



Chichibu 34 Kannon Pilgrimage Suggested Day Trip Route

Visitors interested in trying a pilgrimage do not have to undertake the full 34-temple circuit to experience Chichibu's historic route. The section beginning at En'yū-ji Temple (No.26) and progressing in numbered order to Chosen-in Temple (No.29) is an ideal day trip that includes several scenic attractions. The route is only 6.4 kilometers long and can be easily accessed from the Chichibu Railway.

From Kagemori Station, the walk to En'yū-ji Temple's stately main hall (hondo) takes about 10 minutes. The statue of Kannon was enshrined at Iwai-do, the inner hall of En'yū-ji Temple located higher up the mountain. A trail leads from the main complex, first along a road that passes through the compound of a Showa Denko chemical plant, then into the forest. A climb of over 300 moss-covered stone steps leads up to Iwai-do, a secluded pavilion nestled against the cliff face. From there, the pilgrimage route follows the Kotohira Hiking Trail along the ridge toward Daien-ji Temple (No.27).

Before descending the ridge, visitors will pass Daien-ji's central image, a striking white statue of Kannon enshrined on the hilltop. Lower in the valley stands the main hall, Tsukikage-do, where visitors can acquire temple stamps for Daien-ji. Temple stamps for Hashidate-do Temple (No.28) can also be received here during its winter closure.

Just over a kilometer from Daien-ji is Hashidate-do Temple, which lies beneath the imposing cliff face of Mt. Buko. Nearby is the entrance to Hashidate Limestone Cave. In times past, pilgrims considered the natural pit cave to be sacred ground, and traveling through it was symbolic of rebirth. For a small fee, visitors can explore its 140-meter length of twisting, narrow passages and stalactite formations.

The cave's exit lies near the steps up to Hashidate-do Temple, a scarlet pavilion framed by a sheer limestone cliff over 65 meters high. Enshrined inside the temple are wooden horse figures dedicated to Bato Kannon ("Horse-headed Kannon"), a rare manifestation of the deity who is worshipped as a guardian of horses. Hashidate-do Temple is unattended between the second Monday of December and the end of February.

The road to Chosen-in Temple (No.29) takes visitors over the Urayama River via the Morokami Bridge, which gives an excellent view of the 156-meter-high Urayama Dam. At Chosen-in, the large main hall is flanked by stone lanterns and surrounded by a Zen garden. From Chosen-in, it takes roughly 15 minutes to walk to Urayamaguchi Station.

For visitors who prefer to drive, limited parking is available at each temple.



Chichibu-jinja Shrine

Chichibu-jinja Shrine is one of Japan's oldest shrines, and it celebrated its 2100th year in 2014. The shrine is known for its lovely gongen-zukuri architecture, the striking wood carvings of its eaves, and for its central role in the Chichibu Yomatsuri (Night Festival). Visiting the shrine is said to grant a number of blessings, including academic success, familial safety, and prosperity for one's descendants.



The current shrine building was constructed on the orders of Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616), a powerful warlord who united Japan under a single government. In 1956, it was designated a national Tangible Cultural Property. The eaves on each of the shrine building's four sides bear impressive wood carvings. These were supposedly carved by the legendary artist Hidari Jingoro (fl. 1624–1644), a virtuoso who is also credited with the famous "Sleeping Cat" (nemurineko) carving at Nikko Toshogu Shrine.

