

Eight Views of Omi: Evening Snow at Hira

There are three major peaks in the Hira mountains in the northwest of Otsu: Mt. Bunagatake, Mt. Horai, and Mt. Uchimi. The mountains are known as the source of the Hira *oroshi*, a powerful mountain wind that blows down onto Lake Biwa in March and became infamous for causing shipwrecks.

Evening Snow at Hira is the only scene in the Eight Views of Omi that is typically depicted in winter. It is both a beautiful landscape and a reminder of the harshness of the mountains. In the Hoeido edition of the woodblock print by Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858), jagged white peaks dwarf the snow-capped houses and the handful of people venturing outside. The brilliant blue of Lake Biwa is the only bright color.

The Hira mountains are more easily accessible than they were in Hiroshige's day and are a popular place for hiking, mountain climbing, and skiing. Trains run from central Otsu to the Hira area, and Biwako Valley has a ropeway that runs to the upper reaches of Mt. Horai. The mountains are worth visiting any time of year for their panoramic views over Lake Biwa and especially for their vivid autumn foliage.