

# **Gifu Regional Guide 2016-2017**



(View from Mount Kinka)

Welcome to Gifu!

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### Acknowledgements

This regional guide is not a complete guide to everything in and around Gifu Region, however a brief introduction of places and things to start to get you set up. We highly encourage you to explore, adventure and find all the many charming places and things Gifu Region (and the rest of Japan), has to offer.

This guide book has been compiled over the years by several RPA teams and JETs living in the area.

Contributing RPAs include:

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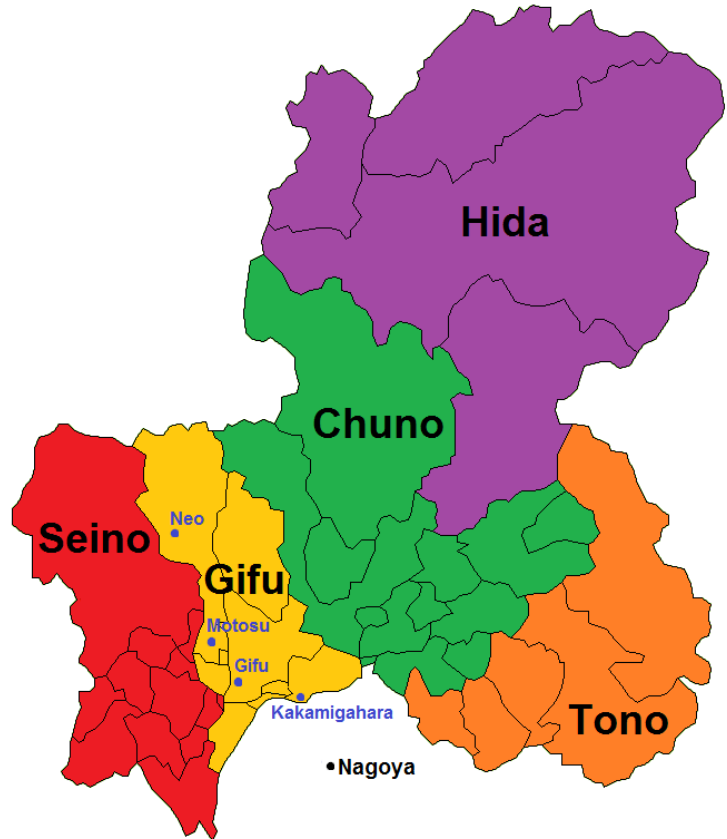
People in Gifu tend to be kind, and always willing to help whether or not you are able to speak much Japanese. If you ever have any problems, always feel free to ask anyone around you. Past that, if you ever need any help, your RPAs are here to assist in any way we can.

Cheers, and enjoy life in Gifu to the fullest,

Meryl J and Sarah D

## So, where am I?

Gifu Prefecture is divided into 5 regions (as shown on the map on the right). You are located in the Gifu region, towards the south west of the prefecture.



**JETs in the Gifu region work and live in the following areas:**

Gifu City (岐阜市)

- North of the Nagara river (長良川): 4 ALTs
- Near Nishi-Gifu station (西岐阜駅): 2 PAs (ALT PA and CIR PA)  
2 ALTs  
3 CIRs at the Gifu Board of Education  
3 CIRs at the Gifu International Centre

Kakamigahara (各務原)

- Living near Nishi-Gifu station 1 ALT

Motosu (本巣)

- Near MALera 3 ALTs
- In Neo 1 ALT

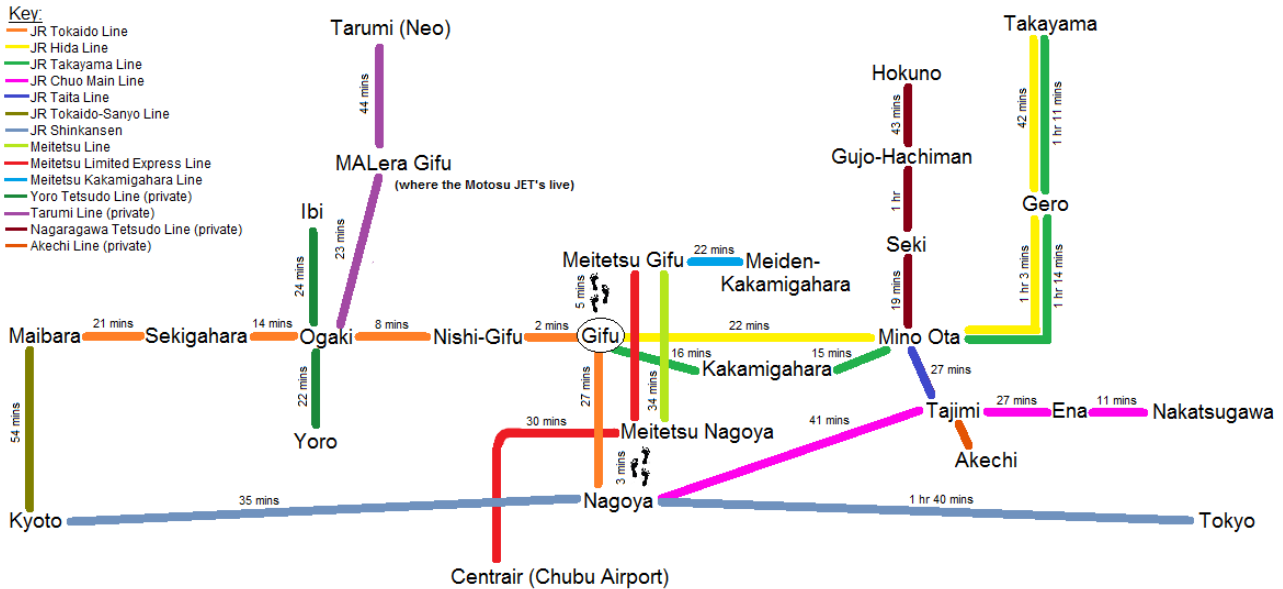
**Other places in Gifu Region, currently without JETs:**

