



**3 Days Spiritual Japan 'Shikoku Retreat'**  
**Valid for travel: 01 May 2015 – 30 June 2016**

## Itinerary – Japan 3 Days Spiritual Japan ‘Shikoku Retreat’



Shikoku is Japan's fourth largest island and the most rural of the main islands in the archipelago. Less developed than the rest of Japan, it still maintains a charm that is somewhat lost elsewhere in Japan, with its wild nature and centuries-old traditions. As the island of the Henro, a pilgrimage route connecting 88 Buddhist temples that are usually visited on foot, it has a deep, strong connection to the most spiritual side of the country. While popular with domestic travellers for its nature, culture and hot springs, it is still rather off the beaten path for foreign tourists.

# DESTINATION ASIA

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT FOR ASIA'S TRAVEL CONNOISSEURS

**Day 1**

**Okayama**

**Kotohira**



Reach Okayama station on own. You will be met there by your guide and board the train for the scenic ride to Kotohira in Shikoku Island. The train will cross the Seto Ohashi, the impressive bridge connecting Honshu to Shikoku, over the Seto Inland Sea, and reach Kotohira after one change.

Your traditional style accommodation tonight has tatami mat flooring with futon beds laid on them. Your afternoon is at leisure to rest after the long journey and enjoy your hotel's onsen hot springs. Onsen are the Japanese's favourite way to unwind and relax and you will discover how much at ease a soak in the hot springs will make your body and mind feel.

Dinner tonight will be a Japanese traditional kaiseki meal, comprised of several dishes. The meal is made up of seasonal dishes using only the freshest of local Shikoku ingredients.

**Meals included**

Dinner

**Accommodation**

Kotosankaku, Japanese style room

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## Day 2 Kotohira

Today you will explore the surroundings with your guide by public transport. Start by Kotohira's Kōpirasan temple, the most famous in Shikoku, dedicated to seafare. Over many centuries, Kōpirasan had been revered as a mixture between Shinto shrine and Buddhist temple, showing how deeply intertwined the two religions are in Japan's spirituality. It is now officially declared a shrine; nevertheless, the former symbiosis is still visible in Kōpirasan's architecture which displays both Shinto and Buddhist elements. To reach the main hall of the temple, nestled upon Mt. Zozu, one has to climb 1,368 stone steps; it is a pilgrimage that has been popular with devotees for centuries as shrines in high altitude are considered closest to the gods. The view from the shrine is amazing and will repay your efforts.

Get back into the city. We recommend a lunch of sanuki udon, the local noodles, that you can sample everywhere in the city (not included).

In the afternoon you will visit Kanamaruza, the oldest still existing Kabuki theatre in Japan. Kabuki is a form of drama that is strongly connected with spirituality in Japan with its stories of gods, heroes and nature, serving a cathartic function beyond mere entertainment. The Kanamaruza is still used sporadically for performances but on days when shows are not scheduled, it is possible to take a tour of it and see all the backstage tricks such as secret doors and rotating stage that make Kabuki so spectacular.

Dinner will be again at your ryokan. Today, too, you will have time for a relaxing soak in the hot springs.

<b>Meals included</b>	Breakfast, Dinner
<b>Accommodation</b>	Kotonohira Kotosankaku, Japanese style room



## Day 3 Kotohira Okayama

After checking out of your ryokan, your guide will accompany you again on the train journey to Okayama, from where you will continue to your next destination.

<b>Meals included</b>	Breakfast
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~ END OF SERVICE ~