



Shikoku

Includes ➔

Tokushima	631
Iya Valley	641
Tsurugi-san	644
Hiwasa	646
Kōchi	648
Ashizuri-misaki	654
Uwajima	654
Matsuyama	659
Ishizuchi-san	665
Takamatsu	669

Best Outdoor Adventures

- ➔ Rafting Yoshino-gawa (p643)
- ➔ Hiking Ishizuchi-san (p665)
- ➔ Hiking Tsurugi-san (p644)
- ➔ Surfing the Tokushima coastline (p647)
- ➔ Canyoning in Nametoko Valley (p656)

Best Temples

- ➔ Zentsū-ji (p666)
- ➔ Konpira-san (p667)
- ➔ Ishite-ji (p659)
- ➔ Kongōfuku-ji (p654)
- ➔ Yashima-ji (p672)

Why Go?

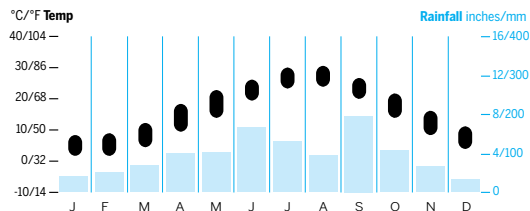
The birthplace of revered Buddhist ascetic Kōbō Daishi (774–835), Shikoku (四国) is synonymous with natural beauty and the pursuit of spiritual perfection. It's home to the 88 Temple route, Japan's most famous pilgrimage, even if some *henro* (pilgrims) today bus it rather than hoof it.

But Shikoku is not just for the seeker of enlightenment – the island's stunning Iya Valley, rugged Pacific coastline, gorgeous free-flowing rivers and mountain ranges all beckon to be explored with hiking boot, kayak, surfboard and your own earthly vessel. Your physical incarnation will feast upon the historic castles and gardens, excellent regional cuisine and modern pleasures of Kōchi, Matsuyama and Takamatsu.

Easy to access from Honshū via two bridge systems – glorious feats of engineering – Shikoku offers an adventurous retreat from the outside world. Just like Kōbō Daishi would have wanted.

When to Go

Takamatsu



Apr Enlightenment may know no weather, but any pilgrimage is best taken in spring.

Jul–Sep Rivers are running, surf is rolling and the sun is, well, shining.

Aug Join every man, woman and child for Awa-odori Matsuri, Japan's wildest dance party.

① Getting There & Around

Most visitors to Shikoku over the past 1200 years have followed a clockwise route starting near Tokushima. Most now usually arrive on the island by train from Okayama or by highway bus from Osaka, Kyoto and Tokyo. The Iya Valley and the two southern capes are probably best explored by car, as many towns there have tricky bus and train connections.

AIR

All Nippon Airways (www.ana.co.jp) and **Japan Airlines** (www.jal.co.jp) services connect Matsuyama, Kōchi, Takamatsu and Tokushima in Shikoku with Tokyo, Osaka and other major centres.

BOAT

Nankai Ferry (南海フェリー; ☎088-636-0750; www.nankai-ferry.co.jp in Japanese) runs daily connections between Tokushima and Wakayama (two hours, six daily).

Ocean Tōkyū Ferry (オーシャン東九フェリー; ☎088-662-0489; www.otf.jp in Japanese; ☀9am-5pm) departs once daily to/from Tokyo/Tokushima (18 hours).

Setonaikai Kisen Ferry (瀬戸内海汽船; ☎Matsuyama booking office 089-953-1003; www.setonaikaikisen.co.jp; ☀7am-9pm) has regular hydrofoil connections between Matsuyama and Hiroshima (1¼ hours, 12 daily).

Jumbo Ferry (☎087-811-6688; www.ferry.co.jp) runs between Takamatsu and Kōbe (three hours and 40 minutes, five daily).

BUS

Three bridge systems link Shikoku with Honshū. In the east, the Akashi Kaikyō-ōhashi connects Tokushima with Kōbe in Hyōgo-ken via Awajishima (Awaji Island). The Shimanami Kaidō is an island-hopping series of nine bridges (with bike paths!) leading from Imabari in Ehime-ken to Onomichi near Hiroshima.

TRAIN

The Seto-ōhashi (Seto Bridge) runs from Okayama to Sakaide, west of Takamatsu. This is the only one of the bridges to carry trains. JR and private Kotoden trains run to all regions, except the tips of the two southern capes.

① INTERNATIONAL DRIVING PERMIT

If you plan on renting a car to explore Shikoku's more out-of-the-way destinations – such as the Iya Valley and the southern surf beaches – be sure to procure an International Driving Permit before leaving your home country.

TOKUSHIMA PREFECTURE

The traditional starting point for generations of pilgrims, Tokushima Prefecture (徳島県) is home to the first 23 of Shikoku's 88 Temples. Notable attractions in this region include the lively Awa-odori Matsuri, which takes place in Tokushima in August; the mighty whirlpools of the Naruto Channel between Tokushima and Awaji-shima; the dramatic scenery of the Iya Valley; and the surf beaches of the southern coast.

Tokushima

徳島

☎088 / POP 257,718

With Mt Bizan looming in the west, and the Shinmachi-gawa cutting a gentle swath through the middle, Tokushima is its eponymous prefecture's pleasant capital. With a number of nearby temples, the city makes a solid starting point for pilgrims.

Every August, the Awa-odori Matsuri, a traditional dance festival, attracts thousands of Japanese from across the country. Book accommodation well ahead and expect to pay a premium if visiting during this time.

👁 Sights & Activities

★ Bizan

MOUNTAIN

(眉山) At the foot of Bizan, the 280m-high summit at the southwestern end of Shinmashibashi-dōri, **Awa Odori Kaikan** (阿波おどり会館; ☎088-611-1611; www.awaodori-kaikan.jp; 2-20 Shinmashibashi; admission ¥300; ☀9am-5pm, closed 2nd & 4th Wed) features extensive exhibits relating to the Awa-odori Matsuri and dance. The dance is performed at 2pm, 3pm and 4pm daily (and at 11am as well on weekends), with a nightly performance at 8pm (afternoon/evening ¥600/800). From the 5th floor, the **Bizan Ropeway** (☎088-652-3617; one way/return ¥610/1020; ☀9am-5:30pm Nov-Mar, to 9pm Apr-Oct & during special events) whizzes you to the top of Bizan for fine city views. A combined ticket for the museum, cable car and dance show is ¥1620.

Tokushima Modern Art Museum

MUSEUM

(徳島県立近代美術館; ☎088-668-1088; www.art.tokushima-ec.ed.jp; Bunka-no-mori-kōen, Hachiman-chō; admission ¥200; additional ¥600 for special exhibitions; ☀9.30am-5pm Tue-Sun) With a permanent collection that includes modern masters both Japanese and Western,