August 28, 2026
East Japan Railway Company
Central Japan Railway Company
West Japan Railway Company
Shikoku Railway Company
Japan Airlines Co., Ltd.

Four JR companies and JAL launch a new cross-regional tourism initiative connecting pilgrimage and spiritual heritage

Creating new value in travel that enriches the spirit and life through experiences of pilgrimage and spiritual heritage

○ East Japan Railway Company (Head office: Shibuya, Tokyo; President & CEO: Yoichi Kise; hereinafter referred to as "JR East"), Central Japan Railway Company (Head office: Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture; President & Representative Director: Shunsuke Niwa; hereinafter referred to as "JR Central"), West Japan Railway Company (Head office: Osaka, Osaka Prefecture; President & Representative Director: Shoji Kurasaka; hereinafter referred to as “JR West”) , Shikoku Railway Company (Head office: Takamatsu, Kagawa Prefecture; President & CEO: Kazuyuki Shinomiya; hereinafter referred to as "JR Shikoku"), and Japan Airlines Co., Ltd. (Head office: Shinagawa, Tokyo; President & CEO: Mitsuko Tottori; hereinafter referred to as "JAL") are jointly launching a new cross-regional tourism initiative connecting pilgrimage and spiritual heritage for inbound visitors.

○ This initiative focuses on Japan's representative pilgrimage and spiritual heritage destination areas—Dewa Sanzan, Kumano Kodo, and the Shikoku Pilgrimage (Shikoku Henro)— promoting a sustainable form of travel that emphasizes meaningful experiences, spirituality, local exchange, and learning while enhancing well-being. This provides a new travel alternative to conventional, consumption-based sightseeing to famous places, thereby contributing to solving regional issues and creating a sustainable future.

1. Overview

(1) Background

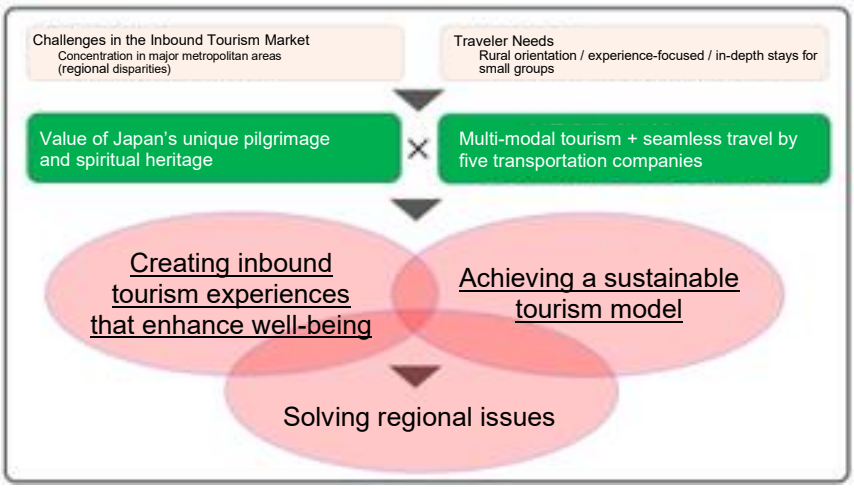
- As the demand for visiting Japan increases, there is a growing interest in travel that enhances well-being through experiencing the unique natural beauty and spiritual heritage of a region, reflecting on oneself, and enriching the spirit.
- On the other hand, tourist destinations tend to be concentrated in metropolitan areas. Therefore, attracting tourists to rural areas and expanding the economic ripple effect on local economies remain important challenges for drawing overseas visitors.

