

What Is the Shikoku Pilgrimage?

The Shikoku Pilgrimage is a unique experience that centers on visiting 88 Buddhist temples on the island of Shikoku. The temples are located throughout the island's four prefectures—Tokushima, Kochi, Ehime, and Kagawa—and walking the entire route from one temple to the next adds up to a journey of more than 1,400 kilometers. Along this route, pilgrims pass through cities, villages, forests, and farmland; they also hike mountain trails, travel along the coasts of the Pacific Ocean and the Seto Inland Sea, and encounter many types of terrain.

Rather than having to follow any single path, pilgrims can chart their own course around Shikoku, where the pilgrimage is an integral part of daily life. Local residents continue the centuries-old custom of offering pilgrims food, drink, small gifts, or even a place to stay the night. There is no single reason for undertaking the Shikoku Pilgrimage. For some, it is a spiritual activity, while for others, it is a journey of discovery; for many, it is a form of tourism. Everyone, regardless of religious beliefs or affiliation, is welcome to participate, as long as they honor a few basic guidelines and approach the undertaking with respect and an open mind.