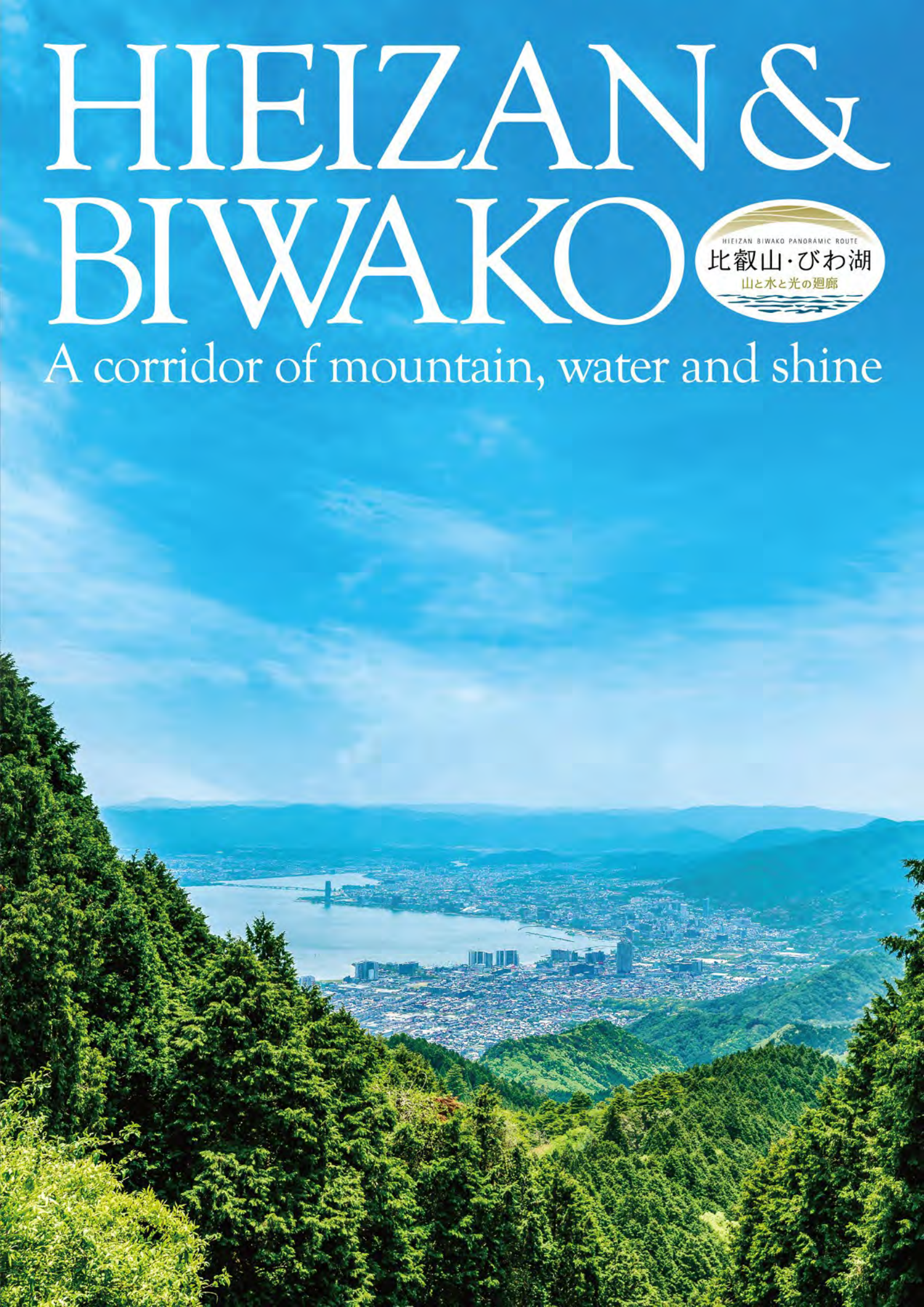
HIEIZAN & BIWAKO

HIEIZAN BIWAKO PANORAMIC ROUTE
比叡山・びわ湖
山と水と光の廻廊

A corridor of mountain, water and shine



Biwako, Japan's biggest lake, Giving birth to life and bounty

Boasting both the largest surface area and amount of water of all Japanese lakes, Biwako is located about 10 kilometers east of Kyoto. It has a total area of about 670 square kilometers and a circumference of about 235 kilometers. It is one of the most ancient lakes in the whole world and the oldest in Japan. It has a rich ecosystem formed in the distant past, and is a habitat for a remarkable approximately 1,000 different species of plant and animal life. Many of these are endemic species and can be found worldwide only in Biwako. It is also a precious destination for migratory waterfowl, and was designated as a wetlands on the registry of the Ramsar Convention in 1993.

Biwako is a rare case even in the global context; while a natural haven for wildlife, people have long lived and worked near its shores. It is a motherly lake in the sense that it nurtures the lives of a truly large population of fish, fowl, flora, and human beings.

Viewed from Biwako, Hieizan awes all with its splendor. And viewed from Hieizan, Biwako captivates hearts with the sheer beauty of its mirror-like waters. Hieizan can be reached from Kyoto by Eizan Cable Car and Ropeway from the Yase-Hieizanguchi Station, and from Shiga by the Sakamoto Cable Car or the Hieizan Driveway, which is also convenient. On any route, the scenery outside the window can be seen only here and delivers a special delight.

From ancient times, the touring or pilgrimage routes from Hieizan to Biwako, and from Biwako to the temples on Hiezan, were popular ones for dynamic experience of all elements; magnificent mountain settings and scenic beauty, the soothing sight of Biwako's waters, and the profound glow of lights in holy Buddhist precincts. Now is precisely the time for an excursion to this sacred Buddhist ground and a mother-lake in a district whose enchanting allure transcends space and time.

Hieizan – at the roots of Japanese Buddhism, Extolled as a "temple at the foundation of Japanese Buddhism"