(2) Objectives

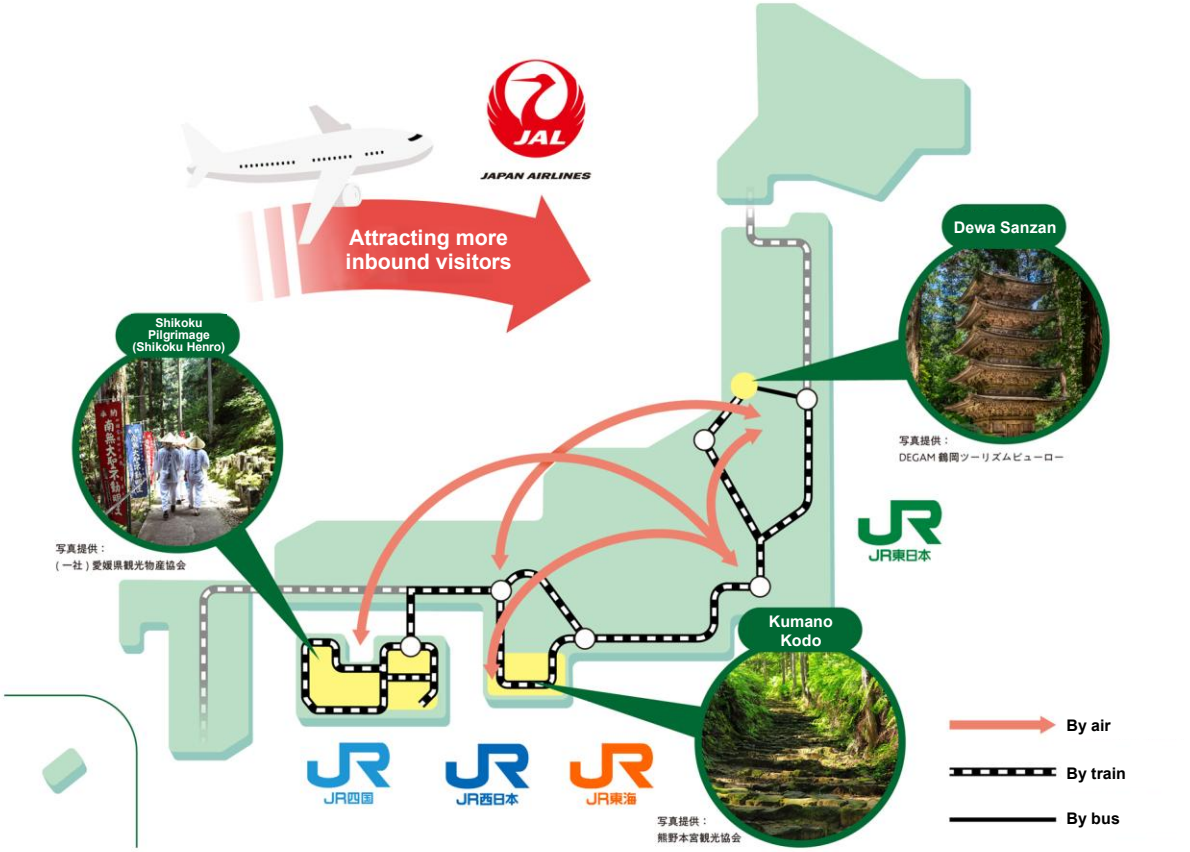
Based on this background, this initiative aims to achieve the following objectives, centering on the pilgrimage and spiritual heritage that have been passed down through generations across Japan, such as "pilgrimage," "prayer," and "rebirth."

- By connecting the historical, cultural, and natural values that each region has protected and inherited, and passing them on to the next generation, we strive to create high-value-added inbound experiences that enhance the well-being of both individual visitors and local communities.
- Through collaboration among the five companies, we will build a cross-regional tourism model, promote multi-modal tourism*, and aim for sustainable tourism that fosters a deeper understanding of regional value through repeated visits over the long term, thereby helping to address regional challenges such as encouraging travel to rural areas.

*Multi-modal tourism: A new travel style that combines multiple modes of transportation, such as rail and air, to construct an itinerary. By combining different transportation modes, we aim to achieve cross-regional travel with greater flexibility.



▼ Concept Image for the Cross-Regional Tourism Model



*For illustrative purposes only

(3) Five-Company Collaboration: An Innovative Approach

- While conventional inbound promotions have focused primarily on communicating the appeal of individual areas and providing transportation, this initiative will disseminate information by combining the transport and tourism infrastructure within the four JR companies' regions with JAL's air network. By directing robust inbound demand to rural areas, it aims to revitalize local economies.
- By developing a seamless travel environment that smoothly connects airlines, railways, and regional transport, we will enhance the infrastructure to allow visitors to comfortably experience each region.

(4) Three Core Destination Areas for the Project

(1) Dewa Sanzan

Photo courtesy of DEGAM Tsuruoka Tourism Bureau

The Dewa Sanzan pilgrimage to Mt. Gassan, Mt. Haguro, and Mt. Yudono has been known since ancient times as a "journey of rebirth"—a special place where nature and faith coexist. An experience that heals the mind and body through connecting with the spirituality of mountain worship is very attractive to visitors who value wellness and spirituality.

