

• Tour Planning Guide •

Reveal the Roots of Japan's Spiritual & Cultural Heritage

Blending spirituality, tradition, and early modern history, Shiga Prefecture boasts profound historical sites rooted in a legacy spanning over a millennium. Discover the sacred grounds, cultural landmarks, and heritage that have shaped Japan's spiritual and cultural essence.



INTRODUCTION

Reveal the Roots of Japan's Spiritual & Cultural Heritage

Historically known as Omi, Shiga has thrived for centuries as a transportation hub due to its proximity to Kyoto and the abundance of Lake Biwa's resources. Along with its political and economic significance, it has long been a center of spiritual tradition as well. These destinations invite you to explore Shiga's rich heritage, from timeless temples to majestic castles, surrounded by the beauty of nature. Ideal for travelers seeking to escape the bustle and connect with Japan's spiritual essence, these spots offer a deep and memorable journey.

KEY DESTINATIONS



Hieizan Enryakuji Temple

Premium Experience 1

Rising above Japan's largest lake, straddling the border between Kyoto and Shiga prefectures, the majestic Mt. Hiei is home to one of the most important temples in the history of Japan. Hidden amongst its heavily forested hills are the many sacred buildings of Enryakuji, a mystical Tendai Buddhist monastery that attracts monks from across Japan to its famously rigorous training.



Saikyoji Temple

A prominent Buddhist temple overlooking Lake Biwa, it is renowned for its grand architecture, including the magnificent zelkova-wood gabled main hall, four distinct styles of Japanese gardens, and its stunning autumn foliage.



Miidera Temple

Premium Experience 2

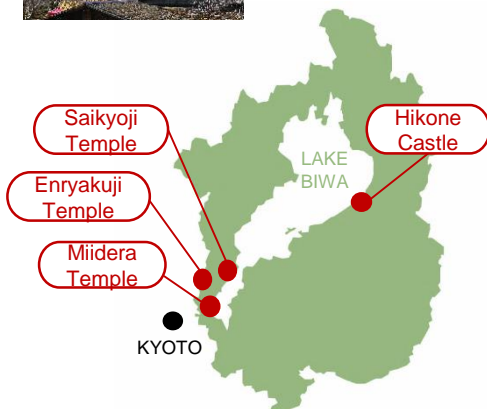
One of Japan's four great temples with a 1,300-year history, the "Temple of the Phoenix" symbolizes resilience, restored repeatedly after the war. It holds 64 National Treasures and is especially stunning during cherry blossom season.



Hikone Castle

Premium Experience 3 & 4

A National Treasure, Hikone Castle is one of Japan's few authentic original feudal castles. Built over 400 years ago, it showcases historic structures and offers views of Lake Biwa, reflecting Japan's samurai heritage.



3- Day Sample Course

Day 1: Hieizan - Enryakuji Temple

Begin your journey with a tailor-made spiritual training program at Enryakuji Kaikan (details on Page 2).

Optional: Stay overnight at the temple and join the tranquil morning rituals.

Day 2: Saikyoji Temple & Miidera Temple

Start the day at Saikyoji Temple and its gardens before visiting Miidera Temple. Check in to Waqoo Mii-dera, a temple stay facility, and enjoy exclusive activities for guests (details on Page 3).

Optional: Participate in Yamabushi (mountain ascetic) training the next morning.

Day 3: Eastern Lake Biwa - Hikone Castle

Choose either (details on Page 4) :

Option 1: Take part in the Lord's Tea Gathering, including a rare lunch in the Shoin guest room at Hikone Castle.

Option 2: Join an exclusive Samurai Experience, featuring a tea ceremony and guided tour of the castle.

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

SHIGA SPECIALITIES

Biwamasu (Biwa Trout) – A Rare Delicacy from Lake Biwa

A rare fish endemic to northern Lake Biwa, it offers rich, delicate flavors with no fishy odor as it melts in your mouth. Unique to Shiga, it pairs beautifully with anything from sashimi to grilled dishes.



Omi Beef – One of Japan's Top Three Wagyu Brands

Its history dates back to the Edo period when the Hikone domain presented it to the Tokugawa Shogunate. Renowned for its rich, high-quality marbling, this wagyu complements any dish with its exceptional flavor.







