

Lake Biwa and Waterside Scenes

— A Heritage of Water in Living and Prayer



What is Japan Heritage?

1. The Purpose and Objectives of the “Japan Heritage” Designation Program

The Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan, has created a plan to promote Japan’s cultural properties and cultural traditions in order to revitalize regional economies. The concept is to package and utilize Japan’s preserved tangible and intangible cultural properties through narratives based on unique regional histories, traditions, and customs passed down for generations. Effective initiatives are thus needed to disseminate information, develop talent, pass on traditions, and improve the environment. By applying the “Japan Heritage” designation, the Agency authorizes the utilization of these compelling historical legacies and their unique features to tell a story about the culture and traditions of Japan. The Agency also provides support for comprehensive efforts that utilize these fascinating tangible and intangible cultural properties—essential for telling each story—for regional heritage tourism.

2. Directions of the Japan Heritage Project

The Japan Heritage Project is designed to carry out the following three courses of action.

- (1) To identify the many cultural properties of each region and package them with a story
- (2) To preserve and utilize these cultural properties cohesively for regional heritage tourism
- (3) To strategically and effectively promote heritage tourism within Japan and abroad

Japan Heritage “Water Culture” Tourism Promotion Council
Shiga Prefecture, Otsu City, Hikone City, Omihachiman City, Takashima City, Higashiomi City, Maibara City
Biwako Visitors Bureau
Shiga Prefectural Association for Cultural Heritages

For Inquiries Japan Heritage “Water Culture” Toursim Promotion Council Secretariat (within the Tourism and International Exchange Bureau, Department of Commerce, Industry, Tourism, and Labor, Shiga Prefecture)
Tel: 077-528-3741 / Fax: 077-521-5030



Japan Heritage—Lake Biwa, Shiga

SHIGA BIWAKO JAPAN HERITAGE



Water, Invocations and Peaceful Living

Welcome to water country.

Rainwater from the mountains surrounding Lake Biwa seeps underground, becoming spring water that flows into rivers that in turn flow into the ancient basin that forms Japan's largest freshwater lake. People rely on that water to thrive.

Feeling gratitude for the water, people living in the upper reaches of a river in their daily activities have always taken care not to pollute the water for people living downstream.

Water is the wellspring of nature that enhances our lives and facilitates the flow of time.

Welcome to water country—Shiga.

And experience its life-giving water.

The Japan Heritage Promotion Project



The Japan Heritage Promotion Project

A Culture of Living with Water

People have long used water with great skill to support their lives. Water was distributed to each house in Takashima on the west side of Lake Biwa through an ancient water system built in the Edo Period. Connected pipes made of bamboo thus carried spring water from distant mountains to places where it was needed. Residents built a water tank in their home known as a **tamemasu** that worked on the principle of a siphon at important points. A lot of effort goes into maintaining the functioning of this system today. In the plains, people use gushing spring water by creating a kitchen washing area known as a **kabata** with separate basins for drinking water, cooking, and washing. When plates are washed, the food scraps feed the **koi** carp kept there. Visitors have the opportunity to observe this modest, wise way of using such an overflowing resource.

Other sights unique to this region include stone walls built to protect villages from wind-whipped waters of Lake Biwa, or people washing clothing against planks of wood extending from the shoreline, or preserved buildings along an ancient post town road. At one time there were dozens of lagoons—inner lakes—around Lake Biwa. Most were turned into farmland through drainage and land reclamation, but the largest, Lake Nishinoko, still remains in the Omihachiman area, fostering industries such as fishing and the reed industry even today. People learned to live within the ecosystem, cutting reeds in the autumn and burning the stalks in early spring, a process repeated seasonally to promote the regenerative cycle.

In the village of Iba, adjacent to nearby Lake Iba-naiko, waterways crisscross the village, reminding visitors of an age when boats regularly plied the waters, transporting people for fishing or farming the rice paddies. Every house had stone steps leading down to the canal for scrubbing and washing in the clean water. Examples of these stone steps, known as **kawato**, still remain today.

In Hikone, at a Japanese garden with a lake at its center, spring water and lake water are used masterfully to create a waterfall flowing from rocks on a small island; it also has a sandbar that utilizes the changing surface of the lake. The arrangement of rocks in the garden and use of water create a highly abstract, artistic landscape.

A Culture of Prayer with Water

People have long feared floods and drought and believed that spirit dwells in the purity of water. They conduct rites with a sense of gratitude to venerate water as if it were a god. In Maibara, the ancient post town of Samegai-juku has pure spring water gushing from the ground. Legend has it that Prince Yamato Takeru, who was injured by a poison arrow, cooled his fever in the spring here known as **izame no izumi**. Also, in this delta region that is susceptible to droughts, a Taiko Odori drum dance is still performed today that originated in prayers for rain. In Takashima, timber is floated down the Adogawa River to Kyoto. The raftsmen built seven shrines along the river, known as Shikobuchi shrines, to protect themselves from the river demons. At Enryakuji Temple on Mt. Hiei in Otsu, established by the founder of Tendai Buddhism, Saichō (767–822), the principal object of worship is the Medicine Buddha (Yakushi Nyorai). This is the Buddha of the Pure Land of Water (Eastern Pure Land), who shines the color of lapis lazuli (blue). Looking out to the east from Mt. Hiei is a panoramic view of Lake Biwa, shining blue. People long ago praised the scenic beauty of the lake, calling it a Buddhist paradise in a sacred song, “Not a lake, that lake in Omi, but Tendai Yakushi’s pond” (Poems to Make the Accumulated Dust Dance). Also, many Tendai sect temples and shrines were built to surround this “Pure Land of Water” in a syncretic fusion of Shintoism and Buddhism, particularly with statues of the Medicine Buddha and Kannon, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Still today, much reverence is paid to these representations of healing power, as people pray for deliverance from illness and calamity.

At the foot of the sacred Mt. Hiei are three **sohonzan** (head) Tendai temples and Hiyoshi-Taisha Shrine, a head shrine with 3,000 subsidiary shrines around the country, plus a sacred spring said to be the place where emperors of yore were given their first bath as infants. Still today Shinto ceremonies are held in which portable shrines are sent out onto the lake. In connection with the shrines and temples built in the mountains facing Lake Biwa in Takashima and Omihachiman, visitors can see vermilion gates standing in the water or witness the religious austerity of jumping into the water from a plank extended from the lakeside. Only here can one see such unique structures and practices that highlight the deep connection between water and prayer.

A Culture of Food and Water

The water that has given rise to special lifestyles and prayers has also led to unique occupations and food culture. On the coast of Lake Biwa and at the mouth of rivers, one spring attraction for visitors to watch is Oisade net fishing, a traditional method in which a net attached to a pole adorned with bird feathers is used to scoop up young **ayu** sweetfish alive. Other traditional fishing methods that take advantage of a thorough knowledge of fish behavior that can be seen only at Lake Biwa include the use of stationary bamboo **yana** weirs stretched out in a fan shape at the mouth of a river or arrow-shaped **eri** fish traps set along the coast.

Fish caught in Lake Biwa were a mainstay of people’s diet, and gave rise to traditional regional cuisine. Visitors can enjoy culinary delights prepared from endemic fish species such as **isaza** (goby), **honmoroko** (willow minnow), and **biwamasu** (cherry salmon). **Funa-zushi**—fermented **funa** (freshwater carp)—and other types of fermented sushi are made from fish caught in the spawning season as they go upstream in large numbers to lay eggs. The technique is a crystallization of knowledge on how to preserve fish for more than a year and is closely related to festivals and traditional rituals performed as prayers for abundant harvests.

Lake Biwa and Waterside Scenes

— A Heritage of Water in Living and Prayer —



Shiga Prefecture, with Lake Biwa in the center of the Omi Basin, is an area with a great abundance of water, as rainfall at the base of the surrounding mountains flows downward in rivers. A culture of water was born throughout the area that reflects Japanese lifestyles and prayer—a culture that remains alive today.

A Culture of Living with Water



Waterfront scenery at Kaizu, Nishihama, and Chinai
Lake shore stone walls and common wells, with a fishing port and sand beach—life today is still lived in close connection with water.



Waterfront scenery at Harie and Shimofuri
Underground spring water flows from everywhere in these villages, where people still use *kabata* basins to harness the water.



Waterfront scenery at Omizo
A place of ancient water channels and conduits. Inner Lake Otomegaie and the “water castle” Omizo Castle tell the tales of history.



Waterfront scenery at Iba
Clean water from the river is channeled throughout the town, with the system connecting to an inner lake.



Mountain village scenery at Higashikusano
A mountain village at the source of the Anegawa River, which flows down from Mt. Ibuki, has one of the heaviest snowfalls in Kansai.



Lakeside District of Omihachiman
This unique inner lake, Japan’s first designated important cultural landscape, is a wetland protected by the RAMSAR convention.



Okishima Island
This is the largest island in Lake Biwa and the only freshwater island in Japan where fishing is still a vital industry.



Gokasho Kondo
Omi merchants’ residences and farmhouses create a special historical atmosphere in this town with beautiful water channels.



Genkyu Rakurakuen Garden
This strolling garden around a pond with an island in the center and bridges over inlets offers a wonderfully varied landscape.



Gardens of the former suburban residence of the lord of the Matsubara clan at Hikone (Ohama Palace)
Built on the lakeside. This tidewater pond is connected to the level of water in Lake Biwa, creating regular variation at the water’s edge.

A Culture of Prayer with Water



Enryakuji Temple on Mt. Hiei
The head temple of the Tendai sect, built high above Lake Biwa, praised as a Pure Land in this world as the lake of the Medicine Buddha.



Onjo-ji Temple (Mii-dera Temple)
The head temple of the Tendai Jimon sect. Has a sacred spring where three emperors of yore were given their first bath as infants.



Hiyoshi Taisha Shrine
The head shrine of all Hiyoshi, Hie and Sanno shrines. The annual ritual of seven mikoshi transported by boat across the lake is a grand sight.



Chomeiji Temple
Built with a spectacular view over the lake, the temple has a Medicine Buddha statue kept from public view since feudal times.



Isakiji Temple
Famous for the ascetic practice of jumping off the end of a plank extending out over Lake Biwa. The temple is closely linked to the worship of water.



Shirahige Shrine
The large torii gate standing in the lake resembles the shrine at the island of Itsukushima (Miyajima) in Hiroshima and presides over travels on Lake Biwa.



Faith in the Shikobuchi deities
The Shikobuchi gods have been revered for protecting the men who transported goods downriver on wooden rafts from river demons.



Samegai-juku post town
A post town on the Nakasendo highroad along the Jizo River that legend says connects pilgrims to the water goddess of Mt. Ryozen and the providence of Buddha.



Mt. Ibuki western foothills
Mt. Ibuki has been revered since ancient times as the dwelling place of the goddess of water and is today still an object of faith.



Asahi Honen Taiko Odori (Japanese drum dancing)
In villages of the area even today this drumming procession to the mountains is held in gratitude for rain.

