

Shikoku & the Shimanami Kaido Cycle



trip highlights

- Ride the Shimanami Kaido, a world-class island-hopping cycle route across the Seto Inland Sea
- Ride across bridges and islands of the Seto Inland Sea
- Explore traditional towns including Mitarai and Uchiko
- Experience Japanese onsen culture in Beppu and Unzen
- Ride through the volcanic landscapes of Mt Aso and the Aso Caldera
- Cycle quiet rural roads, mountain passes and coastal routes of Southern Japan
- Stay in traditional Japanese ryokan accommodation



Trip Duration	10 days	Trip Code: JSCW
Grade	Introductory to Moderate	
Activities	Cycling	
Summary	9 nights in a mixture of traditional, modern and unique Japanese Ryokan (Inns)	

welcome to World Expeditions

For over 50 years, we've been creating high-quality, expedition-style adventures for active travellers with a curious spirit. From our very first trek in the mountains of Nepal to pioneering remote routes across all seven continents, our journeys are built for those who want to truly explore – not just visit.

At the heart of what we do is a simple philosophy: take the paths less travelled.

This means travelling with care, supporting local communities, minimising our impact, and unlocking experiences that most travellers will never have.

If you're ready to go further and dig deeper, we invite you to join us on the Shikoku & the Shimanami Kaido Cycle, a journey that captures the essence of a unique adventure.

why travel with World Expeditions?

This journey has been designed to showcase a different side of Japan through cycling, combining iconic island routes with lesser-visited mountain regions and rural communities. By travelling on quieter roads and scenic backroads, the trip provides a more immersive perspective of southern Japan while maintaining the support and logistics needed for longer riding days. With experienced local guides, vehicle backup and a mix of traditional and modern accommodation, the itinerary balances rewarding cycling with cultural depth and regional experiences.



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World Expeditions will endeavour to arrange for single travellers to share accommodation with another participant of the same gender, however if we cannot match you up a single supplement will be applicable. If you prefer not to share, a single supplement is payable to guarantee your own room. Please refer to our website for the additional cost.

the trip

This guided cycling journey links the iconic Shimanami Kaido with the quieter mountain and coastal roads of Shikoku and Kyushu. Ride across spectacular sea bridges, through fishing villages, citrus orchards, volcanic landscapes and remote rural communities rarely visited by travellers. Cultural experiences including traditional ryokan stays, local cuisine, viewing washi paper making and visits to historic towns provide a deeper connection to southern Japan. With experienced guides, vehicle support and carefully selected accommodation, this is an immersive cycling journey through Japan beyond the major tourist routes.

about your leader/escort

Meet Will Turner, our seasoned guide who leads New Zealand trips in the Summer and shifts gears to guide tours in Japan in the winter. In 2020, Will, alongside Tamie, ventured back to Japan and with their deeply rooted local knowledge, lead meticulously planned itineraries for small groups, infused with a sense of adventure. During your time in Japan, Tamie and Will ensure that your every need is met, offering profound insights into local culture and curating a once in a lifetime exploration of their beloved country.

at a glance

DAY 1	JOIN HIROSHIMA
DAY 2	CYCLE HIROSHIMA TO IKUCHI ISLAND (UP TO 65KM / 40MI)
DAY 3	CYCLE THE SHIMANAMI KAIDO TO SHIKOKU ISLAND (UP TO 73KM / 45MI)
DAY 4	CYCLE THE UFO LINE TO UCHIKO (UP TO 113KM / 70MI)
DAY 5	REST DAY IN UCHIKO
DAY 6	CYCLE UCHIKO TO BEPPU (UP TO 50KM / 31MI)
DAY 7	CYCLE BEPPU TO ASO (UP TO 110KM / 68MI)
DAY 8	CYCLE ASO TO KUMAMOTO (UP TO 72KM / 45MI)
DAY 9	CYCLE NAGASAKI PENINSULA AND MT UNZEN (28KM / 17MI TO 41KM / 25MI)
DAY 10	TRIP CONCLUDES NAGASAKI

what's included

- 9 breakfasts and 8 dinners
- 3 ferry trips
- 9 nights in comfortable hotels and high-quality traditional Japanese ryokan on a twin or double share basis
- Support vehicle throughout the trip
- 2-4 local guides depending on group size
- Printed maps
- GPX files for each day
- Drinks, snacks and refreshments during cycling days

Local cash payments are becoming increasingly popular with many operators in the adventure travel industry. The policy seems to benefit the tour operators, more than the local economies or travellers, as it avoids local taxes and transfers the cost and risk of cash handling to travellers. In accordance with our Responsible Travel practices we have chosen a policy not to ask for such payments.

what's not included

- International flights
- Domestic flights
- Airport and departure taxes
- Visa fees

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trip dates

2026 02 Sep - 11 Sep
28 Sep - 07 Oct
15 Nov - 24 Nov

fast facts

Countries Visited:

Japan

Visas:

Please check visa requirements with your reservations consultant*

Vaccinations:

Please consult a travel vaccination specialist for up to date information

Singles:

A single supplement is available for this trip*

Leader:

Expert local leader

Advice for people with limited mobility

This trip is not suitable for people with limited mobility.