Yamagata 山形	Hashima 羽島	Mizuho 瑞穂
Ginan 岐南	Kitagata 北方	Kasamatsu 笠松

# Transportation

## Trains

The most common and convenient way to travel is by train. Trains are clean, safe and almost always on time. The main rail company is **Japan Rail (JR)**, but there are also a few privately owned railways. Below is a not-to-scale map that shows all of the lines and their main connections in Gifu.



### Gifu JR Station

Gifu JR station is the transport hub for this area. The main lines that depart from here are:

- *Tokaido Line (東海道線)*: south to Nagoya, west to Nishi-Gifu, Ogaki, Sekigahara and Maibara.
  - From Maibara you can catch a train to Kyoto and Osaka. Though slightly longer than catching the shinkansen from Nagoya, it is a cheaper option (¥2000 rather than ¥4000 total).
  - If you are short on time and plan on going to Kansai for a short trip, try the shuttle ticket (シヤトル切符) from Ogaki. This gives a 2 day discount for the shinkansen from Nagoya.
- *Hida Line (飛騨線) in yellow* and *Takayama Line (高山線) in light green*: east to Kakamigahara, Mino-Ota, Gero and Takayama. The Takayama Line takes longer than the Hida express line, but is much cheaper (¥2500 and 3hr15m compared to ¥5000 and 2hrs from Gifu).

### Gifu Meitetsu Station

Meitetsu trains are slightly more expensive than JR trains. The train lines that depart from here are:

- *Kakamigahara Line (各務原) in light blue*: to Meiden-Kakamigahara and Inuyama.
- *Meitetsu Limited Express Line (in red)*: to Nagoya and Central Japan International Airport. It's incredibly convenient for getting to the airport, costing ¥1700 and taking about an hour.

### The Tarumi

The Tarumi is a private, one carriage train that departs from Ogaki JR station and runs to and from Tarumi station in Neo village and goes via MALera. It only goes every 1-2 hours and costs ¥500, which you pay on board to the train driver.

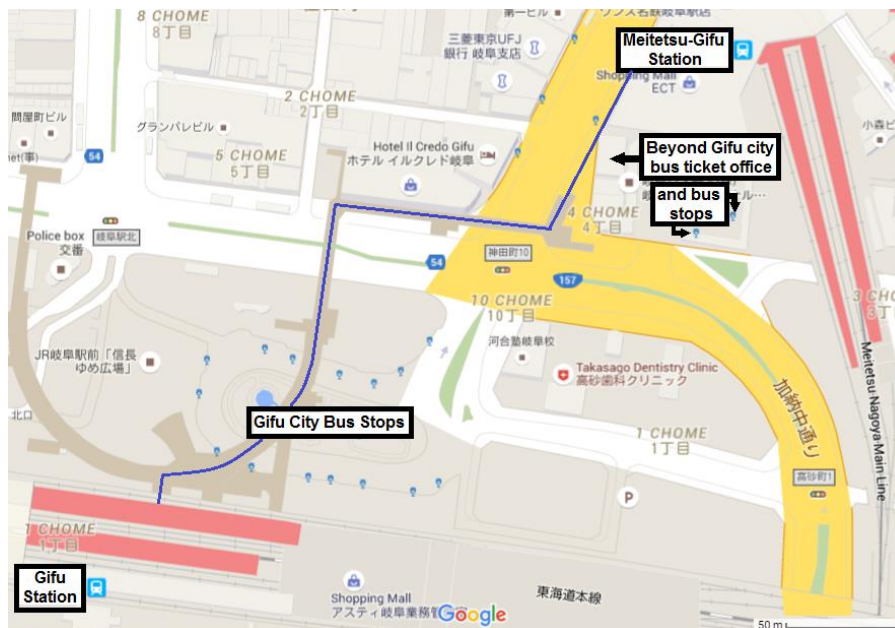
# Buses

## Gifu City Buses

- Outside the north exit of the Gifu JR station is the main bus centre (see map below).
- There is an information booth there and staff can direct you to the appropriate bus if you know where you want to go but don't know how to get there. However, they are unlikely to speak much English. The tourist office staff on the second floor of Gifu JR (to the left of the ticket machines) are likely to speak (slightly) more English.
  - For people who ride buses frequently, you can get a bus IC card at the information booth. You will need to fill out a form in Japanese.
- When your bus arrives, get on via the back door and take a ticket. When you get off, give the ticket to the driver and pay your fare (the fare is always ¥210 within Gifu City).