A Culture of Food and Water

Traditional fishing methods



Oisade (net) fishing



Yana (weir) fishing



Eri (trap) fishing

Traditional country-style cooking (Shiga’s culinary cultural properties)
Traditional freshwater fish cuisine, Ebi mame (shrimp and beans), Funazushi (fermented carp)

Representative fish of Lake Biwa (“Eight Delicacies of Lake Biwa”)
Koayu (small sweetfish), Biwa trout, hasu (three-lips), isaza goby, goby fry, nigoro-buna carp, suji-ebi (lake prawn), honmoroko

Otsu City

The city of Otsu extends from the southwest to south shore of Lake Biwa, and since ancient times has been a key transportation hub for lake travel.

In the Edo Period, it was the base for a union of ship operators traversing Lake Biwa known as the Otsu Hyakusosen (literally, 100 ships of Otsu). Otsu was also a post town along the old Tokaido route that flourished with people transporting goods back and forth over land. Folk culture also developed here, such as Otsu-e painting and the production and use of Otsu soroban (abacus).

The three main temples of Tendai Buddhism are located in Otsu—Enryakuji, Onjo-ji (Mii-dera), and Saikyoji—along with other ancient temples and shrines, including Hiyoshi Taisha and Ishiyama-dera. It is also the home port for the “Michigan,” a sightseeing boat that plies Lake Biwa.



- Enryakuji Temple on Mt. Hiei
- Onjo-ji Temple (Mii-dera Temple)
- Hiyoshi Taisha Shrine

Also a UNESCO World Heritage,
its numerous halls and pagodas are
a sight to see

A Culture of Prayer with Water

The “mother mountain” of Japanese buddhism

Enryakuji Temple on Mt. Hiei

World Cultural Heritage and
National Historic Site and National Treasure

The head temple of the Tendai sect, looked up to as the “mother mountain” of Japanese Buddhism and a symbol of the prayer for world peace. The vast, lapis lazuli Lake Biwa stretches out below, praised as a Buddhist paradise in a sacred song: “Not a lake, that lake in Omi, but Tendai Yakushi’s pond.”

- Nearest station: 10 min. walk from Sakamoto Sta. on the Keihan Ishiyama-Sakamoto Line, change to the Sakamoto Cable Car and get off at the end; Or a 20 min. walk from Hieiezan-Sakamoto Sta. on the JR Biwako Line, change to the Sakamoto Cable Car and get off at the end
- Hours: To-do Area
8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (Mar. to Nov.)
9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (Dec.); 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (Jan., Feb.)
Sai-to and Yokawa Areas
9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (Mar. to Nov.)
9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. (Dec.); 9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (Jan., Feb.)
- Admission: Combined pass for all three areas (To-do, Sai-to, and Yokawa): 700 yen for adults; 500 yen for junior high and high school students; 300 yen for elementary school students
- Inquiries: 077-578-0001



The Konpon Nyorai Statue Presides Over the Water World

The patriarch of Tendai Buddhism, Saichō (766-822), founded Enryakuji in 788. He had the temple built atop Mt. Hiei, dedicating the main ritual hall (at first called Ichijō-shikanin and later Konpon Chūdō) to the principal worship of the Medicine Buddha (Yakushi Nyorai). The entire mountain encompasses temple grounds, extending north to south and straddling Kyoto and Shiga prefectures. It is divided into three areas—To-do (east area), Sai-to (west area) and Yokawa—with numerous temple structures. In the early Kamakura Period (1185-1333), Jien, a Tendai abbot, wrote the Gukanshō (Jottings of a Fool), a historical and literary work about the history of Japan, in which he describes Mt. Hiei as the quintessential sacred mountain. He called it more than a mountain by terrain; rather a spiritual summit. And directly below is Lake Biwa, with such great abundance in its vast waters. The sun rising from the east recalls the image of Yakushi Rurikō Nyorai, the Buddha of the Eastern Pure Land. For these many traits, Enryakuji has been highly revered through the ages.

The Womb of Life and Culture

In an age even more ancient than the founding of Enryakuji, Mt. Hiei was revered as the sacred dwelling place of the deity Oyamakui-no-kami. Rain falls upon the mountain, providing water to irrigate the rice paddies in the foothills, sustaining human life. Similar to worship of the Buddha, people in earlier times offered prayers to the gods of nature dwelling on Mt. Hiei for the water, wood, and rock they used. Far before the introduction of Buddhism to Japan, people here felt the presence of gods in nature, and that sentiment still persists today in people’s hearts and minds. Just as a river will branch into several distributaries, the teachings of Mt. Hiei gave rise to new schools of Japanese Buddhism. These schools were founded during the Kamakura Period by such noted priests as Honen, Shinran, Nichiren, Dogen, and Eisai. Much has descended from the mountain to enrich people’s live besides water.

Magnificent Views of Expansive Scenery

Stone walls in the temple town of Sakamoto are built in the *anouzumi* style, with natural stones that lock together. Visitors can ride up to Enryakuji Temple on Mt. Hiei from the town using the Sakamoto Cable Railway. This cable car system opened in 1927 and is Japan’s longest at 2,025 meters. Once the cable car rises above the deep forests, riders get an expansive view of Lake Biwa out the windows, gloriously reminiscent of the lake’s other appellation, “Tendai Yakushi’s pond.” On the summit, visitors are treated to the wonder of numerous ancient buildings and structures. Other attractions on Mt. Hiei include the amusement park Yumemi-Ga-Oka, which has a cycle monorail that offers a panoramic view of Lake Biwa and the city of Otsu, and Garden Museum Hiei, a garden park inspired by Impressionist painters such as Monet and Renoir.

One of the top spots in Kansai for spring cherry blossom viewing with a thousand sakura trees on the temple grounds



- Nearest station: 10 min. walk from Mii-dera Sta. on the Keihan Ishiyama-Sakamoto Line
- Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
- Admission: 600 yen
- Inquiries: 077-522-2238



A Culture of Prayer with Water

Onjo-ji Temple (Mii-dera Temple)

A temple consecrating sacred spring water
National Treasure, Important Cultural Property

The official name of the temple is Nagarayama Onjo-ji. It is the head temple of the Tendaijimon sect of Buddhism. Its common name, "Mii-dera" ("temple of the three wells"), comes from the miraculous spring in which it is said the three emperors Tenji, Tenmu and Jito were given their first bath as newborns. The temple holds more than 100 national treasures and important cultural properties, including the Kannon-dō, Shaka-dō, and Tōin halls. The main hall itself (Kondō) is a national treasure. Dedicated to Kannon (Bodhisattva of Compassion), the temple is the 14th of 33 temples on the Saigoku Kannon Pilgrimage of western Japan. Also well known is the "evening bell at Mii-dera Temple," one of the famous "eight views of Omi," and Benkei's bell, with its own legend. The temple is especially packed with visitors in the seasons for viewing cherry blossoms and autumn foliage. The temple offers various popular programs by reservation, including Zen meditation and making wrist rosaries.

A Culture of Prayer with Water

Hiyoshi-Taisha Shrine

Shinto shrines among select water spots
National Treasure, Important Cultural Property

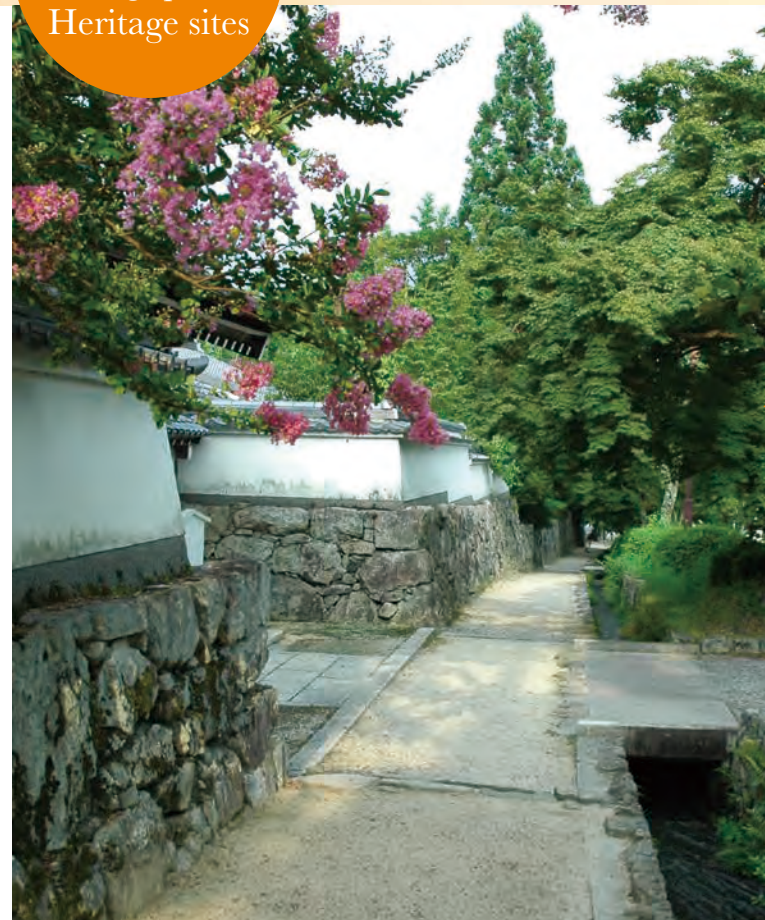
Built for the guardian deity of the capital of ancient Kyoto and the Tendai Sect. So old, the shrine's establishment is noted in the Kojiki, the oldest extant chronicle in Japan, dating from the early 8th century. Hiyoshi-Taisha is the head shrine of approximately 3800 Sanno shrines throughout Japan. The main shrine to the east is dedicated to the deity enshrined at the sacred Mt. Hachioji, Oyama Kui no Kami, while the main shrine to the west was involved in the ceremonial transfer of the deity Ōkuninushi from Mt. Miwa in Nara Prefecture upon the transfer of the ancient capital to Otsu-kyō. Both east and west shrines are built in a rare architectural style known as Hie-zukuri. There are also many shrine buildings of great architectural beauty in the forest along the Omiya River, which appear even more wonderful when the autumn leaves turn color. The Sanno Matsuri, one of the Three Great Festivals of Lake Biwa, is an annual festival with a particularly stirring Yoimiya Otoshi (Shinto ritual) held on the night of April 13.

- Nearest station: 10 min. walk from Sakamoto Sta. on the Keihan Ishiyama-Sakamoto Line, or 20 min. walk from Hieizan-Sakamoto Sta. on the JR Kosei Line
- Hours: 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
- Admission: 300 yen for adults; 150 for children
- Inquiries: 077-578-0009



The mid-April Sanno Matsuri is a Shinto festival very worth seeing

Places to go after seeing the Japan Heritage sites



Temple town at the foot of Mt. Hiei

A temple town at the foot of Mt. Hiei blessed with abundant nature and the scenery of Lake Biwa. Walls made of natural stone, built by stonemasons in a guild called Anoushu, create an enduring, unhurried atmosphere.

