

Welcome to Shiga

The Wind Serenades You and the Waves Entice You'
Proud Location of Japan's Biggest Lake

Imagine blue skies and forested mountains reflecting off a lake. Then, picture yourself on a bicycle pedaling around its shores. Biwaichi offers a great way to take in Lake Biwa with all 5 senses and come out feeling elated, fulfilled and rewarded. There is so much for you to discover, learn and relish about Shiga Prefecture. Do it on a bicycle! Ride Biwaichi!

Tinged with seasonal splendor throughout the year...
Cycle amidst a wondrous natural landscape of mountains, rivers and lakes.

Cultural immersion...
Encounter a contemplative way of life and faith nurtured by nature.

Epicurean delights to try...
Tickle your palate on freshwater fish, Om! Beef and endless sweets you'll only find on the shores of Lake Biwa.

History everywhere...
Travel to sites with long histories and discover how generals lived in Japan's century of civil war.

Access to Shiga

Public Transport
Shiga Prefecture is accessible via various public transport routes including JR, Keio, and private lines.

By Car
Major highways like the Chugoku Expressway and Tozai Expressway provide easy access.

By Bicycle
The Biwaichi Cycling Map of Lake Biwa is a key resource for cyclists.

BIWAICHI Cycle Support Station

Field service for those who enjoy riding around Lake Biwa.

The aid stations provide bike pump rentals and restrooms for cyclists. About 400 amenities (convenience stores, restaurants, etc.) are available in Shiga.

App "Biwaichi Cycling Navi"
This handy app provides total support for cycling in Shiga Prefecture by showing you recommended cycling routes and loads of information on tourist spots, travel distances, cafes you can burn and more.

Biwako Free Wi-Fi

In Shiga Prefecture you can use Biwako Free Wi-Fi. This icon is displayed where Biwako Free Wi-Fi is available. Methods of connecting may vary depending on the location of use. Please check this website for more information.

URL: <http://biwako-wifi.info/about/04ca/en>

Bicycle Insurance Required in Shiga Prefecture

By prefectural ordinance, anyone who wants to ride a bicycle in Shiga Prefecture must have private or group insurance that covers accidents related to damages related to bicycles before setting out on your trip. Check whether you have insurance or not and the coverage provided by your policy. Insurance is not liable in rental rates at some locations. For details, contact a rental bicycle location.

Riding style

You should know how to ride long distances without straining yourself, as well as the basics of riding a bicycle.

Using the proper gear
The proper gear for long distances is what makes it a slightly easy or switch gear or often as needed when climbing slopes or riding into the wind, so that you keep pedaling at a constant speed.

Taking breaks
Rest for 2-3 minutes every hour of pedaling. Longer breaks can be counterproductive.

Staying hydrated
Bicycling causes you to sweat more than you think. It is best to hydrate yourself constantly rather than waiting till you feel thirsty.

Traffic rules and etiquette

Like cars, bicycles are to be ridden on the left of vehicle roads. Also, you must be considerate of pedestrians.

Ride on the left of vehicle lanes in Japan!
A bicycle is a vehicle of sorts. Under the law, bicycles must be ridden in the farthest left lane of the roadway.

Be courteous to pedestrians and local residents!
A road is not a race course. People live and work in the area. Be appreciative of local residents for allowing bicycles to ride through their communities. Be courteous to reduce your speed riding through villages.

Bicycle-Friendly Inn in Shiga Prefecture

Check out these Bicycle-Friendly Inn perfect for traveling with your beloved bicycle! They offer services tailored to cyclists and provide a secure place for you to stay with your bike.

BIWAICHI Cycling Map of Lake Biwa

This map shows various cycling routes around Lake Biwa, including the Biwaichi route and other scenic paths. It includes information on distances, elevation, and local points of interest.

Rules of the BIWAICHI route

What are the blue lines for? The blue lines you see on the road mark the Biwaichi route. They are only found in Shiga Prefecture.

On roadways
The blue lines mark the bicycle lane. When riding on roadways, you must obey the same traffic rules as cars.

On Pedestrian/Bicycle paths
The blue lines mark the general area considered the bicycle lane. When riding on pedestrian/bicycle paths, watch out for pedestrians and observe all warning signs, etc.

About Pedestrian/Bicycle paths

Pedestrian/bicycle paths are separate roadways for pedestrian and bicycle traffic. There are many cycling routes like Biwaichi. Unlike with ordinary sidewalks, bicycles are not required to travel slowly on Pedestrian/Bicycle paths except when passing by pedestrians.