## Beyond Gifu City

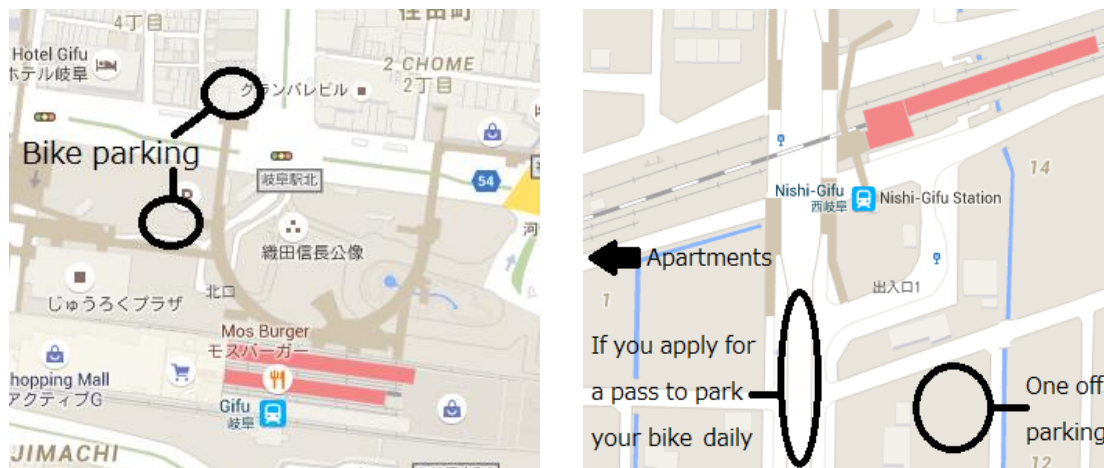
- Between Gifu JR and Gifu Meitetsu is another bus rank. The buses that leave from here are mostly longer-distance buses, many to touristy destinations like Shirakawa-go and Takayama.
- You have to book these tickets at the ticket office, but you can look the times up online beforehand at [nohibus.co.jp](http://nohibus.co.jp)



- From Nagoya station you can catch more buses to regions outside of Gifu. They have many day and overnight buses departing from there. You can book tickets online using [willerexpress.com](http://willerexpress.com) and a range of other different websites. Catching a bus from here is the cheapest way to get to Tokyo!

## Bicycles

There is a lot of bicycle parking all around Gifu, so cycling places is never a problem. Also, Gifu is very safe, so there is no fear of having your bike stolen. If you are looking to take a train from Gifu or Nishi-Gifu station but want to leave your bicycle there, you can use one of the parking areas located on the map below for ¥100/day.



You can also rent a bicycle for ¥100/day. This is perfect for anyone visiting and wanting to get around downtown easily. To do so you have to show ID and fill in a form. The person at the counter might not speak English, so here is your chance to practice Japanese, sign language, or interpretive dance. You can borrow it for up to 2 days and returns are between 9am–5pm. These bikes can be returned to any of the 5 bicycle stands around the city:

1. JR Gifu Station south exit stand
2. Gifu City Office south building stand
3. Gifu Park stand
4. Ukai Viewing Boat boarding area stand
5. Nagara River Ukai Museum stand

For more information on renting bicycles go to: [http://www.gifucvb.or.jp/en/06\\_access/06\\_02.html](http://www.gifucvb.or.jp/en/06_access/06_02.html)

## Bicycle Rules

- 1) Ride on the left side of the road, not the right.
- 2) Don't ride on the footpath where possible.
- 3) Don't hold an umbrella, use you phone, or wear earphones when cycling.
- 4) Bicycles are considered as vehicles, so follow all the road rules (including stop signs)!



## Airports

### Central Japan International Airport / Centrair (*just south of Nagoya*)

- This is the closest airport to Gifu. You can easily access it in one hour from Meitetsu-Gifu station via the Meitetsu Limited Express Line.
- Low cost carriers Skymark and Jetstar fly from here, as well as ANA and Japan Airlines. You can fly to domestic locations such as Hokkaido (Sapporo and Hakodate), Tokyo, Nagasaki, Fukuoka, Kyushu (Kagshima and Kumamoto) and Okinawa.
- There are numerous international airlines that fly here too. Always check out the prices from Nagoya because utilising this airport will save you travel time and money!

### Kansai International Airport (*near Osaka*)

- Kansai has similar domestic options to Centrair, except with the addition of super low cost carrier Peach Airlines (which allows you to pay for your flights at a convenience store too)!
- Kansai also has a much larger range of international airlines flying in and out of it.

### Narita International Airport (*Tokyo*)

- Narita has the most international flight options, but it's very costly to get there from Gifu compared to going to Centrair or Kansai airport.

#### Pro tips:

1. Always use a flight compare website to find the cheapest flight!
2. Take into consideration the cost and time you will spend traveling from Gifu to Kansai or Tokyo airport compared to Centrair before choosing your flights!

## Websites and Apps

### Hyperdia

For all train schedules all across Japan. Hyperdia is offered in English and in Japanese. You can either pay for the app (recommended), or use [hyperdia.com](http://hyperdia.com)

### Navi.gifubus.co.jp

Bus timetables for Gifu. It's all in Japanese, and to search for stops you must type the proper kanji or it will not find the stops. However, the website also has a map that you can click around on to find your stops.

### Willerexpress.com

Cheap highway buses. Particularly useful for cheaper trips to further away places, like Tokyo. They have useful overnight buses too. There are other buses, but the Willer Express website is conveniently in English.

### Nohibus.co.jp

Buses servicing Hida Takayama, with a convenient English Website. This bus is half the price of the express train to Takayama and takes the same amount of time! It's ¥2570 one way or ¥4630 for a roundtrip ticket from the Meitetsu-Gifu bus hub to Takayama (compared to ¥4900 one way on the Hida express line).