*Ask our staff for more information.

- Travel insurance (compulsory)
- Arrival and departure transfers
- Meals not listed as included
- Bike and helmet hire
- Personal expenses such as phone calls, internet, laundry and shopping
- Sightseeing and entry fees not listed as included
- Optional activities
- Any items not listed as included

detailed itinerary

DAY 1 Join Hiroshima

Join the trip in Hiroshima and make your own way to the hotel near Hiroshima Station. In the afternoon, meet the guides and fellow riders for a trip briefing and bike fitting session. Pick-up from the station can be arranged if required. In the evening, enjoy a welcome dinner featuring Hiroshima's local speciality, okonomiyaki, a savoury Japanese pancake.

Accommodation: Hotel

meals: D

DAY 2 Cycle Hiroshima to Ikuchi Island (up to 65km / 40mi)

After a short transfer out of Hiroshima to Kure, begin cycling along the Tobishima Kaido, a network of bridges and coastal roads linking islands across the Seto Inland Sea. The route follows quiet seaside roads through small fishing villages and island communities with views across the Inland Sea. We stop in the historic port town of Mitarai for lunch and time to explore its preserved Edo-period streetscape before continuing to Oyamazumi Shrine, known for its collection of samurai swords and armour. Finish the day on Ikuchi Island overlooking the Seto Inland Sea.

Elevation Gain: approx. 400m / 1312ft

Accommodation: Hotel or Ryokan

meals: B,D

DAY 3 Cycle the Shimanami Kaido to Shikoku Island (up to 73km / 45mi)

Today follows the Shimanami Kaido, one of Japan's best-known cycling routes, linking islands across the Seto Inland Sea via a series of large suspension bridges. The route combines coastal riding with panoramic views over the islands and shipping channels below. There is the option to climb Mt Kiro for sweeping 360-degree views across the Inland Sea before continuing over the Kurushima Bridge onto Shikoku Island.

Elevation Gain: approx. 600m / 1968ft

Accommodation: Hotel or Ryokan

meals: B,D

DAY 4 Cycle the UFO Line to Uchiko (up to 113km / 70mi)

Ride beneath Mt Ishizuchi, western Japan's highest mountain, along the scenic UFO Line, regarded as one of Shikoku's most spectacular mountain roads. The route climbs through forested ranges with expansive views extending toward the Pacific

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thoughtful travel

Our World Expeditions adventures are grounded in a deep commitment to regenerative travel, going beyond minimising harm to actively restoring and enriching the places we visit. We partner closely with local communities, ensuring that our trips support cultural preservation, fair livelihoods, and community-led initiatives. Each expedition is designed to protect and regenerate natural ecosystems through low-impact practices, climate action, and education that fosters respect for biodiversity. We prioritise meaningful connections between travellers and place, encouraging a sense of stewardship that lasts well beyond the journey. By embedding sustainability into every layer of our operations, we aim not only to explore the world responsibly but also to leave it healthier, more resilient, and more vibrant for future generations.

trip grading

Introductory to Moderate

To determine the grade of a particular adventure we consider a number of factors. These include the condition of the terrain, the altitude, the number of pass crossings and the length of the trip. The Shikoku Island Cycle is graded introductory to moderate. We cycle at a leisurely pace that allows us to explore shrines, capture viewpoints and enjoy conversations. Perfect for a recreational level cyclist who is comfortable with 4-5 hours/50-60 kms of cycling per day. There are some hills that can be challenging but we avoid the big mountain climbs. The tour is fully supported and if at any stage you feel like having a rest from cycling you will be able to ride in the support vehicle.

coast. After descending through Omogo Gorge and emerald river valleys, arrive in Uchiko, a preserved historic town known for its traditional architecture and heritage streetscape.

Elevation Gain: approx. 1450m / 4757ft

Accommodation: Hotel or Ryokan

meals: B,D

DAY 5 Rest day in Uchiko

Today is free to relax or participate in optional activities. Ride options are available, along with cultural experiences including a visit to a traditional washi paper workshop and a kimono fitting experience. These activities provide insight into regional Japanese culture and traditional crafts. In the evening, regroup for dinner at a local izakaya, a traditional Japanese pub.

