

Practical Travel Guide - 502

LAKE BIWA, OTSU and HIKONE



Japan National
Tourism Organization
日本政府観光局



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In collaboration with
Tourist Information Centers in Shiga Pref.



Lake Biwa (琵琶湖): The largest lake in Japan, occupies 1/6 of Shiga Pref. Lying 85.6 m above sea level, the lake has a circumference of 235.2 km, an area of 670.3 km² and a depth of 103.6 m at its deepest point. There are many attractive tourist spots and resort areas in the region surrounding Lake Biwa such as Otsu City, Hikone City, Biwako Valley, Mt. Hiei, Mt. Ibuki and Omi-Maiko.

Otsu (大津): The capital of Shiga Pref. with a population of 343,823 (Nov. 2019). Once Otsu was the capital of Japan for 5 years in the 7th century, and later became an important station of the Tokaido road famous as by the wood-block prints of Hiroshige Utagawa. It has since prospered having a key position in Japan's transportation network.

Hikone (彦根): The largest town of the eastern shores of Lake Biwa with a population of 112,928 (Sep. 2019). It is a castletown with one of 12 original castles still remain in Japan.

Access:

From	To	By	Approx. Travel Time	Price
Tokyo	Otsu	Tokaido Shinkansen "Nozomi" or "Hikari" to Kyoto, then 10 min. by JR Biwako Line	2 hrs. 45 min. (Nozomi)	¥14,360*
Osaka		JR Biwako Line (Special Rapid)	50 min.	¥990
Kyoto			20 min.	¥200
Tokyo	Hikone	Tokaido Shinkansen some "Hikari" or "Kodama" to Maibara, then 5 min. by JR Biwako Line	2 hrs. 55 min. (Hikari)	¥12,630*
Osaka		JR Biwako Line (Special Rapid)	1 hr. 25 min.	¥1,980
Kyoto			55 min.	¥1,170

*Fare + express charge (with seat reservation, normal season)

Places of Interest in Otsu:

① **Miidera / Onjo-ji Temple** (三井寺／園城寺): 10 min. walk from Miidera Sta. on Keihan Ishiyama-Sakamoto Line. It was founded in the 7th century in memory of Emperor Kobun who is elder son of Emperor Tenji. The Evening Bell of Miidera Temple is one of the well-known Omi Hakkei (Best Eight scenic spots of Omi, Shiga Pref.). It is the head temple of Tendaijimon sect. Open: 8:00–17:00. Admission: ¥600.

Tomb of Ernest Francisco Fenollosa (1853–1908): An American art critic who contributed very much to preservation and restoration of Japanese traditional art. The tomb is in the cemetery of the **Homyo-in Temple Garden** (法明院庭園) (20-min. walk from Miidera Temple and 15-min. walk from Otsu-shiyakusho-mae Sta. on the Keihan Line) which is a very quiet temple with a superb view of Lake Biwa. The garden is open daily from dawn till dusk. Admission: free.

② **Omi Jingu Shrine** (近江神宮): 10 min. walk from Omi-Jingu-mae Sta. on the Keihan Line. The Shrine was established in 1940 to enshrine Emperor Tenji. Rokoku-sai, a Water Clock Festival held in honor of the first water clock by the emperor in Japan, is held on Jun. 10 every year. **Clock Museum** Open: 9:30–16:30. Closed: Mon. (open when Mon. falls on a national holiday). Admission: ¥300.

③ **Biwako Hana Funsui (fountain)** (びわこ花噴水): The gateway to sightseeing on Lake Biwa, this fountain (having a length of 440 m) is one of the longest fountains in the world. At night, white, orange, and green lights show the spray of the water beautifully. 3 min. walk from Biwako-hamaotsu Sta. on the Keihan Line. *2nd and 4th Wed. are not operated.

④ **Gichu-ji Temple** (義仲寺): 10 min. walk from Zeze Sta. on JR and the Keihan Line. A small temple founded in the 12th century and dedicated to Kiso Yoshinaka, a general of the Minamoto clan who was killed in a battle near here. The tomb of Matsuo Basho, the great haiku poet is in this temple. Basho's haiku poetry is carved on many of the monuments on the temple grounds. Open: 9:00–17:00, –16:00 (Nov.–Feb.). Closed: Mon. (Jan.–Mar., Jun.–Aug. and Dec. except national holidays). Admission: ¥300.