## How to get home from downtown Gifu

### North Gifu Area

- 20 minute bus ride. Buses leave every 15 minutes or so from the Gifu Station Bus Stop 10 to メモリアル正門前 (Memoriaru seimonzen) and from Bus Stop 11 to 簡易保険前 (Kanihokenmae). The last bus home is at 10:20pm.
  - ◇ 5-10 minute walk from the bus stop to the apartments
- 60 minute walk (4.5km)
- 30 minute bike ride
- 15 minute, ¥2000 taxi

### Nishi Gifu Area

- 2 minute train ride from Gifu to Nishi-Gifu station (Tokaido line). They leave every 15 minutes or so and the last train is at 12:27am.
  - ◇ 5-10 minute bike ride from the station to the apartments
  - ◇ 20 minute walk from the station to the apartments (1.6km).
- 15 minute bus ride. Buses leave every 30 minutes or so from Gifu Station Bus Stop 13 to 市橋 (Ichihashi). Ichihashi bus stop is only 500m from Nishi-Gifu train station.
- 60 minute walk (5km)
- 30 minute bike ride
- 20 minute, ¥2500 taxi

### Motosu/Neo

- 30/75 minute train ride total. Catch the JR Tokaido Line from Gifu to Ogaki station, then change to the private Tarumi (樽見) line. It goes through Motosu and Neo, and runs about once an hour. The last Tarumi leaves at:
  - For MALera: 10:42pm, so you need to catch the 10:21pm from Gifu. 10 min walk.
  - For Neo: 9:21pm, so you need to catch the 9:06pm from Gifu. 15 min walk home.
- 40 minute bus ride to Motosu. Buses leave every 60 minutes or so from Bus Stop 8 at Gifu Station to MALera. The last bus is at 9:25pm. (*For websites and apps, you must search “Morera” or the corresponding katakana ‘モレラ’.*)
- 20 minute, ¥3000 taxi from Hozumi station (between Nishi-Gifu and Ogaki) to Motosu.

### Driving

Parking can be found under and all around Gifu station. It costs about ¥300/hour or ¥1200/24 hours. Money saving tip: Drive to Nishi-Gifu station and park your car there for much cheaper (or for free at the Nishi-Gifu apartments), then catch the 2 minute train in to Gifu. This option becomes dramatically cheaper if you're planning on leaving your car at the station for more than one day.

## How to get to the Kyouiku Center (教育センター)

Most ALT events, such as Work Orientation and the Skills Development Conferences, are held at the Kyouiku Center. The closest train station is Nishi Gifu but that's a 20 min walk away, so if you are not already in the Nishi Gifu area, we recommend taking the bus from Gifu Station Bus Stop #5 to ふれあい福寿会館 (Fureaifukujukaikan), which drops you right across the street from the center.



# Gifu City (岐阜)

Located in the south-east of Gifu region, Gifu is the central hub for goings on in the region. So even if you are placed in a neighboring town, there is a high likelihood you will spend a fair amount of time in Gifu City.



*U-tan*

## What to do

### **Mt. Kinka (金華山) & Gifu Castle (岐阜城)**

It's pretty hard to escape the gaze of Gifu Castle, perched on top of the 329m tall Mount Kinka. It's historically significant and you will likely hear much about its history during your time here. In the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, Warlord Oda Nobunaga used it as his base from which he attempted to unify all of Japan.



Admission to the castle is ¥200. There's a small museum on the inside with old weaponry, armor, and paintings, but the real reason to go inside is for the beautiful, panoramic view from the top!

There's also a super cute squirrel park next to the top of the ropeway where you can touch and feed squirrels for a ¥300 admission!

To get to the castle, take one of the following buses from JR or Meitetsu Gifu station to Gifu Park (岐阜公園), they take about 15minutes and cost ¥210:

- N80 towards Takatomi
- N32 to N86 bound for Gifu Park /Takatomi direction
- City Loop-line, Counterclockwise direction

Once you're in Gifu Park, there's two ways to get to the castle:

#### 1. Hike up

- ◇ The harder route: 馬の背 (Uma No Se) – Horseback trail
- ◇ The easier route: めい想の小径 (Meiso No Komichi) – Meditation Path trail.
- ◇ There are two other minor trails that start near the Nawa Insect Museum, the Hyaku-magari trail (100 turns) and the Nana-magari trail (7 turns).

#### 2. The ropeway

- ◇ The ropeway goes from Gifu Park to nearly the top of Mt Kinka, leaving you with a leisurely 5-10 minute walk to the castle.
- ◇ The prices are:
  - One way ¥620
  - Round trip ¥1080 (or ¥900 after 6pm if you want to see panoramic night views)

Castle hours	
March 16-May 11	9:30am – 5:30pm
May 12-October 16	8:30am – 5:30pm
October 17- March 15	9:30am – 4:30pm
Special days have night panorama openings	For more information contact Gifu City Convention and Visitors Department 058-265-3984

\*Depending on the weather, the castle may be closed early.

## Cormorant Fishing (Ukai 鵜飼)

Ukai on the Nagara River has a 1300 year history which is the longest unbroken stretch of this kind of fishing in Japan. It's an immense source of pride for people here and one of the only things about Gifu region you can find in the guidebooks!

The fishing starts around 7:30pm every night from May 11 to October 15. To experience the wonderment of ukai yourself you can book a spot on a boat for about ¥3000. The boats leave at about 6:30pm and you're allowed to bring your own food and drinks on board. If you're feeling frugal, you can enjoy the view for free from the Nagaragawa Bridge.