1 Sakamoto Stroll

Loc Sakamoto, Otsu
Tel. 077-578-6565

2 The Former Chikurin-in

Seasonal atmosphere of temple quarters

Loc 5-2-13 Sakamoto, Otsu
Tel. 077-578-0955 Hrs 9:00~17:00
Adm Adults: ¥320 12 and under: ¥160

3 Ogoto Onsen Kanko Park

Hot springs discovered approx. 1200 years ago
Loc 1-2-17 Ogoto, Otsu
Tel. 077-578-3750 Hrs 8:00~18:00

Otsu City

Around the Area

— The Romance of History —



[By Train]

JR Kosei Line
Ogoitoonsen
Maibara
JR Tokaido Main Line
(Biwako Line) 43 min.
on Special Rapid Service
Otsu
Otsukyo
Kyoto
Yamashina / Otsu Zeze
9 min. on Rapid and Special Rapid Service

Forget your busy life at Mii-dera Temple

A Recommended for beginners Hand-copy the Heart Sutra



When you hand-copy a sutra or trace a Buddhist image, you are momentarily freed from worldly thoughts and become refreshed. Many other trial courses are also offered, including Zen meditation. Please try one upon your visit.

Loc 246 Onjoji-cho, Otsu Tel. 077-522-2238
Hrs 9:00~17:00 Adm Adults: ¥1,000 18 and under: ¥500

Notes: Course participation requires advanced registration. Fees are charged for courses, along with the separate temple admission and parking fees. If you wish to learn about Buddhism or Mii-dera Temple, please speak to a priest in attendance.

B Serving temple food in front of the guardian gate Restaurant Fugetsu



Experience temple food, the source of Japanese cuisine, developed with wisdom over the centuries.

Loc 246 Onjoji-cho, Otsu Tel. 077-524-0638
Hrs 8:30~17:00

Historic sites at castles built by Lake Biwa



C Site of former Sakamoto Castle

Monument on the site of a castle once built by Akechi Mitsuhide under orders from Oda Nobunaga

Loc 3 Shimo-sakamoto, Otsu
Tel. Sakamoto Tourist Information
077-578-6565



D Site of former Otsu Castle

Monument on the site of a castle once built under orders from Toyotomi Hideyoshi at a strategic location for guarding transportation on Lake Biwa

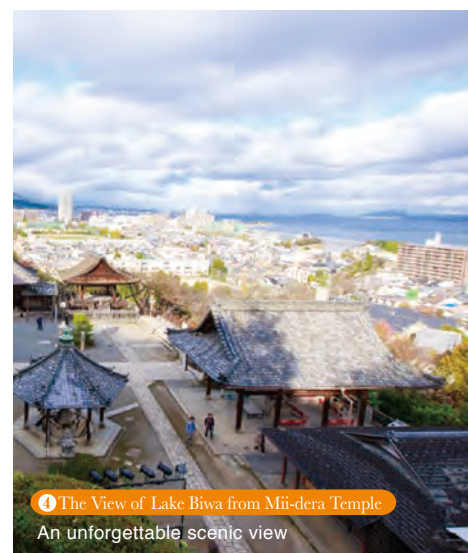
Loc Hamaotsu, Otsu
Tel. Otsu Station Tourist Information Center
077-522-3830



E Site of former Zeze Castle

Once a beautiful lakeside castle built upon orders of Tokugawa Ieyasu after the Battle of Sekigahara

Loc 7 Honmaru-cho, Otsu
Tel. Otsu Station Tourist Information Center
077-522-3830



4 The View of Lake Biwa from Mii-dera Temple

An unforgettable scenic view

The view is wonderful from Kannon-do hall high up at Mii-dera Temple, looking out over Lake Biwa and Otsu. On the vast temple grounds one can enjoy seasonal flowers in bloom. The cherry blossoms in spring and colorful foliage in autumn are big attractions. All year round there is plenty to see at the temple.

Loc 246 Onjoji-cho, Otsu Tel. 077-522-2238 Adm ¥600

Hikone City

Hikone Castle, which stands on a craggy rock named Mt. Hikone at the edge of Lake Biwa, was the castle of the 14th lord of the Ii clan, a family lineage that produced a succession of chief ministers in the Edo Period. The city of Hikone flourished as a town that grew up around this castle. Surrounding the castle are public gardens such as Genkyuen and Ohama Palace gardens, built originally by feudal lords as part of family villas. The style of these gardens features a walking path around a pond and are leading examples of exquisite Japanese garden design using water. Many scenic aspects of both the castle town and post town are well preserved and enjoyable for visitors to walk around and see.



Hikone City

- Genkyu Rakurakuen Garden
- Gardens of the former suburban residence of the lord of the Matsubara clan at Hikone (Ohama Palace)

Daimyo villa gardens incorporate famous garden scenes from Japan and China

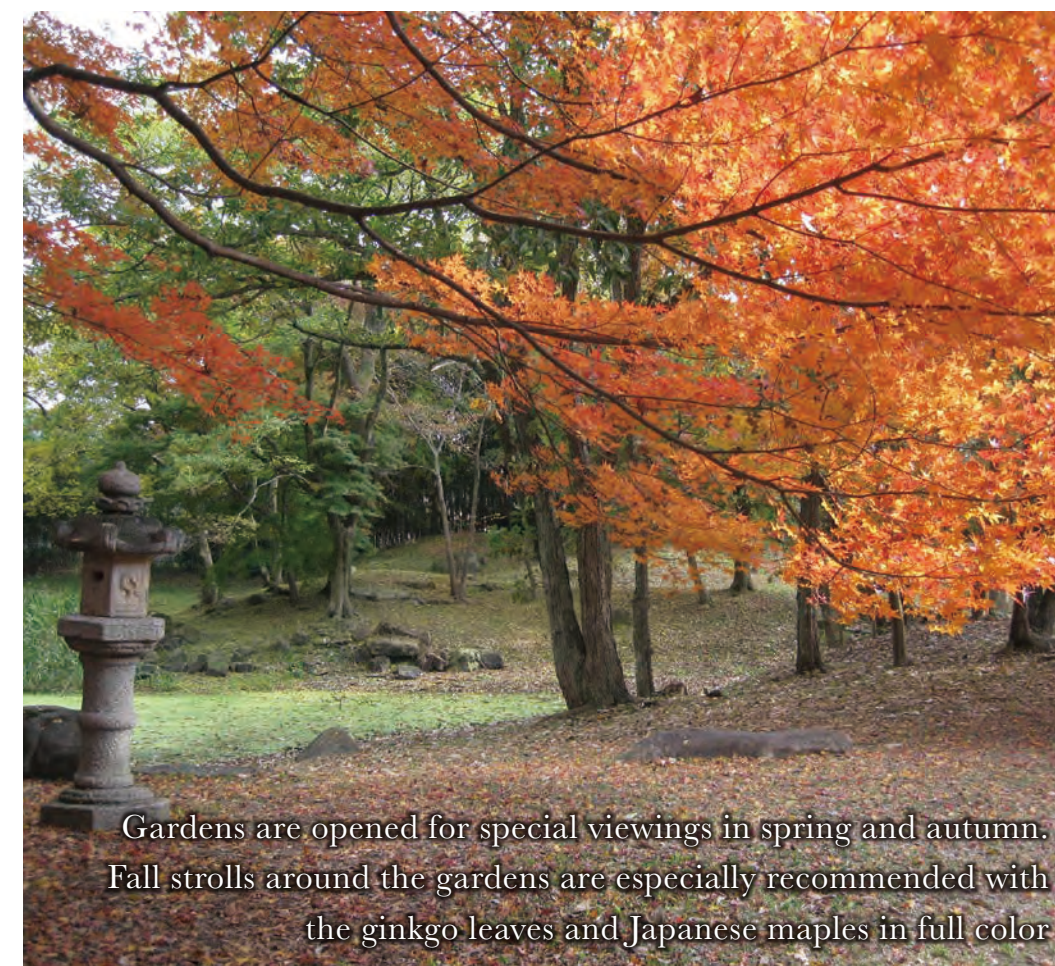
A Culture of Living with Water

A reproduction of famous spots in Japan and China

Genkyu Rakurakuen Garden (Genkyuen) National Place of Scenic Beauty

Genkyuen was constructed to model the scenery of Lake Biwa. The large pond in the center has an island and nine bridges over inlets. It is a strolling garden with varied landscape. Employing an inverted siphon principle, the water for the pond is conveyed up from the outer moat, which has an abundant flow of spring water. Today, the suburban residence is called Rakurakuen and the strolling garden Genkyuen. The pond has a boathouse, and at one time boating was enjoyed within the garden as a refined leisure activity. The adjacent residence Rakurakuen was built together with the garden by the fourth lord of Hikone, Ii Naooki, as a family residence for the Hikone clan. It is also known as Keyaki Goten (Palace).

- Nearest station: 15 min. walk from Hikone Sta. on the JR Biwako Line
- Hours: 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
- Admission: With Hikone Castle 600 yen for adults; 200 yen for children
- Inquiries: Hikone Castle Administrative Office 0749-22-2742



Gardens are opened for special viewings in spring and autumn. Fall strolls around the gardens are especially recommended with the ginkgo leaves and Japanese maples in full color

A Culture of Living with Water

Landscape changes with the level of water in the pond

Gardens of the former suburban residence of the lord of the Matsubara clan at Hikone (Ohama Palace)

National Place of Scenic Beauty

A suburban residence of the lord built around 1810 by Ii Naonaka, the 11th daimyo of the Ii clan. Half of the approximately two-hectare (five-acre) land area is a strolling garden that reflects the environment of Lake Biwa—its water and mountains. In an earlier age, the scenery of Lake Biwa, Mt. Ibuki, and Mt. Sawa could be seen from the garden. The pond at the center of the garden is a tidewater pond that is affected by the level of water in Lake Biwa and the inner lake of Matsubara Naiko. It is the only one of its kind in Japan that is filled with fresh water. At one time there was a boat landing with a waterway that led from the pond to Lake Biwa, and also through Matsubara Naiko to Hikone Castle and the bronze statue of Benzaiten. Today, the garden is open to the public in spring and autumn.



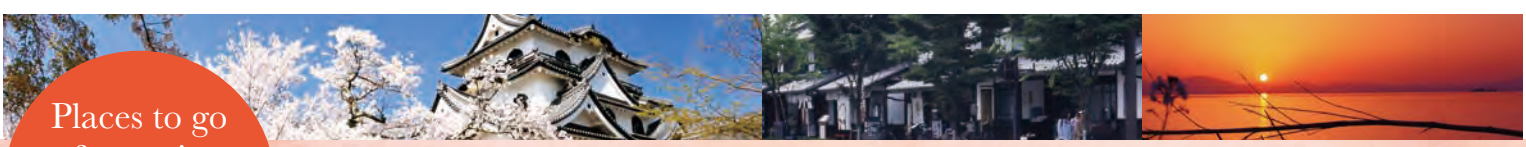
Main castle keep dates from the 1600s

Hikone Castle

National Treasure, Important Cultural Property, Special Historic Site

Hikone Castle was built as a base for the Ii clan overlooking Lake Biwa on a hill called Mt. Hikone to maintain its control over the Western region. The three-story, white-walled main castle keep is surrounded by a double moat and dates back 400 years. The majestic castle is a symbol of Hikone, having survived 260 years from the start of its construction in 1601 through 14 generations of Ii clan lords to 1860 without a single transfer of fiefdoms or attack. The inner moat reflects Mt. Hikone, which has an evergreen broad-leaved forest, and across the seasons the scenery looks like an exquisite painting. It is one of five castles in Japan designated as national treasures, joining Himeji, Matsumoto, Inuyama, and Matsue Castles.

