

RAID CYCLING THE SOUTHERN ISLANDS 8 DAYS / 7 NIGHTS



I. HIGHLIGHTS

- Cycle directly into a themed hotel complex in Onomichi, offering a seamless blend of industrial aesthetics and organic warmth, complete with dining options and bike facilities.
- Explore the picturesque Shimanami Kaido between Onomichi and Imabari, renowned for its orange orchards, traditional ryokans, and stunning views of the Seto Sea.
- Immerse in Hiroshima's history with visits to the Atomic Bomb Dome and Mitaki temple, balanced with a taste of local cuisine like okonomiyaki.
- Experience the beauty of Ōita prefecture, cycling through lush landscapes, visiting Mount Aso's caldera, and ending in the charming village of Yufuin, surrounded by natural wonders.

II. ITINERARY

DAY 1

HIROSHIMA TO ONOMICHI

Upon your arrival at Hiroshima International Airport, we will provide a 1-1-scheduled transfer from Hiroshima to our arrival city, Onomichi. It is an easy 40-minute journey. Depending on your arrival time, we will either go for a short-guided ride to loosen up the legs or we can take the famous Onomichi Temple Walk, up and down the many stairs behind the town, visiting 25 temples along the way. *You can also arriving directly at Osaka (KIX) airport and transfer to Onomichi by train - please inquire.

Only in Japan could a themed hotel complex, you don't even have to step off your pedals — you can ride right into this cavernous space, which includes not just the hotel but a restaurant, a bar, a café, and a bakery, as well as a Giant bike shop and a retail space dedicated to local food, clothing, and housewares. The building's interior still retains some warehouse atmosphere, with its double-height ceiling and its elevated walkways. But the rooms temper their industrial origins with organic warmth, and they're efficient, as you'd expect, complete with hooks for hanging your bike up out of the way.

DAY 2

ONOMICHI & THE BRIDGES OF SHIMANAMI KAIDO - IMABARI

Behold, the Shimanami Kaido. Known as the most scenic route in Japan, the 76km route between Onomichi and Imabari is dotted with orange orchards, traditional ryokans, and stunning views of the Seto Sea. There's no better way to absorb the quaint, small-town Japan that tourists tend to ignore.

Our oceanfront ryokan tonight is, Daichoso, located near Itozaki Park/Kurushima Observatory in the Seto Inland Sea National Park where we have stunning views of the Kurushima Strait. We not only come for the view, but the remarkable seafood served here. Since 1963 the in-house restaurant has served lavish seafood meals.

DAY 3

IMABARI TO HIROSHIMA

We will take a mountainous route through a corner of Shikoku Island early this morning, winding our way through tiny paths toward the seaside city of Matsuyama, the capital city of Ehime Prefecture. From here we board the super fast ferry across the sea and arrive in Hiroshima.

We'll wind down our day at the site of the first use of nuclear weapons in wartime: Hiroshima's Atomic Bomb Dome. It proffers a deeper understanding of the suffering caused by violence, nuclear weapon proliferation, and the real value of peace. Balancing the striking significance of the day, we will soak up the harmonious atmosphere in Hiroshima's spectacular woodland temple, Mitaki. It is a beautiful and atmospheric temple complex tucked away in a forest on the slopes of Mount Mitaki, just north of the city.

Tonight we venture into the humming center of Hiroshima where we get to sample the local dish from the WW II era known as okonomiyaki, ("Western food for a penny") made up of battered cabbage and noodles cooked on a hotplate with oysters and squid.

DAY 4

HIROSHIMA TO HITA

Breaking in the RAID tradition, today we climb aboard Japan's famous railway transit: The Shinkansen Bullet Train. We'll be whisked to Kurume, a principal city of the island of Kyushu, only 1.5 hours away. A quick transfer brings us deep into the mountains outside Kurume. Today's route begins with a stunning pedal through lush green tea fields, with rolling hills covered in trees to the horizon, replete with tea sampling along the way.