Accommodation: Hotel or Ryokan

meals: B,D

DAY 6 Cycle Uchiko to Beppu (up to 50km / 31mi)

Today combines cycling and ferry travel as the journey continues from Shikoku to Kyushu Island. Ride through rural farmland and along the Hiji River toward the coastal port town of Yawatahama. Terraced orange orchards line the surrounding hillsides.

Board the ferry across the Inland Sea to Beppu, one of Japan's best-known hot spring towns. On arrival, there is time to relax in the hotel onsen.

Elevation Gain: approx. 300m / 984ft

Accommodation: Hotel or Ryokan

meals: B,D

DAY 7 Cycle Beppu to Aso (up to 110km / 68mi)

After a short transfer out of Beppu, cycle through Yufuin and onto the Kuju Plateau, riding through volcanic highlands and open mountain landscapes. Stop for lunch at a local farmhouse before beginning the ascent of Makinoto Pass, a sustained 12km climb to the day's high point. From the pass, descend into the Aso Caldera, one of the world's largest volcanic craters, surrounded by grasslands and volcanic peaks. Overnight is in a traditional ryokan.

Elevation Gain: approx. 2000m / 6562ft

Accommodation: Ryokan

meals: B,D

DAY 8 Cycle Aso to Kumamoto (up to 72km / 45mi)

Begin with a gradual warm-up ride before climbing Mt Aso, a 12km ascent to viewpoints overlooking the active volcanic landscape. Stop at Aso Café before descending toward lunch. There is the option to continue over Jizo Pass along "Kenny Road," named after motorcycle racer Kenny Roberts. Arrive in Kumamoto with views toward Kumamoto Castle and time to explore the old town. Dinner is your own choice this evening.

Elevation Gain: approx. 1500m / 4921ft

Accommodation: Hotel

meals: B

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adventure travel

By its very nature adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected. In remote and developing countries do not expect standards you are used to at home. Remote areas are sometimes unpredictable and itineraries may be altered. To get the most out of your adventure it is important that you are flexible, positive and eager to take on all the challenges that arise. If you are uncertain about your suitability for this trip we recommend that you speak with your consultant or travel agent.

important note

These trip notes represent the most current information for this itinerary, and may supersede any information on our website, including but not limited to the itinerary and price. The itinerary should be seen as a guide only. This itinerary may change at any time due to inclement weather, forces of nature and other circumstances beyond our control.

DAY 9 Cycle Nagasaki Peninsula and Mt Unzen (28km / 17mi to 41km / 25mi)

Take a short ferry crossing to the Nagasaki Peninsula beneath Mt Unzen, a volcanic peak rising dramatically above the coastline. Stronger riders may choose to climb to the Unzen Onsen area while others transfer by vehicle and explore the geothermal "Unzen Hells," where steam vents emerge from the ground. Later, regroup for the Nitta Pass loop, a scenic mountain road with expansive views across the peninsula and surrounding bays. Finish with a descent through terraced rice fields and traditional villages before transferring to Nagasaki for a farewell dinner.

Elevation Gain: approx. 400m / 1312ft to 1100m / 3609ft

Accommodation: Hotel

meals: B,D

DAY 10 Trip concludes Nagasaki

The trip concludes after breakfast in Nagasaki. Guides will be available during the morning to assist with onward travel arrangements if required.

meals: B

This itinerary is subject to change with any change in Community regulations as well as Governmental changes and natural circumstances beyond our control.

cycling

We believe that cycling is one of the best ways to see a country. Our cycling trips have been well researched to take you on the best route which usually means a combination of tarmac and dirt roads, the odd main road but generally smaller secondary roads. And sometimes even the occasional hill! All of this so that you can see the incredible scenery and landscapes, view the main sights and along the way eat delicious food, stay at unique accommodation and discover the incredible people.

Generally we supply you with geared (21-27) mountain or touring bikes and support vehicle which will follow the group on almost all sections of the ride. All equipment and luggage will be carried by the support vehicle. You will need to carry a small day pack with your camera, sunscreen and water. It is important to remember that these cycling journeys are not designed to be a marathon event. No one needs to feel under pressure to ride. If at any point you do not wish to ride the vehicle is always available for you and your bike to be transported. Usually we stop every 10 to 20kms for a rest. This will be the time to recover your breath and replenish your fluids and energy with water and snacks.

