

Lake Biwa Maruko-Bune Boat Museum

A 17-meter traditional wooden cargo ship is the central attraction of the Lake Biwa Maruko-bune Boat Museum, which pays tribute to the shipwrights and sailors who made Lake Biwa a vital commercial artery in the days before railways and automobiles.

Marukobune were long, shallow-draft ships with distinctive hulls that incorporated the two halves of a split cedar trunk. Over 1,000 *marukobune* sailed Lake Biwa during the Edo period (1603–1867), carrying goods such as clothing, tobacco, and medicine from Kyoto, as well as firewood, rice, and salt from the Sea of Japan. The museum's carefully restored vessel, one of only two surviving *marukobune*, was part of this trade. Life-sized figures in period costume representing the family that might have owned and crewed the boat show what life was like on board during the Lake Biwa crossing.

The museum also features maps, models, and a detailed diorama of Edo-period Ōura Harbor, which was the home port for many *marukobune*. The Ōura Furusato Museum, located in the same building, is filled with a range of folk artifacts, from agricultural and nautical tools to an antique phonograph.