*Gifu AJET usually holds an Ukai event in September/October, either in Gifu City or Seki City. Keep an eye out for the event!*

## Big Buddha

Gifu is home to a very impressive Daibutsu (Big Buddha), but you would never know it was there because it's hidden away in a building near Gifu Park.



To get there, catch the same bus that you would catch to get to Gifu Park (岐阜公園) and get off a stop early, or just walk the 600m walk from Gifu Park. You can see where it is on the map on the right:



## **Gifu City Tower 43 (岐阜シティ・タワー43)**

Located near Gifu JR station, this is the tallest building in the prefecture with 43 floors, reaching a height of 163 meters (535 ft). While it can hardly be called a skyscraper, Tower 43 offers 360-degree views of Gifu city from the top-floor observatory, 'Sky Lounge'. Take the free elevator from the shopping area on the first and second floor

## **FC Gifu**

Check out a soccer game! The local team, FC Gifu, plays at home every second Sunday or so from December through to July. The team is quite bad so we lose quite a bit, but admission comes with all-you-can-drink!



## **Masa 21**

This is the local shopping center for JETs living north of the Nagara River. Masa has a food court and a bunch of other restaurants, a shopping market (though not the closest shopping market to the North Gifu JET apartments), clothing stores such as Uniqlo, and Gu (and many more), a 100 Yen Store, an Edion for electrical appliances, and an arcade and bowling alley. Masa 21 is also conveniently located across from Nitori (the home goods Japanese Ikea equivalent) and Starbucks.

## **Where to eat and drink**

This is definitely not a complete list of restaurants, but just some of the recommendations of restaurants that are popular with the Gifu JETs.



## **Gifu Station**

Gifu Station has a variety of different restaurants, cafes and izakayas within the station!

### Starbucks

Great to grab a coffee, a sandwich and use the free WiFi (must sign up for an account using other WiFi before you can access Starbucks WiFi).

### Showa Shokudo

A Showa themed Izakaya in Gifu Station with all-you-can drink for only 1000¥ per person for two hours, including self-serve umeshu!

## **Central Gifu**

The area around Gifu Station tends to be the central meeting area and hub for eating and drinking in the region, and as such there are tons of great places to check out.

### Poruchipu Samugyopusaru

A casual Korean BBQ place. They have an all you can eat meat and drinks menu for ¥3500! The service is really on point, and you get food and drink really quickly after you order. Perfect to combine with a night of karaoke in downtown Gifu.

### Watami

A popular izakaya, located right next to Meitetsu Gifu Station with traditional Japanese izakaya dishes.

Da Achiu (ダアチユ)      Delicious, legitimate pizza.

The Golden Chicken      Rotisserie chicken restaurant.

Rasamanda      An Indian food restaurant, inconveniently located right between Nishi-Gifu and Gifu Station, but the food makes up for it. The décor is pretty great as well, with beautiful, large wooden chairs and tables.

Hana No Mai      An izakaya with good nomi/tabehoudai menus that's popular for parties and gatherings.

Nomads      This bar is situated just behind 'Loft' and Meitetsu Gifu station. It's cozy, has a great atmosphere, a TV, and nice bar staff.

El Paso      A Tex-Mex joint in a small space with friendly staff and wacky decor. It's a bit on the expensive side and the restaurant is pretty small, so booking in advance is advised. \*Recommendation: the Burritos leave something to be desired, so go for the Quesadillas or the Fajitas. But if you are looking for something to really fill those Mexican food withdrawals, it's honestly probably worth making the trip down to Desperados in Nagoya instead.

## **Tamamiya-Dori (玉宮通り)**

Many young Japanese and foreigners alike are likely to be located in Tamamiya-dori, often referred to as "drinking street". It's a small street running north of Gifu JR station. The simplest way to get there is to walk along the overpass leading from the second floor of the station to the right, at the Circle K convenience store turn left and go down the stairs to reach the ground level. Turn right and follow this street north.



Bierhall      Certainly lives up to its name, being both full of beer and built like a narrow hallway. Bierhall also has a handy book-swap corner where you can take one and leave one. They also put on a pretty good St Patrick's Day party every year.

Scrum      Located just above Bierhall, Scrum is a New Zealand themed rugby bar. The most important games are played here on the TV and one can sample a wide range of brews from around the world. There's usually a few pool sharks are in attendance.

Alffo      This is a kind of hipster bar with a chill atmosphere with DJs and a view over the park. The food here is a little lacking in volume but the drinks are good, and the crowd is really friendly. It's a good place to meet hip, young Japanese people. It is located on the second floor across from the Gifu Bunka Center.

Tora      An izakaya on the main food street with the best karaage we have ever had! It also does nomi/tabehoudai menus that you have to book at least one day in advance.

## North of the Nagara River

Sushiro A chain 100 yen conveyor belt sushi restaurant popular with JETs grabbing dinner before bouncing over to study at the Starbucks located right across the street.



Dohtonburi A chain Okinomiya restaurant. Even though it's a chain, the place still has a good atmosphere.

Café Turquoise A Turkish café with delicious pancakes. On nice days you can eat out on the roof and soak up the sunny weather.

Indo Nagara All you can eat Indian curry for only 1000 yen (take out curry and naan for 800¥)! The food is pretty mediocre and the options are limited but you can't beat the price.

Indo Dinigu Himaraya More expensive Indian food than the previous option, but it is so much more delicious with many more options.

Something New York A delicious bagel shop and café that's perfect for weekend brunch.

