

Japanese pilgrimage

Pilgrim as tourist

As described in "Canterbury tales" in UK, pilgrimage has provided a means of escape from restrictions of feudal society and of satisfying new experience. Pilgrims flocked to the shrine of great saint for cure or miracle. The city of Canterbury prospered from their donation and the money spent around its inns and shops. Just like Canterbury, Kotohira has been bustling with many pilgrims since Edo period. There still remain not only many fine architectures donated by pilgrims, merchants and lord but also long shopping street. A litter, wheelless vehicle called Kago is in service for tourists up to today for special experience (see left bottom). Kotohira which is also called Konpira is the best place to experience a good old Japanese pilgrimage.



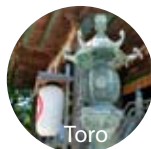
Mt. Zozu



Pilgrims to Kotohira sailed from Osaka to Marugame, and went on foot with this map. Many dropped by Zentsuji temple for home.

Lantern called Toro

Toro was originally used in Buddhist temples, where they illuminated paths to temples. Lit lanterns were then considered an offering to Buddha. Many Toro were donated not only within shrine but on the road from Marugame to Kotohira.



Mt. Zozu

The Kotohira hill is called as Mt. Zozu meaning elephant head for religious reasons; it actually looks like elephant.

Pilgrim for grace

In the middle of Edo period, pilgrimage to temple and shrine had boomed. People went out on pilgrimage to Kyoto, Nara and others for divine grace. Kotohira-gu shrine (photo B of cover) located halfway up of Mt. Zozu was the most well-known spot in Shikoku. As the deity (C) honors the guardian of maritime transport, it has been the best place to pray for a safe sailing. An Japanese astronaut of starship also pilgrimaged here for safe journey (A). Interestingly, the sailer's guardian is on the mountain.

Enjoy Setouchi Outing No.5



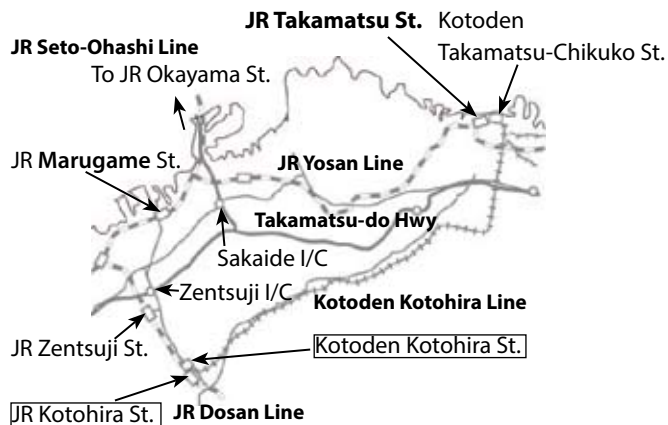
琴平

Kotohira Day Out



5. Join Japanese pilgrimage

Access map



From JR Takamatsu Station - 50 min. by train
 Kotoden Kotohira Line: To Kotoden-Kotohira St.
 JR Dosan Line: To Kotohira St.
 From Zentsuji Highway I/C - 30 min. by car



Shikoku Gakuin University,
Kukai Cafe2

(四国学院大学 PMカフェ:空海カフェ2)

1-2-3 Bunkyo-cho, Zentsuji, Kagawa 760-8505 JAPAN

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Inside of Kanamaru-za theater



Entrance of Kanamaru-za theater



Former Konpira Ooshibai Kanamaru-za theater

Discover Japanese Pilgrimage

Approach to shrine



1 Takadoro lantern

The tallest lantern in Japan (27m). It was used like a light-house leading pilgrim boats to the right way.

2 Soft serve ice cream

An ice cream topped with "Oiri" (bubble shaped sweet) which is used for celebration of traditional Japanese Weddings.



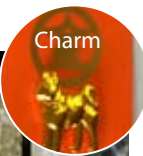
3 Fune fune senbei

This is a traditional Japanese biscuit on which a part of the lyrics of Konpira pilgrimage song is stamped.

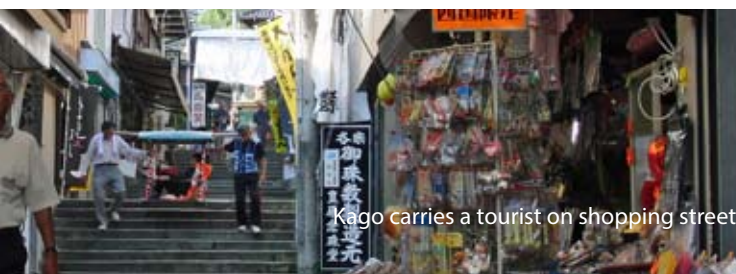


4 Konpira inu* (*dogs)

The poor who could not afford pilgrimage of Konpira let their pet dogs go on behalf of themselves.



Charm

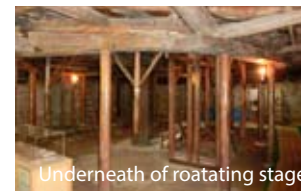


Kago carries a tourist on shopping street.



The former Konpira Grand Theatre known as the *Kanamaru-za* (金丸座) was originally built in 1835 and is the oldest kabuki theater in Japan still in use. A special program *Shikoku Konpira Ooshibai* is held in April by famous *Kabuki* actors.

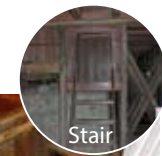
5. Kanamaru-za theater



Underneath of rotating stage



Karaido (3 in photo below)



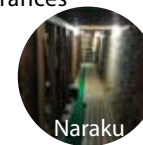
Stair

5 Rotating stage

Here, you can see exquisite rotating stage and trap doors, both of which lead underneath the stage called *naraku*. They enabled more creative entrances and exits.

6 Trap doors

The *Kanamaru-za* has two types of hidden entrances. *Karaido* is a space accessible from underneath by stairs (photo). *Suppon* is an elevator trap to allow actors to enter directly onto the stage, the stairs allow an actor for better dramatic effect.



Naraku

Architecture of the theater

1. Hanamichi: Long stage extension which runs from the stage to the back of the theater (See left).

2. Suppon: Elevator trap to allow actors to enter directly onto the hanamichi at better time his entrance,

3. Karaido: Space accessible from underneath by stairs.

4. Mawari-butai: Rotating stage operated manually.

5. Seri: Trap doors from the underneath of the stage.

6. Masu: Seats for small parties which are divided by a grid of wooden planking.