- Nearest station: 15 min. walk from Hikone Sta. on the JR Biwako Line
- Hours: 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
- Admission: 600 yen for adults; 200 yen for children
- Inquiries: Hikone Castle Administrative Office 0749-22-2742



Places to go
after seeing
the Japan
Heritage sites

1 Umoriginoya
The childhood home of feudal lord Ii Naosuke
Loc 1-11 Osue-cho, Hikone **Tel** 0749-23-5268
Hrs 9:00~18:00 (Irregular holidays)
Adm Adults: ¥300 High school: ¥200 Junior and elementary: ¥100

2 Hikone Castle Museum (inside Hikone Castle)
House items belonging to the Ii Clan
Loc 1-1 Konki-cho, Hikone **Tel** 0749-22-6100
Hrs 8:30~17:00 (Last entry at 4:30 p.m.)
Adm Adults: ¥500 Children: ¥250

Hikone City

Around the Area

— Historical Heritage of a Castle Town —

[By Train]
JR Tokaido Main Line (Biwako Line) 5 min. on Special Rapid Service
Maibara
Hikone
Kyoto JR Tokaido Main Line (Biwako Line) 47 min. on Special Rapid Service

Elegant blossom viewing from a traditional houseboat
A ride on the Osuki Yakatabune, a barge-style boat associated with the Ii family, offers a great view of cherry blossoms from the castle moat, highly recommended in season.
3 Osuki Yakatabune Ride the lord's boat
Loc Genkyuen-mae boat landing
Tel Koedo Hikone, NPO 080-1461-4123 **Adm** Adults: ¥1,300 *¥1,500 in cherry blossom season
Hrs Weekdays: 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. One boat per hour
Weekends, holidays: 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. One boat per hour (Special nighttime runs in cherry blossom season.)

4 Yumekyobashi Castle Road
Streetscape of the Edo Period
Starting at Kyobashi Bridge, which crosses the outer moat of Hikone Castle, this reproduction of an Edo-period castle town street extends north-south for 350 meters and is lined with unique miscellaneous goods stores and restaurants. Walking up and down the street gives visitors the feel of feudal Edo.
Getting to Yumekyobashi Castle Road
From Hikone Castle walk south along the inner moat in front of the front gate with the ticket booth; just cross Kyobashi Bridge.

Experience genuine green tea by Hikone Castle

A Tea hospitality in a luxurious space
Hosho-dai Teahouse

The teahouse name means a high ground where the mythological phoenix flies in the sky. On the map of Genkyuen drawn in Edo period more than 300 years ago it was listed as one of the 10 attractions of the garden. One can have matcha green tea with a traditional Japanese sweet while enjoying a panoramic view of the pond garden.
Loc 3-41 Konki-cho, Hikone
Tel Hikone Castle Management Office 0749-22-2742
Hrs 9:00~16:00 (last order)
Adm Garden and castle: ¥600 Garden only: ¥200

B Take a breather before climbing up to the castle
Choshonan Teahouse

A charming Japanese-style teahouse with a view of the castle keep and below. The time signal bell (Jihoshou) right next door was cast in 1844 and today is rung five times a day to give people the time below the castle. The sounds of bell and insects have been selected as one of the "Top 100 Soundscapes" of Japan.
Loc 1-1 Konki-cho, Hikone
Tel Hikone Castle Management Office 0749-22-2742
Hrs 9:00~16:00 (last order)
Adm Castle: ¥600

Omihachiman City

The city of Omihachiman developed historically from the towns of two castles on the eastern shore of Lake Biwa—Azuchi Castle built by Oda Nobunaga and Hachimanyama Castle built by Toyotomi Hidetsugu in the 16th century. The inner lake Nishinoko, in the northeastern part of the city, forms the lakeside district; pleasure boats that ply its waters are popular with tourists. Also visible is the biggest island in Lake Biwa, Okishima. It is Japan's only inhabited freshwater lake island.

- Lakeside District of Omihachiman
- Okishima Island
- Isakiji Temple
- Chomeiji Temple

Lakeside District of Omihachiman

Important Cultural Landscape

A Culture of Living with Water
Waterfront living fostered by a symbiosis with nature

Selected as one of the eight best views of Lake Biwa—the Azuchi Hachiman Water Channels in Spring. A leisurely paddle boat takes visitors through Biwako's inner lake of Nishinoko with its stands of reeds. The lake is home to countless water fowl and fish. The distinctive scenery and abundance of nature at the lake have been carefully maintained by the people of Omihachiman through centuries of moderation in use. In 2006, the Wetland in Omihachiman was designated the country's first important cultural landscape.

A Culture of Prayer with Water

A sacred peninsula-tip temple dedicated to the unmovable wisdom king Fudō Myōō

Isakiji Temple

Isakiji Temple is also called by its honorific mountain name “Ikiyasan” and is counted as one of the three holy places in the Tendai Shugendō, next to the Myōō Hall of Mudōji Temple on Mt. Hiei and Katsuragawa Myōō-in. In the eighth-century Nara period, the founder of the Shugendō religion of mountain asceticism, En no Gyōja, is said to have named the temple for a wild boar that led him to the spot. During a religious training period in mid-summer known as Sennichie, the trainee monks doing a one-thousand-day mountain practice walk out onto a plank extended out over Lake Biwa and jump from a significant height. This ceremony is known as “saotobi”. It signifies the ascetics gaining a new rebirth from the mother lake, after having gained strength from the thousand-day practice.

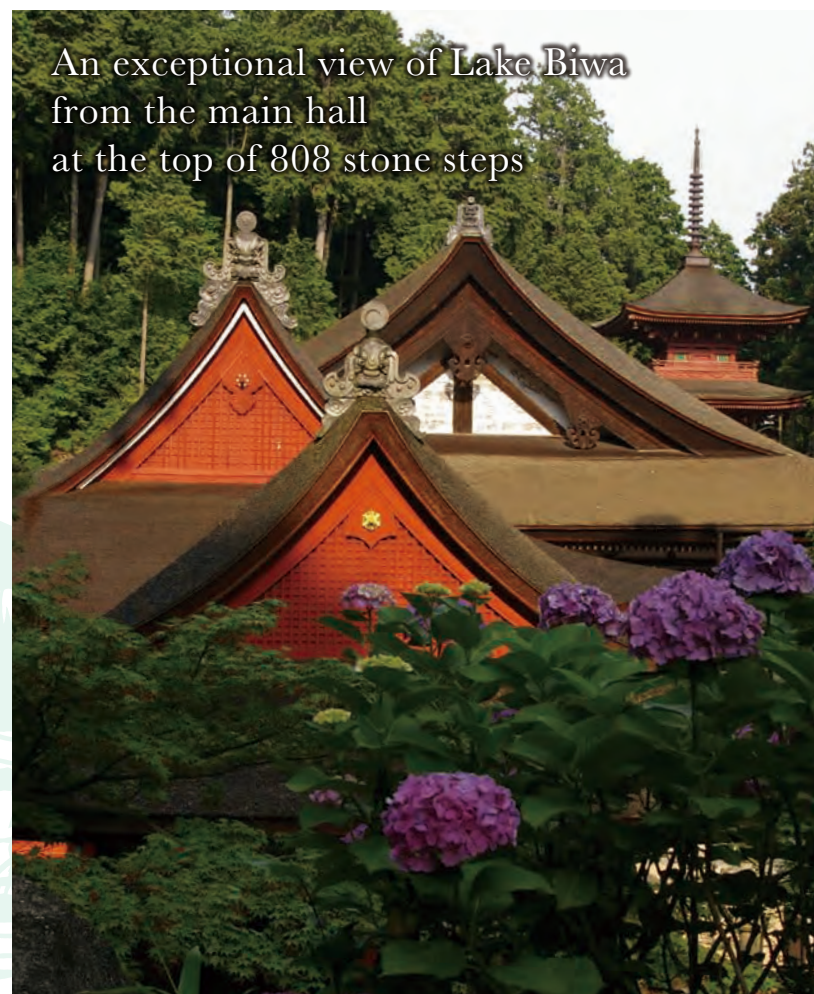
- Nearest station: Omihachiman Sta. on the JR Biwako Line; from station take the Ohmi Railway Bus 30 min. to Horikiri Port
- Inquiries: 0748-32-7828



The temple gate standing above the plank is a famous spot once visited by worshippers by boat



An ancient island, once venerated as the home of gods



An exceptional view of Lake Biwa from the main hall at the top of 808 stone steps

A Culture of Prayer with Water

Kannon Jodo (the pure land of the formless savior deity) in the Water

Chomeiji Temple

Important Cultural Property, Prefectural Tangible Cultural Property

According to temple legend, this was the site where a loyal retainer, Takeshiuchi no Sukune, prayed for a long life and was rewarded with life to the age of 300, for which the temple was named Chomeiji, the “temple of long life.” From the lakeside one must climb 808 stone steps to reach the main hall. The temple is dedicated to the thousand-armed Kannon, the Shō Kannon, and eleven-faced Kannon, bodhisattvas of compassion. The temple has many nationally designated important cultural properties, such as a statue of the guardian deity Bishamonten. All of the temple’s structures are cultural properties, either prefectural or municipal designations. Before land reclamation began on the shores of the lake, the temple was atop a large island surrounded by Lake Biwa, Dainakanoko and Tsuda-naiko, and was visited by boat by worshippers coming from the 30th pilgrimage temple, Hōgonji Temple, on Chikubu Island. On the Chomeiji temple pilgrimage mandara, a scene is depicted of worshippers passing through a torii gate from Lake Biwa, with the image of the dragon maiden proffering a sacred torch to the deity Benzaiten on the shore of the lake.

- Nearest station: Omihachiman Sta. on JR Biwako Line; from station take Ohmi Railway Bus 25 min. to Chomeiji bus stop
- Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
- Inquiries: 0748-33-0031



A Culture of Living with Water

Japan's only inhabited lake island

Okishima Island

Okishima Island is the largest island of Lake Biwa, with 300 or so inhabitants. It is the only inhabited island on a freshwater lake in Japan, and is of great academic interest for many reasons. When it was uninhabited, people prayed to it as the home of gods that protected transportation on the lake. It is said to have first been inhabited by descendants of the warrior Seiwa Genji, who lost civil war battles in 1156 and 1159, after which time it became settled. The beautiful views of Chomeij Temple and the mountains of Suzukayama and Hirasano are unique to this island with its position in the middle of Lake Biwa. Fishing has been the main occupation of islanders, both fishing and fish processing. Many unique fishing methods and a distinctive food culture developed. Island life, supported by the natural abundance of the lake, has a nostalgic air.



