

Zafu-making & zazen meditation experience in Fukui, a land with deep connections to Zen culture

Concept

Zen experience program
emphasizing local culture and
sustainability

Fukui Prefecture has had deep connections with the Soto sect of Zen Buddhism since ancient times.

In this program, participants will experience Zen culture at Eikenji Temple, a Soto sect Zen Buddhist temple in Tsuruga City, Fukui Prefecture.

Participants will start by making a cushion known as “zafu”, which is used in zazen meditation. This is an activity that emphasizes sustainability, putting into practice the Zen teaching of “making the most of the life of things and reducing waste”.

Afterwards, participants will experience zazen meditation under the guidance of a monk in Eikenji Temple’s zazen meditation hall (monks’ hall). Refresh your body and mind in Fukui, a land with deep connections to Zen culture.

Tsuruga City (Fukui)

The Soto Sect, Zen, and Fukui Prefecture

Dogen Zenji, the founder of the Soto sect of Zen Buddhism, was born in Kyoto in 1200, became a monk at the age of 13, and traveled to China at the age of 24, where he attained enlightenment. After returning to Japan, he preached on the importance of zazen meditation in Kyoto, but in 1244, seeking a quieter environment, he moved to Echizen Province (present-day Fukui Prefecture) and built the Daibutsuji Temple. This temple was later renamed Eiheiji Temple and became the center of the Soto sect. The Soto sect places great importance on the teaching of Zen. Zen refers to the practice of determining the true nature and existence of things and preparing one's mind to respond correctly to them. Through zazen meditation, which is practiced in a sitting position, the body is stabilized, and the mind is focused, allowing the practitioner to achieve harmony of body, breath, and mind.

The Soto Sect's Zen Teachings and Their Influence

The Zen teaching of "making the most of the life of things and reducing waste" has a profound impact on environmental initiatives and sustainable lifestyles. Waste upcycling and effective resource use are being promoted based on this teaching, which has taken root as part of the region's cultural identity. Local industries and cultural activities are developed in ways that put Zen teachings into practice, promoting sustainability within communities.



Eikenji Temple

Eikenji Temple was founded in 1395 by Shinso Komuro, a monk from Kaga. Old structures built in the Edo period still remain in the grounds of Eikenji Temple, including the main hall, the monks' hall, and the temple's main gate. The main hall, which was built in 1741 in the irimoya architectural style, is roughly 20 meters long, and has a roof with undulating tiles. There are many cultural treasures housed within the temple grounds, including ancient documents, paintings, and wooden seated statues, which are preserved as Tsuruga City designated cultural assets.

Experience Overview

- Meeting place: Eikenji Temple (9-5 Tsuruga City, Fukui Prefecture)
- Meeting time: Please gather 5 minutes before the starting time
- Experience schedule

① Zafu-making experience (time required: roughly 45 minutes)

Participants will make a zafu (cushion) to be used during the zazen experience together with a monk.

② Zazen meditation experience (time required: roughly 45 minutes)

Participants will experience zazen meditation while listening to a lecture by a monk in Eikenji Temple's zazen meditation hall (monks' hall).



Zafu-making experience

In the zafu-making experience, participants will make a zafu (cushion) to be used in the zazen meditation experience afterwards. The zafu covers are made from scraps of unneeded clothing, patchwork style, by volunteers from the local community. Furthermore, instead of cotton, the zafus are stuffed with cloth and lint that would normally be discarded, provided by a local textile company. This is an experience that puts into practice the Soto Zen Buddhist teaching of “making the most of the life of things”, and is designed to help participants learn about upcycling and caring for the environment. Once the zafu has been filled to a hardness that is comfortable for you to sit on, all you need to do is shape it, and it is ready to be used.

Zazen meditation experience

Participants can experience zazen meditation while listening to a lecture by a monk at Eikenji Temple, an environment with abundant nature. Temples with zazen meditation halls (monks’ halls) are rare, making this one of the highlights of the program. Through this experience, participants will have an opportunity to take deep breaths and reflect on themselves, creating an opportunity for them to ponder their daily lives and futures. Zazen meditation also helps to refresh the body and mind.