Photo Courtesy by Sennaritei

Facility Name	Hieizan Enryakuji Temple (4229 Sakamoto Honmachi, Otsu, Shiga)		
Activity Details	<div>    </div> <p>Exclusive Tailor-Made Spiritual Training at Enryakuji Monastery on Mt. Hiei</p> <p>The majestic Mt. Hiei is home to one of the most important temples in the history of Japan. Hidden amongst its heavily forested hills are the many sacred buildings of Enryakuji, a mystical Tendai Buddhist monastery that attracts monks from across Japan to its famously rigorous training.</p> <p>These immersion experiences at Enryakuji begin with a conversation with one of the monks that works at the temple. Through a series of questions and observations regarding your own unique goals, preferences, motivations and struggles, the monk will design and customize a program specifically for you, so that each guest is ensured the best, most impactful experience.</p> <p>Program Schedule:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Monk Consultation: Meet with a monk to share personal goals or struggles, leading to a personalized training plan. ● Introduction to Enryakuji: Discover the essence and history of the temple at Konpon Chu-do, its central hall. ● Tailored Training: Participate in two customized sessions, such as candlelight meditation, dialogue with a monk, incense making, calligraphy, prayer bracelet making, mountain trekking on the training path, or Zen garden creation. 		
Start Time / Duration	Start either at 9:00 am or 1:00 pm / Duration: 3 to 4 hours <i>*Flexible scheduling is available to accommodate individual needs.</i>		
Minimum No. of Guests	1	Maximum No. of Guests	20
Language	Monks at Enryakuji provide explanations in Japanese, requiring the assistance of an English guide. <i>*A pre-consultation with the guide is essential to ensure an accurate understanding of temple's essence.</i>		
Important Notes	Groups typically participate in the same training, but separate activities can be arranged upon request. Please note that this may result in adjusted pricing.		

*For pricing, please inquire.

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

Facility Name	Temple Stay WAQOO Mii-dera (246 Onjoji-cho, Otsu, Shiga)			
Activity Details	<div><div><div><div><div><h3>Plan A: Authentic Kaiseki Lunch</h3><p><i>Authentic Kaiseki Cuisine by Kiyomoto, a 120-Year-Old Renowned Restaurant</i></p><p>Savor an exclusive kaiseki meal in the serene, private setting of WAQOO Mii-dera, a one-group-per-day fully private retreat within the grounds of Miidera Temple. This exceptional dining experience highlights the finest local ingredients from Shiga.</p></div><div><h3>Plan B: Premium Tea Ceremony Experience</h3><p><i>The Ultimate Tea Ceremony Experience in a Private Setting (90–120 minutes)</i></p><p>Immerse yourself in the art of sado (Japanese tea ceremony) with a private lesson led by a master of the Urasenke School, one of Japan's most esteemed tea ceremony traditions. This exclusive experience takes place in the serene setting of WAQOO Mii-dera.</p></div></div><div><div><h4>For Small Groups (2–4 guests):</h4><p>The tea master prepares and serves matcha to each participant. Guests then take turns at the tea preparation area, receiving personalized guidance to try tea-making themselves.</p><h4>For Larger Groups (5–8 guests)*an additional fee applies:</h4><p>The tea master prepares tea for one or two participants while the remaining guests are served separately. Each guest practices tea-making at their seat, following the master's demonstration.</p></div><div><h4>Exclusive Activities for Overnight Guests</h4><p>Available only for guests staying at the accommodation. Please inquire when booking.</p><ul style="list-style-type: none">● Temple Tour: Guided tour of important architectural sites within the temple precincts.● Special Access: Exclusive entry to the Kannon-do Hall inner sanctum, three-story pagoda interior, and Toin complex, with Kangetsu Butai (Moon-Viewing Stage) access in spring only.● Mountain Monk Experience: Dress in traditional ascetic attire and embark on a spiritual training journey through Mt. Nagara.● Zen Meditation in a National Treasure: Experience seated meditation in the historic Kan-gakuin or Kojo-in guest halls.● Special Prayer Ceremony: A private prayer session by the head priest in the Kannon-do Hall inner sanctum.● Special Goma Fire Ritual: Personalized prayer through a sacred fire ritual performed in the Kannon-do Hall.</div></div></div><div></div></div></div>			
	Tour Operating Time / Duration	Plan A: between 11:30 am to 1:30 pm (may be adjusted) / Plan B: to be consulted		
	Minimum No. of Guests	2	Maximum No. of Guests	Plan A: 6 / Plan B: 8
	Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● In-person guide for Plan A and B is English only.● Temple information is available in 19 languages via QR codes.● Certified interpreters in English and Chinese can be arranged for activities such as zazen, special access tours, and mountain monk experience.		
Important Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Special access and National Treasure areas are not open to the public.● Activities may be unavailable on certain dates; advance requests are required.● Interpreter requests should be made in advance. Payment is made directly to the interpreter, based on time and travel.			

*For pricing, please inquire.