Places to go after seeing the Japan Heritage sites

Hachiman-bori Moat is well known as the setting of Japanese dramas. The presence of many white, earthen-walled buildings and preserved houses create a charming historical atmosphere.

① Hachiman-bori Moat

The promenade is perfect for a waterside walk.

Loc Miyauchicho, Omihachiman



Leisurely canal boat tour

The Azuchi Hachiman Water Channels in Spring are famous. Enjoy a ride on a yakatabune flat boat on the inner lake of Nishinoko. Superb in spring to see the cherry blossoms and rapeseed blossoms as well as in summer when the reeds are green; in fact, the scenery is special any time of the year.

② Water ride Feel the seasons of Japan

- | | |
|---|---|
| ● Omihachiman Sightseeing Cooperative
Loc 880 Kitanocho-cho, Omihachiman
Tel 0748-32-2564 | ● Shima Pearl Canal Boat
Loc 224 Maruyama-cho, Omihachiman
Tel 0748-32-3527 |
| ● Suigo-No-Sato Maruyama
Loc 1467-3 Maruyama-cho, Omihachiman
Tel 0748-32-2333 | ● Biwako Kanko
Loc 639-1 Nakanosho-cho, Omihachiman
Tel 0748-32-2131 |

*The route may vary by operator.

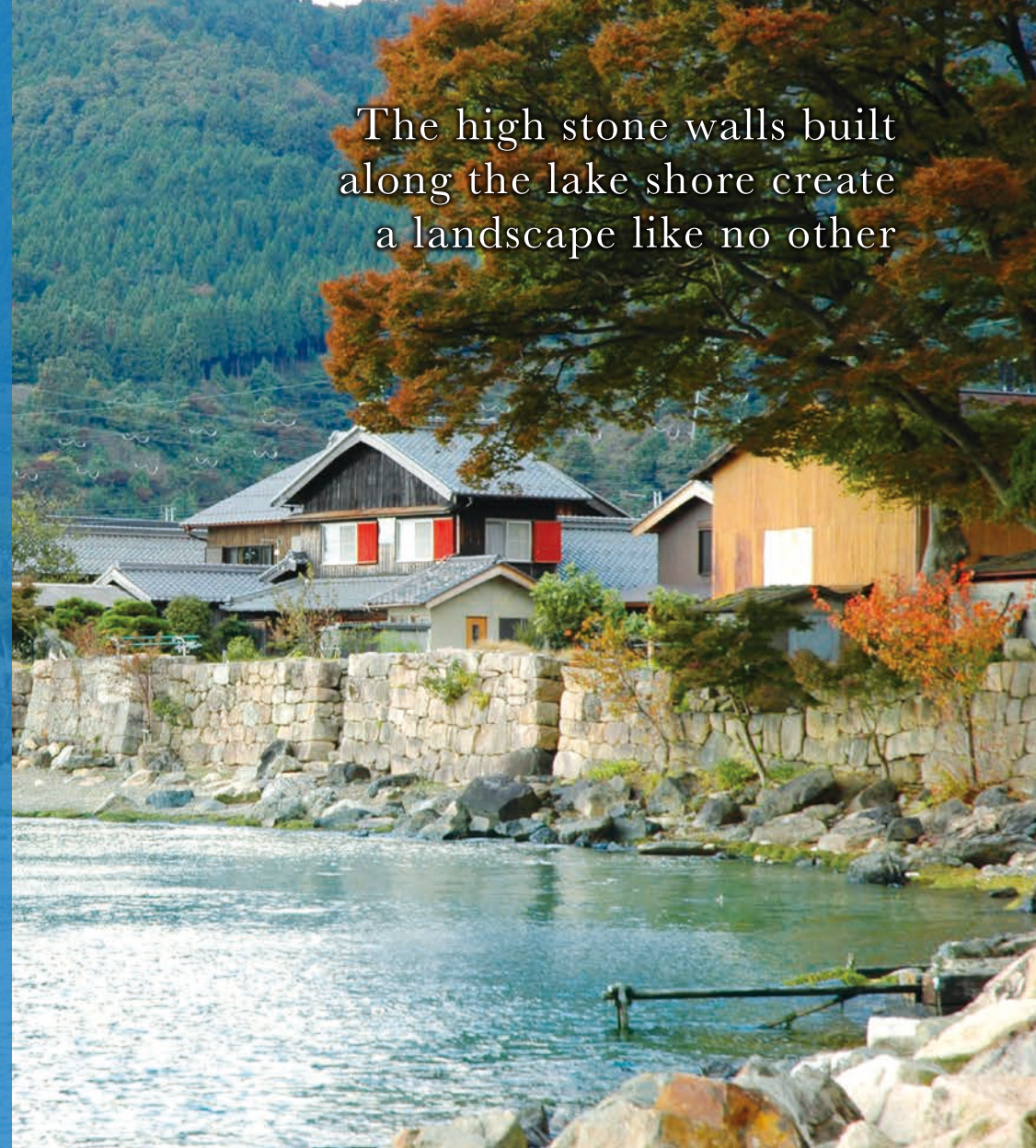
Takashima City

The city of Takashima is situated on the northwest side of Lake Biwa. Its area is slightly greater than that of the lake, making it the largest of the 13 cities in Shiga prefecture. It is beautifully forested, especially with the Hira and Nosaka Mountains. The lake water quality remains high here and the environment is filled with natural bounty. A unique religion based on water still exists here, along with distinctive lifestyle customs; its water circulation system, closely tied to people's lives, has recently come under a lot of attention.

Takashima City



The high stone walls built along the lake shore create a landscape like no other



A Culture of Living with Water

Traces of an ancient port town

Waterfront of Kaizu, Nishihama and Chinai

Important Cultural Landscape

The districts of Kaizu, Nishihama, and Chinai once flourished as port town, post town, and fishing village. Built along the shoreline of the lake, they are distinctive for their stone breakwaters. The waterfront scenery in these districts was selected as Japan's fifth important cultural landscape in 2008. The key components of the landscapes are the stone walls of Kaizu and Nishihama, the former warehouse of the fishing guild, and machiya townhouses built by merchants. The machiya are wooden structures that date to the end of the Edo Period (up to 1868) lining the street, serving as accommodations for travelers or housing commercial businesses.

- Waterfront of Kaizu, Nishihama and Chinai
- Waterfront of Harie and Shimofuri
- Shirahige Shrine
- Waterfront of Omizo
- Shikobuchi Faith in the Adogawa River Area



③ Hachiman-bori stone walkway

Cafés and machiya-style shops of long standing along the way

Near Himure Hachimangu Shrine, right next to Hakuunbashi Bridge that crosses the Hachimanbori moat. Has an atmosphere of olden days with Omi merchants' townhouses and kura built from the 1910s to 1930s.

Loc Osugi-cho, Omihachiman

Spots to See Around Omihachiman

A Get travel information at this Meiji-era Western-style building Hakuun-kan (Tourist Information Center)

Built in 1877 by Omi merchants, the building served as Hachiman Higashi School. It was constructed with the enthusiasm of the merchants of Hachiman with the cooperation of the local residents and employs traditional Japanese building techniques while being completely Western-style in appearance. Today it houses a tourist information center where visitors can get information and view and buy specialty goods from the area.



Items for Purchase

Upper left: Red konyaku ¥480

Lower left: Yōkan (sweet bean jelly) ¥280

Upper right: Fu (wheat gluten with mustard-vinegar miso) ¥500

Lower right: Omi beef curry ¥700

Loc 9 Ishincho-moto, Omihachiman Tel 0748-32-7003

Hrs 9:00~17:00

B Try your hand at ceramic art Kawara Tile Museum



Loc 738-2 Taga-cho, Omihachiman Tel 0748-33-8567

Hrs 9:00~17:00 (Last entry: 4:30 p.m.)

Adm Adults: ¥300 Junior high and elementary: ¥200

C Omihachiman City Museum (Local History Museum) Western-style building -former Hachiman Police Station



Loc 2-22 Shinmachi, Omihachiman

Tel 0748-32-7048

Hrs 9:00~16:30 (Last entry: 4:00 p.m.)

Adm Adults: ¥900 Junior and elementary: ¥500

* Pass covers admission to: the Local History Museum, History and Folklore Museum, former Nishikawa Residence and former Ban Residence



People's clever system for using clear water from rivers is still in use today



The great shrine gate puts on a different face with changes in light and season

A Culture of Living with Water

The flow of life-giving water

Waterfront of Harie and Shimofuri

Important Cultural Landscape

The districts of Harie and Shimofuri, which have spring water (Shozu) gushing up from underground, are known for their **kabata** culture, ever-running water in kitchen basins that demonstrate care taken with water in everyday life, even today. The spring water flows from the Harie-Okawa River and Koike River through the inner lakes to Lake Biwa. The lake shoreline is taken over by reed beds, and the scenery remains today much as it was in the earliest days of Japan. Reed beds are a spawning ground for many types of fish that inhabit Lake Biwa. You can enjoy scenes of life-giving water flowing through the quiet countryside here.



● Reserve for a tour. "Harie Shozu-no-Sato Committee"
Tel: 0740-25-6566 Hours: 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (In winter until 3:00 p.m.)

A Culture of Prayer with Water

Grand torii gate standing in the lake

Shirahige Shrine

Important Cultural Property (building)

The oldest shrine in Omi with a famous large torii gate rising out of Lake Biwa. The name "Shirahige" means "white beard" and the shrine is dedicated to the god of long life. It is one of the top power spots for visitors to Shiga. Also of interest are the many inscriptions of tanka poems by celebrated poets engraved on a monument within the shrine precinct. One poem is by the early modern poet Tekkan Yosano and his wife Akiko Yosano, written upon their visit, extolling the clear spring water that flowed in front of the shrine.



● Light-up of the torii gate in the water Days : (1) Saturday, Sunday from sunset for approx. 2 hours (2) Sept. 5 fr om sunset until 10:00 p.m. (3) New Year's Eve until daybreak
(4) Jan. 1 – 5 from sunset until 9:00 p.m. ● Inquiries: 0740-36-1555



Famed as the final battle spot of
the Fujiwara no Nakamaro Rebellion in 764

A Culture of Living with Water

Communicates water usage wisdom

Waterfront scenery at Omizo

Important Cultural Landscape

In ancient times, Omizo flourished as the area surrounding Katsunozu port, connecting Wakasa (today southern Fukui) and the territories in the vicinity of Kyoto. The place names of the area appear in literature such as the Man'yōshū, compiled in the eighth century. Lake Otomegaike, one of Lake Biwa's inner lakes, was the location of the finale of the biggest civil war battle of the Nara period, the Fujiwara no Nakamaro Rebellion. Also, Oda Nobunaga built Omizo Castle as a strategic stronghold for controlling Lake Biwa in the closing years of the Warring States period. Omizo is known for its mountain spring water and well water that have been skillfully used in people's lives since ancient times, with special customs that still exist today.