Biwaichi Mind Three "G"s

Being mindful of the following will make your ride more enjoyable for you and the communities on Lake Biwa.

- G**ive way to others: Observe the rules of the road. Yield to vehicles and pedestrians.
- G**reet others: Communicate aloud. Say "hello" to the pedestrians and cyclists you meet.
- G**ive yourself ample time to enjoy your ride: Plan your ride so that you have enough time to take the sights, wonders and specialties of Lake Biwa.

Ship baggage to your lodgings or home with Yamato Transport

You can ship bags or souvenirs you purchased from any of Yamato Transport's 31 offices in Shiga Prefecture. Your bags arrive the same day at your destination in Shiga Prefecture. (Yamato Office (Maibara, Nagahama, Takamatsu))

Bicycle Rental Shops in Shiga Prefecture

Cycling is a great way to enjoy Shiga Prefecture. Shops carry a wide selection of bicycles from roadbikes and offroad bikes to city bikes and sports bikes.

Facts & Tips for Cycling around Lake Biwa

"Biwaichi" is a term used to describe completing a full circuit around Lake Biwa, or touring various tourist destinations and scenic spots within the prefecture, specifically using bicycles as your mode of transportation. The complete circuit around Lake Biwa is approximately 200 km. The north side alone (North Lake Circuit) is about 150 km, and the south side alone (South Lake Circuit) is about 50 km.

Plan your trip out
The "Biwaichi" route is best cycled counterclockwise. Because bicyclists in Japan must be kept riding with Lake Biwa on your left side, you have to keep closer to the lake shore and cross fewer intersections. Sample plans are provided, according to number of nights and averaging an average speed of 12 km/hr, factoring in breaks.

Check your bike out before riding

To ensure safe riding, check the following before heading out on your ride. If you do not feel capable of checking your bike properly, consult a bicycle shop, etc.

- Tires**: Check that your tires are properly inflated and not scratched, damaged or deformed in any way. Also, spin your tire by hand and check if they are warped.
- Brakes**: Spin your bike forward and back with the front and rear brakes squeezed, and check that the brakes are working properly and are not loose. Also, check that the rubber brake shoes are not worn down and that the brake wires are not damaged in any way.
- Tightness of assembled parts**: Rest one foot at a time about 11 cm off the ground, then drop the bike and listen for sounds that might suggest loose parts. Check around the handlebars and seat area for tightness.
- Chain and gears**: Check your chain for dirt and grime. It should be lubricated only to the degree that it looks slightly wet. Also, check that your gears function properly.

Clothing and carried items

Bicycling is a sport. Choose clothing that is appropriate for doing sports. Minimize and bundle carried items in as light and small a bag as possible.

- Headset**: For your safety, always wear a helmet. Helmets are also easy for drivers to spot.
- Eyewear**: Wear a pair of sunglasses or goggles. If you wear contact lenses, use a pair of sunglasses. Flying insects, kicked-up rocks, etc.
- Gloves**: A pair of gloves dampen the impacts transmitted to your hands. They also protect hands should you fall.
- Shoes**: The best shoes for riding are low-cut athletic shoes with hard soles. Laces must be kept tied so that they do not get entangled in the chain.
- What to bring with you**: Water bottle, Food (Portable supplements), Flat tire repair kit, Spare tube, portable pump and tools, Bicycle lock, Spare clothes, Cash, credit card, smartphone, camera, etc.
- Bags**: A mini-volvo uses small wheels of more than 20 inches in diameter. Foldable types work great if combining with hard shells. The mini-volvo offers better performance than road bikes and cross bikes.

Bicycle recommendations

Choose a 'sports bike' for your ride.

- Road bike**: Built for road racing, so it is made to cover long distances at high speeds. However, you have to be somewhat used to the thin tires, drop bars and forward-leaning riding posture. More recently, manufacturers have come up with many long-range models that can be ridden in a more comfortable posture for people who are not looking for race-competitive speeds.
- Mountain bike**: As its name suggests, a mountain bike is built for off-road riding such as on mountain trails. All Biwaichi courses travel on paved surfaces, so the deep tread tires and suspension forks are not needed with greater resistance.
- Minivelo (Small diameter tire bike)**: A minivelo uses small wheels of more than 20 inches in diameter. Foldable types work great if combining with hard shells. The mini-volvo offers better performance than road bikes and cross bikes.
- Cross bike**: This genre of sports bicycle comes with straight handlebars and slightly wider road tires. Though a cross bike does not reach the speeds of a road bike, it is operated much like a city bike, so first-timers will feel safe riding it.

