

When I was traveling in Shikoku last week, I kept noticing things that I wanted to write about in my Education Center Journal. “Finally, something interesting to write about,” I thought. But now that I’m back to life as usual in Mie, I have started to forget some of the interesting points that I wanted to mention!

We set off for Shikoku on Saturday morning—three friends in a car with lots of camping gear. We decided to see Shikoku by driving through the mountains and along the beach, and staying in campsites along the way. I had never been camping before, but it sounded like a fun adventure, so I agreed. Looking at a map of Shikoku, it looks huge! I thought we would be driving forever. But when I think about it, compared to the distances I used to drive at home in the United States, it’s really not very big! We got to Awaji in less than 4 hours—I couldn’t believe it! It was too windy on our first day to see the whirlpools at Naruto so we decided to see it on the way back. We started our tour in Naruto and began to make our way counter-clockwise around the island. Our first night, we stayed at a campsite in Sanuki city. Have you heard of it? It’s famous for Sanuki udon, and rightly so. The roads were lined with self-service udon shops and everywhere we stopped (we ate a LOT of udon) we had a delicious meal. That night, my first night ever sleeping in a tent, it rained very hard. We found out the hard way that our tent was not waterproof, but we still had a fun time. We were enthusiastic, at the beginning of the trip at least, so we made the best of a rough situation. The rain cleared up after a few days and we had a nice trip. But the first few days were spent eating udon noodles in the rain.

We spent a few days seeing the sights in Kagawa, visiting nice onsens and finally going to Kompira-san, the famous temple west of Takamatsu city. Even though Shikoku is famous for its 88 temple pilgrimage, this was the only temple that we visited! We climbed up the more than 700 steps to the main temple at Kompira-san and admired the view from the mountainside. It was a clear, warm day that felt almost like summer so it was a very good part of our vacation. That night we ventured deep into the mountains to meet a friend of mine who is an ALT in the Iya valley. Have you heard of that region of Shikoku? I am so surprised that many of my Japanese co-workers have never heard of that part of Japan. There are some very interesting things to see there, but I will save it for the next journal. We were in Shikoku for 8 days—I can’t write about all that time in just one journal!

For all the newcomers to the office this year, I hope that you will enjoy this journal about my life in Japan. Don’t hesitate to talk with me if you have any questions about what I’ve written, or ideas for a journal in the future. I’d like to hear your opinions.