

## **Relationship between Otsu and Kyoto**

Otsu is nine minutes from Kyoto by train. Many people who live in Otsu commute to work in Kyoto, and visitors to Kyoto often travel to Otsu for a day trip or a longer stay. However, the two cities share much more than a train line and have a deeply entwined history.

In the eighth century, Enryakuji Temple on Mt. Hiei in Otsu was tasked with protecting Heian-kyo (now Kyoto), then the nation's new capital. The entire 1,700-hectare grounds of the temple are now part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site that also includes many of Kyoto's temples. During the Edo period (1603–1867), Otsu served as the gateway to Kyoto on the Tokaido highway connecting Kyoto and Edo (now Tokyo). Travelers and goods bound for Kyoto made their way through Otsu first.

The two cities are also connected by the Lake Biwa Canal. Lake Biwa supplies Kyoto with fresh drinking water and hydroelectric power via the canal. Boats cruise the historic waterway as they did when it was first built, taking tourists on the scenic route between Kyoto and Otsu.