Situated on the boundary between Shiga and Kyoto prefectures, Hieizan forms a beautiful belt of five peaks. It stretches about 16 kilometers north and south, and its highest peak is Oobie, which rises 848 meters above sea level. It constitutes a majestic sacred mountain; the whole of it lies within the precincts of Enryakuji Temple, whose grounds proper are spread over an area of about 100 square kilometers centered around Oobie.

At the foundation of this sacred mountain is Enryakuji Temple, whose construction dates from 788, when the monk Saicho, who founded the Japanese school of the Tendai sect and was posthumously given the title "Dengyo Daishi" (Great Teacher and Transmitter of the Dharma), built the Ichijo-shi Kan-in (which later became the Konpon Chu-do) here. Thereafter, eminent monks such as En-nin, Enchin, and Ryogen erected numerous other edifices in the three areas of To-do, Sai-to, and Yokawa, and the temple prospered.

At its height, Enryakuji was a center of study for more than 3,000 monks and produced many illustrious ones, including the founders of different sects and schools of Buddhism, including Honen, Eisai, Dogen, Shinran, and Nichiren. In this sense, it is truly at the roots of Japanese Buddhism. The Tendai monk Jien, whose work is included in the "Hyakunin Isshu" classic anthology of poems by 100 poets, also revered Hieizan as Japan's foremost mountain, stating, "While there are many mountains in the world, when we speak of the mountain, we mean only the hallowed Hieizan."

Another of the appeals of Hieizan is its rich natural environment. Because it was long a sanctuary as a sacred mountain, it retains plenty of pristine natural settings even today. Offering many scenic views, it looks down on Lake Biwa, the biggest freshwater lake in Japan, to the east, and the streets of Kyoto, the ancient capital, to the west.

Visitors are charmed by the twittering of wild birds in spring and soothed by its clean air, which is cooler than that in the plain below, in summer, when the foliage is a brilliant green. Autumn turns the maple leaves scarlet over the whole mountain, and is followed by the tranquility of winter, which wraps it in pure white snow. It therefore presents a different aspect that will surely delight the senses in any season.