⑤ **Hiyoshi Taisha Shrine** (日吉大社): 10 min. walk from Sakamoto-hiezanguchi Sta. on the Keihan Line. Hiyoshi Taisha Shrine enshrines the deities believed to protect Mt. Hiei. The vermilion-painted main edifices (National Treasure) which stand out against the foliage of the grounds, were built in 1586. **Sannosai Festival** (山王祭) is the main event of this shrine in which Mikoshi (portable shrine) fighting is held on Apr. 13 and Mikoshi procession by boat on Apr. 14. Open: 9:00–16:30. Admission: ¥300.

⑥ **Enryaku-ji Temple** (延暦寺): 8 min. walk from Cable Enryakuji Sta. of Sakamoto Cablecar or 1 hr. 10 min. by Keihan Bus and Kyoto Bus from JR Kyoto Sta. Located near the summit of Mt. Hiei, Enryaku-ji Temple was founded in 788 by the Buddhist Priest Saicho (Dengyo Daishi, the founder of Tendai Sect, 766–822) Kompon-Chudo (Central Hall, National Treasure) and Kaidan-In (Ordination Hall) are the main places to see in the Todo area of the temple. ["To-do" (the central stupa) area] Open: 9:00–16:30 (Jan.–Feb.), 8:30–16:30 (Mar.–Nov.), 9:00–16:00 (Dec.). Admission (for all area): ¥700. **National Treasure House** (国宝殿) Admission: ¥500.

*See p. 5 for admission and opening times.

⑦ **Ishiyama-dera Temple** (石山寺): 10 min. walk from Ishiyamadera Sta. on the Keihan Line. This Shingon Sect temple was founded in the 8th century by the priest Roben(or Ryoben). The main sights of the temple are the Main Gate, the Tahoto Pagoda, the Belfry, the Hondo (Main Hall) and the adjoining Room of Genji in the hall, where Murasaki Shikibu created the plot of “Genji Monogatari” or the Tale of Genji, a famous court novel of the Heian Period (794-1185). Open: 8:00–16:30. Admission: ¥600.

Cruise on Lake Biwa:

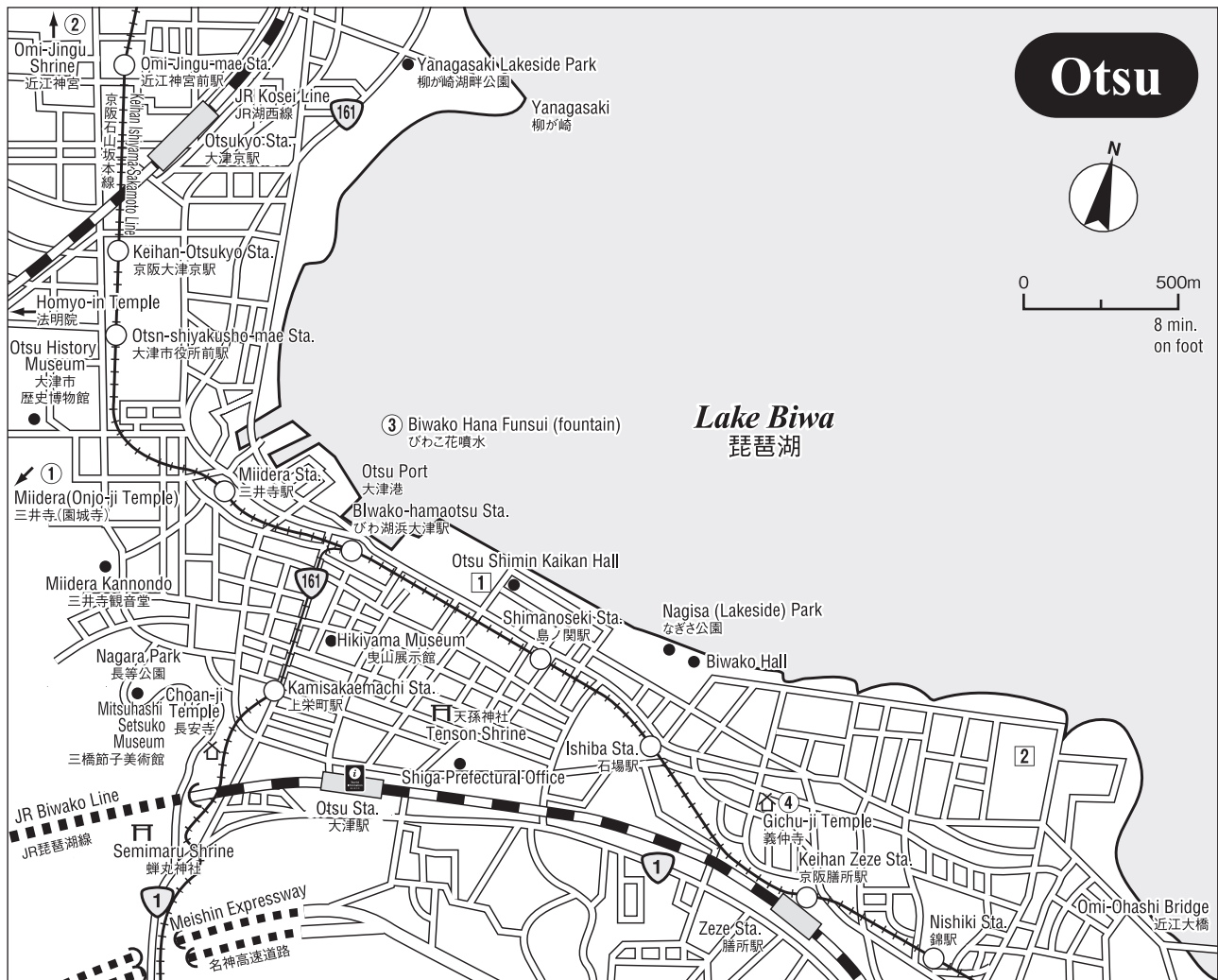
Lake cruise by the Michigan and the Bianca

