

# Chapter 3-2

## Tourism

### Abstract

The landscape and culture that has developed from the livelihoods of the local population of “Lake Biwa,” Japan’s largest lake, take on diverse aspects with the changing seasons and times. Shiga Prefecture caters to the wide-ranging preferences for leisure activities of visitors, providing opportunities to enjoy the unique scenery and culture of the area

**Keywords:** Nature and landscape, History and culture, Hot springs, Sports and recreation, Events

### 1. Nature and Landscape

A number of pleasure boats that take tourists to islands on the lake coast are in service on Lake Biwa, allowing visitors to enjoy the picturesque scenery. The beautiful seasonal scenery that can be seen from the boats is one of the greatest sightseeing attractions of Lake Biwa. The east, west, south and northeast sides of the lake each presents different scenery. “The riverside area in Omihachiman,” “the water fronts of Kaizu, Nishihama and Chinai in Takashima City” and “the water front in Harie and Shimofuri in Takashima City” are three of the 29 Cultural Landscapes of Japan (as of January 1, 2012).

Views of Lake Biwa can be also enjoyed from many different points in the mountains. The driveway that leads to Hieizan Enryakuji Temple which is listed as a world cultural heritage site and the ob-

servatory of Okubiwako Parkway which runs along the peninsula jutting out into the North Basin of the lake, both offer breathtaking views of Lake Biwa.

### 2. History and Culture

There is a saying that goes, “The one who rules Omi (Shiga) will rule the whole nation.” There are many historical heritages such as castles and remains from the age of provincial wars. Hikone Castle (a designated national treasure) made use of Lake Biwa and its attached lakes for protection and transportation in bygone days, and its tower provides a panoramic view of the lake.

Various major festivals are held in towns that once flourished as castle towns. Hiyoshi Taisha Shrine, located at the foot of Mt. Hiei in Sakamoto, holds the Sanno-sai Festival every year to pray for peace and abundant harvests. The



**Fig. 3-2-1** Boat for cherry blossom viewing  
(Photo courtesy of Biwako Visitors Bureau)



**Fig. 3-2-2** The mikoshi (portable shrine) paraded at the Sanno-sai Festival  
(Photo courtesy of Biwako Visitors Bureau)

mikoshi (portable shrine) parades that are a part of the festival are particularly splendid and impressive.

A wide variety of cultural experiences can be enjoyed at facilities such as Biwako Hall which is furnished with one of the country's best-known stages from which modern-day art and culture are disseminated, and the Lake Biwa Museum, where people can learn about the lake while having fun based on the theme of "The Relationship between the Lake and People."

### 3. Hot Springs

There are many hot springs around Lake Biwa. Tourists can take a bath while enjoying splendid views of Lake Biwa at the lakeside hotels or Japanese-style inns.

At Ogoto Spa that is said to have been discovered by Saicho, the founder of the Tendai sect of Buddhism, there are some parks where tourists can enjoy foot baths.

### 4. Sports and Recreation

Cycling or walking around Lake Biwa, the largest lake in Japan is a truly enjoyable experience. Tourists can also stroll through the surrounding natural beauty, historical sites and tourist attractions, enjoying the fresh breeze from the lake.

Well-equipped camping sites and swimming areas with beautiful pine trees and white sand can be found around the lake, offering outdoor activities to allow visitors to fully enjoy nature.

In addition, water sports including windsurfing and kayaking are popular in Lake Biwa. Some facilities provide instructors so that even beginners can feel safe and enjoy the experience of water sports.

### 5. Events

The "dawn mist and rocks at Kaizuo-saki" is one of the Biwako-Hakkei (eight scenic views around Lake Biwa) and is famous for the cherry blossom tunnel that extends for approximately four km along the lakeside. This spot is crowded with visitors coming to view the cherry blossoms every spring.

The Lake Biwa Fireworks Festival is held in summer. The fireworks are launched from the offshore of Otsu Port and their colorful reflections on the lake are truly impressive to see.

### 6. Other Attractions

There are many rest areas along roadside of the lake called "Michi no Eki" that provide spots where visitors can take a break from driving or touring on bicycles/motorcycles. Farmers' markets that sell local safe farm and fishery products which are very popular among visitors, can also be found in these areas.

Blessed with a rich natural environment, Lake Biwa is a paradise for waterbirds and the lake is visited by various species of migratory birds. Waterbirds can be observed using field scopes at Kohoku Waterfowl Park or Shinasahi Waterfowl Observation Center.

Lake Biwa is surrounded by an abundance of natural, historical and cultural attractions unique to Shiga Prefecture.

(Tourism and International Exchange Bureau, Shiga Prefectural Government)



**Fig. 3-2-3** The Lake Biwa Fireworks Festival  
(Photo courtesy of Biwako Visitors Bureau)