We enjoy a leisurely lunch of homemade buckwheat soba noodles from a hidden cafe that we have been visiting for years. The patriarch of the family has been crafting noodles for nearly 40 years. His wife and three daughters will be our friendly servers, it's a special afternoon. From here we continue up the Hoshino River before we head up a stunning European alpine climb.

After absorbing the wonders of today's ride, we disappear into a Japanese Ryokan for the night and relax in the many hot springs that await our stay as we are enveloped in a sense of the local culture, untouched by time.

DAY 5

HITA TO OKUNOYU

Today's ride sees us pedaling through Ōita's enchanting countryside, where every turn of the wheel reveals a new facet of this remarkable region and its culinary treasure—the shiitake mushroom. This region of Ōita produces the most dried shiitake mushrooms in Japan.

By now almost everyone is craving a pizza! And today's lunch does not disappoint in both flavor and view! As we rest outside on the hillside deck take in the stunning views of the Kuju Mountains while you indulge in the traditional brick oven pizza.

We wrap up today's shorter ride with plenty of time to check in and relax at the elegant inn situated in the mountains surrounded by nature. With three types of private-use hot spring baths and several mixed open-air baths allowing you to wash away your soreness.

DAY 6

OKUNOYU TO ASO

Today is our Queen Stage, heading south through the Ōita prefecture, known to many as the "Land of Abundance". We will be traversing through the Kirishima Mountain Range, a volcanic belt of major peaks that run vertically through the prefecture and contribute to the many hot spring sources that make this region so popular. Ōita has the largest number of hot springs in the entire country! Known for its quiet roads and scenic beauty, 60% of Ōita is covered in dense forests.

This afternoon we spend circling Mount Aso's barren caldera, then descending back to the lush valley below. The constant smoke plume reminds us of its power and potential, and gazing down into the 20-mile-wide crater gives us a glimpse at the Earth's origins. This is one of the most visually striking places in Japan, if not the world - its grey, craggy moonscape is covered in small, jagged rocks - like something from a SciFi film set on a distant world.

We'll spend the night in the shadow of Mount Aso at another ryokan set among tranquil gardens and hot springs. Tonight we visit a small local restaurant where we will dine on some noteworthy regional cuisine this evening.

DAY 7

MT ASO TO YUFUIN (OITA)

Our last day's journey traverses the scenic Yamanami Highway, considered one of the most scenic byways in Japan, crossing the Kuju mountain range before finishing in Oita. The amazing route takes us from the Tadewara Marshlands through the Chojabaru and Kuju Mountain Ranges with stunning views of sprawling grasslands and steaming, looming volcanoes the entire way.

A wonderful finish to our adventure, we'll end our ride in the tiny resort village of Yufuin, located on a flat river basin surrounded by mountains. The most prominent feature of Yufuin's skyline? The twin-peaked Mount Yufu, hovering over the town, serving as the backdrop for scenic views. Another natural landmark is Lake Kinrinko, a small lake located at the end of the town's main walking route. The small lake is located at the end of the town's main walking route. Finally, we'll finish our stay at a small Ryokan, the Oyado Kaikatei Ryokan - In a leafy area, this warm, relaxed hot spring inn is 12 minutes' walk from Kinrin Lake, a 14-minute walk from Yufuin Floral Village, a country village in the style of England's Cotswold's. Featuring indoor and outdoor hot spring baths, the understated cottages feature en-suite bathrooms and sitting areas, plus tatami floors and futons.

For those interested in visiting the Comico Art Museum this afternoon, we will make arrangements for you to visit during a private tour. View the works of acclaimed Japanese contemporary artists Yayoi Kusama, Tatsuo Miyajima, and Kohei Nawa.

DAY 8

YUFUIN TO FUKUOKA or OSAKA

This morning, enjoy a short walk through the village of Yufuin before we embark on the last leg of our journey. Our vehicles will transfer everyone 1h45m to Fukuoka International Airport (FUK) from where you can connect to your international or domestic flight.

-END OF SERVICES-

Tour extensions: pre-tour or post-tour extensions are available, which would include accommodation and private transfers, please speak to Focus Asia travel consultant for further details.