The Michigan, an American Mississippi River paddle wheel boat. The name was from the state of Michigan, a friend ship state of Shiga Pref. 80 min. boat trip leaves from Otsu Port. 60 min. and night cruise are also available.

For further details: Biwako Kisen <http://biwakokisen.co.jp/en/>

Sightseeing Boat Tours

A few sightseeing boat tours departing from Otsu Port and visiting lakeshore places of interest are available.



① – ② correspond to those in the Accommodations list on page 3/5

① – ④ correspond to those on page 1/5

Places of Interest in Hikone:

⑧ **Hikone Castle** (彦根城): 10 min. walk from Hikone Sta. on JR Biwako Line. Ii Naokatsu (Naotsugu), the 2nd lord of the Ii family, began construction of this castle in 1604, and completed it in 1622. Standing upon Hikone-yama hill and surrounded by forest. The castle is considered, together with Himeji, to be one of the most beautiful castles in Japan. There is also a splendid view of Lake Biwa from the 3rd story of the donjon. Incidentally, Ii Naosuke, a descendant of Naokatsu, was an important minister of the Tokugawa Shogunate and played an important role in opening Japan at the end of the Edo Period. Open: 8:30–17:00. Admission: ¥800 including the admission for **Genkyuen Garden** (玄宮園).

