

•Tour Planning Guide•

## Explore the Core Values of Japan Through the Life and Legacy of the “Omi Merchants”

Japanese culture was shaped not only by the samurai, but also by the vibrant customs of the common folk.

The Omi Merchants from Shiga, who rose to prominence during Japan’s feudal era, are a key example of such influence. Their philosophy and spirit left a lasting impact on the heritage of Japan.



# INTRODUCTION

Explore the Core Values of Japan Through the Life and Legacy of the Omi Merchants

For over 300 years, the Omi Merchants from Omihachiman, Hino, and Higashiomi in Shiga built networks using the region's resources. Their credo, *Sanpo Yoshi* — "Trilateral Benefit," or good for the buyer, the seller, and for society—was key to their success. This itinerary model offers insight into their philosophy, with historical towns, traditional cuisine, and unique accommodations reflecting how their values continue to shape both the region's and Japan's cultural spirit.

## KEY DESTINATIONS



### Hachimanbori (Hachiman Moat)

Premium Experience 2

Once a bustling hub for trade during the medieval period, the area thrived as a commercial center, playing a key role in the rise of Omi merchants. Today, there are picturesque views along the moat of the castle remains, where visitors can enjoy seasonal beauty and peaceful rowboat rides through this historically rich area.



### Omi Merchant Residence - Former Yamanaka Shokichi House

Step back in time at this well-preserved merchant residence, now a museum showcasing the 400-year history and business practices of the Omi Merchants. The experience is enriched with the chance to savor authentic merchant-style cuisine, served in a traditional Japanese garden setting.



### Townscape of Gokasho Kondo

Premium Experience 5

Wander through the tranquil streets of Gokasho Kondo, a merchant town where time seems to stand still. The beautifully preserved white-walled houses and traditional wooden storehouses offer a glimpse into the past, allowing visitors to experience the historical charm and peaceful lifestyle of this quiet, picturesque community.

## 3- Day Sample Course

### Day 1: Omihachiman Historic Merchant Town

- Enjoy a scenic boat ride along the historic Hachimanbori (see Page 3)
- Enjoy an Omi Beef lunch, a premier wagyu renowned for its tenderness.
- Take a leisurely walk through Shinmachi Street, lined with historic merchant houses

### Day 2: Hino Historic Merchant Town

- Visit one of the merchant houses with 400 years of history.
- Enjoy a traditional soba lunch at Morisada, housed in a renovated merchant residence.
- Visit the tranquil Watamuki Shrine, tied deeply to the lives of local merchants.

### Day 3: Higashiomi Historic Merchant Town

- Try your hand at traditional weaving at the Omi Jofu Traditional Industry Hall.
- A guided tour at the Fujii Honke Sake Brewery with a sake-paired lunch.
- Visit the Omi Merchant Museum for a deeper look at merchant culture.
- Stroll through the picturesque Gokasho Kondo area.

*Note: The course can be tailored to a single day according to your preferences.*

## SHIGA SPECIALITIES

### Fermented Foods

Shiga is known for its rich fermentation tradition, including Funazushi, made by salting and fermenting Lake Biwa's crucian carp in rice. The region also produces sake, miso, and vinegar. Omi merchants historically spread these fermentation techniques to other areas of Japan. Such fermented foods now receive global attention and praise for their health and beauty benefits.

### Sake Tasting at Fujii Honke

Fujii Honke, a sake brewery established in 1831, offers a glimpse into traditional brewing methods. Enjoy a guided tour of the brewery, sample a variety of their sake, and savor local cuisine perfectly paired with the drinks, all while immersing yourself in the region's rich cultural heritage.