History of the Chichibu Yomatsuri

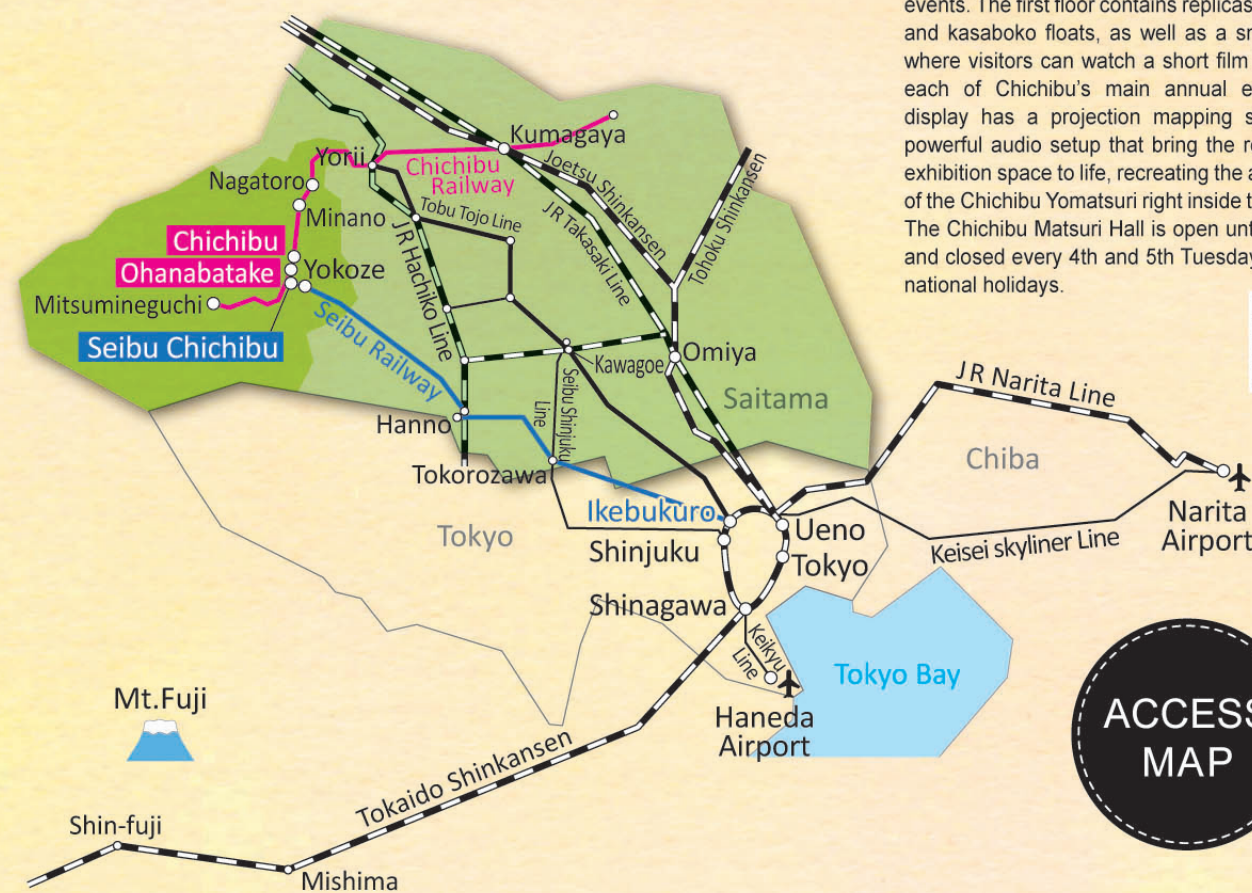
The Chichibu Yomatsuri (Night Festival) is held on December 2 and 3 to honor and express gratitude to the deities that are enshrined in Chichibu-jinja Shrine.

According to legend, Myoken (considered a female deity) and the male dragon deity of Mt. Buko are in love, but the dragon deity is officially married to the spirit of Suwa-jinja Shrine. Each year on December 3, Myoken travels from the sacred grove to Suwa-jinja Shrine to beg for a single night with her lover. By tradition, when the float from Motomachi passes it along the parade route, the musicians quiet their instruments and the onlookers whisper so as not to disturb the negotiations. If all goes well, Myoken and the deity of Mt. Buko meet at Kamenoko Rock, a statue of a turtle enshrined in Chichibu Park near Chichibu City Hall.



Chichibu Matsuri (Festival) Hall

The second floor of the Chichibu Matsuri (Festival) Hall, located near Chichibu-jinja Shrine, contains a variety of exhibits detailing the history of the Chichibu Yomatsuri, as well as many of Chichibu's other unique festivals and cultural events. The first floor contains replicas of the yatai and kasaboko floats, as well as a small theater where visitors can watch a short film introducing each of Chichibu's main annual events. The display has a projection mapping system and powerful audio setup that bring the replicas and exhibition space to life, recreating the atmosphere of the Chichibu Yomatsuri right inside the building. The Chichibu Matsuri Hall is open until 5:00 p.m., and closed every 4th and 5th Tuesday except for national holidays.



ACCESS MAP

<< Train Access to Chichibu from Tokyo >>

Ikebukuro	Seibu Railway Express 80min.	Yokoze	Seibu Railway 4min.	Seibu Chichibu	Ikebukuro	Tobu Tojo Line 80min.	Yorii	Chichibu Railway 40min.	Ohanabatake
Ueno	JR Takasaki Line 60min.	Kumagaya	Chichibu Railway 70min.	Ohanabatake					

Chichibu City Government Industrial Tourism Department, Tourism Division
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