Thanks to worldwide recognition of its more than 1,200 years of history and tradition in this blessed natural environment, Mount Hiei was inscribed on the list of UNESCO World Cultural Heritage sites in 1994. In addition to admiring its architecture and art, its neat precincts are ideal places for casually taking strolls under trees and exploring historical sites.

UNESCO | World Cultural Heritage Site on December 17, 1994

Hieizan Enryakuji Temple

Hieizan Enryakuji

To-do area

The To-do (Eastern Pagoda) area is the birthplace of Enryakuji Temple, which was established by Saicho. It contains the Konpon Chu-do Hall, which is the temple's main building, and lies at the nucleus of its sprawling precincts, which encompass about 150 edifices scattered over Mount Hiei and are referred to as "Santo Jurokudani" (literally meaning "three pagodas and 16 valleys"). Apart from the Konpon Chu-do Hall, this area is the site of an array of other important buildings such as the Dai Ko-do (Great Lecture Hall), which is dedicated to the founders of various Buddhist schools and sects, and the Amida-do Hall. In addition, it is the location of the Enryakuji Bus Center, which offers shuttle bus service to the summit of Mount Hiei and the Sai-to and Yokawa areas as well as regular buses to central Kyoto. Visitors can also ride the Sakamoto Cable Railway to Sakamoto, the town at the base of Mount Hiei. The To-do precincts likewise contain Enryakuji Kaikan, which offers meals, lodging, and even experience of ascetic practice (reservations are required).

1 Konpon Chu-do National Treasure

This is the most important temple building on Mount Hiei. It grew out of the Ichijo-shi Kan-in (One-Vehicle Meditation) Temple, which was built by Saicho in 788. It was destroyed several times, and was enlarged every time it was rebuilt. The current structure was completed in 1642 at the order of the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu. The building has the status of a national treasure, and the corridor, that of an important cultural property. The principal image is of Yakushi Nyorai (Bhaisajyaguru, the healing Buddha) and was reportedly carved by Saicho himself at the time of the temple's founding. The lamplight glowing before it has continued to burn, without being extinguished even once, for over 1,200 years, and is known as the "Eternal Light."

2 Dai Ko-do (important cultural property)

The Dai Ko-do (Great Lecture Hall) developed as a site of study and practice. Numerous discussions and services are held here. The principal image is of Dainichi Nyorai (Mahavairocana, the celestial Buddha). To its left and right are wooden statues of the founders of many sects who pursued studies on Mount Hiei. The Dai Ko-do has been designated as an important cultural property by the Japanese government.

3 Amida-do

This training hall dedicated to the souls of ancestors was built in 1937 to commemorate the grand ritual held to celebrate the 1,150th anniversary of the establishment of Enryakuji. Its principal image is that of Amida Nyorai (Amitabha, the Buddha of limitless light), and "eko" rituals for the salvation of the departed based on "nenbutsu" (chanting of the Buddha's name) are performed here. The image is said to grant prayers for the repose of ancestral souls. In front of the hall is a "suikinkutsu" (a buried earthen pot into which water is allowed to drip, also called a "water koto"), whose lovely melodic sounds have a distinctively Japanese charm.

4 Hokke So Ji-in

This structure was rebuilt in 1980 next to the Amida-do Hall. Saicho erected pagodas in six places across Japan as part of his plans for the country's protection. The central role in these plans was played by this Eastern Pagoda. Its principal images depict Dainichi Nyorai and the four other Nyorai Buddhas. The uppermost tier holds a relic of the Buddha and a handwritten copy of the Lotus Sutra.

