

## **How to Approach the Pilgrimage**

The Shikoku Pilgrimage welcomes everyone, regardless of religious beliefs or affiliation. People set out on the pilgrimage for a wide variety of reasons: some come to pray for the soul of a loved one who has passed away, while others seek spiritual guidance. Likewise, many undertake the journey to challenge themselves mentally or physically. What most prospective pilgrims have in common is a desire to take a break from everyday life and dedicate themselves to a single pursuit, be it for a few days or several months at a time. This is achieved in part by wearing pilgrims' clothing, including a white vest or jacket, sedge hat, and stole, and in part by adhering to the customs of the pilgrimage. Such customs include praying at temples, collecting temple stamps and calligraphy in one's nokyochō notebook, and interacting with fellow pilgrims. The pilgrimage is not a form of demanding religious training; rather, it is a journey in both the literal and metaphorical sense. As pilgrims travel through the towns and forests of Shikoku, they are likely to come across a diverse range of landscapes, climates, situations, and people. Ideally, this provides them with new ideas, inspiration, and opportunities to reassess their priorities in life.