BIWAICHI Plus

I want to see more of Shiga! Discover the Sites and Attractions Found Only by Circling Lake Biwa - serious for hardened cyclists. The intermediate and advanced courses have strenuous ups and downs, and it can be enjoyed on any of the skill-appropriate courses from the short and challenge for beginners to the serious for hardened cyclists.

Hills and History! Plenty to See and Do on the South Lake Loop

65.4 km | 4 hr, 25 mins | Intermediate

You start by getting your information at the OTSU Tourist Information Center at OtSU Station. You then depart from Nagata Park heading south along the shoreline and eventually cross Seto-na-Karashi Bridge. At Takebe-taisha Shrine, you take the Kyu (Old) Tokaido Rd. towards Kusatsu. The old course of the Kasuga River, take the Biwaiko Chiishi-Shimino-Mori Park along the remnants of the Old Yasu River, and when you open lakes, head south. Turn west to cross the Biwaiko-ohashi Bridge. You continue uphill on Radoke Rd. to Katachi Village. The route takes you up and down hills through a rural landscape of rice paddies and the hamlets in Ogi. The mountain road empties into a residential area and thereafter a series of historical and cultural heritages in Saijyoji Temple, Hyochi-taisha Shrine, Omijingu Shrine and Miidera Temple. You then ride through the streets of OtSU back to OtSU Station.

Central Kusatsu, Shigaraki's Humorous Clay Raccoon Dogs and Tea Fields of Asamiya

70.3 km | 4 hr, 45 mins | Advanced

You start from Asai Hiroba in Kusatsugawa-Atochi Park, and with the lake behind you, follow the cycling path that runs alongside the old course of the Kasuga River until crossing the bridge over Rt. 1. You then follow Tokaido Rd. to Kusatsu. The old course of the Kasuga River, take the Biwaiko Chiishi-Shimino-Mori Park along the remnants of the Old Yasu River, and when you open lakes, head south. Turn west to cross the Biwaiko-ohashi Bridge. You continue uphill on Radoke Rd. to Katachi Village. The route takes you up and down hills through a rural landscape of rice paddies and the hamlets in Ogi. The mountain road empties into a residential area and thereafter a series of historical and cultural heritages in Saijyoji Temple, Hyochi-taisha Shrine, Omijingu Shrine and Miidera Temple. You then ride through the streets of OtSU back to OtSU Station.

A Trip Along the Yasu River, the Streets of Hino and the Kyu-Tokaido

123.8 km | 4 hr, 40 mins | Intermediate-Advanced

Rent yourself a bicycle at Giant Store Biwako Moriyama and set out atop the levee along the left bank of the Yasu River. Take the bridge across Nat. Rt. 8 towards Mikami-Jinja Shrine, a National Treasure. Keeping Mt. Mikami to your left, cut through the residential area of Hino and head south along the highway and pass by the Shiga Ryo Mitsui Outlet Mall to pay a visit to Namura-Jinja Shrine, another National Treasure. After that, you follow the river to the Agari Park Ryo Roadside Rest Area where you can take a break. Then, from Hino Station, you ride through the old quarter and the famous clay figurines of Kamataki. You turn left at the intersection with Radoke Rd. From there, you cross the mountains where you do not want to miss either the Yasu River Dam or the delicious "Dam Curry" at Kamoshiki. The descent to the left takes you by thousands of cherry trees along the river. After crossing the Ouchi Dam, you head for the Ono-Tsuchiyama Roadside Rest Area. You then head west on the yellow-paved Kyu-Tokaido Rd. through the preservation district of Minakuchi-shuku and past the Lantern of Yokota-watashi standing majestically amidst the idyllic countryside. You then spin by Ishibe-Shukuba-no-sato Park, head to the river and it's back to the lake.

Sites on the Eastern Shore and Returning by Train (Bicycle, too!)

59.5 km | 3 hr, 45 mins | Intermediate

You start your ride by renting a bicycle from Cycle Station in Maibara Station. After enjoying the railroad highlights, you head south on Nakasendo Rd. Once passed the old layover tower of Torimoto, you turn left and follow the Senri River to Tago-Taisha Shrine. In the village, you head south and, if so desired, can choose from authentic oven-fired pizza or some other hearty fill at the Sasegawa-nato Kuro Roadside Rest Area. Back on the road, you ride through Kora and uphill to Kongonji Temple. From there, you can stop downhill, cut through the Tom Park, cross the Ube River and climb the steep trail through the forest. You take the main road north to Nat. Rt. 421 and cross the railroad tracks to Maibara Station. You can then coast downhill to the Aho Marguerite Station Roadside Rest Area to chillax a bit and have a snack.