⑨ **Hikone Castle Museum** (彦根城博物館): Located by the

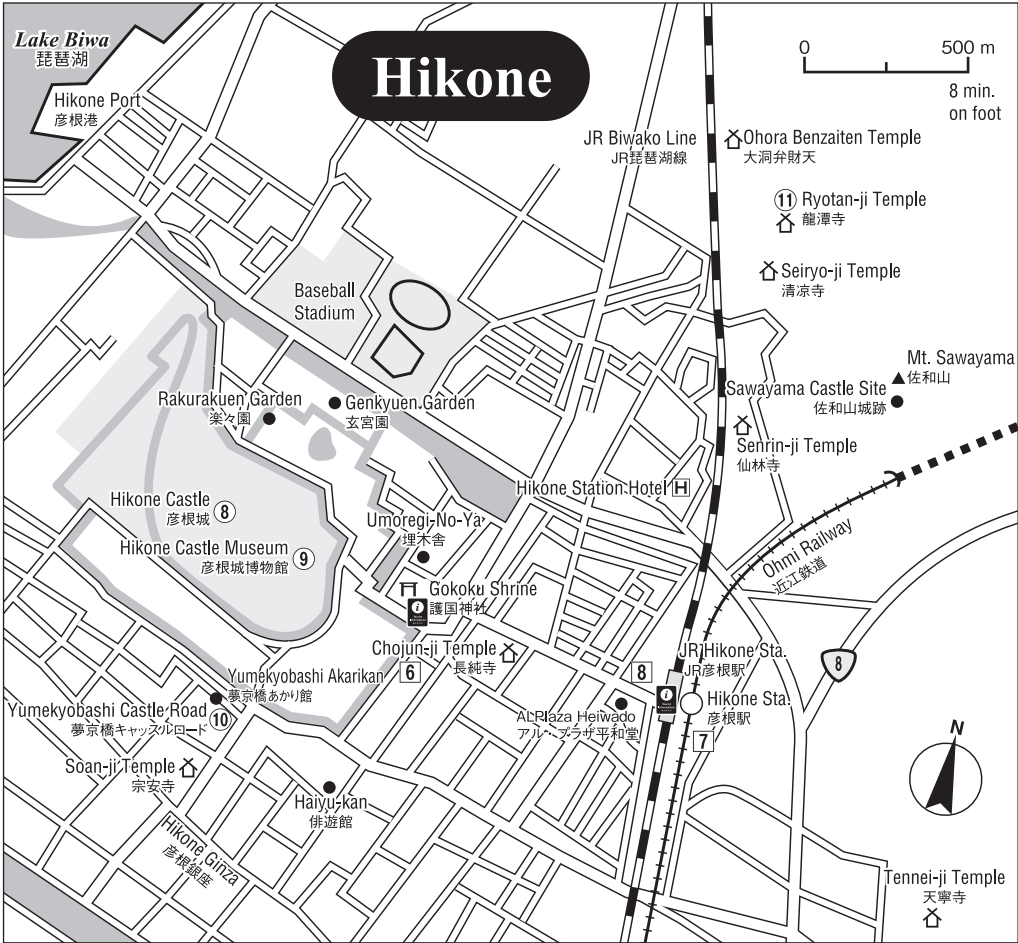
main gate of the castle, the museum exhibits treasures from the Ii family collection such as armor, swords, calligraphy, Noh costumes and pottery. This museum also includes an exhibit of the Hikone Byobu (folding screens) which were painted by a member of the Kano school. Open: 8:30–17:00. Closed: Year-end period and extra closure irregularly. Admission: ¥1,200 (incl. ⑧).

⑩ **Yumekyobashi Castle Road** (夢京橋キャッスルロード): From Kyobashi Bridge built across the outer moat of the Castle, the City's 350-m-long main street stretches southward—this is the area called Yumekyobashi Castle Road. Arts and crafts shops, tea houses, restaurants, and boutiques, as well as private houses, are refurbished in a unified color of white, black, brown, and gray, together creating the atmosphere of merchants' houses of the Edo Period. Visitors are entertained by unique presen-

tations at each shop as they walk along the road, and are reminded of past times. With the old merchant town beautifully arranged in a modern style, Yumekyobashi Castle Road has become another tourist favorite of Hikone City.

- ⑪Ryotan-ji Temple (龍潭寺): 25 min. walk from Hikone Sta. The temple is a Rinsai Sect Zen Temple founded in 1617 by li Naotaka. This temple contains a dry landscape garden of white sand and 48 stones. Open: 9:00–16:00. Admission: ¥400.
- ⑫Chikubu-shima Island (竹生島): Circumference 2 km and

area 0.14 km². Chikubushima Shrine and Hogon-ji Temple are the main attractions of this island. Hogon-ji Temple features the Chikubu-shima Kannon and is famous as the 30th temple of the Kannon Temple Pilgrimage in the area. Ohmi Marine operates boat from Hikone Port, which leaves all year round (reduced operation in winter), takes 40 min. and costs ¥3,000 for round trip. A boat for Chikubu-shima Island also leaves from Omi-Imazu and Nagahama. Admission for the island: ¥400.