## Nishi-Gifu area

Benigoma A really popular spicy tonkotsu and sesame ramen place popular with the locals. Teachers at my school make special lunch trips from across town to visit this place!



Ichiran A famous tonkotsu ramen chain restaurant where you fill out a sheet to personalize your ramen order. It has separate booths for people looking to slurp in silence.

Sushiro A chain 100 yen conveyor belt sushi restaurant. It's right next door to the closest supermarket to the Nishi-Gifu apartments, so it's really convenient if you want to drop in for a quick dinner when getting groceries! They also do take-away!

Marugame Udon Sanuki udon is made fresh in front of your eyes which you can choose to be served either hot or cold. You can then top it off with your own selection of self serve tempura before paying at the end. Fast food, but really fresh and delicious!

Tulsi Indian A well priced Indian restaurant that provides all you can eat naan bread!

Rustico A trendy bread shop with nice lunch sets.



## Where to go to stay fit

### Gyms

- Gifu Memorial Centre near the North Gifu apartments has a cheap gym option at only ¥310 per session. It has weights, treadmills, machines, bikes and a platform for deadlifts and overhead weights. It also has no sign up fees, showers and ¥100 parking!
- Konami Gym in Gifu station and Ogaki Aeontown is great for people looking for the full gym experience. They have exercise classes, weights, machines, bikes, a pool, sauna, sento and even a virtual golf driving range with lessons available. This will set you back ¥7000 for 4 visits per month, or ¥12,000 for unlimited visits per month.
- Ogaki Boxing Gym is in the east of Ogaki city, only a 15 minute drive from the Nishi-Gifu apartments. It has treadmills, skipping ropes, a few free weights, heaps of boxing bags and sparring partners, and a boxing ring. It also has 2 trainers that are willing to train non-Japanese speakers (through the use of gestures and basic one word commands)! It's ¥4000 for 4 visits per month, or ¥5300 for unlimited visits per month.



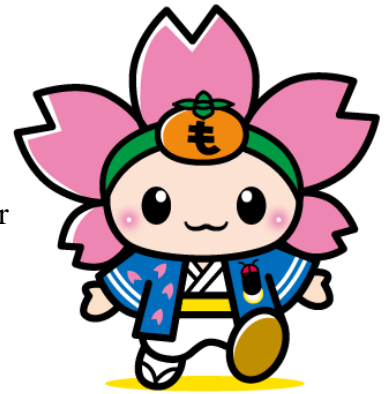
### Sports

- You can rent out gym space and equipment for sports like volleyball and basketball at the gym next to the Board of Education.
- A range of Japanese martial arts lessons are available at 岐阜市西部体育館, near the Nishi-Gifu apartments. Iaido lessons are Friday 7-8:30pm.
- The Ichihashi community centre has many clubs you can join, such as ikebana, calligraphy, taiko, singing, and photography. The clubs generally meet during work hours (they're aimed at older people), but they also have some activities on weekends.

# Motosu 本巢

Located in the north west of the Gifu Region, this city was originally four separate towns, Motosu, Neo, Shinsei and Itonuki, but was incorporated together as Motosu City.

<http://www.city.motosu.lg.jp/>



*Momomaru*

## What to do:

### **Malera** (モレラ岐阜)

The biggest shopping mall in Gifu prefecture! Be warned, it gets pretty crowded during the weekends. Shops found in the mall include, but are certainly not limited to:

Edion (エディオン) for electrical appliances

Nitori (ニトリ) for home goods

Toho Cinemas

H&M, Uniqlo, Berksha, Zara, Gap, GU, Old Navy and much more for fashion

Lush, for beauty supplies

Daiso ¥100 store

Bowling, Pool Hall, and Arcade

Food: Freshness Burger, Saizeriya (cheap pasta, pizza and wine), Baskin-Robins, KFC, Starbucks, Café Lani, the food court, and many other fancier restaurants.

Valor Supermarket

Kaldi import food store

## Where to eat:

Shintai Menbo One of Motosu's many Ramen shops, but conveniently located just around the corner from where the Motosu JETs live.

Swagatam One of the best Indian restaurants in the Gifu region. It also does take-away using re-usable containers.

Shanimuni A restaurant serving tsukemen, a type of ramen where you dip your noodles in the broth instead of it coming premixed in one bowl. This gem was discovered upon a local's recommendation and is known as one of the best ramen shops in the area.

Neo Kaido A delicious mom-and-pop yakiniku restaurant that's hidden away in Motosu's backstreets.

# Neo 根尾

Officially a part of Motosu City, Neo is a picturesque little village located to the north of Motosu proper. It's a small mountain town, with a clean river and some nice waterfalls.



## What to do:

### **Usuzumi Onsen (淡墨温泉)**

Relax in the public baths with water from natural hot springs for a ¥800 entrance fee. There are both indoor and outdoor baths. If you're the lucky Neo JET, make sure to show them your residence card with your address for the Neo local discounted ticket!

### **Usuzumi-zakura (淡墨桜)**

One of Japan's National Treasures, and referred to as "One of the Three Great Cherry Blossom Trees of Japan", said to be planted by the Keitai Emperor over 1,500 years ago. It blooms in early April, and creates immense traffic up to the sleepy little town of Neo. Right next to the tree is the Usuzumi-zakura Museum.

### **Earthquake Fault Observation Museum (地震断層観察館)**

A museum about the 1891 Mino-Owari earthquake. It was one of the largest earthquakes to ever hit Japan and had its epicenter right in Neo.

### **Neo Camping Park**

Spend a night in the mountains camping right by the river and enjoying picturesque nature.

