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KOICHI TANAKA's Travel Journal – Undertaking the journey of the the SHIKOKU HENRO

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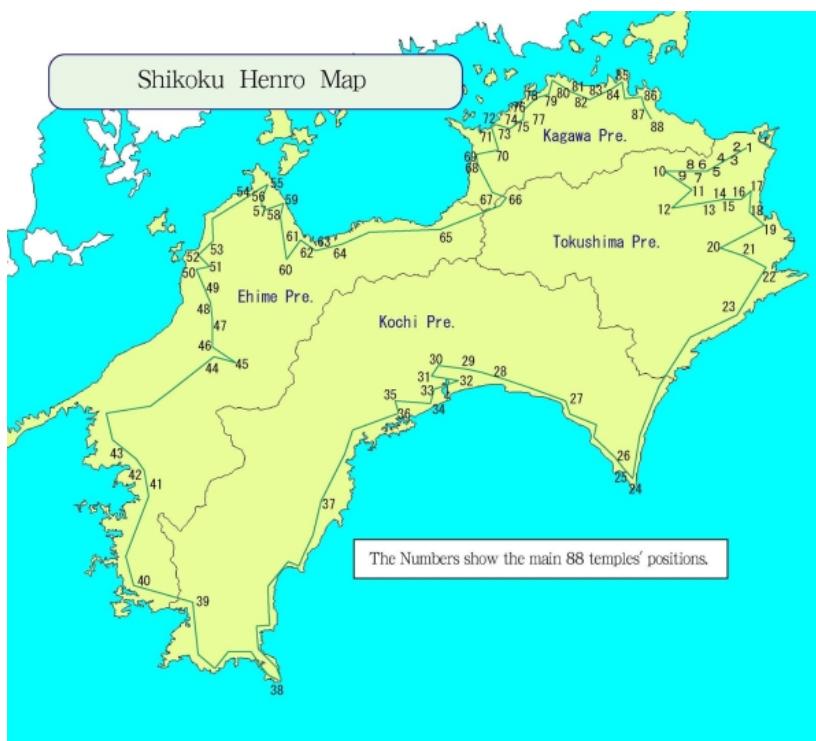
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Pleased to meet you! My name is TANAKA KOICHI. Ever since retiring from my job, I've been walking all over Japan. So far, I've walked many different famous pilgrimage routes and highways in Japan, such as the TOKAIDO, the NAKASENDO, the SANYODO, the NAGASAKI KAIDO, the KUMANO KODO, and many others. Recently, I got the idea to take a tour of SHIKOKU, and so I decided to walk the HENROMICHI (Pilgrimage route) that forms a full loop around the island. Over 61 days from the period of March 21, 2013 to April 7, 2014, I walked approximately 1,600 km and made a lap around SHIKOKU.

I'd like to use my experiences to introduce you to the SHIKOKU HENRO.

The SHIKOKU HENRO is a pilgrimage that involves walking around SHIKOKU while touring the temples and places where the monk KOTO-DAISHI KUKAI(*1) trained and studied. The most important 88 temples are numbered, and are called the FUDASHO. There are also 148 other, non-numbered sites called the REIJOU (sacred places); among these are 20 principally important sites called the BEKKAKU REIJOU. Visiting all 88 of the FUDASHO means a journey of 1,200 km, and adding the 20 BEKKAKU REIJOU stretches that out to 1,400 km. Include the unnumbered REIJOU too, and you have a distance of 1,600-1,700 to cover.



(*1) KOTO-DAISHI KUKAI (774-835): Japanese religious leader. Born in SHIKOKU's ZENTSUJI city, he trained in the mountains of SHIKOKU in his younger years. Afterward, he visited China during the Tang dynasty and learned of SHINGON MIKKYO (tantric Buddhist Shingon doctrine), which he brought back to Japan and popularized.

Those who undertake the HENRO are called OHENRO SAN.

Famous stops on pilgrimage routes include World Heritage Sites such as Santiago de Compostela and the KUMANO KODO, but the unique feature of the SHIKOKU HENRO is how a finished tour forms a complete loop of SHIKOKU.

Usually, one starts from the first FUDASHO and visits each in order, but it doesn't matter if you start the tour in the middle, or



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visit the FUDASHO in reverse order. Visiting the FUDASHO in order is called JUN UCHI and visiting them in reverse order is called GYAKU UCHI. Visiting all the FUDASHO in one journey is known as TOSHI UCHI, while taking several trips to do so is known as KUGIRIUCHI. I myself made a KUGIRIUCHI, dividing my journey into six separate trips.

It doesn't matter what clothing you wear when you're on a HENRO, but OHENRO SAN typically have four hallmark pieces of equipment:

菅笠 SUGEGASA: a HENRO hat

白衣 BYAKUE: a white jacket

輪袈裟 WAGESA: a Buddhist stole

金剛杖 KONGOTSUE: a walking stick



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