HONSHU / SOUTH HONSHU / OSAKA · ONOMICHI · HIROSHIMA · YAMAGUCHI · IZUMO · KINOSAKI · 17 DAYS · TRAIN OR CAR

Peace, pedals & a thousand torii: Hiroshima and the secret San'in coast

Updated October 2026 · Best time: Apr–May · Oct–Nov
Trip planner · tabi-notes.com/south-honshu-hiroshima-sanin-loop

Most visitors see Hiroshima as a day trip from Kyoto and turn back. That's a shame, because the rest of western Honshu is one of the quietest and most rewarding parts of Japan. This loop starts in **Osaka** and heads west along the Seto Inland Sea: Himeji, the canal town of Kurashiki, the hill-and-harbour town of Onomichi, then **Hiroshima** and Miyajima. Onomichi is the start of the **Shimanami Kaido**, the cycling route across six islands to Shikoku, which you can ride as a day trip or with a night on the islands.

From Hiroshima the route turns north and works its way back east along the **San'in coast** on the Sea of Japan: Yamaguchi's torii path to the sea and karst plateau, the castle towns of Hagi and Tsuwano, the Iwami Ginzan silver mine, Izumo's great shrine, Matsue's original castle, a temple built into a cliff, and the onsen towns of Misasa and Kinosaki, before the boathouses of Ine and Amanohashidate bring you back to Osaka.

Train or car? The Seto Inland Sea half is perfect by train. On the San'in side the trains are slow and the hidden gems sit off the line, so the easiest version picks up a **rental car in Hiroshima** on day 9 and drops it in Kyoto or Osaka on day 16. Each stop below lists both ways. **Camper van?** The loop can also be adapted to a camper van: the San'in coast has quiet roads, plenty of michi-no-eki roadside stations and onsen in almost every town.

17 days	**train or car** car from Hiroshima recommended	**11** stops	**Apr–May · Oct–Nov** best time
~¥320k per person*			

*Accommodation (sharing a room) and transport, middle version. International flights not included.

The route at a glance

1 2 3 4

Osaka
Nights 1–2

Kurashiki
Night 3

Onomichi
Nights 4–5

Hiroshima & Miyajima
Nights 6–8

5
Nagato & the Yamaguchi coast
Night 9

6
Hagi & Tsuwano
Night 10

7
Izumo & Matsue
Nights 11–12

8
Misasa Onsen & Tottori
Night 13

9
Kinosaki Onsen
Night 14

10
Ine & Amanohashidate
Night 15

11
Osaka
Night 16



The loop: by train from Osaka to Hiroshima (with the optional Shimanami Kaido by bike), then by car (about 1,100 km) or train along the San'in coast back to Osaka.

Prices are per room for two per night. Ryokan prices include dinner and breakfast. ⭐ = famous / worth it · ⭐⭐ = splurge.

Stop by stop

01 Osaka 大阪

Nights 1–2 · Start with street food

PLAN

- Arrival at Kansai Airport: the Haruka express or the Nankai Rapi:t into the city (~45 min)
- Osaka Castle, then Dotonbori and Shinsekai for takoyaki, okonomiyaki and kushikatsu
- Kuromon Market, the Umeda Sky Building at sunset

WHERE TO STAY

Cross Hotel Osaka a few steps from Dotonbori ¥25–40k

Hotel Hankyu Respire Osaka above Osaka Station, easy for every train — ¥18–30k

☆☆ **Conrad Osaka** on the top floors of a tower in Nakanoshima — ¥80k+

> **Good to know** Book the same hotel for night 16 and leave a suitcase there. The San'in coast is much easier with light bags.

WHERE I EAT

Yakisoba Baby / Okonomiyaki Baby, Dotonbori
okonomiyaki & yakisoba

Zeniya Nishinakajima
kushikatsu

02 Kurashiki 倉敷

Night 3 · Japan's finest castle, a great garden & a canal town

PLAN

- Day 3: Shinkansen to Himeji (~30 min). Himeji Castle, the white heron, and the Koko-en gardens next door
- On to Okayama (~20 min): Korakuen, one of Japan's three great gardens, facing the black Okayama Castle
- Local train to Kurashiki (~15 min): willow-lined canals, old rice storehouses, the Ohara Museum, and the denim shops of the Bikan quarter at dusk

WHERE TO STAY

☆ **Ryokan Kurashiki** a converted sugar merchant's house right on the canal — ¥70–100k

Kurashiki Ivy Square ivy-covered red-brick former cotton mill — ¥18–30k

Hotel Nikko Kurashiki simple, next to the station — ¥15–22k

> **Good to know** Kurashiki is lovely after the day-trippers leave. Walk the canal again after dinner, when the old town is lit up.