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

Facility Name	National Treasure Hikone Castle (1-1 Konki-cho, Hikone, Shiga)		
Activity Details	<p>The Lord's Tea Gathering - Exclusive Access to Hidden Cultural Treasures in Hikone Castle</p> <p>Step back into the Edo period at Rakurakuen, the serene retreat within Genkyuen Garden at Hikone Castle. This exclusive experience recreates the refined tea gatherings of Lord Ii Naosuke, the 13th Lord of Hikone Domain. Renowned as a pivotal political figure in Japan's modern history and as a distinguished cultural figure, he made significant contributions to the tea ceremony, leaving a lasting impact on the art. Gain rare access to normally restricted areas (Goshoin and Jishin-no-ma) and immerse yourself in sophisticated samurai traditions and cultural refinement.</p> <p>Highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enjoy kaiseki cuisine and tea alongside Lord Naosuke (portrayed by an actor), offering a glimpse into the life of an Edo-period lord. - Experience a curated pairing of Japanese sake to complement the kaiseki meal. - Receive a "Samurai Certification" issued under the name of the lord of the Hikone domain, as a memento of your experience. <p>Sample Itinerary:</p> <p>9:00 am Hikone Castle Main Keep Tour by Guide 10:30 am Kimono Dressing (<i>optional</i>) 12:00 pm Kaiseki Meal at Goshoin 1:00 pm Tea ceremony with Koicha (thick tea) at Jishin-no-ma 2:15 pm Genkyuen Garden viewing and Usucha (thin tea) at Hoshodai</p>		
Tour Operating Time / Duration	Between 10:00 am to 4:00 pm / Duration: 4 hours		
Minimum No. of Guests	2	Maximum No. of Guests	5
Language	Japanese / English *An English guide will be available		
Important Notes	Participants must be 20 or older as Japanese sake is served.		



*For pricing, please inquire.

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

Facility Name	National Treasure Hikone Castle (1-1 Konki-cho, Hikone, Shiga)		
Activity Details	<p>Hikone Castle SAMURAI Experience - Tea Ceremony in a Cultural Property & Special Castle Tour Experience the spirit of Japan's samurai at the National Treasure, Hikone Castle. This exclusive program includes a tea ceremony in the normally inaccessible "Goshoin" cultural property, along with a guided tour by Hikone Castle specialists. Learn about the samurai way of life and their deep connection to the tea ceremony in an authentic castle setting.</p> <p>Itinerary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meeting Point: Iroha Matsu Tourist Parking Lot ● Hikone Castle Tour by Special Expert Guide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iroha Matsu → Umoreginoya → Sawaguchi Tamon Yagura* • Umaya* → Omote-mon Gate → Omote-mon Pathway • Kane-no-Maru → Tenbin Yagura* • Taiko-mon Gate* → Tsukimidai → Hikone Castle Main Keep** • Kuro-mon Gate → Genkyuen Garden and Rakurakuen (* Important Cultural Property / ** National Treasure) ● Explore Genkyuen Garden and enjoy a traditional tea ceremony in the "Goshoin," exclusive area. ● Visit the Hikone Castle Museum (available on open days) 		
Tour Operating Time / Duration	Between 10:00 am to 3:00 pm / Duration: 2-3 hours		
Minimum No. of Guests	2	Maximum No. of Guests	20
Language	Japanese		
Important Notes	English guide services can be arranged upon prior request.		



*For pricing, please inquire.

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

Facility Name	Manyo Blacksmith Hut (741 Kajiyacho, Nagahama, Shiga)		
Activity Details	<p>Kajiyacho Village in Nagahama City, northern Shiga, was a key center for crafting armor and spears during the Sengoku era. Later, it became a hub for agricultural tools, but by the 1950s, the Manyo Blacksmith Hut was the last workshop, and now welcomes visitors as a municipal cultural property. Guests can experience traditional blacksmithing, such as the following:</p> <p>Plan A: Blacksmith Experience – Create a Paper Knife Experience traditional blacksmithing techniques. Using a 5-inch nail, craft your original paper knife under the guidance of skilled local craftsmen, who are dedicated to preserving the area's cultural heritage.</p> <p>Plan B: Paper Knife Crafting & Exploration of Kajiya Village After crafting your paper knife, join a guided tour of the village, a blacksmithing settlement with 840 years of history. Explore with a local guide and discover its rich cultural heritage.</p>		
Tour Operating Time / Duration	Plan A: between 10 am and 4:00 pm / Duration 2 hours Plan B: between 10 am and 4:00 pm / Duration 2.5 hours		
Minimum No. of Guests	1	Maximum No. of Guests	15
Language	Japanese		
Important Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Age Requirement: 7 years and older / Children aged 7–9 must be accompanied by an adult. ● Recommended Attire: Wear clothing that minimizes skin exposure / Flat, closed-toe shoes (no sandals) ● Access: please use vehicle or public transportation 		



*For pricing, please inquire.

