

Day 49: Ron finishes, alone — “what Kukai had in mind for my last day”

The Bethlehem Gadfly Fun Stuff, Ron Yoshida April 28, 2019

(6th in a series of posts on Ron Yoshida's pilgrimage)

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This final day, I traveled alone though I thought of Ichigo, Ichie – one lifetime, one moment. Perhaps that is what Kukai had in mind for my last day.



On April 21, Ron Yoshida completed his incredible pilgrimage. *I thought about reaching the finish. Indeed, a moment to enjoy as I passed through the sanmon and rang the temple bell – over two hundred years old.*

88 Temples.

You might want to know what pilgrims do when they are at a temple and what I do as a secular person who respects other people's beliefs but is not religious but spiritual. . . . I put my hands together, bow my head and think the following. I am grateful that I am healthy in mind and body to have walked to this temple (83 so far). I am grateful to my grandparents who had the courage to leave Japan for whatever reason and who endured in a new land. I am grateful to my parents who nurtured me even though at times I rebelled. I am grateful to have Sharon as my wife and partner who has shared my life and supported me on this trip. I am grateful for my friends who I know have helped me and will help me again when needed. I am grateful for all of my girl cats and Sherman who purr and give unequivocal love. I am grateful to all of the people who have given me acts of kindness. For those fellow

pilgrims and for those performing osettai whom I will never meet again, Ichigo, Ichie (in one lifetime, one meeting), thank you.

1200km.

745.6454 miles.

Over mountains

thousands of feet high.

I am sad to leave the road with the excitement of what possibilities lie ahead. Each day brought surprises and experiences that can't be bought. Walking put the moments into slow-motion. I saw details that would have been missed while on a bike, in a car, bus, train, or plane. I am sad because although I have hiked before, I have never gone this distance and time appreciating nature and our environment. Will I ever hear frogs as I did when I walked around the pond having missed Temple 36 on Day 19? Will I walk along a coastline and feel the wind for as long as I did in Kochi prefecture? Will I hear the sweet spring sounds of the birds as I was walking through the forests of Shikoku?



We look forward to Ron's reflections on his return.

"Please wear the clothes of the Buddha's great compassion."

Kukai (Kobo Daishi)

Buddha: "I am the awakened one."

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