03 Onomichi 尾道

Nights 4–5 · Temple hills, cat lanes & the Shimanami Kaido

PLAN

- Day 4: train via Fukuyama (~1 h). Stop on the way at Tomonoura (bus from Fukuyama, ~30 min): an Edo-era harbour with a stone lantern lighthouse, said to have inspired Ponyo
- Onomichi: the ropeway up to Senko-ji, then the Temple Walk down through cat-filled lanes and 25 temples; Onomichi ramen with pork-fat broth
- **Day 5, Shimanami Kaido (optional)**: rent a bike at the port and ride the blue line across the bridges. **Day trip**: Innoshima and Ikuchijima to Setoda (~30 km), lemon sweets and the Kosan-ji temple, then the ferry back to Onomichi (~40 min)

- **Overnight**: ride the full 70 km across six islands to Imabari on Shikoku over two days, with a night on Ikuchijima or Omishima. Drop the bike at any terminal and take the bus back

WHERE TO STAY

☆ **Hotel Cycle (Onomichi U2)** harbour warehouse turned hotel; take your bike into the room	¥30–45k
☆☆ **LOG** a 1960s hillside apartment rebuilt as a small design inn	¥80k+
☆☆ **Azumi Setoda (Shimanami overnight)** a salt merchant's mansion on Ikuchijima, for the night on the islands	¥120k+

> **Good to know** Book e-bikes ahead in spring and autumn. Not a cyclist? The bus over the bridges, or a car, shows you the same views. More on Shikoku is in my Shikoku road trip.

04 Hiroshima & Miyajima 広島・宮島

Nights 6–8 · Peace Park, okonomiyaki & a night on the sacred island

PLAN

- Day 6: train Onomichi → Hiroshima (~1 h 15). Peace Memorial Park, the museum and the Atomic Bomb Dome; layered okonomiyaki at Okonomimura
- Day 7: Shukkei-en garden and Hiroshima Castle, or a half day at the Mazda museum; a boat down the river to Miyajima in the afternoon
- Night 8 on **Miyajima**: when the day-trippers leave, the torii is lit up and the deer have the streets. Early next morning, climb Mount Misen or take the ropeway
- Check the tide table: the torii stands in the water at high tide and you can walk to it at low tide

WHERE TO STAY

Hilton Hiroshima new tower close to the Peace Park	¥30–50k
Mitsui Garden Hotel Hiroshima central, good-value high floors	¥15–25k
☆ **Iwaso (Miyajima)** ryokan since 1854 in the Momijidani maple valley	¥60–100k
Miyajima Hotel Makoto small, modern ryokan near the shrine	¥40–60k

> **Good to know** Day 9 is the switch: **by car**, pick it up in Hiroshima. **By train**, take the Shinkansen to Shin-Yamaguchi and continue by bus and local train.

05 Nagato & the Yamaguchi coast 長門

Night 9 · A torii path to the sea & a karst plateau

PLAN

- On the way west: Kintaikyo in Iwakuni, five wooden arches over the river
- Akiyoshidai, Japan's largest karst plateau, and Akiyoshido, a vast limestone cave you walk through for about a kilometre
- Motonosumi Shrine: 123 red torii winding down a green cliff to the Sea of Japan; try to throw a coin into the offering box on top of the big torii

- Tsunoshima Bridge, 1.8 km over turquoise water, if the light is good
- **By car**: ~2 h 30 of driving with all stops. **By train**: Shin-Yamaguchi → bus to Akiyoshidai, then bus and the JR Mine line to Nagato-Yumoto; Motonosumi needs a taxi from Nagatoshi Station

WHERE TO STAY

★★ **KAI Nagato** riverside onsen ryokan in the renewed Nagato-Yumoto town	¥80–120k
★ **Otani Sanso** big, classic onsen ryokan in the valley	¥40–60k
Nagato-Yumoto ryokans small onsen inns along the river	¥30–45k