A unique religious faith of
the Adogawa River system protects raftsmen
from the demons of the river

A Culture of Prayer with Water

Gods that chase away river demons

Faith in the Shikobuchi gods

The Shikobuchi gods are guardian deities of raftsmen belonging to a religious faith unique to the Adogawa river basin. A legend is told in which a Shikobuchi god and his son were rafting down the Adogawa and when they reached Obuchi, a kappa pulled the boy underwater to cause mischief, but the god chastised the demon who pledged from then on to keep rafts safe. The Adogawa River has many whitewater sections, and the dangerous work performed by raftsmen was life-threatening, so they built shrines for the Shikobuchi gods at dangerous spots along the river to chase away the river demons.

Places to go
after seeing
the Japan
Heritage sites



A Highland Area for Outdoor Leisure

At the foot of Mt. Akasaka, in winter Makino Kogen has a snowy ski slope and from spring to autumn a carpet of green lawn. Many sports facilities are available, from Makino Rinkan Sports Center to a campground, ground golf, and restaurant. It is a highland resort area for safe playing for the entire family.

1 Makino Kogen

Loc 931 Makino-cho Makino, Takashima 1
Hrs 9:00~17:00
Tel Makino Kogen Management Office 0740-27-0936

Unwind at Highland Hot Springs

This onsen facility at Makino Kogen features a spacious "bade zone" with heated swimming pool for use with bathing suits, plus a standard large bath that includes an open-air bath and low-temperature herbal bath. Relax after camping, skiing, or other outdoor activity.

2 Makino Kogen Onsen Sarasa

Loc 931-3 Makino-cho Makino, Takashima (at Makino Kogen)
Hrs Weekdays 10:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Weekends/holidays 10:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m.
Tel 0740-27-8126
Adm Bath: Adults ¥700 Children: ¥350
Full area (includes heated swimming pool):
Adults ¥1,200 Children: ¥600



A Repurposed Edo-era buildings Takashima Village

150-year-old merchants' residences were renovated by hand as a local commerce project and remodeled as "villages" that include studios for trying your hand at dyeing cloth or making candles. You can also enjoy a tasty restaurant meal here.

Loc 1400 Katsuno, Takashima (Village 1-8)
Tel Biwako Takashima Tourist Association 0740-36-2011



Jizake (Local Sake) Made with the Clean Water of Lake Biwa

B Find all Takashima specialties Takashima Marugoto Department Store

A full range of specialty products from Takashima are sold at a tourism and products exhibition area. You can purchase clothing made of Takashima Crepe and many more traditional items here.

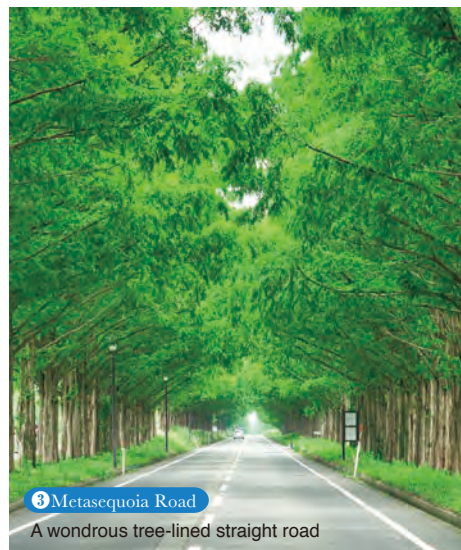
Loc 1-10-1 Shin-asahicho-asahi, Takashima
Tel 0740-33-7103
Hrs 10:00~18:00
Closed Tuesdays



Takashima jizake is made from the clean source water that feeds Lake Biwa, tasty rice of Omi, and the traditional skills of master brewers. Each sake has a different flavor.



(Left to right) Biwa no Chouju (Ikemoto Shuzo); Furosen (Uehara Syuzou); Chikubushima (Yoshida Shuzo); SORA (Kawashima Sake Brewery); Satoyama (Fukui Yahei Shoten)



3 Metasequoia Road

A wondrous tree-lined straight road

The tree-lined road extends for 2.4 km and passes through Makino Pickland. About 500 metasequoias line the road, creating a picturesque highland-like approach to Makino Kogen.

Loc From Hiruguchi to Makino, Makinocho, Takashima
Tel Makino Pickland 0740-27-1811

Higashiomi City

The city of Higashiomi spreads from the Suzuka Mountains along the Echi River to Lake Biwa.

The clear water that flows down a beautiful ravine from Eigenji Temple passes through beautiful canals in a historical neighborhood in the corner of the Gokasho district that has both Omi merchants' residences and farmhouses.

Walking along a canal one can spot brightly colored carp swimming in the clear, flowing water.

The channels connect to the Iba waterfront. After the water's use in people's lives, it returns to its mother, Lake Biwa.



Higashiomi City

- Waterfront scenery of Iba
- Gokasho Kondo



A Culture of Prayer with Water

Traces of an old lakeside district

Waterfront scenery of Iba

Iba in Higashiomi City is a waterfront village on the eastern plain of Lake Biwa. At one time, the Iba River flowed down to the village from Mt. Kinugasa, and passed through a network of water channels used by the people. The village was a hub community in the inner lake district.

As part of the Iba Matsuri, held every May, a Shinto event called **saka-kudashi** is held, in which the men of the village drag heavy **mikoshi** shrines carrying the gods down the mountain through the village to the lake. The distance from the shrine on the top of the mountain to the large **torii** gate at the foot is about 500 meters and a 170-meter drop in elevation along a steep slope. Along the way are a huge boulder and other obstacles. Three of these shrine floats are hauled down in a stirring event.



Lifestyles unchanged from the past in which water plays a central part can only be seen here on the shores of Lake Biwa.



Clear water flows through the channels where brightly colored carp swim

A Culture of Living with Water

The locale of Omi merchants

Gokasho Kondo

Important Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings

The Gokasho Kondo District has strong ties to the merchants of Omi and has been designated by the national government an important preservation district for a group of traditional buildings. It was once a rice-growing village and in the early seventeenth century the territory belonged to the shogunate. In the Genroku era (1688-1704) it served as a residence-town for the Yamato Koriyama clan. In the Kondo district, there were temples in three directions around the center of the town, and from the end of the Edo Period into the early part of the Showa era (starting in 1926) the district had a magnificent historical townscape comprised of the opulent residences of Omi merchants and traditional farmhouses. The town is lined with traditional white-walled buildings, storehouses with thick earthen walls, and outer walls boarded neatly with boat planks. Brightly colored carp swim through the water channels, and one can feel the atmosphere of affluence from days of yore in the area.



- Nearest station: Notogawa Sta. on the JR Biwako Line; take bus 10 min. to "Plaza Sanpoyoshi"; or a 30 min. walk from Gokasho Sta. on the Ohmi Railway Line
- Inquiries: Higashi Omi Tourist Association 0748-48-2100

Places to go
after seeing
the Japan
Heritage sites

1 Notogawa Museum

Features nature, history and folk culture of the area

This local museum shares the same building with the Notogawa Library. On permanent exhibition are rooms reconstructed in the style of the immediate post-WWII decade and 1965-1975—a flashback to how people lived in a slightly earlier time.

Loc 2225 Yamajicho, Higashiomi Tel 0748-42-6761
Hrs 10:00~18:00

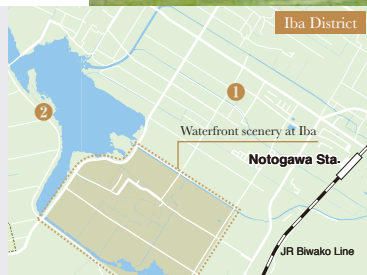
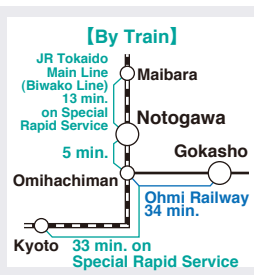


Higashiomi City



Around the Area

— The Locale of Omi Merchants —



Park with Giant 13-meter-high Waterwheel

The park consists of a giant waterwheel that is preserved at the edge of the Iba-naiko lagoon, one of the few inner lakes of Lake Biwa that remain. In summer, a local dragon boat racing tournament is held here.

2 Notogawa Waterwheel and Canoe Land
Loc 1269 Ibacho, Higashiomi
Tel Water Wheel Museum 0748-42-3000 Hrs 9:00~16:00



3 Kondo Machinami Preserved Exchange Center
Free admission and a popular spot to enjoy tea.

The former home of Tomijuro Nakae, the third of four brothers who founded the former Minakai Department Store. The center is popular with tourists for its souvenir shop and exhibition corner. The building, which once belonged to a wealthy merchant, is worth seeing in itself.

Loc 904 Gokasho-Kondo-cho, Higashiomi Tel 050-5801-7107
Hrs 10:30~16:30



Start Here to Tour Gokasho

A Plaza Sanpoyoshi Higashiomi Tourism Association

This building houses the tourist information center and specialty goods store for Higashiomi. It is an essential stop when seeing the Gokasho area. Get your souvenirs here before going home.

Loc 279 Gokasho-tsukamoto-cho, Higashiomi
Tel 0748-48-2100 Hrs 9:00~17:00

B A wealthy merchants' town with historical atmosphere Gokasho Omi Merchant's Residence

Loc Gokasho-Kondo-cho, Higashiomi Tel 0748-48-3399
Hrs 9:30~16:30 Km Admission to 3 buildings: Adults: ¥600 Children: ¥300



● Nakae Jungoro Residence

The home of one of the brothers that ran the former Minakai Department Store. It has two kura (storage warehouses) and a display of many Obata Deko dolls inside.



● Tonomura Shigeru Residence

Former home of a Japanese author known for writings about the Omi merchants in his Ikada series of books. This is the home where he was born, with many cultural materials also on display.



● Tonomura Uhee Residence

Tonomura Uhee was a wealthy merchant, listed as one of Japan's wealthiest people in the Meiji era. The main structure of his home was built in 1860 and is the home where he grew up.

Maibara City

Strategic transportation points in olden times included the post town of Maibara along the old Hokkoku Kaido (Northern Country Route) and the post towns of Banba, Samegai, and Kashiwabara on the Nakasendo highroad. Much of the historical atmosphere remains in these places.

Mt. Ibuki to the northeast of the city is the highest peak in Shiga prefecture. The rainwater from this mountain and snow melt flows underground and becomes abundant spring water in the foothills that has given rise to unique water landscapes and lifestyle customs.



- Samegai-juku post town
- Mt. Ibuki western foothills
- Higashikusano mountain village landscape
- Asahi Honen Taiko Odori Dance



The Jizo River flows by with tiny flowers blooming in the water from mid-May to September

A Culture of Prayer with Water

Lovely underwater blooming flowers

Samegai-juku post town

National Tangible Cultural Property,
Municipal Tangible Cultural Property

The place name, Samegai, originates in the legend of Prince Yamato Takeru, who was healed by the famed spring water that is the source of the Jizo River from his injury fighting the giant serpent of Mt. Ibuki. The post town was a place that provided laborers and horses to traveling feudal lords and government officials in the Edo Period, and had facilities for repacking loads for further travel. Several of these extremely rare historical buildings remain perfectly intact today. With the Jizo River right alongside, the town features beautiful scenery that demonstrates a harmony with nature, seen in the tiny flowers that bloom underwater in the water channels, in combination with the historical atmosphere of once prosperous days. The "Izame no Shimizu" spring was recently selected by the Japanese government as one of the most renowned 100 water sources of the Heisei era.