## Where to eat:

Mihara (みはら) An adorable café restaurant for lunch, with an outside dining patio right on the river, making it the perfect place to enjoy the fall and spring seasons.

There are a few more restaurants in Neo, but many tend to be lunch-time establishments.



## Kakamigahara 各務原

Located in the south east of the Gifu region, Kakamigahara is famous for being the site of Japan's oldest airfield and aviation matsuri, and for being one of the top 100 places to view cherry blossoms in Japan.

<http://www.city.kakamigahara.lg.jp/>



*Rarara*

### **Shinsakai-unga River**

A beautiful river lined with 1200 cherry trees on either side. It's known as one of top 100 Cherry Blossom viewing spots in Japan. The tree's bloom in early April, and draw large crowds to sit along the river banks and snack on food from the numerous food stands (yatai), while enjoying the beautiful views. Gifu AJET usually has their Hanami Event here every year so keep an ear out for it!

### **Kakamigahara Aeon Mall**

A large mall with almost everything you could want! It's a rival mall to Motosu's Malera. Some of the shops it has are:

- Aeon Cinema and Namco Arcade
- H&M, Forever 21, Berksha, Uniqlo, Urban Outfitters and much more for fashion
- Kaldi foreign import store.
- KFC, Subway, Starbucks, Burger King, Mr.Donut, Baskin-Robbins, and Krispy Crème.
- Seria ¥100 Store

### **Murakuniza**

A Japanese traditional entertainment theater built in 1877. Traditionally used for Kabuki, but will also host other performances.

## Hashima 羽島

Located in the south west of the Gifu region, Hashima is the one city in the prefecture with a shinkansen stop. It's also known for its newly opened Costco, its 300 year old wisteria tree, and the Takehana matsuri held at the end of April.



*Hanachan and Takechan*

### **Hashima Costco**

JETs travel all the way down from Hida to make the pilgrimage to the Hashima Costco, which only just opened in November 2015. Stock up on bulk foods that are hard to find elsewhere such as cheese, salsa and peanut butter! Don't forget to make a stop at the food court for some pizza or a cheap hotdog!

## Hashima Enku Museum

Only ¥300 admission to see 17 of the wooden statues carved by the Edo-period Buddhist Monk Enku, who is said to be from the area and to have carved 120,000 enku-butsu style statues throughout Japan during his lifetime.

# Yamagata 山形

Yamagata is located to the east of the Gifu region, bordering on the Mino area. Yamagata City is made of up three smaller villages; Takatomi, Ijira, and Miyama.

<http://www.city.yamagata.gifu.jp/index.html>



*Town emblem*

## Ijira (伊自良)

Western Yamagata City. Check out Ijira Lake (伊自良湖), nestled between the mountains creating a very scenic spot.

## Miyama (美山)

Northern Yamagata City. The Mugi River is famous, especially for the Ayu (sweet fish) that come from it. Miyama Forest (みやじまの森) has amazing summer fireflies.

## Takatomi (高富)

Eastern Yamagata City.

# Kitagata 北方

Kitagata is the smallest municipality in Japan, at only 5km<sup>2</sup>, and is located in the west of the Gifu region, sandwiched between Gifu city, Motosu city and Mizuho city.



*Kitagataro-kun*

## Rice Field Art

Every June, elementary and junior high school students work together to plant rice fields with different kinds of rice to create images in the rice fields that will appear when the rice grows in August.

## Mizuho 瑞穂

Located in the western part of the Gifu region, Mizuho is famous as the origin of Fuyu Persimmons in 1892. Around the end of September, many are grown, and you can buy them for quite cheap. The orange of the persimmons compliments the fall colors of the many ginkgo and maple trees, turning the town into a picturesque place during fall.



*Kakirin*

## Ginan 岐南

Located in the south of the Gifu region, Ginan is famous for its own special version of a scallion. It has been designated as Gifu Prefecture's traditional vegetable, and it is a mix between a long white and long green onion. Every year farmers from Ginan take the Tokuda long onions to the Onion Summit!



*Negiccyo*

## Kasamatsu 笠松

Kasamatsu is located in the south of the Gifu region and runs along the Kiso river. Its mascots are the adorable two yuru-chara riding in boats on the right here!



*Kasamarukyodai*

## Calendar – Festivals (祭り) and Events

Japan's festivals - *matsuri* (祭り) - are truly magnificent and give you an insight into the country's traditions. They are a chance for people to take time out to marvel at nature, experience Japanese culture at its most intense, and really let loose. JETs tend to be avid attendees of matsuri, with various trips happening throughout the year. Here's a brief run-down of some annual festivals in the Gifu region. (Just some we're aware of, this list is by no means complete! There are plenty more in neighboring regions and prefectures too!)

### July

#### **Chunichi Newspaper Nagaragawa Fireworks Festival**

**What:** The first weekend of the large 'rival' fireworks displays that are held two weekends in a row. Fireworks are set off from the Nagara riverbed with Mt. Kinka in the background. This is a perfect opportunity to buy a yukata and enjoy the festival in style!

**Where:** Gifu City, along the banks of the Nagara river, between the Nagara bridge and Kinka bridge.

**When:** Fireworks are from 7:15-8:45pm on the last Saturday of July.



### August

#### **Nagaragawa National Fireworks Display**

**What:** The second weekend of the 'rival' fireworks displays (as above).

**Where:** Gifu City, along the banks of the Nagara river between the Nagara bridge and Kinka bridge.

**When:** Fireworks are from 7:00-8:45pm on the first Saturday of August.

#### **Tejikara Fireworks Festival**

**What:** Men carry portable shrines with firecrackers exploding from them. This festival also happens in another part of Gifu City in April.

