rituals later), maybe chat with other pilgrims. Slowly, you make your way around the island, finally making it to T88, the last temple. From there, you may close the loop by returning to T1 and later continue to Koyasan if you want.

Pilgrimage by Public Transportation

Not everyone is strong enough to do the pilgrimage on foot. And even on foot, you might find yourself in a situation where you might prefer getting a ride, due to pain, frustration, schedule or bad weather. Nothing wrong with that, there are no rules, and it is not a race. Trains and busses will take you to most parts of Shikoku, but you should be aware of the schedules, as many connections are not even covered on an hourly basis.

To make travelling convenient for foreigners, the JR stations are numbered so that station names need not be remembered.

With a few exceptions, most of the 88 Temples can be accessed by public transportation and some walking (many of the temples are located on hills).

When taking the train, on major lines you proceed as follows:

1. Find your destination station on the maps near the ticket machines
2. Check the price listed at your destination name
3. Press "English" on the ticket machine if necessary
4. Insert enough money into the machine (They also take bills and give change)
5. Press the button with the ticket price that you found on the map
6. Collect the ticket and your change
7. Go to the platform, show your ticket to the station employee
8. Keep your ticket
9. Upon arrival your ticket will be checked and collected