Photo Courtesy by Biwako Visitors Bureau




Facility Name	Omihachiman Tourist Association		
Activity Details	<p><b>Explore the Historic Streets of Omihachiman with a Local Guide</b>  Omihachiman is a city where the historic castle town layout and the thriving merchant culture of past centuries blend seamlessly into modern life. The influence of William Merrell Vories, an American architect and missionary who made significant contributions in the post-war period, is also evident throughout the town. A local guide will lead you along a route, tailored to your interests, allowing you to experience both the area's rich history and unique cultural heritage.</p> <p><b>Basic Itinerary:</b>  <b>Course A:</b>  Hakuunkan → Hachimanbori Canal Tour → Himure-Hachimangu Shrine → Shops around Hachimanbori &amp; William Vories Statue → Omi Merchant streets → Denshokan Museum  <b>Course B:</b>  Hakuunkan → Hachimanbori Canal Tour → Vories Gakuen → Vories Memorial Hall → Streets of Omi Merchants → Former Hachiman Post Office &amp; Machiya Club (Former Sake Brewery) → Andrews Memorial Hall &amp; Hachiman Church → Ikeda Town Western-style Mansion Street  <i>*Detailed routes and times can be customized upon request.</i></p>		
Tour Operating Time / Duration	9:00 AM – 12:00 PM / 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM / 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM / Duration: 3 hours <i>*An additional charge will apply if the time exceeds 3 hours. Please pay on-site.</i>		
Minimum No. of Guests	1	Maximum No. of Guests	10
Language	Japanese / English		
Important Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cancellations may occur due to weather conditions.</li> <li>● Meeting place: Hakuunkan (9-1 Ishincho-moto, Omihachiman)</li> <li>● A delay of more than 30 minutes without prior notice will be treated as a cancellation.</li> <li>● Admission fees and other charges are to be paid separately at the site.</li> </ul>		



\*For pricing, please inquire.



\*Reservations must be made at least one month in advance.



Facility Name	Hachimanbori Boat ride (Waden) (743 Taga-cho Omihachiman, Shiga)		
Activity Details	<p><b>Hachimanbori Boat Ride</b>            Enjoy a relaxing ride on a traditional boat along the Hachimanbori moat, which connects to Lake Biwa. Historically, it was used by merchants to transport goods. Experience the breathtaking seasonal view: cherry blossoms in spring, willows in summer, vibrant autumn foliage, and snowy winter scenes.            *The tour is shared with other boat customers.</p> 		
Tour Operating Time / Duration	Between 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM / Duration: 35mins		
Minimum No. of Guests	2	Maximum No. of Guests	22
Language	Japanese		
Important Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cancellations may occur due to weather conditions.</li> <li>● If a guide accompanies, please cover the guide's boat fee.</li> </ul>		

\*For pricing, please inquire.

\*Reservations must be made at least one month in advance.

Facility Name	Hino Morisada (1365 Murai, Hino, Gamo, Shiga)		
Activity Details	<p><b><u>[Exclusive for overnight guests for Hatago Morisada Bettei Chidori and Rokka]</u></b>            *Please see Page 8 for more information about the facilities.</p> <p><b>Plan A: Soba-Making Experience and Meal (1 hour)</b>            Experience making this classic Japanese dish entirely from scratch, from mixing the soba flour to making the noodles.            After the experience, enjoy the soba you made in a charming Japanese-style dining area.</p> <p><b>Plan B: Kimono Fitting Experience and Commemorative Photos (1 hour)</b>            Choose your favorite kimono at a kimono shop, and we'll help you with the fitting. Then, take memorable photos in your kimono.</p> <p><b>Plan C: Rickshaw Ride and Shrine Visit (45 mins)</b>            Take a rickshaw ride through the streets of Hino, followed by a visit to pray for blessings at the Watamuki Shrine.            (Canceled in case of rain)</p>		
	 		
Start Time / Duration	3:00 PM or 4:00 PM /Duration : Plan A 1hour , Plan B 1hour, Plan C 45mins		
Minimum No. of Guests	1	Maximum No. of Guests	5
Language	Japanese		
Important Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Weekday Only</li> <li>● Preschool children are not allowed to participate.</li> <li>● Photography inside the facility requires prior permission.</li> <li>● Masks must be worn during the experience (Plan A).</li> <li>● For hygiene reasons, please refrain from wearing perfumes, and avoid elaborate hair and nails during the meal experience.</li> </ul>		

\*For pricing, please inquire.

\*Reservations must be made at least one month in advance.