Hieizan Enryakuji

Sai-to area

In the middle of this area is the Shaka-do, its main building. It lies about 1 kilometer north of the Eastern Pagoda, and was founded by Encho, the second head of the Tendai sect, who was given the title "Jakko Daishi" (Great Teacher of Tranquility and Light). It additionally contains the Ninai-do, which is a hall for ascetic practice, and the Jodo-in, a mausoleum for Saicho. Visitors will also find the Kojirin, a training facility for the general public where they can experience ascetic practices themselves (reservations are required).

1 Ninai-do

The Hokke-do and the Jogyo-do, two halls of the same form, are linked by a corridor. The name derives from the legend that Benkei, a medieval warrior monk who had great strength, once carried the corridor on his shoulder ("ninau"). The principal image is that of Fugen Bosatsu (Samantabhadra Bodhisattva) in the Hokke-do on the right (as viewed from the front) and Amida Nyorai in the Jogyo-do on the left. The structure has been designated as an important cultural property by the Japanese government.

2 Shaka-do

This is the main hall of the Sai-to area, and is named after the statue of Shaka Nyorai (Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha), which is said to have been carved by Saicho himself. The Kon-do(central hall), which was relocated here from Mii-dera Temple in Otsu by the warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1596, after Oda Nobunaga, another warlord, attacked and set fire to Enryakuji, is the oldest of all existing buildings on Mount Hiei. It has been designated an important cultural property by the Japanese government.

Yase

Spreading out at the base of Mount Hiei, Yase is quiet area blessed with an abundance of nature, and is even called the "Kyo-no-Okuzashiki" (parlor of the Kyoto). It soothes the soul with the brilliant green of its verdure in spring and summer, and attracts visitors with its autumn colors in fall. It is a relaxing area in which time seems to flow at a more leisurely pace

1 Yase Momiji-no Komichi

This pathway unfolds beside Cable Yase Station. As might be gathered from the name, which means "a little trail through maple leaves," it is a perfect choice for admiring the breathtaking colors of the foliage there in fall. In summer, on the other hand, strollers refresh themselves by walking under the vivid green leaves.

2 Takano River

The Takano River is also called the Yase River by people living in the Yase basin. A walk along this river bathed in the green of its natural setting calms heart and mind. It is hard to believe that a natural haven of this quality lies so close to Kyoto.

Biwako

Lake Biwa, Japan's biggest lake, offers different types of enjoyment depending on the purpose of the visit. The assortment includes dynamic lake leisure activities, exploration of tradition and historical sites, and enjoyment of distinctive fish dishes and lake-related arts. The centers of tourism in Shiga Prefecture are all concentrated along the banks of Lake Biwa.

1 Yanagasaki Lakeside Park

Filled with lush greenery, this park is centered around Biwako Otsukan and stretches along the banks of Lake Biwa. On its grounds is an English-style garden that is planted with roses and other types of flowers in step with the change of seasons. Visitors are encouraged to take an exhilarating stroll through the garden as breezes waft over from the lake.

❖ **Hours** April – September: 9:00a.m. – 6:00p.m. / October, November, and March: 9:00a.m. – 5:00p.m. December: 11:00a.m. – 4:00 p.m. / January and February: closed

2 Otsu Port

The port is the terminal for cruises on the lake by the Michigan and other ships. It also offers trips on cruise ships and high-speed boats to the three islands in Lake Biwa: Chikubushima, regarded as a sacred isle; Takeshima, whose entire area is a temple precinct; and Okishima, which is a thriving fishing grounds.

3 Biwako Otsukan

This cultural facility is housed in the main building of the old Lake Biwa Hotel, which was built in 1934 and was the first hotel for international tourists in Shiga Prefecture. Known as the "guest house of lake country," the elegant edifice won the favor of many distinguished visitors from inside and outside Japan. It contains a restaurant, cafe, gallery, exhibition room, and other facilities. Visitors also love its charming English-style garden.