[6] – [8] corresponds to those in the Accommodations list on page 3/5
[9] – [11] correspond to those on page 2/5 & 3/5

Accommodations:

Numbers 1) – 7) correspond to those on the map page 2/5, 3/5 & 4/5

Name of facilities	Tel.	Fax	Room rate (¥)	Name of facilities	Tel.	Fax	Room rate (¥)
Otsu				Hikone			
① Biwako Hotel (H)	(077)524-7111	(077)524-8318	¥¥¥	⑤ Hikone Castle Resort & Spa (H)	(0749)21-2001	(0749)21-2200	¥¥
② Lake Biwa Otsu Prince Hotel (H)	(077)521-1111	(077)521-1110	¥¥¥	⑥ Comfort Hotel Hikone (H)	(0749)27-8211	(0744)27-8212	¥
③ Yumotokan (R)	(077)579-1111	(077)579-4126	¥¥¥	⑦ Hotel Sunroute Hikone (H)	(0749)26-0123	(0749)26-0686	¥
④ View Lodge Biwa (PL)	(077)572-1317	(077)572-3370	¥				

Remarks:

Accommodation rates are due to change by season or days. Please check the correct rates before you visit.

H = Hotel
R = Ryokan
PL = People's Lodge

Rate per person
¥¥¥ = more than 15,000 yen
¥¥ = 8,001 yen – 15,000 yen
¥ = 8,000 yen or less
*Standard basis rate (no meals, taxes included)

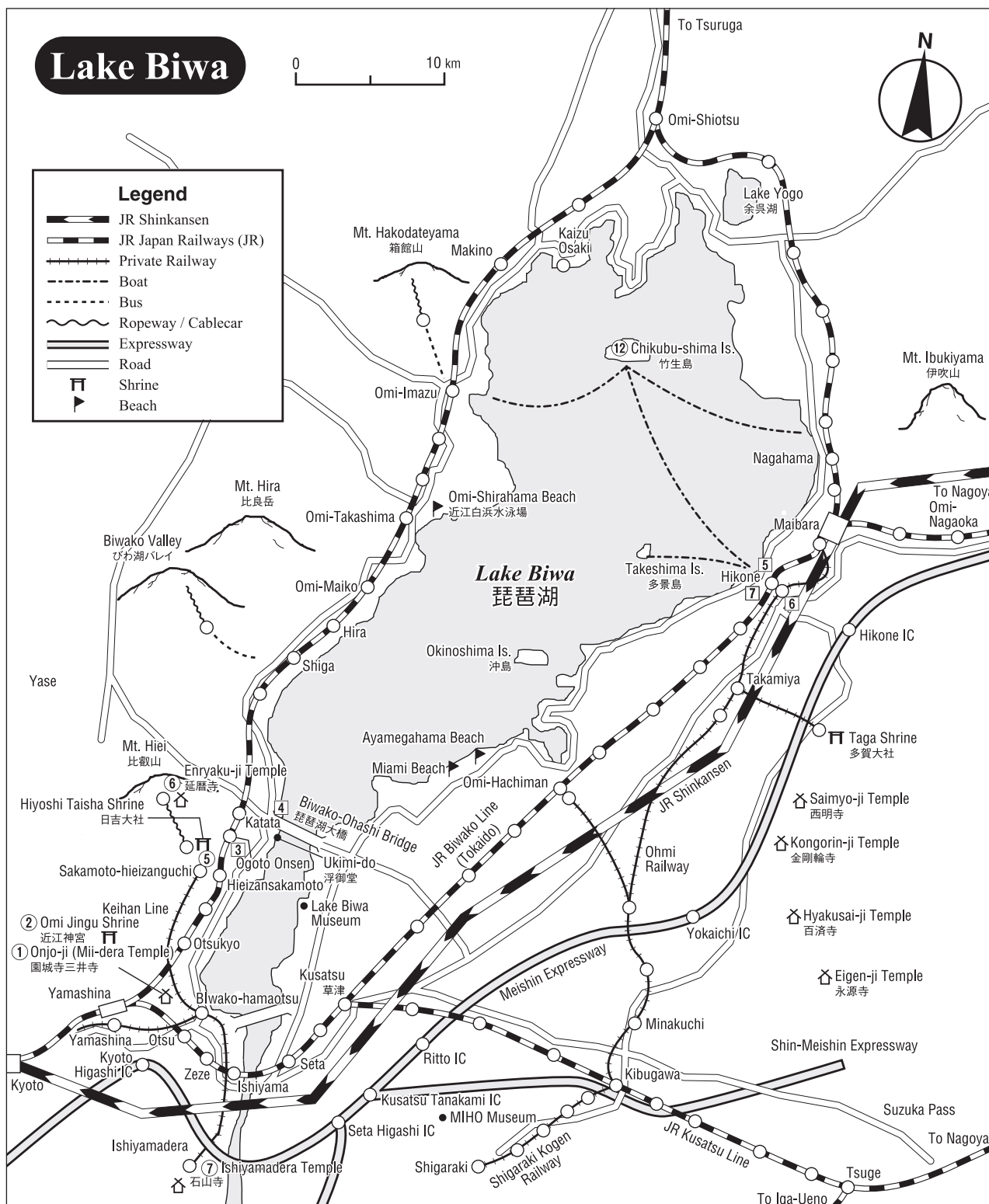
*See p. 5 for admission and opening times.

