

Discover the world of Japanese
sake and fermented food
culture and blessings of Japan's
largest lake, Lake Biwa.



In recent years, fermented foods have gained considerable attention. It is said that Japan's high humidity levels is the reason behind the development of the country's diverse fermenting culture. In Shiga Prefecture especially, a unique culture of fermenting foods has been passed down since ancient times. It is the birthplace of *funazushi*, a preserved food made by fermenting fish from the lake together with rice. And the area is also known for its *sake* production. Below we showcase some gastronomy tourism highlights of the region, which is renowned for the majestic beauty of Lake Biwa and its unique culture of fermentation.



MODEL COURSE



Take an private cruise
on Lake Biwa



Go ashore at Takashima
and enjoy a private sake
brewery tour



Touring the water sources and
terraced rice paddies used as
raw material for sake brewing



Visit artisans in the
community and interact with
the locals



Enjoy a special dinner that
pairs local ingredients with
Japanese sake

LAKE VIEW RESORT HOTEL BIWAKO HOTEL

All of the rooms at this lakeside resort hotel offer views of Lake Biwa. With sweeping views of beautiful Mt. Hiei and Lake Biwa, you can truly unwind and relax. One notable attraction is the views of Lake Biwa from the hotel's hot spring facility. And the restaurant and bar offer dishes made with local Shiga ingredients. It is conveniently located not far from Otsu Station, which is only 10 minutes by train from Kyoto Station.



ACCESS TO Lake Biwa

When travelling from Kyoto or Osaka, Otsu is the gateway to Lake Biwa. Otsu Station is a mere 10 minutes by train from Kyoto Station. By car it is approximately 30 minutes. Getting to Lake Biwa is really easy and in less than half an hour you will be rewarded with views of the picturesque scenery.

【From Kyoto】

By car: Around 30 minutes

By train: Around 10 minutes from JR Kyoto Station to JR Otsu Station

Around 20 minutes from Sanjo Keihan Station to Biwako-hamaotsu Station

【From Osaka】

By car: Around 60 minutes

By train: Around 40 minutes from JR Osaka Station to JR Otsu Station



Experience the water culture of Harie and visit a 160-year-old sake brewery and whiskey distillery



Harie is a village on the western shore of Lake Biwa in an area blessed with an abundance of clear spring water. It has its own unique culture centered on springs inside the home called *kabata*, through which the abundant spring water is drawn into the house for everyday use, such as for washing and as drinking water. Kawashima Shuzo, a longstanding sake brewery that continues to produce sake that reflects the local *terroir*, was founded in this area some 160 years ago. The brewery uses spring water from Harie for brewing sake. In 2023, in addition to sake, it also started selling whiskey. The president, Mr. Kawashima, will give you a tour of the sake brewery and whiskey distillery. After the tour, you can taste test some sake and whiskey, paired with local snacks.

Takashima Area

60-75min

1-10 pax

- Enjoy a private tour led by the president of a 160-year-old brewery
 - Sample not only sake, but also some acclaimed whiskey
 - Can be combined with a “Kabata guided tour”
- *Please contact the Harie Living Water Village Committee for an advanced registration.



Tour an award-winning 270-year-old sake brewery usually closed to the public



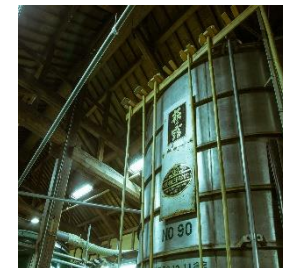
Fukui Yahei Shoten is a sake brewery that has won numerous awards at prestigious sake competitions in Japan and overseas, such as the International Wine Challenge and Kura Master. Guided by a belief in brewing sake that reflects its roots, Fukui Yahei Shoten cherishes the bounties of the local area and incorporates them into the sake-making process; namely, the high-quality rice harvested from the surrounding valleys and slopes and the soft waters of the naturally beautiful Takashima region. The brewery continues to pursue innovative sake production by not only preserving the flavors passed down over successive generations, but also by incorporating different ingredients and experimenting with new brewing techniques. Under the guidance of President and CEO Takeshi Fukui, you can take a tour of the brewery, which is usually off limits to visitors, and then get a rare opportunity to taste a variety of sake and fruit liquor.

Takashima Area

60 min

1-5 pax

- Get to sample some global award-winning sake
- Enjoy a private tour led by the president of a 270-year-old brewery usually closed to the public
- The brewery is actively engaged in protecting the terraced fields where brewer's rice is grown, so you could also combine your visit with a tour of the terraced rice paddies



Explore Japan's quintessential terraced rice paddies and sample some *onigiri*



Terraced rice paddy fields resemble steps cut into the sloping terrain of hill slopes. They have long been cherished by many people as a natural woodland scene that preserves an archetypal image of Japan. However, this landscape is gradually disappearing in Japan due to population decline and the aging of village communities. In this experience, the local residents will take you on a guided walk through these terraced rice paddies—selected in Japan's top 100 terraced rice fields. You will get to see how rice and sake brewer's rice are cultivated in terraced fields and learn about how terraced rice paddies influence environmental conservation in the region. After the tour, you will have the chance to sample some *onigiri* (rice balls) while enjoying the scenic views of the terraced slopes at a leisurely pace. The valuable experiences of rice planting and rice harvesting are also on offer in early May and early September, respectively.