DEGAM Tsuruoka Tourism Bureau: https://www.tsuruokacity.com
thedewasanzan.com: https://thedewasanzan.com/

(2) Kumano Kodo World Heritage Site

Photo courtesy of Kumano Hongu Tourist Association

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Photo courtesy of Mie Prefecture Tourism Federation

Steeped in a thousand years of prayer, Kumano Kodo is a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site that enjoys high acclaim both domestically and internationally. The experience of walking along moss-covered stone paths and through deep forests offers a time for introspection and rebirth that goes beyond mere sightseeing, delivering the appeal of a profound cultural experience unique to Japan.

VISIT HIGASHIKISHU: https://kumanokodo-iseji.jp/en/
Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Bureau: https://www.tb-kumano.jp/en/
Nachi Katsuura Tourism Organization: https://nachikan.jp/en/
Shingu City Tourist Association: https://www.shinguu.jp/en

(3) Shikoku Pilgrimage (Shikoku Henro)

Photo courtesy of the NPO Network for Shikoku Henro Pilgrimage and Hospitality

Photo courtesy of Zentsuji

Photo courtesy of Zentsuji

The Shikoku Pilgrimage (Shikoku Henro), which visits 88 temples associated with Kobo Daishi, is a rare circular pilgrimage route in the world. The approximately 1,200 km journey is filled with magnificent natural beauty, human connections, and the local hospitality culture exemplified by the tradition of "*osettai*," making it highly compatible with long-term stays and multi-destination travel.
Shikoku 88 Temple Pilgrimage : https://88shikokuhenro.jp/en/

2. Specific Initiatives

(1) Launch of a Special Website

The special website introducing pilgrimage and spiritual heritage alongside Dewa Sanzan, the Kumano Kodo World Heritage Site and the Shikoku Pilgrimage (Shikoku Henro) was launched on July 30, 2026, to expand awareness among inbound travelers and strengthen the dissemination of the cross-regional tourism model.
URL: https://en.japantravel.com/feature/sacred-journeys

Content on the website will be updated and expanded sequentially.

(2) Formulating a Shared Branding Strategy to Connect the Three Destination Areas

Workshops to formulate branding will be held for stakeholders around September to October. Local residents will also be invited to participate, ensuring that the branding strategy is created in unison with local communities.
Additionally, we will engage international creators and copywriters to ensure the branding effectively resonates with inbound visitors. Once shared branding is established across the five companies, we will leverage their combined networks to promote information and reach new target audiences that could not be engaged by any single company alone.

(3) Joint Information Dissemination to Overseas Media and Digital Promotion
Following the establishment of the branding, we will sequentially roll out promotions, including media outreach to overseas outlets and web advertising, to further build awareness.

(4) Roll out of “EKITAG” Across the Three Destination Areas
Starting around November, we will begin rolling out multilingual versions of EKITAG across the three destination areas. Through EKITAG, we aim to encourage repeated visits to Japan over the long term. Furthermore, by analyzing visitor movement patterns using EKITAG usage data, we will gain insights to inform future initiatives.

Screen Concept Image

About “EKITAG”
EKITAG is a digital station stamp app provided by JR East Marketing & Communications, Inc. that allows users to collect stamps in an in-app stamp book within the app simply by holding their smartphones over NFC tags installed at stations and other locations. In addition to regular station stamps, the app supports limited-time and event-linked stamps. For further details on the EKITAG app, please visit the official website:
Official EKITAG website: https://www.ekitag.jp
*EKITAG is a registered trademark of JR East Marketing & Communications, Inc.

EKITAG App
Scan to download

(5) Menu of Services and Options under this Initiative
In addition to improving access to each destination area and encouraging travel between them, we will offer options that allow visitors to experience the history, culture, natural beauty, pilgrimage, and spiritual heritage of each location on a deeper level.

