



# Ohenro Tour

## Ohenro: Day 1

After breakfast, you will embark on the first steps of your Ohenro experience. Remember that the Ohenro isn't so much about the destinations but more about the journeys between them.

The first temple will be Ryōzenji. At this location Kūkai is said to have meditated on the meaning of the Buddha's sermon and found the temple with the intention of filling pilgrims with a sense of "hotsugan," a term referring to a desire to save all beings.

After the first temple, the day will consist of a walking through the charming suburbs of a more rural side of Tokushima.

Down twisting town alleys, along small roads, and occasionally crossing over small hills and through groves, the walking is a time to enjoy nature, self reflect, and take in this ancient experience.

The final temple and your lodging for the day will be Anrakuji. While visiting this area it is said that Kūkai declared that Yakushi Nyorai (the Medicine Buddha) would save the people here from sickness and evil. The monk found a hot spring in the area and from this, the temple was founded.

The onsen and temple have since been used as a place of physical and spiritual healing, making an ideal location to spend your first evening on Shikoku.



## Ohenro: Day 2

After a temple breakfast at Anrakuji, you will visit four more temples today.

The approach to the last temple of the day, Kirihataji, is a gentle slope that passes through rice fields, flower beds, and sleepy town streets.

Situated atop a hill, the winding path up to Kirihataji is shady and breezy underneath a canopy of verdant greens in the warmer months and smoky yellows and reds in the fall and the winter.

The temple itself was supposedly founded after a young seamstress provided cloth for Kūkai to mend his robes. The young lady requested to join the Buddhist priesthood and as Kūkai completed the ceremony the young woman transformed into Kannon Bosatsu, a major Buddhist deity of forgiveness and salvation.

The story represents Buddhist ideas of how our actions and intentions can transform us into bastions of virtue and good in this very life and provides some food for thought as you walk along the pilgrimage trail.



## Ohenro: Day 3

Today will be a longer walking experience along the mountain trails that wind through the backyards of farmers and the thick pine forests that cover many of the mountains on Shikoku.

In the morning you will visit a local farmers market to see firsthand the productivity the region enjoys. Mountains of citrus, root vegetables, and various other local produce are piled on the market tables as local vendors sell their goods. The market also sells bento lunchboxes that feature the unique cuisine of this mountainous region.

The trail to the first temple of the day, Kakurinji, will take you through a mountain path that offers sweeping views of the valleys below and mountain ridges in the distance.

The temple itself is said to have been founded after Kūkai discovered two cranes protecting a golden statue of the Buddhist figure Jizō Bosatsu. This figure is among the most popular of Buddhist deities in Japan and his peaceful expression and bald head fit his image as a savior and protector (especially of children and travelers) within Buddhism.

The next part of the trail is a bit of a stretch but offers some varied and highly interesting scenery. Hillside farms with trees heavy with ever present citrus, forest trails with the constant companionship of mountain streams, mountain side perches offering sweeping views of the island, and pine forests rich with ferns and moss that weave through the mountains, and finally the final temple of the day, Tairyūji.

Hidden amid mountain groves, this temple has been largely protected from damage due to its location. Significantly, this temple is well known as the Koyasan of the west as it attempts to recreate the feeling and style of the center of Shingon Buddhism.

Even more importantly, this is one of the locations where Kūkai is thought to have trained and reached awakening. For the daring, one can visit the ledge where this occurred now marked with a statue of the monk.

The scenery lends itself well to this tale and as one descends the mountain top by cable car, this can be felt. Gazing past the windows at the rolling hills, deep valleys, and dark groves, one can feel not just beauty, but also a sense of power and mystery that these places frequently possess.



## Ohenro: Day 4

The final day of the tour will be spent in Tokushima City. Here, you will spend the day leisurely experiencing the highlights of this city.

First will be a cruise over the waters where the Pacific meets the Seto Inland Sea. Due to the collisions between the currents, dramatic whirlpools often form as the tides change. Shipside, you will be treated to a frontstage performance of this phenomenon. Afterwards, lunch will be at the nearby park. Here, from the bridge, you will also be able to view this dramatic display from a different viewpoint as well.

Today you will also experience some the artistic side of Tokushima as well as the natural. The Otsuka Art Museum houses ceramic replications of famous works and architectural designs. Walking through the halls of the museum it is easy to forget the time and place as you view works ranging from the Sistine Chapel to Picasso and Van Gogh.

The final event for the evening will be a performance at the Awa Odori Dance Hall. According to one story, the dance evolved from the drunken performances that occurred at the lord's castle in the past. Since then, and regardless of the true origin, the people of Tokushima have owned this unique dance with the yearly Awa Odori Festival.