06 Hagi & Tsuwano 萩・津和野

Night 10 · Samurai lanes, pottery & carp canals

PLAN

- Morning in Hagi: the castle ruins by the sea, white-walled samurai lanes, the school where the Meiji Restoration was born, and Hagi-yaki pottery studios
- Afternoon in Tsuwano, the 'little Kyoto of San'in': carp in the canals of Tonomachi, and the tunnel of about a thousand torii up to Taikodani Inari
- **By car**: Nagato → Hagi ~1 h, Hagi → Tsuwano ~1 h. **By train/bus**: Nagato → Hagi by JR, bus Hagi → Tsuwano (~1 h 45). On some weekends the SL Yamaguchi tourist train runs from Shin-Yamaguchi to Tsuwano

WHERE TO STAY

★ **Hokumon Yashiki (Hagi)** ryokan inside the samurai district	¥50–80k
Hagi Honjin onsen hotel with big baths	¥30–45k
Tsuwano ryokans small family inns in the old town	¥25–40k

07 Izumo & Matsue 出雲・松江

Nights 11–12 · A silver mine, the gods' shrine & an original castle

PLAN

- Day 11: Iwami Ginzan on the way (UNESCO): walk or e-bike up to the Ryugenji mine shaft, then the old town of Omori. **By train**: Tsuwano → Masuda → Odashi (~2 h), then a bus
- Izumo Taisha, one of Japan's oldest and most important shrines (bow twice, clap **four** times, bow once). Inasa beach and the Hinomisaki lighthouse at sunset; Izumo soba
- Day 12 in Matsue: one of only twelve original castles, a boat round the moat, the samurai houses of Shiomi Nawate, sunset over Lake Shinji
- Stay at Tamatsukuri Onsen, one of Japan's oldest hot springs, 20 minutes from Matsue

WHERE TO STAY

★ **Minamikan** elegant ryokan on the shore of Lake Shinji	¥50–80k
Chorakuen (Tamatsukuri Onsen) ryokan with one of Japan's largest outdoor baths	¥35–55k
Hotel Ichibata lakeside onsen hotel, sunset rooms	¥25–40k

Good to know In October (the old 'month of the gods') Japan's gods are said to meet in Izumo. Hotels here fill up then.

08 Misasa Onsen & Tottori 三朝温泉・鳥取

Night 13 · A garden like a painting & a temple on a cliff

PLAN

- Morning: the Adachi Museum of Art, whose garden has been ranked Japan's best for over 20 years in a row; view it through the windows like a living painting
- Optional: the Mount Daisen highlands, or Sakaiminato's Mizuki Shigeru Road with its bronze yokai figures
- Mitokusan: a steep climb over roots and chains to **Nageiredo**, a temple hall built into a cliff face, a national treasure. You can't climb alone (pairs only), and the path closes in rain and in winter
- Evening in Misasa Onsen, known for its radon springs and the free riverside bath under the bridge
- **By train**: Matsue → Kurayoshi (~1 h 15), then a bus to Misasa. Adachi has a free shuttle from Yasugi Station; Mitokusan is a short taxi ride from Misasa

WHERE TO STAY

☆ **Ohashi Ryokan** wooden riverside ryokan, a registered cultural property	¥50–80k
Misasa ryokans smaller inns along the river	¥30–45k

09 Kinosaki Onsen 城崎温泉

Night 14 · Sand dunes, then seven baths in a yukata

PLAN

- Day 14: the Tottori Sand Dunes and the Sand Museum, then the Uradome coast of islets and coves on the way east
- Kinosaki: walk between the town's seven public baths in yukata and wooden geta; your ryokan gives you a free pass
- Winter (November–March) is Matsuba crab season, and Kinosaki's ryokans serve it every way
- **By train**: Kurayoshi → Tottori (~30 min), then the San'in line east to Kinosaki-Onsen (~2–2 h 30, change at Hamasaka)

WHERE TO STAY

☆☆ **Nishimuraya Honkan** Kinosaki's grand old ryokan, with a famous garden	¥90k+
☆ **Mikuniya** smaller, friendly ryokan in the centre	¥40–60k
Kinosaki ryokans dozens of inns along the willow canal	¥30–50k

10 Ine & Amanohashidate 伊根・天橋立

Night 15 · A sandbar across the bay & a village of boathouses

PLAN

- Amanohashidate: take the chairlift up to Kasamatsu Park and look at the pine-covered sandbar upside down, between your legs (matanozoki)

- Ine: about 230 funaya, wooden boathouses built right on the water. A short boat tour, then pink rice wine at the small sake brewery
- Sleep in a converted funaya, with the bay at your door
- **By train**: Kinosaki → Amanohashidate on the Kyoto Tango Railway (~1 h 30), then a bus to Ine (~1 h)

WHERE TO STAY

★ **Funaya inns (Ine)** a handful of boathouses with one or two rooms each	¥35–60k
Amanohashidate Hotel onsen hotel facing the sandbar	¥30–50k

> **Good to know** Ine has very few rooms. Book it first and build the San'in half of the trip around it.