Facility Name	Fujii Honke Sake Brewery / Kakuregura Fujii (Restaurant) (601 Nagano, Aisho, Echi, Shiga)		
Activity Details	<p><b>Highlights</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Built in the Taisho era, this brewery is a National Registered Tangible Cultural Property and a renowned filming location for various historical dramas.</li> <li>· Guests can sample the "brewing water" used in the sake-making process during the experience.</li> <li>· The deepest area of the brewery features a striking storage room made entirely of Japanese keyaki zelkova wood for a unique architectural experience.</li> </ul> <p><b>Plan A: Sake Brewery Tour (30 mins)</b> Explore facilities that are nationally designated as Registered Tangible Cultural Properties. Enjoy tasting the brewing water used in the sake-making process and learn about fermentation and storage methods. This tour offers an immersive experience of both Japanese history and the craft of sake brewing.</p> <p><b>Plan B: Meal and Sake Tasting (60 mins)</b> Savor Kyokujitsu, a premium sake brand from Fujii Honke, brewed with Shiga's pure underground water and local rice, paired with seasonal ingredients unique to this area. Experience the refined flavors of sake crafted in a traditional wooden brewery, where the cultural, historical, and natural heritage of Shiga is meticulously preserved.</p>		
Start Time / Duration	Flexible to be consulted / Duration: Plan A 30mins, Plan B 60 mins		
Minimum No. of Guests	3	Maximum No. of Guests	40 <i>*Capacity: 16 guests at the counter / 24 guests at the table</i>
Language	Japanese and written English instruction		
Important Notes			



\*For pricing, please inquire.

\*Reservations must be made at least one month in advance.

Facility Name	NIPPONIA Gokasho Omi Merchants' Town (645 Gokasho Kondo-cho, Higashiomi, Shiga)		
Activity Details	<p>*Please see Page 8 for more information about the accommodation.</p> <p><b>Plan A: Introduction to Omi Merchants &amp; Cultural Experience (Exclusive for Overnight Guests)</b>            Guests will learn the philosophy of Omi merchants, including the "Sanpo Yoshi" principle, through an insightful lecture within the estate. Following this, engage in a hands-on cultural experience, with options such as calligraphy, pottery, and flower arrangement, available by advance request.</p> <p><b>Plan B: Estate Tour and Lunch (For Day Visitors)</b>            Take a guided tour of the estate, where the Omi merchant ethos is woven into every corner. Enjoy a thoughtfully prepared lunch, tailored to your budget, with bento or meal options provided by a partner restaurant.</p> <p><b>Plan C: Space Rental for Seminar or Meeting</b>            Utilize the renovated kura warehouse, fully equipped for seminars or meetings, or the first-floor tatami rooms. The kura can accommodate up to 18 guests, while the tatami rooms offer seating for 20-30 guests.</p>		
Start Time / Duration	Plan A: Between 3:00 PM and 5:00 PM on the first day / Between 10:00 AM and 5:00 PM on the second day of the stay Plan B: Between 11:00 AM and 2:00 PM Plan C: Between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM (Available only if no other guests are staying the night before or on the day of the reservation)		
Minimum No. of Guests	Plan A: 2 / Plan B: 5 / Plan C: 5	Maximum No. of Guests	Plan A: 15 / Plan B: 20 / Plan C: 30 (in case of use of tatami rooms)
Language	Japanese (interpreter needs to be arranged for English)		
Important Notes	The building is a renovated traditional Japanese house with many steps, so guests with mobility issues may need assistance.		



\*For pricing, please inquire.

\*Reservations must be made at least one month in advance.