Remember that cycling involves some physical exertion, so you cannot expect that you will not feel tired. A little bit of preparation will go a long way. Cycling, of course, is an active pursuit and to maximise your own personal protection in case of a tumble or fall, the wearing of a bicycle helmet is compulsory at all times whilst cycling.

country information

Japan is a captivating blend of deep-rooted tradition and cutting-edge modernity. Stretching from the snowy mountains of Hokkaido in the north to the subtropical islands of Okinawa in the south, the country offers a remarkable diversity of landscapes, cultures and experiences. In the cities such as Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka you'll find a dynamic mix of futuristic architecture, vibrant street life and refined aesthetics. In contrast, rural Japan reveals a quieter side: forested hills, wooden temples, rice paddies and traditional villages that reflect centuries of cultural continuity.

Japan's history spans thousands of years, shaped by powerful feudal clans, shoguns, emperors and a long period of isolation before opening to the world in the 19th century. The country's heritage is preserved in ancient castles, Buddhist temples, Shinto shrines, and traditional arts such as calligraphy, tea ceremony and Noh theatre. Despite rapid post-war modernisation,

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Japan maintains a strong connection to its past with cultural traditions still playing a central role in daily life. Visitors will experience a society that values respect, harmony and detail, with omotenashi (hospitality) at the heart of every guest encounter.

Food is another highlight of any journey from regional specialities and street-side ramen to some of the world's most refined cuisine, meals are crafted with seasonality, balance and presentation in mind. With an efficient transport network, including the famous Shinkansen (bullet trains), travel between regions is smooth and comfortable. Japan's blend of natural beauty, cultural depth and modern energy offers travellers a rewarding and richly layered experience.

climate

Japan experiences four distinct seasons, each offering unique appeal for travellers. Spring (March to May) is one of the most popular times to visit, with cherry blossoms in bloom and mild daytime temperatures ranging from 10–20°C (50–68°F) across much of the country. Summer (June to August) begins with a brief rainy season in early June, followed by warm to hot conditions and high humidity, particularly in cities like Tokyo and Kyoto. Temperatures often reach 28–34°C (82–93°F), though it can feel warmer with humidity. Autumn (September to November) is widely regarded as one of the best seasons for walking and cultural travel. Days are typically clear and pleasant, with temperatures between 15–25°C (59–77°F) and vibrant autumn foliage throughout the countryside. Winter (December to February) is cold in the north and at higher elevations, with heavy snowfall common in regions like Hokkaido and the Japan Alps. Temperatures in northern areas can fall below 0°C (32°F), while southern regions such as Kyushu and Shikoku remain relatively mild, averaging 5–12°C (41–54°F) during the day. Because Japan stretches across a long north-south axis and includes significant mountain ranges, conditions vary considerably. Coastal cities tend to be milder, while alpine areas can be much cooler and subject to rapid weather changes year-round. Travellers should be prepared for a range of conditions and pack layered clothing, including a waterproof jacket, regardless of the season. Japan by Bike departs in both Spring and Autumn.

dietary requirements

Provided we are advised in advance of your departure we are able to cater for vegetarian diets and can assist with medically recommended diets (allergies and intolerances). Please ensure you discuss your requirements with us well in advance (at least 1 month prior to your trip) to determine whether we can cater to such dietary requirements on your chosen adventure. Please note that options are likely to be limited in very remote locations or alternatives may be more expensive or unavailable. There may be times when those with special requirements may need to provide their own food. We are unable to guarantee a peanut-free or allergen-free trip, and therefore, we strongly encourage that travellers with life-threatening or severe allergies take all necessary medical precautions to prepare for the possibility of exposure. Passengers must travel with all necessary medications for food allergies and be capable of self-administering these medications.

equipment provided

Bikes are available to hire at an additional charge and are not included in the base trip price.

We have a range of rental options available including road bikes, hybrid/cross bikes and eBikes. A mix of excellent quality Giant, Specialized and Cannondale bikes are available. Exact model, spec and price of bike can be confirmed once you register your interest in the tour as it is dependent on your size and availability.

All bike rentals are provided fully serviced and include a helmet and lights. We also provide a small handlebar bag for carrying accessories if you wish. Please note that water bottles are not included, so kindly bring your own.

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accommodation on the trip

We stay in a mix of mainly Japanese-style accommodation, ranging from the traditional to the modern. To stay in a Ryokan, or 'Japanese Inn', is to experience the 'real' Japan. The Japanese ryokan is such a delicate environment, with compact spaces and displayed heirlooms, that for the first encounter, something of a bull-in-a-china-shop feeling is inevitable, especially in the entrance as shoes are put on and removed. However, this reaction normalizes as we and the innkeepers get used to each other's ways!