- Nearest station: 5 min. walk from Samegai Sta. on the JR Tokaido Main Line
- Inquiries: Maibara City Sightseeing Division 0749-58-2227

The tallest mountain in Shiga and one of the top 100 mountains in Japan, known since ancient times as an abundant source of medicinal herbs and alpine plants



A Culture of Prayer with Water

A sacred mountain of bounty

Mt. Ibuki western foothills

National Historic Site, National Natural Monument

Since ancient times, Mt. Ibuki has been revered as the abode of the god of water. The mountain god, which, according to legend, defeated Prince Yamato Takeru as a giant serpent, is revered as the god of water. Since the eighth century, mountain ascetics have stood under a waterfall here to gain the strength of this god, and large temples once stood on every ridge. The spring water that flows from Mt. Ibuki even today supports people's lives ceaselessly, and those who live in the western foothills understand the importance of that water and have a strong religious faith in Mt. Ibuki and its water power.



A dance originating in prayers for rain, today it is held in gratitude to the water god of Mt. Ibuki

A Culture of Prayer with Water

In gratitude to Mount Ibuki

Asahi Honen Taiko Odori Dance

National Intangible Folk Cultural Property

This is a rain dance that dates back approx. 1300 years. It is said that it began to rain when the feudal lord Toyotomi Hideyoshi celebrated his victory in the Battle of Shizugatake in 1583 with war drums and bells. Thereafter, drums and bells started to be used in prayers for rain. The processioners wear a traditional umbrella-like hat, an undervest, striped pantaloons-style hakama, white tabi, grass sandals and a red, cape-like arm covering. Their drumsticks are made of bamboo and they have golden, plaited and paper streamers hanging from their backs. The tradition has been carried on without interruption, even after WWII, and it became a nationally designated intangible folk cultural property in 1974.

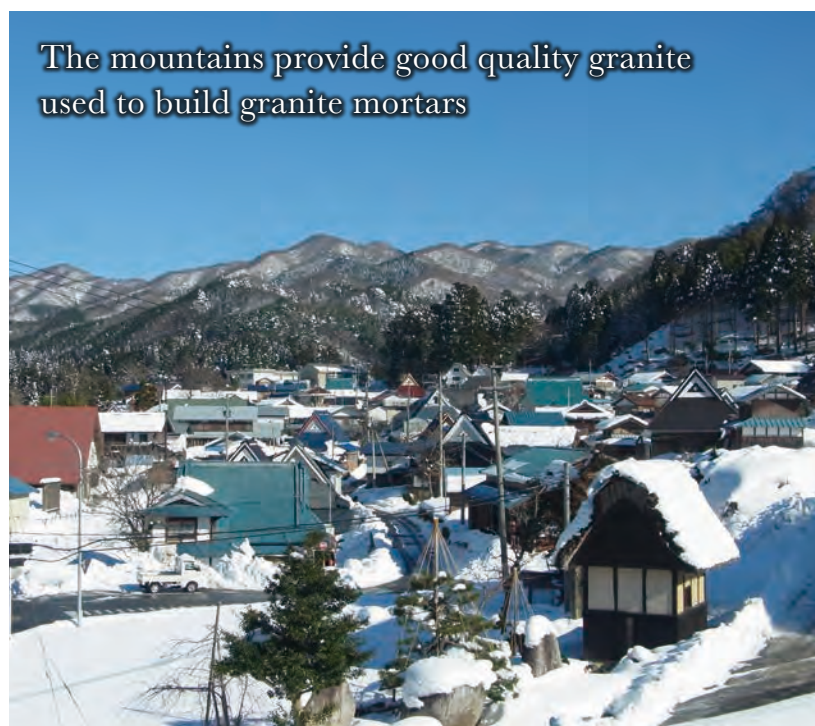
A Culture of Living with Water

Waterfront at headwaters of Lake Biwa source

Higashikusano mountain village landscape

Important Cultural Landscape

The Higashikusano district is a mountain village situated in an upstream valley on the Anegawa River. The village is closed in by mountains all around, but long ago roads were built over mountain passes and exchange flourished—more with the Gifu prefecture side than with Maibara. The district has one of the heaviest snowfalls in western Japan, and homes have long, steep eaves known as *kaidare*, as well as water storage facilities also used for melting snow known as *ike*, and wash basin areas where the water channels were dammed up, known as *kawato*. All of these inventions for coping with heavy snows can be observed in the village.



The mountains provide good quality granite used to build granite mortars

Places to go after seeing the Japan Heritage sites



A Top 100 Renowned Water Source of the Heisei Era

This natural spring emerges from underground after years beneath Mt. Ryozen. It is known through legend for healing the ill Prince Yamato Takeru, from which its name derives, which means "healing spring."

1 "Isame no Shimizu" Spring

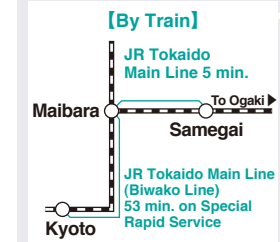
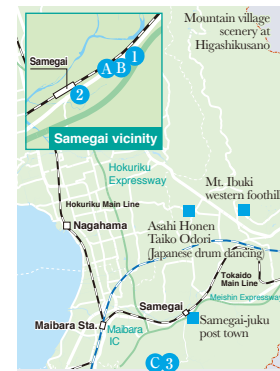
Loc 58 Samegai, Maibara (By Samegai Sta., free walking)
Tel Maibara Tourist Association 0749-58-2227

Flowers Blooming in Water of Jizo River (Mid-May to late September)

Plants flourish in the water that maintains a temperature of around 14°C throughout the year. Flowers bloom in the Jizo River from Mid-May to late September every year.

2 Baikamo flowers blooming underwater

Loc Samegai, Maibara (short walk from Samegai Sta., free walking)
Tel Maibara Tourist Association 0749-58-2227



For Gourmet Visitors to Samegai

A A long-standing restaurant in the post town of Samegai Chojiya

The shop sells a crunchy rice cracker revived from the 17th century. Soft ice cream with the aroma of baikamo flowers is another treat during a walk around the town.



Loc 392 Samegai, Maibara
Tel 0749-54-0128
Hrs 9:00 ~ 19:00
Closed Wednesdays

Samegai mochi crackers ¥110

B Archives museum in a cultural property Samegai-juku Toiya-ba



Loc 123 Samegai, Maibara **Tel** 0749-54-2163
Hrs 9:00~17:00 (Last entry: 4:30 p.m.)
Closed Mondays (or the following day if a national holiday)
Adm Adults: ¥200 Junior high and elementary: ¥100

C Restaurant for lovers of nature, history and culture Samegaio



Loc 2054 Kaminyu, Maibara (next to Samegai Trout Farm)
Tel 0749-54-0120
Hrs 11:30 ~ 17:00
Closed Thursdays between Dec. and March (Unfixed days closed between April and Nov)
*Inquire about an evening meal



4 Shiga Pref. Samegai Trout Farm Japan's first trout farm

Established in 1878 for breeding Biwa masu (Biwa salmon) and other freshwater fish. Amago trout and Iwana (white-spotted charr) are among the many types of fish you can catch and eat grilled with salt on the spot.

Loc Kaminyu, Maibara **Tel** 0749-54-0301
Hrs July to Sept.: 8:30 a.m. ~ 6:00 p.m.
Oct. to Nov., Mar. to June: 8:30 a.m. ~ 5:00 p.m.
Dec. to Feb.: 8:30 a.m. ~ 4:00 p.m.
Adm Adults: ¥500 University/High school: ¥300 Younger: no charge

Nearby Cultural Properties

The location of wollastonite, a natural monument

Ishiyama-dera Temple

National Treasure, Important Cultural Property

The only river flowing out of Lake Biwa is the Seta River. Ishiyama-dera stands on its western bank at the foot of Mt. Garan. This ancient temple is said to have been founded in the late Nara Period in 747 by the priest Rōben by decree of the Emperor Shomu. The temple served as a kind of government office, supplying timber and other materials to the capital Nara. The notable scenic point at Ishiyama-dera is its wollastonite rock, a designated natural monument. The principal object of worship is the Nyoirin Kannon (Goddess of Mercy), who sits upon this rock. The temple's moon-viewing platform overlooks the clean waters of the Seta River and is a symbol of the "Autumn moon at Ishiyama-dera," one of the famous "Eight Views of Omi." The spring water that emerges below this platform and the building that covers the spring (Akaiya) offer a distinctive water landscape scene.

- Nearest station: 10 min. walk from Ishiyamadera Sta. on the Keihan Ishiyama-Sakamoto Line; or Ishiyama Sta. on the JR Biwako Line; take bus 10 min. to Ishiyamadera Sanmon-mae
- Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- Admission: 600 yen
- Inquiries: 077-537-0013



The temple of Murasaki Shikibu,
11th century author of The Tale of Genji



Buddhist prayers are recited at this hall day
in and day out as religious training

Graceful Gardens Designed with Water

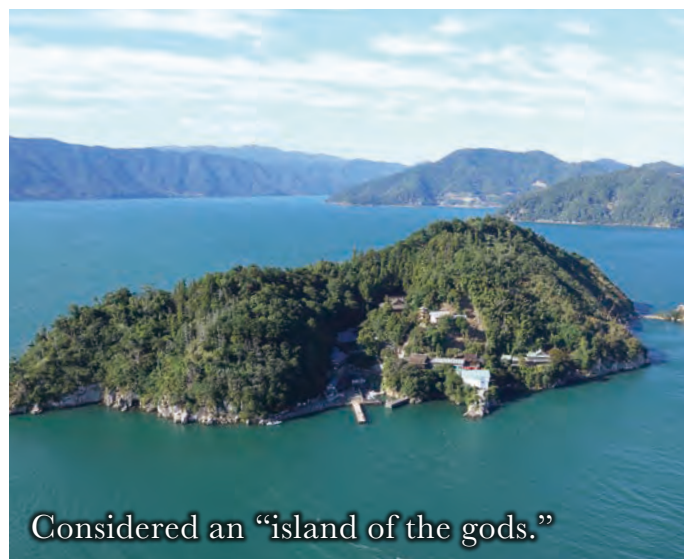
Saikyoji Temple

Important Cultural Property

Saikyoji, a sacred site along the thousand-day walking route followed by mountain ascetics. It stands between Imurodani—one of the major structures of Enryakuji Temple—and Hiyoshi Taisha Shrine, which enshrines the guardian deity of Mt. Hiei. It is located on a hill overlooking Lake Biwa.