Michigan Cruise Courses to choose from

Enjoy a leisurely meal and show on the 80-minute
Michigan 80

Enjoy a lighter excursion around the lake on the 60-munite
Michigan 60

Enjoy the night view, evening meal and a show on the 150-munite
Michigan Night

Hieizan Enryakuji

Yokawa area

Stretching about 4 kilometers northward from the Western Pagoda, this area was opened up by En-nin, the third head of the Tendai sect, whose title is "Jikaku Daishi" (Great Teacher of Mercy and Awakening). Noted monks subsequently came here for study and practice, among them Genshin, Shinran, Nichiren, and Dogen. Even today, it still has a pronounced atmosphere of hallowed solemnity. The main edifice is the Yokawa Chu-do, which is a specimen of "butai-zukuri" (hanging platform) architecture and is modeled after a ship of the sort that took many Japanese monks to Tang Dynasty China for studies. From the To-do area, Yokawa lies about 15 minutes away by shuttle bus and about 100 minutes on foot by the Tokai Nature Trail. From the Sai-to area, it is a ride of about 10 minutes on the shuttle bus.

1 Yokawa Chu-do

This is the main hall of the Yokawa area, and is also known as the Konpon Kannon-do Hall. It is distinguished by its overall resemblance to a sailing ship thanks to its "butai-zukuri" architecture. The original hall was built in 848 by En-nin, but burned down after being struck by lightning in 1942. It was restored in 1971 in conjunction with services to commemorate the 1,150th anniversary of the death of Saicho. It is also 18th on the new list of pilgrimage temples dedicated to Kannon (Avalokitesvara, the Buddhist goddess of Mercy and Compassion) in western Japan, and is counted as one of the 108 so-called "power spots" (spiritual places) in the Omi district.

2 Konpon Nyoho-to

The Konpon Nyoho-do is said to have originated with a small pagoda built to hold a copy of the Lotus Sutra which En-nin made over a period of three years of retreat after he became seriously ill around age 40. Painted in brilliant vermilion, the current structure was built in 1925.

3 Ganzan Daishi-do(Shiki ko-do)

The Shiki Ko-do (Lecture Hall) was once the residence of Ryogen, who was given the title "Jie Daishi" (Great Teacher of Mercy and Favor). He is also known as "Ganzan Daishi" and revered as a 10th century restorer of Enryakuji. Its name derives from the fact that, at the order of Emperor Murakami in 967, instruction in the Lotus Sutra was begun here for students in each of the four seasons ("shiki"). It is also the birthplace of "o-mikuji," the fortune-telling slips of paper reportedly devised by Ryogen. Visitors can receive an amulet depicting Tsuno Daishi to use as a charm to ward off demons.

❖ Admission fee

All areas

Adults: 1,000 yen
Junior and senior high school students: 600 yen
Elementary school students: 300 yen

Kokuhoden (Treasure Museum)

Adults: 500 yen
Junior and senior high school students: 300 yen
Elementary school students: 100

❖ Hours

To-do area

March - November	8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
December	9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
January - February	9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Sai-to & Yokawa areas

March - November	9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
December	9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
January - February	9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

*No admission after 30 minutes before closing time.
*Closing time may be earlier in winter due to snowfall etc.

The top of Mt. Hiei

The summit of Mount Hiei affords a panoramic, 360-degree view encompassing both the streets of Kyoto and Lake Biwa in Shiga Prefecture, and overwhelms the viewer with its spectacular beauty. Because it is 848 meters above sea level, the temperature is 2 – 3 degrees lower than on the flatlands of Kyoto and Shiga in summer. The summit is therefore also a popular spot for refreshing respite from the summertime heat.

2 Eizan Cable / Eizan Ropeway

The Eizan Cable Car makes it easy to reach the summit of Mount Hiei from Yase. The distance of 1.3 kilometers between Cable Yase and Cable Hiei stations on the line takes about 9 minutes. At 561 meters, the difference in elevation over this distance is the greatest in all Japan. Passengers enjoy panoramic views of Kyoto as well as natural scenery accented by cherry blossoms in spring and scarlet maple leaves in fall. From the terminus of the cable line, they change to the ropeway for the rest of the journey to the summit, which takes about 3 minutes.

