

## **Nagahama's History**

Nagahama occupies an important crossroads at the northern end of Lake Biwa, Japan's largest lake, and its history has been shaped by the movement of people, ideas, goods, and armies. The city was founded in the sixteenth century, a time when samurai lords battled to control the strategic junction between the eastern and western halves of Honshu. Later, Nagahama prospered as a hub for commerce and transport during the more peaceful Edo period (1603–1867), serving as a stop on the Hokkoku Kaidō highway and as the center of a thriving shipping trade. Boats based in the ports of Ōura and Nagahama carried goods from the cities of Kyoto and Osaka in the southwest to Shiotsu in the north, from which they ferried cargo delivered by land from the Sea of Japan.

Nagahama also has a rich industrial history. The village of Kunitomo became an important center for gun manufacturing in the sixteenth century, and entrepreneurs from the area were pioneers in the development of railways, mass-produced textiles, and diesel engines. The wealth they generated supported cultural activities such as the Hikiyama Festival, which remains a symbol of Nagahama today.