Saikyoji has four gardens. The main one is on the south side of the *kuri* (priests' quarters), featuring a simulated waterfall in a dry garden. It has a nearly two-meter-tall standing stone in the center, flanked by an arrangement of side stones. Contrast is provided by the garden on the west side of the *kyakuden* (reception hall), which has a pond in the center filled with water from Lake Biwa. In the pond are decorative stones with a stone bridge going across, creating a placid atmosphere. Dry waterfall and pond: graceful, masterfully designed gardens and a study in contrasts.

- Nearest station: 20 min. walk from Sakamoto Sta. on the Keihan Ishiyama-Sakamoto Line
- Hours: 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
- Admission: 500 yen
- Inquiries: 077-578-0013



Considered an "island of the gods."

Lake Biwa's No. 1 Power Spot

Chikubu Island

The island is considered an "island of the gods." Since ancient times, the water goddess Azai-hime-no-mikoto was worshipped in the northern area of Lake Biwa. She is believed to be a deification of the mother principle in nature—the mountains that produce water, the source of all life. It seems only natural that a mother god would be worshipped on Chikubu Island, which stands in Lake Biwa, where all of the water originating in the mountains ultimately flows together.

When Buddhism arrived in Japan, the beliefs held in Chikubu Island were influenced. Azai-hime-no-mikoto took in Buddhism and she became clad in the form of the deity Benzaiten, a Japanese Buddhist goddess who originated from the Hindu goddess Sarasvati. In India, she is a goddess of water, a deification of the Sarasvati River. The traits of Azai-hime-no-mikoto and Benzaiten naturally overlapped and people continued to pray to nature and the mother principle, now deeply tied to Benzaiten.

Revel in the Scenery of the Japan Heritage of Lake Biwa

Enjoy the beautiful scenery of Lake Biwa in any season.

Take a leisurely all-day cruise to the islands or zip around the south.

Various boats ply the waters.

Why not travel on the water and
feel the lake breeze against your skin?

Lake Biwa Cruises BIWAKO CRUISE

Water Tour The classic cruise on Lake Biwa

① Michigan Cruise



An early American-style paddle steamer with luxurious interior and a panoramic view from the sky deck. Enjoy the resort atmosphere or just travel from one port to another.

For inquiries, contact the Biwako Kisen Reservations Center

Water Tour Full-day enjoyment of the lake world

③ Tour of Islands Cruise



Take the entire day to visit all four special islands in Lake Biwa. This is the only cruise that goes slowly up and down the entire length of the lake.

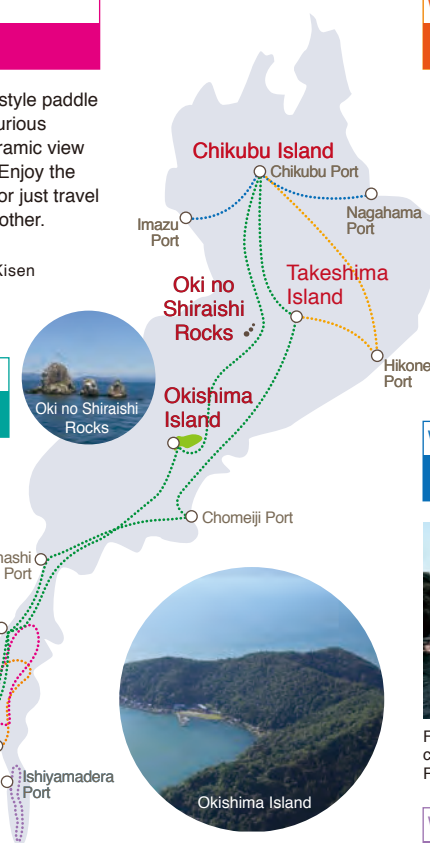
For inquiries, contact the Biwako Kisen Reservations Center

Water Tour Shape-shifting island from many viewpoints

⑤ Takeshima Cruise

The entire island is considered sacred as the precinct of Kentoji Temple of the Nichiren Sect.

For inquiries, contact Ohmi Marine



Water Tour A high-speed jaunt around the lake's southern end

② South Lake Route High-Speed Cruise



A convenient high-speed ride to see the southern area of the lake. Take a quick ride out onto the lake or use the boat as a means of transportation between ports.

For inquiries, contact the Biwako Kisen Reservations Center

Water Tour Go to Lake Biwa's power spot

④ Chikubu Island Cruise



A small, sacred island just two kilometers in circumference with national treasures—Hogonji Temple's Karamon (Chinese) Gate and Tsukubusuma Shrine. The island has become popular in recent years as a "power spot," visited by both worshippers and tourists.

For inquiries, contact the Biwako Cruise Reservations Center or Ohmi Marine

Water Tour Ride the river on a paddle steamer

⑥ Setagawa River Cruise



Time slip into the past on an old-style paddle-wheel boat, the Ichiban-Mar, to see the scenery at a leisurely pace.

For inquiries, contact Lake West Kanko

For Inquiries

■ Biwako Cruise Reservations Center
TEL. 077-524-5000 (Reception: 9:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.)
Toll-free call 0120-050-800 (from landline only)
www.biwakokisen.co.jp



■ Ohmi Marine
TEL. 0749-22-0619
www.ohmitetudo.co.jp /marine/



■ Lake West Kanko
TEL. 0120-077-572
www.lakewest.jp



* For details on each type of cruise see our website.

Lake Biwa Traditional Fishing Methods and Culinary Culture



Experience the rich tastes of the Omi region.

The “8 Delicacies” of Lake Biwa + Omi Beef Course Meal with Sukiyaki

Kyukamura Ohmi-Hachiman

A culinary culture unique to the Lake Biwa area based on the endemic fish species in the vicinity of Okishima Island is still alive today. A course meal featuring this special food source together with sukiyaki prepared with Omi Beef is available year round. Don't miss this experience of the rich tastes of Lake Biwa.

<http://www.qkamura.or.jp/ohmi/>



- Nearest station: Omihachiman Sta. on the JR Biwako Line; from station take the Ohmi Railway Bus 43 min. to Kyukamura Ohmi-Hachiman
- Cost: ¥3,300 (includes hot spring)
- Inquiries: 0748-32-3138

Home delivery of home-style cooking

Home-Style Cooking of Okishima

Fishery cooperative wives' group offers local delicacies by mail order.

The wives' of the Okishima fishery cooperative call their group the Kotobuki-no-kai. Together they cook fresh fish caught in Lake Biwa and prepare seasonal dishes which they sell via the Internet. Visitors who want to try their home cooking in person must make a reservation. The Okishima wives will treat you to their seasonal fish cuisine according to your budget.

For home delivery of Okishima home-style cooking

* Please visit the website for ordering instructions.
<http://www.biwako-okishima.com/takuhai.html>



- Nearest station: Omihachiman Sta. on the JR Biwako Line; from station take the Ohmi Railway Bus 32 min. to Horikiri Port; take Okishima-Tsusen boat for 10 min. to Okishima Fishing Port
- Inquiries: The wives' of the Okishima fishery cooperative "Kotobuki-no-kai" 0748-47-8787



On Okishima Island one can buy funazushi and lake fish dishes as specialty foods to take home.

There are also restaurants to eat at if reservations are made in advance.

Kyukamura Ohmi Hachiman, a hotel with dining, stands on the opposite mainland shore.

There you can experience a special course meal prepared with fish that only inhabit the lake.

Popular Dishes



Koayu Tempura

Fresh-caught small sweetfish are dipped in batter and deep-fried until crispy. The slightly bitter innards, combined with the distinctive aroma of the fish, is a special taste experience one can enjoy in spring to summer.



Ebi Mame (Shrimp and beans)

Shiga has many dishes that combine small fish and soybeans cooked together. One of the most representative is shrimp and beans. The two ingredients are cooked with sweet and spicy flavoring, yet there are many styles and variations of the dish.



Funazushi (Fermented carp)

This delicacy of Lake Biwa is made with nigoro-buna carp. The fish is caught in early spring and pickled in salt. In the summer it is stuffed with boiled rice and fermented for a year or more. It is said that modern-day sushi derives from this particular dish.

Traditional Fishing Methods



Oisade (Net) Fishing

Schools of koayu in the shallow water along the shore are driven into a large net called a **sade-ami**—which has crow feathers attached to the top of a long rod—by slapping it on the water's surface. This fishing method has been used at Lake Biwa since ancient times.



Yana (Weir) Fishing

Yana fishing was once carried out in rivers around Japan, but most of these were set up to catch descending **ayu** that had gone upstream for spawning. This is known as **kudari-yana**. On the other hand, the yana fishing carried out in the Lake Biwa system is all **nobori-yana**, the catching of fish migrating upstream from the lake. This fishing method is still used today on the Anegawa and Adogawa rivers.



Eri (Trap) Fishing

An eri trap is a set of umbrella-like large nets that stick out into the lake from the shore. They are a special feature that adds poetic charm to Lake Biwa. Fish swim deep into the maze of fixed nets and become caught. This fishing method has been used in the lake for approximately 1500 years, and is a method also used in China and Southeast Asia.

The Eight Delicacies of Lake Biwa?

Hasu (three-lips)

This is a fish-eating fish, rare for freshwater fish in this family that includes carps and true minnows. In Lake Biwa it primarily feeds on koayu. Because it has many tiny bones, it requires a deft touch to eat, but people enjoy the delicate, light, white flesh and prefer the fish broiled with salt.

Nigoro-buna (carp)

A species unique to Lake Biwa, it inhabits the lake bottom offshore. This fish has been the main ingredient in funazushi, the fermented delicacy, since the eighth century. The female fish, when filled with roe, is especially prized.

Koayu (small sweetfish)

This fish grows to a size of about 10 cm (4 inches) in length and a weight of 5–20 grams. Most grow to maturity in Lake Biwa, but their distinctive feature is growing into adult fish while remaining small. Its scales are smoother and finer than saltwater sweetfish, with a better taste, people say.

Isaza (goby)

A fish in the gobioid suborder that inhabits the northern part of Lake Biwa offshore. Deep-frying makes the hard bones edible. Catches rise and fall from year to year, with big catches in some years and next to nothing in others.

Suji-ebi (lake prawns)

Prawns are an essential food for the people of Shiga. A bounty from the lake that goes into the country-style ebi-mame “shrimp and beans” dish. When alive it is a transparent brown color; but it turns shrimp red when cooked.

Biwa trout

A species unique to Lake Biwa that lives in deep water offshore, trout eat koayu and different kinds of shrimp. It is caught primarily in June to September when the fish has plenty of fat. Because it swims upstream in heavy rains, it is also called “Biwa salmon.”

Goby fry

These are the fry of yoshinobori goby that only live in Lake Biwa, and are caught in fishing nets in summer. They are popularly cooked with soy sauce and sugar. Freshly caught and boiled in salted water, they reveal a light sweetness.

Honmoroko

The Japanese willow shiner is said to be the most delicious of the fish in the carp and minnow family. The female with roe caught at the beginning of spring is especially prized. Those caught in autumn have plenty of fat, enough to drip and cause flames to jump when grilled over charcoal.

For more information on the Japan Heritage sites of Shiga, visit our website.

<http://ja.multilingual.biwako-visitors.jp/japan-heritage>