1) Dewa Sanzan

Option	Schedule
Distribution of special commemorative gifts at Dewa Sanzan Shrine.	From autumn 2026
Provision of a special dining menu at Mt. Haguro Sanrojo “Saikan” (currently being adjusted).	From 2027
Provision of non-alcoholic gin inspired by the scent of Mt. Haguro at accommodations in Mt. Haguro and Tsuruoka City.	Limited time; Aug.–Sep. 2026
Setup of a PR corner (photo spot, etc.) at JR Tsuruoka Station, and PR announcements at the station and on the Limited Express Inaho.	From autumn 2026
Regular scheduled sightseeing bus service between JR Sendai Station and Mt. Haguro Summit.	Sat., Sun., public holidays; Jul.–Sep. 2026
Option to select the “JR Sendai Station ⇔ Mt. Haguro Summit scheduled sightseeing bus service” as an add-on for JALPAK products. URL: https://www.activities.jalpak.co.jp/transport	On sale now
Kabuki dance performance by Hashigo Nakamura	
Location: Tohoku Epson Aquarium Kamosui JRE MALL https://event.jreast.co.jp/activity/detail/a122/a122-2026-r002 (in Japanese) KKday https://www.kkday.com/en/product/621366	Sep. 7, 2026
Location: Five-storied Pagoda of Mt. Haguro JRE MALL https://event.jreast.co.jp/activity/detail/a122/a122-2026-b001 (in Japanese) KKday https://www.kkday.com/en/product/621354	Sep. 14, 2026

2) Kumano Kodo World Heritage Site

Option	Schedule
Special Experience at Seiganto-ji Temple, Kumano Kodo World Heritage Site (Planned by Nippon Travel Agency) A special plan includes: 1. Special esoteric *goma* fire ritual and *horagai* (conch shell) experience at Nachisan Gyojado Hall led by a Kumano Shugendo yamabushi monk. 2. Special admission to Takihoden (normally closed to the public) to view the National Important Cultural Property Kongokai Three-Dimensional Mandala. 3. Special guided tour of the Three-Story Pagoda.	Autumn 2026
Special Experience at Fudarakusan-ji Temple, Kumano Kodo World Heritage Site (Planned by Nippon Travel Agency) A special plan includes: 1. Special illustrated explanation of the Nachisan Shrine Mandala. 2. Special unveiling of the Hidden Three-Faced, Thousand-Armed, Thousand-Eyed Kannon Bodhisattva.	From 2027
Hands-Free Travel in Kumano (Luggage Delivery Service) Luggage dropped off in the morning at the Shingu City Tourist Association in front of Shingu Station is delivered on the same day to designated accommodations in Shingu, Nachikatsuura, and Kushimoto. Shingu City Tourist Association https://www.shinguu.jp/en/new-events/detail/317	Currently available
“WEST QR Kansai-Nanki Area Pass” QR tickets allowing unlimited rides on local and rapid trains in the Nanki and Keihanshin areas are currently on sale through select travel agencies for international visitors purchasing JAL tickets for Haneda–Nanki Shirahama flights. Details:https://www.westjr.co.jp/travel-information/en/services-offers/air/jal-wakayama/ *The "World Heritage Sites 'Koyasan/Kumano' Pilgrimage Bus" provides convenient access from the Kumano Kodo area to Koyasan after completing the Shikoku Pilgrimage. Ryujin Jidosha Co., Ltd. https://visitwakayama.jp/en/stories/5#286	On sale now
Local hospitality initiatives at stations along the Kumano Kodo Iseji Route, Higashikishu area.	From autumn 2026
Distribution of special commemorative gifts to participants of English-guided tours on the Kumano Kodo Iseji Route.	From autumn 2026

3) Shikoku Pilgrimage (Shikoku Henro)

Option	Schedule
English-guided Shikoku/Kagawa Pilgrimage Taxi Tour (2 nights, 3 days). (Departing from/arriving at JR Takamatsu Station or Takamatsu Airport; planned by JALPAK Co., Ltd.) URL:https://www.activities.jalpak.co.jp/ohenro	On sale now
Guided tour of the temple grounds by staff and special viewing at Temple 75, Zentsuji	From winter 2026
Special experiences at Temple 86, Shido-ji (sutra copying, tracing Buddha images, dry landscape garden sand-raking, etc.).	From winter 2026

3. Future Developments

This initiative is not intended as a short-term promotion, but as a medium- to long-term effort. Initially, we will collaborate with travel agencies to create and sell original travel products combining domestic air routes with JR railway lines of individual JR companies. In the future, we aim to develop travel packages utilizing charter flights and contribute to solving regional issues, such as tourism labor shortages and secondary transportation infrastructure. Furthermore, we will deepen collaboration among the companies to explore achieving a “seamless travel experience connecting rail and air” and expanding “luggage delivery services.”

*All images and illustrations are for illustrative purposes only.
*Details of individual initiatives are subject to change.