**【Chichibu 34 Kannon Pilgrimage: Traditional Attire】**

The set of rental attire for the Chichibu pilgrimage consists of five items that are traditionally worn by pilgrims. The full set can be borrowed for one to three days, or in 30-minute sessions for visitors who just want to try walking around in the traditional clothing. The set can be both picked up and dropped off at either of two locations: the Chichibu Tourist Information Center (just south of Seibu-Chichibu Station, near the police box) and the Chichibu Local Product Center (within Chichibu Station). The items in the set are also available for purchase.

**Hat (*Sugegasa*)**

The *sugegasa* is woven from sedge and has a broad brim for protection from the sun and rain. Sedge hats have been worn by pilgrims, travelers, and laborers in Japan for at least a millennium, and they come in a variety of shapes and types. When going on a pilgrimage, it is customary to write certain phrases on the sides of the *sugegasa*. The hats worn by Chichibu pilgrims typically bear the following four phrases:

1. 迷故三界城 (*meiko sangaijō*) “All the world is a fortress in which I am lost.”
2. 悟故十方空（*goko jippōkū*）“In my pursuit of Buddhist teaching I am freed.”
3. 本来無東西 (*honrai mutōzai)* “In reality, there is neither east nor west.”
4. 何処有南北 (*gashō* *nanboku*) “Just as there is neither north nor south.”

The last two phrases refer to the idea that worldly concepts like “north” and “south” are only human ideas. Without the existence of a self, there can be no directionality.

In addition to these four phrases, it is also common to write a fifth phrase: *dōgyō ni nin*, (同行二人) which literally means “Two people going together.” This is a reference to the constant presence of Kannon, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, who is said to accompany pilgrims on the Chichibu route just as in all other paths of life. For other routes, the phrase may instead refer to Kūkai (774–835), the founder of Esoteric Buddhism.

**Sleeveless Jacket (*Oizuru*)**

Pilgrims traditionally dress entirely in white robes, a style referred to as *byakue*. White clothing is associated with purity, and the outfit is similar to the white funereal robes (*shiroshōzoku*) used to dress a deceased person. Wearing *byakue* is said to reflect each pilgrim’s recognition that they are risking life and limb by journeying for many days into unknown regions. If a pilgrim perished along the way, they were already prepared for burial.

Though most modern pilgrims do not wear full white robes, many wear a white, sleeveless jacket called an *oizuru*. It was once common for pilgrims to carry a portable wooden cabinet called an *oi* that contained sutras, incense, or a Buddhist image such as a statue. The name *oizuru* literally means, “garment that the *oi* rubs against.” Similar to the sedge hats, it is very common for pilgrims to write the phrase “Praise Kannon, Bodhisattva of Compassion” (*namu kanzeon bosatsu*) on their *oizuru*. Some pilgrims also choose to have the official stamp (*goshuin*) of each temple written on their *oizuru* rather than in a notebook.

**Stole (*Obi* or *Wagesa*)**

The stole worn by pilgrims developed as a simplified version of a “five-panel robe” (*gojō*), a traditional monk’s stole that is sewn together from many smaller pieces of cloth. The stole is the outermost garment of the “three robes” (*san’e*) that monks traditionally wear. The Sanskrit name for this garment (*kāṣāya*), which means “ochre,” refers to the traditional robes worn by monks in India, which were patched together from pieces of discarded cloth and dyed with ochre.

**Bag (*Osamefuda-ire*)**

In the past, pilgrims left a mark of their visit by posting slips of paper called *senjafuda* on the walls and rafters of each temple. Pasting these slips of paper was believed to bring good luck or aid in the fulfillment of a wish, but the practice was stopped after countless temples became plastered with them. Now, it is considered equally beneficial to deposit votive slips of paper (*osamefuda*), which pilgrims carry in this special bag. Many pilgrims also bring a second carryall bag, called a *zudabukuro*, or “monk’s bag,” after the bags carried by mendicant Buddhist monks (*zuda*).

**Pilgrim’s Staff (*Kongōzue*)**

The *kongōzue* is the only item that is considered absolutely essential for any pilgrim. Aside from its obvious utility as a walking stick, the traditional pilgrim’s staff has tremendous symbolic meaning as well. The name, which means “diamond staff,” is a reference to Esoteric Buddhism and its founder, Kūkai,who is said to accompany all pilgrims. In fact, the pilgrim’s staff is said to physically embody Kūkai himself. For this reason, it is customary to clean the base of the staff at the end of each day and set it in the decorative alcove (*tokonoma*) of the room at night.

The *kongōzue* has a secondary practical use as well. The cover at the top protects a carving of a stupa marked with Sanskrit letters that refer to the five Buddhist elements of earth, water, fire, wind, and void. In much the same way that pilgrims dress in funerary clothes for easy burial, the stupa carving allows the *kongōzue* to be used as a grave marker. As with the *oizuru*, it is possible to have the temple stamp written on the *kongōzue*.