Takashima Area

90 -120min

1-6 pax

- Experience a private tour with the local residents through one of Japan's top 100 terraced rice fields
- Get to experience rice planting or rice harvesting (depending on the season)
- Can be combined with a tour of the Fukui Yahei Shoten sake brewery



Experience making and tasting the traditional fermented food of *heshiko*



Long ago, seafood caught in the Sea of Japan would be carried across the mountain passes and transported to Kyoto, the former capital of Japan. Particularly due to the transportation of large amounts of mackerel, this route came to be known as the “mackerel road.” Along this road in a mountainous area of Shiga Prefecture lies Kutsuki, a village that has inherited traditional local dishes made with mackerel. Among them is *heshiko*, a fermented food made by salting mackerel and marinating it in rice bran for over a year. It was traditionally made by households deep in the mountains as a preserved food, but the number of people making it is now declining year after year. In this experience, you can participate in the preparation of traditional *heshiko* alongside local residents in the months of November and December, the time when the mackerel is usually readied for fermentation. After this experience, you will move to the community center in the middle of the town, where you can try some *heshiko* and mackerel sushi and also interact with the local residents.

Takashima Area

120 min

1-5 pax

- Experience making the traditional fermented food of *heshiko* with local residents
- Sample the local specialties of the “mackerel road”—mackerel sushi and *heshiko*



Observe the inner workings of a long-established sake brewery in this Tokaido road post town



Otsu once prospered as the hub for Lake Biwa's water transportation network and as the largest post town on the Tokaido road connecting Tokyo with Kyoto. The street that used to be frequented by many travelers has now been transformed into a shopping arcade. In this arcade there is a sake brewery called Hirai Shoten that still retains the atmosphere of the olden days. Hiroko Hirai, one of the very few female chief brewers in Japan, overseas the brewery's operations, which have continued for more than 300 years since 1658. Together with her husband and father—the 17th generational head of the Hirai family—they have a reputation for meticulously brewing sake in a traditional manner, made possible by the fact that it is a small family-run business. In this experience, you will have the opportunity to step inside a brewery that is usually closed to the general public and enjoy a sake tasting session accompanied by some traditional snacks from the arcade's long-established shops.

Otsu Area

45 min

1-10 pax

- Enjoy a private tour of a long-standing sake brewery that has been in operation for over 300 years and usually closed to the public
- Participate in a sake tasting session paired with some snacks from the arcade's long-established shops
- Walking distance from Biwako Hotel



Visit the workshop of a globally renowned wooden bucket craftsman

The *konoha* wooden tub has been recognized as a champagne cooler by international champagne producers. You can visit the workshop of Mr. Shuji Nakagawa, a third-generation craftsman of the Nakagawa Mokkougei studio on the shores of Lake Biwa where this piece was created. It is said that the technique of wooden bucket making was brought to Japan approximately 700 years ago. This workshop has garnered a lot of domestic and international attention for embracing the challenge of creating well-designed, innovative products whilst still employing traditional wooden bucket making methods passed down through generations. After observing the process of creating a wooden bucket in the workshop, you will have the opportunity to hear Mr. Nakagawa speak about pioneering new styles of wooden buckets while upholding tradition. As an optional activity, you can try your hand at making your own chopsticks in the workshop.

Otsu Area

75-105min

1-10 pax

Highlights

- Privately visit a woodcraft workshop renowned in Japan and overseas
- Savor the valuable experience of talking directly with Mr. Nakagawa, a third-generation craftsman of the Nakagawa Mokkougei studio
- Experience making your own chopsticks in the workshop





Formal visit to Omi Jingu Shrine and receiving sacred sake

Omi Jingu Shrine venerates Emperor Tenji, who moved the capital to Otsunomiya. Otsu is designated as an old capital by the Ancient Capitals Preservation Law, and the shrine represents the city of Otsu, whose history spans 1,350 years. This activity offers overseas visitors the chance to learn how a formal visit to the shrine (for a prayer) works including proper manners.

Participants can also experience Japanese sake culture by drinking sacred sake as part of the program and receiving a small bottle to take home.