Traditional-style accommodation often means sleeping on "futon" bedding laid out on tatami floors. Accommodations in Japan generally supply towels and yukata in your room. Yukata is like a casual kimono that Japanese people put on after a spa visit and are also acceptable to wear at dinner on the nights we eat at the accommodation.

Please note that there are spas at most of the accommodations we stay at on this trip. The baths are separated by male and female. The Japanese love bathing together, communing as they soak. This is a surprisingly good opportunity to meet the locals.

pre and post tour accommodation

If you would like some help booking a pre or post tour night accommodation speak to our staff as they can help with different suggestions.

what you carry

The tour is fully supported so you won't have to carry anything. If hiring one of our bikes it will have a small handlebar bag, with enough space to put an extra layer, your camera and wallet etc. We urge you to keep your luggage to a minimum and limit your bags to 1 per person.

equipment required

A comprehensive gear list will be provided on confirmation of your trip.

Bikes are available to hire at an additional charge and are not included in the base trip price.

We have a range of rental options available including road bikes, hybrid/cross bikes and eBikes. A mix of excellent quality Giant, Specialized and Cannondale bikes are available. Exact model, spec and price of bike can be confirmed once you register your interest in the tour as it is dependent on your size and availability.

All bike rentals are provided fully serviced and include a helmet and lights. We also provide a small handlebar bag for carrying accessories if you wish. Please note that water bottles are not included, so kindly bring your own.

You are also welcome to bring your own bike. Bikes can be carried on trains as long as it is in a bike bag or a box. It is also possible to arrange the shipping of your bike from specific airports (Tokyo Narita and Haneda, and Osaka Kansai) to your hotel and back using a courier service, please ask us for details.

protecting the environment

In a world where more and more rubbish is produced every year we are trying to do our little bit to help the planet. We encourage you to please bring your own water bottle. If you are a keen coffee or tea drinker you might like to bring your own reusable cup, as there are a few opportunities along the tour to get take-away drinks. Also if you think you might do some shopping, it could be useful to carry small foldable reusable shopping bags with you.

non exclusive trips

Please note that this trip is not exclusive to World Expedition clients and is operated by Tamie and Will Turner and our local partner in Japan. Groups are pleasantly informal, usually comprising of



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a range of nationalities and are aimed at healthy, active participants looking for an adventurous holiday.

vehicles & safety

During the course of your trip, we will use a variety of vehicles, all of which are fit for purpose and the conditions encountered. It should be noted that laws governing transportation safety may differ from those in your home country and whilst wherever possible, vehicles with seatbelts are provided, on occasion some vehicles may not have seat belts fitted.

visas

The following passport holders can travel to Japan for up to 3 months without a visa:

Australia

New Zealand

USA

UK (6 months)

Canadian

If you are travelling on any other type of passport we would request that you contact us, or your travel agent, to check the visa requirements.

Please bear in mind that visas may be required for countries you are visiting en route or transiting through on the way to your destination. It is important that you check the requirements of all countries you will visit. Visa costs and requirements do change regularly so we suggest you check with your travel agent or World Expeditions reservations consultant. It is your responsibility to obtain all necessary visas.

webinars & events

Catch a Webinar – Live or On Demand - to learn more about a particular trip. Make sure the trip you choose is right for you. Watch them live, so you can ask our presenters a question, or catch the recording later at your leisure and watch it On Demand. Visit our website or keep an eye on our newsletter for upcoming presentations.

private groups

The adventures that you see on our website are just a starting point. We operate many of our trips, which means we can be flexible and create an itinerary to suit your interests and dates. Talk to our team, you'll be surprised how much more affordable it can be when you get a group of friends, colleagues, a club – you name it, to travel with you!

subscribe to our e-newsletter

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social networking

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Subscribe to our channel at youtube.com/worldexpeditions

Share the love

Use the hashtag #WorldExpeditions on your best travel photos and videos to be featured.

trip availability

We operate small group adventures, which means availability is always worth checking early. Check trip availability online or call our team who might be able to dig a little deeper for you to find what you want, when you want.

Many adventures require services that, if not available at the time you book (like an internal flight or permit) could mean the trip is unavailable. So, book early to avoid missing out on your dream adventure.

how to book

Check trip availability and book your tour online, or call or visit one of our offices. To book a trip, you will need to complete a Booking Form (online or request a PDF) and pay a non-refundable deposit. Please note that when booking our tours to not confirm any additional arrangements until all services related to your tour are confirmed by your dedicated Reservations Consultant.