

Biwako Valley

The Biwako Valley is located between Mt. Uchimi and Mt. Horai. It can be reached by a 10-minute bus ride from Shiga Station on the western side of Lake Biwa, followed by a five-minute trip up a ropeway. The trees in the verdant valley turn orange and red in autumn, while in winter the valley is a favorite skiing destination for Otsu and Kyoto residents. In warmer weather, Biwako Valley also offers a zip-line and a forest high ropes course.

Biwako Terrace has facilities on the peaks of each mountain. On Mt. Uchimi, the Grand Terrace has a viewing platform, an outdoor infinity pool, and a cozy cafe. It is connected by a corridor to the North Terrace, which also has an outdoor infinity pool plus its own lounge and cafe stand. On Mt. Horai, Cafe 360 has a large, arched wooden deck with comfortable seats and a drinks stand. Both mountains afford panoramic views of Lake Biwa, showing the distinctive shape of the lake, which resembles a *biwa* (Japanese lute).

The Biwako Valley area plays an important role in the local Hirahakko Festival. The Buddhist ritual is held annually on March 26 and involves drawing water from a well near the peak of Mt. Uchimi and pouring it into Lake Biwa. A large sacred bonfire is lit by the lakeside at Omi-Maiko. The festival is a way to mark the start of spring and pray for safe travel on the lake and purification of the water.