



- Explore the regions -



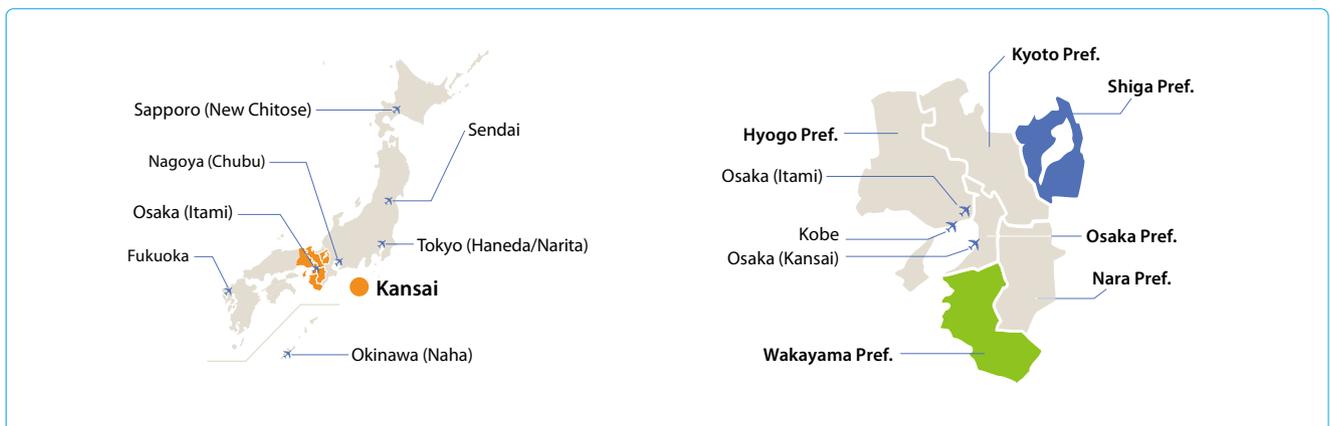
1 A cycling course beside Lake Biwa.
© WANOKUNI Lake Biwa Cycling Promotion Council

2 Hang gliding makes you feel like a bird, with an eagle-eye view of the vast plain below.

Autumn Fun in the Great Outdoors

The geography of the Kansai region invites outdoor and sports enthusiasts from beginner to veteran to enjoy a host of activities. Topographical variety ranges from plains and valleys to mountain peaks and lakes. In Shiga Prefecture

is Lake Biwa, or Biwa-ko, a body of water perfect for recreation and relaxation, including biking or boating. Hang gliding in Wakayama Prefecture offers a unique perspective, with an eagle-eyed view of the world below.



Shiga Pref.

Touring Lake Biwa on Bike

Situated in the center of Shiga Prefecture and taking up one-sixth of prefectural landmass, Biwa-ko is Japan's largest lake. It reportedly appeared some four million years ago, making it the world's 13th oldest lake. The lake's shape resembles a *biwa*, the four-stringed



Even beginners enjoy the cycling course that has minor variations in elevation.
© WANOKUNI Lake Biwa Cycling Promotion Council

traditional lute, for which it's said to be named. The vastness of Lake Biwa, at a circumference of about 200 kilometers, makes for a variety of surrounding highlights. "Biwaichi" is the popular name for cycling around the lake, which you can do as you also visit various tourist destinations. This term also generally refers to cycling the lake area north from Biwako Ohashi Bridge (Hokko), a circumference of about 150 kilometers. The complete tour, known as the "Full Biwachi," includes the lake area south from the bridge (Nanko).

The lakeshore is fairly level, and carefully placed signs indicate the route for easy access, even for beginners. It's a great feeling to cycle while enjoying the view and feeling a breeze off the lake. Local establishments geared toward cyclists are highly recommended for taking a break, adding to a complete experience of Lake Biwa that includes local specialties. The NPO Gokanseikatsu website (biwaichi-cycling.com, in English) offers loads of information on route recommendation, bike rental and other great deals, so do check it out before taking off on your journey to the lake.

Getting There: ANA serves Osaka (Itami and Kansai) from many cities across Japan, including Tokyo (Haneda and Narita), Sapporo (New Chitose), Fukuoka, and Okinawa. From Itami Airport, it's over 1.5 hours by train (a few transfers), or about 1 hour by car.

Wakayama Pref.

Hang Gliding

Hang gliding involves a pilot "hanging" perpendicular to the aircraft, which is an aluminum or composite frame covered with a synthetic sailcloth. The frame is so sturdy and well-balanced that it would sail straight through the air if thrown. Its design allows even novices to glide without losing balance. Riding the upward current with the glider's large wings, and reading the wind, hang gliders can rise to 3,000 meters and continue to fly up to 300 kilometers (about three to four hours).

Wakayama's Kinokawa is the largest area in Kansai where enthusiasts can fly like birds, if only for a while. This is Wakayama Prefecture's largest plain area, flanked by the Izumi and Kii mountains, and through which runs Kinokawa River, the city's namesake. The Kinokawa river valley has an upward current, making it perfect for hang gliding. A pilot launching from the takeoff base of Kinokawa Flight Park, located on Mt. Ryumon (some 756 meters high)—known locally as Kishu Fuji—will see below the vast and beautiful Wakayama Plain (aka Kinokawa Plain). It goes without saying that beginners are advised to start off their experience with tandem hang gliding, which is flying together with an instructor. With an experienced guide at your side, you're sure to enjoy taking off into the wild blue yonder!



A hang glider pilot thrills to leaping and launching into the blue sky, rising 3,000 meters, and flying around for three hours or more.

Getting There: ANA serves Osaka (Itami and Kansai) from many cities north to south, including Tokyo (Haneda and Narita), Sapporo (New Chitose), Fukuoka, and Okinawa. From Kansai Airport, it takes about 1.5 hours by train (a few transfers) to Uchida Station and about 5 minutes by car from the station.

Looking Ahead

The next theme of Get to Know Kansai is "Culture," set for November, when we feature Japanese puppet theater (*ningyo joruri*) in Osaka Pref.

Handy URL

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