1 Garden Museum Hiei

At this lovely museum, visitors can admire famous porcelain panel paintings whose designed was inspired by the art of the French Impressionists in a garden alive with flowers in bloom. It also contains a cafe and museum shop, and is an ideal place for taking a rest or shopping for unique gifts. The garden offers excellent views of Lake Biwa and the city of Kyoto as well.

❖ Admission fee

Visitors of junior high school age or over: 1,200 yen

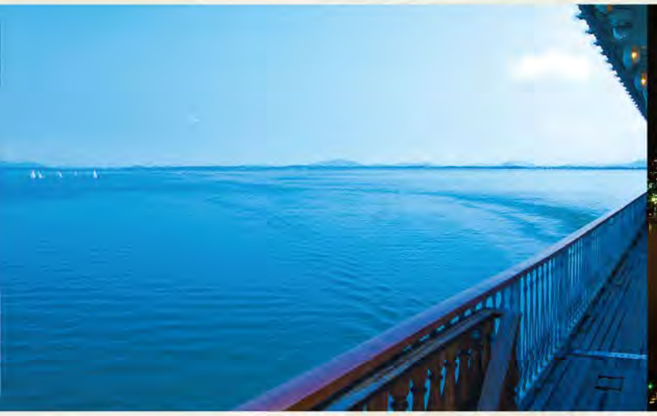
❖ Hours

10:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. [No admission after 5:00 p.m.]
*Closed in winter

❖ 075-707-7733 ❖ www.garden-museum-hiei.co.jp

3 Yumemigaoka

Yumemigaoka's lookout point provides spectacular views in the directions of Kyoto and Lake Biwa. It has a cafe and a rest area, as well as a full line of facilities for children, including a cycle monorail that makes riders feel as if they are pedaling in mid-air.



Sakamoto

Sakamoto prospered as a town that grew up in front of Enryakuji on Mount Hiei. The temples located on the left and right sides of the street leading up to the Hiyoshi Taisha Shrine are the "satobo" of Enryakuji. They furnished quarters for monks who had undergone much practice on Mount Hiei. Some of the "satobo" have splendid gardens in the Momoyama style. Each year, tours of these gardens are held during the Golden Week holiday period in May.

1 Hiyoshi Taisha Shrine

Said to have been established about 2,100 years ago, the Hiyoshi Taisha Shrine is the head shrine of the more than 3,800 Hiyoshi, Hie, and Sano shrines nationwide. It has been designated as a national treasure and important cultural property by the Japanese government. Its grounds are planted with some 300 maple trees, and it is also a favorite spot for viewing autumn colors. In fall, it is thronged with visitors who come for this purpose.

❖ Adults: 300 yen/children: 150 yen ❖ 9:00a.m. – 4:30p.m. [reception desk]

2 Sakamoto Cable Railway

The Sakamoto Cable Railway provides transportation between Enryakuji and Sakamoto stations in about 11 minutes and has an operating distance of about 2 kilometers, the longest in Japan for a cable railway. Its Cable Enryakuji Station on Mount Hiei is on the list of 100 prominent stations in the Kinki region. Constructed in 1927, the venerable structure housing Sakamoto Station has been designated as a tangible cultural property by the Japanese government.

3 Shigain Monzeki Temple

Up until the end of the Edo era (1603 – 1867), this temple was the residence of generations of priests who headed the Tendai sect at Enryakuji. Measuring about 20,000 square meters, the expansive grounds contain an inner temple, "shoin" study, storehouse, and other facilities. The temple is particularly noted for the paintings on the partitions in the guest building by artists of the Kano school and the garden designed by Kobori Enshu (Masakazu).

❖ Adults: 500 yen ❖ 9:00a.m. –4:00 p.m.