# Recommended 3-Day Comprehensive Itinerary

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All transportation is by private vehicle / Estimated cost: 320,000 yen per person

Day 1	Omihachiman Visit & Hino Stay
10:30 AM	Depart from Maibara Station to Omihachiman (50 mins)
11:20 AM - 1:00 PM	Lunch featuring Omi beef sukiyaki at KanKanKan
1:00 PM - 4:00 PM	Explore the Omihachiman area with a guide and enjoy a boat ride along the historic Hachimanbori moat (Premium Experience 2)
4:00 PM - 4:50 PM	Travel to the Hino area (50 mins)
4:50 PM	Check-in at Hatago Moritada Bettei Chidori and enjoy a seasonal kaiseki dinner
Accommodation: Hatago Morisada Bettei Chidori	
Day 2	Soba-Making in Hino & Higashiomi (Gokasho) Visit and Stay
9:00 AM - 11:30 AM	Visit the Hino Merchant Museum, enjoy a kimono fitting, and take a rickshaw ride
11:30 AM - 12:30 PM	Soba-making workshop and lunch at Morisada (Premium Experience 3)
	Travel to the Higashiomi area (40 mins)
1:20 PM - 2:15 PM	Explore the Omi Jofu Traditional Crafts Center
2:30 PM - 3:30 PM	Visit the Higashiomi Omi Merchant Museum
3:30 PM	Check-in at NIPPONIA Gokasho, where you will learn about Omi merchants, explore the area, and enjoy a catered dinner
Accommodation: NIPPONIA Gokasho	
Day 3	Cultural Activity in Gokasho & Sake Brewery Tour
9:00-11:00	Cultural experiences (calligraphy, flower arrangement, etc.) at NIPPONIA Gokasho (Premium Experience 5)
11:15-13:00	Visit Fujii Honke for a sake brewery tour, sake tasting, and traditional Japanese lunch (Premium Experience 4)
	Terminate the tour at Maibara Station (40 mins) or Kyoto Station (80 mins)

## Access from Major Cities to Otsu / Maibara

Travel from:	Arrive in:	Travel Time by JR Train / Shinkansen	Distance / Route
Kyoto	Otsu, Shiga	10 mins to JR Otsu Sta. (Biwako Line Special Rapid)	14.2 km (JR Kyoto Sta. – JR Otsu Sta.)
Osaka	Otsu, Shiga	40 mins to JR Otsu Sta. (Biwako Line Special Rapid)	40.3 km (From Meishin Expressway Suita IC)
Maibara	Otsu, Shiga	45 mins to JR Otsu Sta. (Biwako Line Special Rapid)	71.3 km (via Meishin Expressway)
Nagoya	Maibara, Shiga	28 mins to JR Maibara Sta. (Tokaido Shinkansen Kodama / Hikari)	58.7 km (From Meishin Expressway Komaki IC)
Tokyo	Maibara, Shiga	134 mins to JR Maibara Sta. (Tokaido Shinkansen Kodama / Hikari)	402.4 km (via Tomei and Meishin Expressway)
Kanazawa	Maibara, Shiga	113 mins to JR Maibara Sta. (Hokuriku Shinkansen Tsurugi & Local JR Express)	182.7 km (via Hokuriku Expressway)



# Recommended Accommodations

## NIPPONIA Gokasho



### A Historic Retreat with Modern Comforts

Stay in a fully restored merchant house, where the spirit of "Sanpo Yoshi" (the principle of three-way benefit) is woven into the space. This 160-year-old estate offers a private retreat featuring expansive gardens, a large public bath, and kitchen. Ideal for those seeking a blend of historic charm and modern amenities, the location also serves as a venue for corporate training.

**Address:** 645 Gokasho Kondo-cho, Higashiomi, Shiga

**Access:** 3 mins walk from Omi Bus "Kondo" stop / 20-min drive from Yokaichi IC

## Hatago Morisada



### A Luxurious Retreat into Timeless Elegance

Hatago Morisada is a boutique inn in Hino, known for its historic merchant houses. It offers two unique accommodations: Bettei Chidori and Rokka, each inspired by the town's merchant heritage. With only one group per night, the inn provides an intimate, luxurious retreat, allowing guests to experience the timeless beauty of wabi-sabi. This serene escape combines the charm of the past with modern comforts, making it the perfect getaway.

**Address:** 1365 Murai, Hino, Gamo, Shiga

**Access:** By car: 30 mins from Meishin Expressway Ryuo IC / 35 mins from the Shin-Meishin Expressway Shigaraki IC