

Overview of Otsu City

Otsu is a port city bordering the southwestern corner of Lake Biwa. Natural beauty surrounds the city with water on one side and lush green mountains on the other. The city is just 10 kilometers from Kyoto and can be reached in nine minutes by train.

History and temples

Otsu is now the capital of Shiga Prefecture and was the capital of Japan between 667 and 672. Several ancient shrines and temples within the city limits date to Otsu's early years. Notable among them are Miidera Temple, Hiyoshi Taisha Shrine, the Ukimido Hall floating pavilion, and Omi Jingu Shrine. Another highlight is Enryakuji Temple at the top of Mt. Hiei, whose sprawling grounds are part of an extensive UNESCO World Heritage Site that includes parts of Otsu, Kyoto, and neighboring Uji.

Lake Biwa and seafood

Otsu's local cuisine features a lot of seafood because of the city's location on the shores of Lake Biwa, the largest freshwater lake in Japan with over 60 native species of marine life. *Shijimi meshi*, freshwater clams cooked with ginger and rice, and *funazushi*, salted and fermented fish, are two Otsu specialties.

Otsu in art

Lake Biwa provides picturesque views as well as a variety of seafood, and is ideal for cruising by boat. The Eight Views of Omi, a set of traditional landscape images of beautiful places, are all based on sites in and around Otsu, some of them along Lake Biwa. The sites are all open to the public, and the artists' depictions can be compared with their present-day, real-life counterparts.

Recreation

There is skiing in Biwako Valley to the north of Otsu, and hiking trails run through the secluded mountains around the city.