3 The Stone walls Constructed by Ano-shu

In Sakamoto, there is a unique stone wall erected by the hands of a group of masons known as the "ano-shu." Built by a technique called "ano-shu zumi" (anoshu-piling), this wall consists of natural stones that were deftly fitted and piled on top of each other, without any working or plastering, and preserves their natural beauty.

Guide of a stay

A L'Hotel de Hiei

A favorite with gourmands, this auberge-style hotel is nestled in a tranquil setting on Mount Hiei. Its pride is its dishes fusing the culinary culture of Lake Biwa and the Omi district with French cuisine, which surprise and delight its customers. It offers a magnificent view of the city of Otsu at night and the waters of Lake Biwa reflecting the rising sun in the morning.

❖ 075-701-0201 (10:00a.m. – 6:00p.m.)
❖ www.hotelkeihan.co.jp/hotel-hiei/

B Enryakuji Kaikan

The Kaikan offers lodging close to Konpon Chu-do. It has a variety of rooms, including some with a distant view of Lake Biwa, others facing the hill on which is perched the Monjuro pavilion in front of the Konpon Chu-do, and yet others with a stand of cedar trees outside the window. It also has Western-style rooms with regular beds. It serves vegetarian temple cuisine, and guests can experience ascetic practices.

❖ 077-579-4180 (9:00a.m. – 5:00p.m.)
❖ syukubo.jp

C Biwako Hotel

All rooms in Biwako Hotel have lake views, so guests can enjoy Lake Biwa's scenery throughout their stay. The dishes served in its restaurant are made with locally produced ingredients specially chosen by its chefs, who can boast of a menu featuring a high degree of freshness and imbued with a seasonal flair. The hotel is equipped with a natural spa, too.

❖ 077-524-7111
❖ www.biwakohotel.co.jp

D Ogoto-Onsen

Situated to the west of Lake Biwa, this hot spring facility has long been popular as the natural spa closest to Kyoto. All of the accommodations offer water from the natural hot springs. With a pH of 9.0, Ogoto is a highly alkaline, simple hot spring whose waters are said to alleviate neuralgia and muscular pain, among other ailments.