Annual Events:

Otsu Festival (大津祭): A big festival is held along the city's old streets on 2nd Sat. and Sun. in Oct. It began about 400 years ago and is similar to a procession of floats used in the Gion Festival in Kyoto. On festival eve, many floats are decorated with red lanterns. And the next day, thirteen floats decorated with gorgeous Gobelin tapestries are pulled around town. The floats are designated as Important Cultural Properties. Don't miss seeing the unique mechanical marionettes on the floats. 5-min. walk from JR Otsu Sta. (Parade takes place from 9:00–17:30 on the second day.)

Lake Biwa Fireworks Festival (びわ湖大花火大会): One of the largest fireworks shows in the region, held in a evening of early Aug. every year. The fireworks can be enjoyed best from Hama-Otsu area.

Hikone Castle Festival Parade (ひこねの城まつりパレード): Procession of people dressed in the traditional costume of feudal lords on Nov. 3.



Number ③ – ⑦ correspond to those in the Accommodations list on page 3/5

Number ① – ②, ⑤ – ⑦, ⑫ correspond to those on page 1/5 – 3/5



Japan Official Travel App

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JNTO TIC (Tourist Information Center)

TIC of Japan National Tourism Organization is your helping hand while in Japan. Its main services are providing travel information and free literature on Japan such as tourist spots, transportation, and suggesting tour itineraries, etc.

1F, Shin-Tokyo Bldg., 3-3-1 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
100-0005 Tel. 03-3201-3331 (in Japan)
Open daily from 9:00 to 18:00 (Closed on Jan. 1)
<https://www.japan.travel/en/plan/tic/>



Goodwill Guide Groups offer tourists from overseas local tours guided in English or other languages. The guides are registered with JNTO and display the badge shown. As they are volunteers, there is no charge for their service. You are only expected to pay for their transportation, admission to tourist facilities if you visit any and their meals if you eat with them.

JNTO Website
<https://www.japan.travel/en/plan/list-of-volunteer-guides/>

[Good to know] Admission and opening times at tourist attractions:

- Last entry to the most of attractions is 30 min. before the closing time.
- In general, if their weekly closing day (most are on Mon.) falls on a national holiday, they are open on the day and are closed on the following day after the holiday(s).
- Most are closed throughout / a part of New Year holiday period (especially Dec. 29–Jan. 3).
- Please visit the official website of each venue / your nearest tourist information center for the updates.



TOURIST INFORMATION in the area

Otsu Station Visitor's Information Center:

JR Otsu Sta., 1-3 Kasugacho, Otsu, Shiga

Hours: 9:00 – 18:00

Tel. (077) 522-3830

Hikone Tourist Information:

JR Hikone Sta., 40-7 Furusawa-cho, Hikone City, Shiga

Hours: 9:00 – 17:00 (Closed: Dec. 29 - 31)

Tel. (0749) 22-2954

To find other Tourist Information Centers, visit <https://tic.jnto.go.jp/>



JNTO Website: <https://www.jnto.go.jp>

All information, including transportation schedules, fares, prices and accommodation charges which is contained in this leaflet is based on data as of November 2019, and is subject to change without notice. While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of all information, regrettably errors do occasionally occur. Therefore, you should check with organizations concerned for updated and accurate information on your chosen destination. JNTO shall not be liable for any loss or damage of whatever nature that may arise as a result, directly or indirectly, from the use of any of the information or material contained in this leaflet.

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