11 Osaka 大阪

Night 16 · Back to the big city

PLAN

- Day 16: **by car**, about 2 h 30 to Kyoto or Osaka; return the car. **By train**: the Hashidate limited express to Kyoto (~2 h), then 15–30 min to Osaka
- Last evening in Dotonbori
- Day 17: fly out from Kansai Airport

WHERE TO STAY

Cross Hotel Osaka a few steps from Dotonbori	¥25–40k
Hotel Hankyu Respire Osaka above Osaka Station, easy for every train	¥18–30k

WHERE I EAT

Yakisoba Baby / Okonomiyaki Baby, Dotonbori
okonomiyaki & yakisoba

Zeniya Nishinakajima
kushikatsu

Budget

Estimates for October at ¥150 ≈ US$1 · ¥165 ≈ €1. Ranges, not promises.

Version	Accommodation (2 people)	+ Transport (per person)	Per person
Value: business hotels, simpler ryokans, all by train	≈ ¥400k	≈ ¥60k	≈ ¥260k
Middle, by train: ryokans in Kurashiki, Miyajima, Nagato, Misasa, Kinosaki, Ine	≈ ¥520k	≈ ¥60k	≈ ¥320k
Middle, with a car from Hiroshima (8 days)	≈ ¥520k	≈ ¥75k	≈ ¥335k
+ Splurge: KAI Nagato, Azumi Setoda or Nishimuraya	+ ¥80–120k		+ ¥40–60k

MY RECOMMENDATION

Take the middle version with the car, **about ¥335k per person**. It costs only a little more than the train and saves about a day of waiting for buses on the San'in coast.

🚗 The car version: compact car Hiroshima → Kyoto/Osaka for 8 days with full insurance, about ¥70–90k, plus a one-way drop-off fee (ask when you book), fuel and tolls (~¥20–30k).

NOT INCLUDED

- International flights
- Food outside the ryokan dinners
- Shimanami bike rental (~¥2–4k per day; e-bikes more) and bike drop-off fees
- Entrance fees, boats, ropeways
- Golden Week, Obon and autumn weekends: up to +30%

Booking & practical tips

RAIL PASSES

Price the JR West San'yo-San'in Area Pass against single tickets. It covers the Shinkansen to Hiroshima and the San'in limited expresses; check which private lines (like the Kyoto Tango Railway) are included before you buy.

DRIVING

You need an International Driving Permit (1949 Geneva Convention) or, for some countries, an official Japanese translation. San'in roads are quiet and easy; see my rental car guide.

CAMPER VAN VERSION

The whole loop works in a camper van: pick one up in Osaka, follow the Inland Sea to Hiroshima, then the San'in coast home. Michi-no-eki roadside stations and onsen towns are everywhere. See my Tohoku camper van trip and the road-trip essentials for how it works.

SHIMANAMI KAIDO

Follow the blue line on the road. Rental terminals let you drop the bike at another terminal for a fee. Spring and autumn are ideal; summer is very hot on the bridges.

SEASONS

Spring and October–November are best. The Sea of Japan side gets snow and grey skies in winter, but that's crab and onsen season. June is the rainy season.

BOOK EARLY

Miyajima, Ine and the best Kinosaki ryokans have few rooms. Book them first, about four to six months ahead for autumn.

Frequently asked questions

Train or car on the San'in coast? –

Both work. Trains are slow and the hidden gems sit off the line, so a car from Hiroshima saves about a day of waiting for buses. Each stop on this page lists both ways.

Do I need to be fit for the Shimanami Kaido? –

No. The bridges have gentle ramps, and e-bikes are available. The day-trip version to Setoda is about 30 km; the full route to Imabari is 70 km and easier over two days.

Can this trip be done in a camper van? –

Yes. Pick up a camper in Osaka, follow the Inland Sea to Hiroshima, then the San'in coast home. Quiet roads, michi-no-eki stations and onsen in almost every town make it ideal.

Is Nageiredo safe to climb? –

It's a steep scramble over roots and rocks with chains, not a hike for flip-flops. You must go with at least one other person, and the trail closes in rain and winter. Allow about 1.5 hours return.

What's the best time for this loop? –

April–May and October–November. Winter brings snow and grey skies to the Sea of Japan side, but also crab season in Kinosaki.