



2 Day Ohenro Tour

Ohenro: Day 1

This two day course will be an introduction to the Shikoku Pilgrimage set in the charmingly odd city of Takamatsu. This pilgrimage (Ohenro in Japanese) is taken by many people for many different reason. Keep this in mind as you take your first steps upon the ancient trail—your journey is much more important than the destinations.

The first temples visited will be Shiromineji and Negoroji. Located high amid the Goshikidai Mountain Range, these temples offer sweeping views of the countryside, city, and the Seto Inland Sea.

The temple grounds of Shiromineji are rich with greenery and moss that are verdant green in the warmer months and surrounded by fiery orange and red in the mild winter and autumn. From here you will walk the ancient pilgrimage trail that connects to Negoroji.

Overlooking the surrounding countryside, Negoroji is hidden below a canopy of leaves enveloping it in mist of shady mystery. This atmosphere is more than appropriate as, according to legend, the surrounding area was once terrorized by a demon that lived on the mountain. It is said that a local archer used his faith in Buddhism and martial skill to defeat the monster and that the monster's horn is kept in the temple treasury to this day.

The day will end with a visit Ritsurin Park, widely regarded as one of the best representations of classic Japanese gardening and architecture. Maintained for over 400 years by the lords of Takamatsu, this garden is rich with koi filled ponds, blooming flowers, and seasonal beauty. The park also maintains the trappings of its feudal origins including plants gifted from far away lords, archery grounds, and even an artificial waterfall constructed for the amusement of one local lord.

In the evening, you will have ample free time to explore streets of downtown Takamatsu. The intriguingly modern yet old fashioned atmosphere of this city provides an excellent opportunity to take in local culture and reflect on the day.



Ohenro: Day 2

After a temple breakfast at Anrakuji, you will visit three more temples on your last day in Takamatsu.

First is Shidoji. Located near the Seto Inland Sea, this temple boasts a sprawling garden rich with seasonal plant life and a towering red pagoda. Its location to the sea is not without significance either. According to legend, a sea dragon who stole a mystical Buddhist Orb capable of fulfilling wishes was defeated near by this temple.

Next is Yakuriji, a temple said to have been founded after five heavenly swords fell from the sky marking the 5 mountain peaks of the area. On clear days, this mountain temple offers a sweeping view of the surrounding countryside that reaches the azure waters of the Seto Inland Sea.

The last temple of the day is Yashimaji. This area was the site of a major battle in Japan's first civil war between ruling clans. Evidence of this still exists in such land marks as the "Pond of Blood," where soldiers are said to have washed their swords.

Aside from more grisly details, Yashimaji offers an exciting look into the more "carnival" like nature of Japanese religious expression. The temple itself is surrounded by a complex of vendors selling everything from souvenirs, pilgrimage gear, to udon noodle flavored ice cream. This combined with the lovely mountain top view of the Seto Inland Sea, makes for a truly unique atmosphere.

The day will end with a visit to Shikoku Mura, a kind of open air museum. Showcasing buildings from the past taken and restored from all over Shikoku, this village allows you to view slices of the past local lives of people from all across this island.

The day will end at Takamatsu Station. Here you are free to continue onto the next leg of your journey amid the sun setting behind the azure waves of the Seto Inland Sea.