Otsu Area

40～60min

2～20PAX



写真はイメージです

■ Feel at ease on your first shrine visit!
We will guide you through the proper etiquette and step by step process with care and detail

■ Participants can drink sacred sake brewed locally in Shiga

An elegant private cruise on Japan's largest lake



Lake Biwa is the largest lake in Japan. Because it fulfills a vital role in providing water not only to Shiga, but also Kyoto, Osaka, and surrounding areas, it is known as the "Mother Lake," and is beloved as a symbol of the region. This program features an elegant chartered cruise on the Mustang, a craft with a bedroom and living room, complete with an optional breakfast and snack while touring the sights of Lake Biwa. Get the gorgeous scenery all to yourself while you tour the lake surrounded on all sides by majestic mountains. On the way to Takashima, you'll see the torii gate of Shirahige Shrine on the water. Viewed from the lake, the scenery looks even more enchanting than from the land. Kaizu Osaki is known as one of the most famous cherry blossom spots in Shiga, and you can skip the crowds and enjoy the beautiful trees on one of these popular springtime cruises.

Otsu Area

2 - 6H

1 - 8 PAX

- Enjoy an elegant time on a luxurious, chartered cruise of Lake Biwa
- Disembark at Takashima and tour the local sake breweries (Kawashima Brewery and Fukui Yahei Shoten)



Special course meal pairing Shiga brewed sake with traditional Japanese cuisine



Located in Biwako Hotel, Ohmi serves Japanese cuisine in a spot that offers superb panoramic views of Lake Biwa. This special course pairs Japanese sake brewed in Shiga with traditional Japanese cuisine made using plenty of local ingredients. Enjoy Japanese sake carefully selected by a sommelier paired with seasonal dishes while listening to an explanation of the sake and foods. Dishes are made with local ingredients for local consumption, and include items from the ancient Shiga culinary tradition of fermented foods. These dishes have attracted attention from around Japan and the world for their excellent nutrition, long shelf life, and unique flavors. Come get your fill of the tastes of Shiga while taking in the grand scenic views of Lake Biwa.

Otsu Area

90-120 min

Min 2 pax

- Savor foods that pair perfectly with locally brewed sake including some fermented dishes!
- Enjoy cuisine made with locally grown ingredients and six 70 ml bottles of famous sake brands brewed in Shiga.



Tour Mifuku Brewery in a Tokaido Road post town and tie two sake bottles together



Mifuku Brewery boasts over a century in business, and is located in a Tokaido Road post town that prospered as a key transport hub during the Edo period, vestiges of which can still be seen in the charming town scenery today. Mifuku was established in 1917 as a branch of the Fujii Honke Brewery in Higashiomi. Shiga is home to Omi Rice and abundant, pure water, as well as the ideal climate and natural elements for sake brewing. Participants will have the chance to enjoy wonderful Mifuku sake made possible thanks to this blessed locale.

In Japan, tying two bottles of sake together as a gift is considered good luck. The origins of this custom comes from the fact that two tied bottles resemble the silhouette of a sake barrel, which is used for celebratory occasions.

KOKA Area

60~150min

1PAX~20PAX

■ You get lecture, then sake bottle tying activity

■ Lunch and sake seminar at the brewery at 『Learn About Sake Brewing!』 plan



Evening sake brewery tour & dinner ~Fujii Honke Brewery~

Established in 1831, Fujii Honke is a historic sake brewery that crafts special sacred sake for main shrines across the country ceremonial offerings to celebrate a plentiful harvest, and is the only brewery in Japan that has the honor of presenting sake to the Emperor each year for this purpose.

After a rare chance to tour the sake brewery during the evening, this special program offers participants the opportunity to enjoy dinner at the brewery restaurant. Remnants of the brewery can be seen all over the restaurant, which is located in a renovated brewery building, making for a truly elegant, unique meal. During the tour, participants can try water used in the brewing process.



HIGASHI OHMI Area

180min

2PAX~15PAX

- Tasting: Five rare, high-end varieties of sake that are usually not served are available for tasting.
- The tables in the restaurant are made of wood from sake casks and the curtains from cloth used in sake brewing.





Shigaraki ware sake cup making at Rakusai Takahashi Kiln

Shigaraki ware is said to have a history stretching back nearly 800 years. At that time, there was plenty of quality clay in Shigaraki that was perfect for making pottery. The Rakusai Takahashi Kiln is located in Shigarakicho, Shiga, which is famous for this beautiful pottery. Rakusai Takahashi is an artisan versed in the long history of Shigaraki ware. At the Rakusai Takahashi Kiln, which has produced many famous pieces of pottery, participants will tour the kiln itself and have the rare opportunity to try hand coiling pottery. After touring the kiln, Rakusai Takahashi will talk about Shigaraki ware while showing photos of the process. The chance to have a friendly chat with the fifth generation Rakusai Takahashi in a cozy space is a great way to experience the unique Japanese sense of beauty. Participants can enjoy a cup of tea while viewing Takahashi's creations.

KOKA Area

180min

1~5PAX

- The traditional wood fired kiln truly showcases the profound depth of the pottery.
- Includes a Rakusai Takahashi lipped bowl as a souvenir.
The cup made during the pottery activity and souvenir lipped bowl make a sake set.