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

Recommended 3-Day Comprehensive Itinerary

All transportation is by private vehicle
Estimated cost: 700,000 yen per person

Day 1	Sacred Mt Hiei & Enryakuji Temple
10:30 am	Depart from Kyoto Station
11:10 am - 12:15 pm	Lunch at Fuyoen Honkan featuring local ingredients such as Hiei Yuba (tofu skin), Lake Biwa fish, and vegetables.
12:40 pm – 4:00 pm	Visit Enryakuji Temple and participate in a tailor-made spiritual training experience (Premium Experience 1)
4:30 pm	Check in at WAQOO Mii-dera and enjoy a kaiseki dinner at the renowned restaurant, Kiyomoto.
Accommodation: Temple Stay WAQOO Mii-dera	

Day 2	Revered Miidera Temple & National Treasure Hikone Castle
9:00 am –11:00 am	Exclusive activities for guests at WAQOO Mii-dera (Premium Experience 2)
11:30 am –12:30 pm	Enjoy a tempura lunch at Tempura Ohmi in Biwako Hotel, and depart to Hikone (about 75 mins)
1:45 pm – 4:00 pm	Arrive at Hikone Castle for a tea ceremony, followed by an exclusive tour led by a Hikone Castle specialist (Premium Experience 4)
4:30 pm	Check in at Hikone Castle Resort & Spa and enjoy Japanese cuisine featuring seasonal delicacies of the region.
Accommodation: Hikone Castle Resort & Spa	

Day 3	Hikone Castle Town & Nagahama Blacksmith Village
9:00 am–11:00 am	Stroll and explore the surrounding castle town, including Yume Kyobashi Castle Road and Ashigaru Residences (Optional: Try a gold leaf experience in the Buddhist altar district)
11:50 am–12:50 pm	Travel to Nagahama (30 mins) and enjoy an Italian lunch featuring the local ingredients at Kita Biwako Hotel Grazie
1:20 pm –3:20 pm	Participate in a blacksmith experience (Premium Experience 5) Terminate the tour at Maibara Station (35 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

Temple Stay WAQOO Mii-dera



A 400-Year-Old Gem on the Grounds of the Profound Mii-dera Temple

WAQOO Mii-dera is a luxury temple lodging nestled within the historic grounds of Miidera Buddhist Temple in Otsu, overlooking Lake Biwa. This exclusive, one-group-per-day accommodation offers a completely private retreat. Set within a serene environment, the expansive 807-square-meter property features a Japanese garden and a *rest pavilion*, providing a space to immerse yourself in nature with all five senses.

**Exclusive activity plans are also available for guests. Please refer to the detailed page for more information.*

[Address] 246 Onjoji-cho, Otsu, Shiga (within Miidera Temple)

[Access] 10 mins on foot from Miidera Station (Keihan Railway) / 10 mins by taxi from JR Otsu Station

Enryakuji Kaikan



Nestled within the Historic Grounds of Enryakuji Temple on Mt. Hiei

Located on the sacred grounds of Enryakuji Temple, a cultural center with over 1,200 years of history and tradition, this serene retreat is surrounded by lush nature and tranquility, offering visitors a peaceful stay. From the special Japanese-Western rooms with panoramic views of Lake Biwa, guests can comfortably relax and enjoy the breathtaking scenery. These spacious accommodations provide an ideal setting for visitors to unwind during their pilgrimage to Enryakuji Temple.

**Exclusive activity plans are also available for guests. Please refer to the detailed page for more information.*

[Address] 4220 Sakamoto Honmachi, Otsu, Shiga

[Access] 60 mins by bus from Kyoto Station / 30 mins by vehicle from the Meishin Expressway Kyoto East IC

Ryotei Ryokan Yasui



A Historic Ryokan and Restaurant in the Castle Town of Hikone

This historic ryokan and restaurant, established in 1869, provides a distinctive dining experience centered on seasonal ingredients and a commitment to local sustainability. Enjoy the flavors of the Lake Biwa region in this charming auberge right in the heart of Hikone's castle town.

[Address] 13-26 Yasukiyo-cho, Hikone, Shiga

[Access] By vehicle: 10 mins from the Meishin Expressway Hikone IC / 5 mins by from Hikone Station

Hitomi Sanso



A Secluded One-Group-Per-Day Traditional Farmhouse Stay

Nestled in a tranquil mountain village, this exclusive farmhouse offers an unforgettable experience. Enjoy meals prepared with local ingredients, including fresh iwana trout from the on-site fish pond, while relaxing around the traditional *irori* hearth.

[Address] 1691 Mandokoro-cho, Higashiomi, Shiga

[Access] By vehicle: 35 mins from the Meishin Expressway Yokaichi IC / 50 mins from JR Hikone Station