Ogoto Onsen Kanko Park

❖ 077-578-3750
❖ www.ogotoonsen.com/

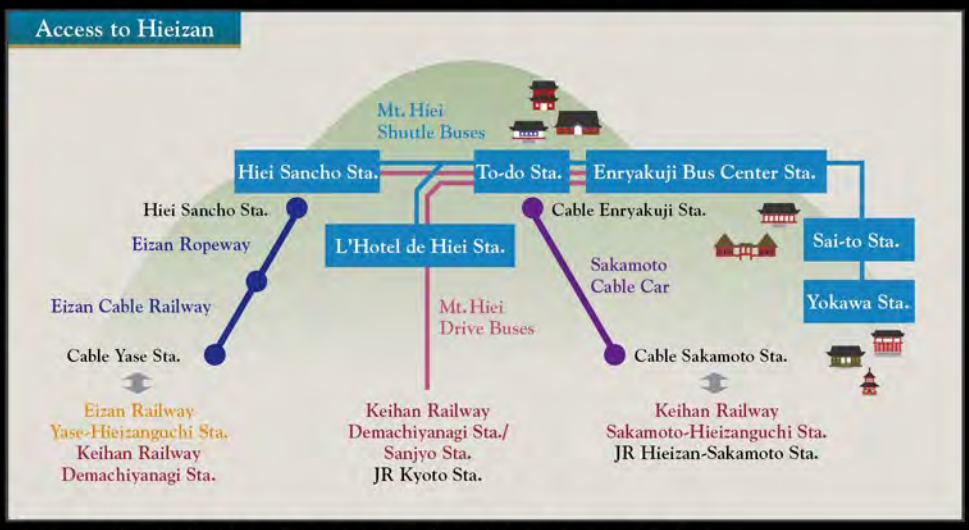
Map of Hieizan & Biwako

Kurama
Kibuneguchi
Ninose
Ichihara
Nikenchaya
Kyoto-Seikadai-mae
Kino
Iwakura
Hachiman-mae
Kokusai Kaikan
Miyakehachiman
Yase-Hieizanguchi
Takaragaike
Shugakuin
Ichijyoji
Chayama
Mototanaka
Demachiyanagi
Eizan Railway
Kyoto City Subway Karasuma Line
Kamo River
Takano River
Jingu-marutamachi
Sanjo-keihan
Higashiyama
Karasuma Oike
Sanjo
Keage
Kyoto-Kawaramachi
Gion-shijo
hankyu railway
Kiyomizu-gojo
Misasagi
Kehan Railway Keihan Main Line
Shichijo
JR Tokaido Line
Kyoto
Tofukuji
JR Nara Line
To Yodoyabashi/Nakanoshima
Ohara
367
Sabo-Kaido Road
Mt.Hiei Shuttle Buses
※Out of Service in winter
Minemichi Restaurant & Observatory
Minemichi
※Closed in winter
Garden Museum Hiei
Closed in winter.
Rope Hiei
Sai-to
Enryakuji Bus Center
To-do
Enryakuji Kaikan
Cable Yase
Cable Hiei
※Out of Service in winter
Eizan Cable
※Out of Service in winter
Eizan Ropeway
※Out of Service in winter
Hiei Sancho
Cable Enryakuji
Mudoji
L'Hotel de Hiei
Tosendai
Yumemigaoka
※Closed in winter
Yamanakagoe
Hieizan Driveway
Omi Jingu lamp
Tanotani Pass Tollgate
Omi-jingu Shrine
Mt.Hiei Drive Buses
※Out of Service in winter
Nishi-otsu Bypass
JR Kosei Line
Biwako Canal
Bishamon-do Temple
Yamashina
Keihan-yamashina
Shinomiya
Oiwake
Otani
Kyoto Higashi Interchange
Kehan Railway Keishin Line
JR Tokaido Shinkansen Line
Kyoto City Subway Tozai Line
Oku-Hiei Driveway
Ogi Tollgate
Yokawa
Hieizan Enryakuji Yokawa
Ogi-Ogoto I.C.
Ogoto-Onsen
Ogoto-Onsen
Ogoto-Onsen Port
Katata
Biwako Ohashi Bridge
Saikyoji Temple
Hiyoshi Taisha Shrine
Hieizan Enryakuji Sai-to
Hieizan Enryakuji To-do
Sakamoto-hieizanguchi
Hieizan-sakamoto
Cable Sakamoto
Matsunobamba
Sakamoto Cable Car
Keihan Railway Ishiyama-Sakamoto Line
Anoo
Karasaki
Shigasato
Minamishiga
Omi Jingu
Ohmijingumae
Yanagasaki Port
Biwako Otsukan
Otsukyo
Keihan-otsukyo
Otsu-shiyakusho-mae
Otsu Port
Miidera Temple
Miidera
Biwako Hotel
Biwako-hamaotsu
Shimanoseki
Ishiba
Nionohama Port (Biwako Otsu Prince Hotel)
Omi Ohashi Tollway
Kamisakaemachi
Otsu
Zeze
Keihan-zeze
Nishiki
Zeze-hommachi
Nakanosho
Kawaragahama
Awazu
Ishiyama
Keihan-ishiyama
Karahashi-mae
Ishiyamadera
Seta River
Meishin Expressway
Tokaido Road
Biwako

Temple | Shrine | Port | Hot spring | Bus stop | Hotel / Accommodation | Restaurant | Cafe | Park / Playground | Parking | Vista spot | Wi-Fi

Wide area

Access to Hieizan



The information presented here is as of March 2020. Please note in advance that it is subject to change, depending on the circumstances.

Hieizan-Biwako<Corridor of mountain, water and shine>
https://www.hieizan.gr.jp/

Hieizan Enryakuji
https://www.hieizan.or.jp/

Hieizan-Biwako DMO
(一社) 比叡山・びわ湖DMO