

Omuro Hachijuhachi-kasho Reijo

The Omuro Hachijuhachi-kasho Reijo is a 3-kilometer, 2-hour walking course that is a miniature version of the famous Shikoku pilgrimage. The Shikoku route takes pilgrims to 88 temples situated around the perimeter of Japan's Shikoku Island.

Ninnaji's scaled-down version, which ascends the steep hill called Mt. Joju at the rear of the temple, takes pilgrims past 88 chapels called *fudasho*. They can collect an amulet at each chapel while venerating the priest Kukai (Kobo Daishi), to whose teachings Ninnaji is dedicated. Obtaining all 88 amulets and completing the route earns one the title *kechigan*, and is said to bestow prosperity equal to that attained by completing the Shikoku pilgrimage, which is 400 times longer.

Ninnaji's 29th head priest inaugurated the miniature route in 1827 in response to a call for a less arduous alternative to the Shikoku pilgrimage. He brought back sand from the sacred grounds of the Shikoku pilgrimage, scattered it along the paths of Mt. Joju, and then commenced the construction of the 88 *fudasho*. One structure on the trail is made from part of a former bathhouse on the Shikoku trail where pilgrims would stop and wash after visiting the last of the 88 pilgrimage sites, though is not used as a bathhouse at Ninnaji.