**Where:** Gifu City at Nagaragawa Park (north side of Nagara bridge).

**When:** From 6:30-9pm on the second Sunday of August.



### October

#### **Gifu Nobunaga Festival**

**What:** Held in honor of Oda Nobunaga, who aimed to unite Japan from his headquarters in Gifu castle. There is a warrior procession, horses, flea markets, a marching band and more.

**Where:** Downtown Gifu City.

**When:** 10am-5pm the first Saturday and Sunday of October.



## **Chestnut Festival**

What: A celebration of the Reihei chestnuts that were developed locally. At this festival over 100 booths sell delicacies such as yakikuri (fried chestnuts), yakitori and other local foods. There is also entertainment, including performances by local and more prominent talent.

Where: Oga in Yamagata City

When: 9am-4pm on the first Sunday of October

## **December**

### **Ikenoue Purification Ceremony**

What: Men jump into the Nagara River wearing only loincloths for purification and to pray for personal achievement.

Where: Gifu City in the Nagara River near the Chusetsu-bashi Bridge.

When: 3pm, 7pm and 10pm on the second Saturday in December.



## **March**

### **Bairin Park Plum Festival**

What: Bairin Park has 1300 plum trees, and so is one of the best spots to enjoy the plum trees in full blossom in early March. Bairin Park also holds a festival at this time with photography contests, Japanese harp concerts and a plum bonsai exhibition. Plum blossoms are one of the first flowers to emerge every spring.

Where: Gifu City in Bairin Park (just south of Gifu station)

When: Early March



### **Shinsakai-unga River Cherry Blossom Festival**

What: A canopy of about 1,200 cherry blossom trees line and overhang the river, with dozens of yatai (food stands) lining the pathways on either side. You'll find families and group of friends putting blankets down on the grassy riverbanks enjoying the splendor that is cherry trees in blossom!

Where: Kakamigahara, on the banks of the Shin-Sakae River and Citizen's Park. Take the Takayama JR Line east from Gifu City and get off at Naka Station.

When: Late March/early April



## **April**

### **Usuzumi Sakura Hanami and Festival**

What: See one of Japan's oldest cherry trees in all its blossoming splendor!

Where: Neo

When: Early April

### **Dosan Festival & Gifu Festival**

**What:** During the day there is a parade of floats honoring Dosan Saito, a famous warlord. The Gifu Festival follows it Saturday night and involves another parade of floats and lanterns from Inaba shrine to Kogane and Kashimori shrine.

**Where:** Gifu City, 10 minute walk north of Meitetsu-Gifu station.

**When:** The first Saturday and Sunday in April



### **Tejikara Fire Festival**

**What:** Men carry portable shrines with firecrackers exploding from them. This festival also happens in a different location every August.

**Where:** Tejikarao Shrine, Kuranomae in Gifu. Take the Meitetsu Inuyama line to Tejikara station.

**When:** 6:30-9pm on the second Saturday of April

### **Takehana Wisteria Festival**

**What:** You can view the purple flower clusters of hanging wisteria around the town, but don't miss the highlight, a 300 year old wisteria tree in full bloom in front of the Takehana Betsuin Temple, which has been designated a natural prefectural treasure. On May 3<sup>rd</sup> there is a huge puppet performance followed by old floats being paraded through town while people and yatai stands flood the main streets to celebrate in the bloom of the wisteria.

**Where:** Hashima. 5-10 mins walk from Hashima Shiyakusho Mae Station (Meitetsu Takehana Line).

**When:** The festival is on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, but the wisteria is in bloom from late April to early May.



## **May**

### **Nagaragawa Cormorant Fishing Opening**

**What:** A religious service is held before the fishing boats make their maiden voyage, accompanied by drums, dancing and fireworks.

**Where:** Gifu, on the banks of the Nagara River near Gifu Park.

**When:** May 11<sup>th</sup> is the opening night, but ukai runs every night until October 15<sup>th</sup>.



## **June**

### **Daianji River Firefly Festival**

**What:** Fireflies flit around the river at dusk, creating a dream-like atmosphere!

**Where:** Kakamigahara. Take the JR Takayama line from Gifu station to Unuma station. Turn left out of the station and walk north alongside the 21 or the Kiso river which heads north to Seki. You will see the firefly park (a very cute fairy garden) on the right hand side. There is viewing along the river in the area but the park is the easiest landmark to spot.

**When:** Fireflies appear at around 7:45pm and stay for a couple of hours from mid to late June.

## Other important places for your reference

### **Immigration Offices (名古屋入国管理局岐阜出張所)**

Anything to do with your visa will be processed here. Hopefully you don't have to go through any painful processes here, especially if you're not staying longer than your 3 years visa. But this might be useful for some of our JET unicorns or for people bringing over partners and families.

### **Gifu International Center (GIC)**

This is a support center for foreign people living in Gifu Prefecture. The center conducts activities that promote multicultural awareness among people living here, as well as translating and interpreting services in Portuguese, Chinese, Tagalog and English. One very cool thing they do is three way interpreting over the phone between individuals and government agencies (i.e. immigration, tax, city hall, police, NOT your internet provider or your boyfriend). This only costs the price of the phone call. It's on the second floor so make sure you look up when looking for it!



**We hope that you enjoy your time in Gifu!**