Pedaling Through Nature and History in the Ikuji Foothills

39.7 km | 2 hr, 20 mins | Intermediate

On this trip, you depart from Cycle Station in Maibara Station, heading east. At Baraba-shuku, you take Nakasendo Rd. to Samegai-shuku. You ride past Kamo-jinja Shrine and, where the road merges with Nat. Rt. 21, a little farther ahead, you turn right and enjoy the pleasant ride along the cherry tree-lined Takahashi River. You pass by Dogenji Kannon-do (Kogonji) Temple where you will want to go face to face with the immaculately beautiful statue of the standing 11-faced kannon that is named a National Treasure. Another seeing are the Odani Castle Senkouji Historical Museum, the Azai Family Museum and the mountains marking the encampment of the Battle of Anegawa. It is also the birthplace of Lord Hideyoshi Toyotomi's retainer Mitsunari Ishida. In fact, as a tribute to this local hero, you take the Mitsunari-green Road to Central Nagahama.

in the Legends of Lake Yogo and Stories from Japan's Period of Warring States

46.2 km | 3 hr, 25 mins | Intermediate

This course starts at Yogo Station and loops around Lake Yogo. You take the national highway to Hokkoku-kaido Rd. where you head south towards Kinomoto-ji. You enter the foothills that lead you to Keisokuji and Shakujiji Temples. Go downhill and enjoy the pleasant ride along the cherry tree-lined Takahashi River. You pass by Dogenji Kannon-do (Kogonji) Temple where you will want to go face to face with the immaculately beautiful statue of the standing 11-faced kannon that is named a National Treasure. Another seeing are the Odani Castle Senkouji Historical Museum, the Azai Family Museum and the mountains marking the encampment of the Battle of Anegawa. It is also the birthplace of Lord Hideyoshi Toyotomi's retainer Mitsunari Ishida. In fact, as a tribute to this local hero, you take the Mitsunari-green Road to Central Nagahama.

Takashima Long Ride 100 Plus

105.5 km | 8 hr, 20 mins | Advanced

This route is a similar version of the Takashima Long Ride 100 that is staged every year. You depart STAGE Takashima and ride south along the lakeshore, then turn right and head north up Pref. Rd. 296, then turn left and climb the steep ascent. At the top, you make a hairpin turn and cruise downhill. You then follow the Aho River up into the foothills where you can dig into the buffet lunch at the Kutsuki Shinjojin Roadside Rest Area. After that, it's another steep climb to the hot spring where you can enjoy a soak. Next, you backtrack the way you came, turn left at the Shimokawara Bus Stop and head east. Turning left and heading north takes you to the highest point on the route with a spectacular view of Chikubu Island. You then ride to the lakeshore road and head northwest around Om-i-mazu Station, which will take you past backwater fields in the vicinity of the Imazu Sports Park. You ride to Biwakonomiura where you can take the gondola up Mt. Hakodate to see Lake Biwa, then descend to the lakeshore road where you go north until reaching Chikubu-jinja Shrine, you arrive at the lakeshore road and eventually cruise by the rows of metasequoia trees. After Makino Kogen Onsen, you arrive at encounter lots of rice paddies where you head east until reaching Makino-Osaka-take Roadside Rest Area. This is a great place to relax a bit and enjoy some bread made from rice flour. From there, you backtrack a little to the bicycle/pedestrian path on the south side and then follow the lakeshore road south to the end of the route.

Cycling + Cruising "Cruising" and Select Experience

56.3 km | 4 hr, 15 mins | Intermediate

You depart from Makino Station, then catch a boat at Kaizu-osa or another landing to Chikubu Island, one of the 8 Most Scenic Places on Lake Biwa. (Your bicycle goes, too, but you need reservations.) After a tour of island where you find Chikubusama Hongoji Temple and Takabusama-jinja (Chikubu-jinja) Shrine, you arrive at Hikone Landing. There, you head north along the lakeshore and ride the first nationally designated cycling port. Along the way, you enjoy Lake Biwa from up high once through the Shizugatae Tunnel and the waterfront in Oura, plus the landscape highlights of the northern part of the lake.