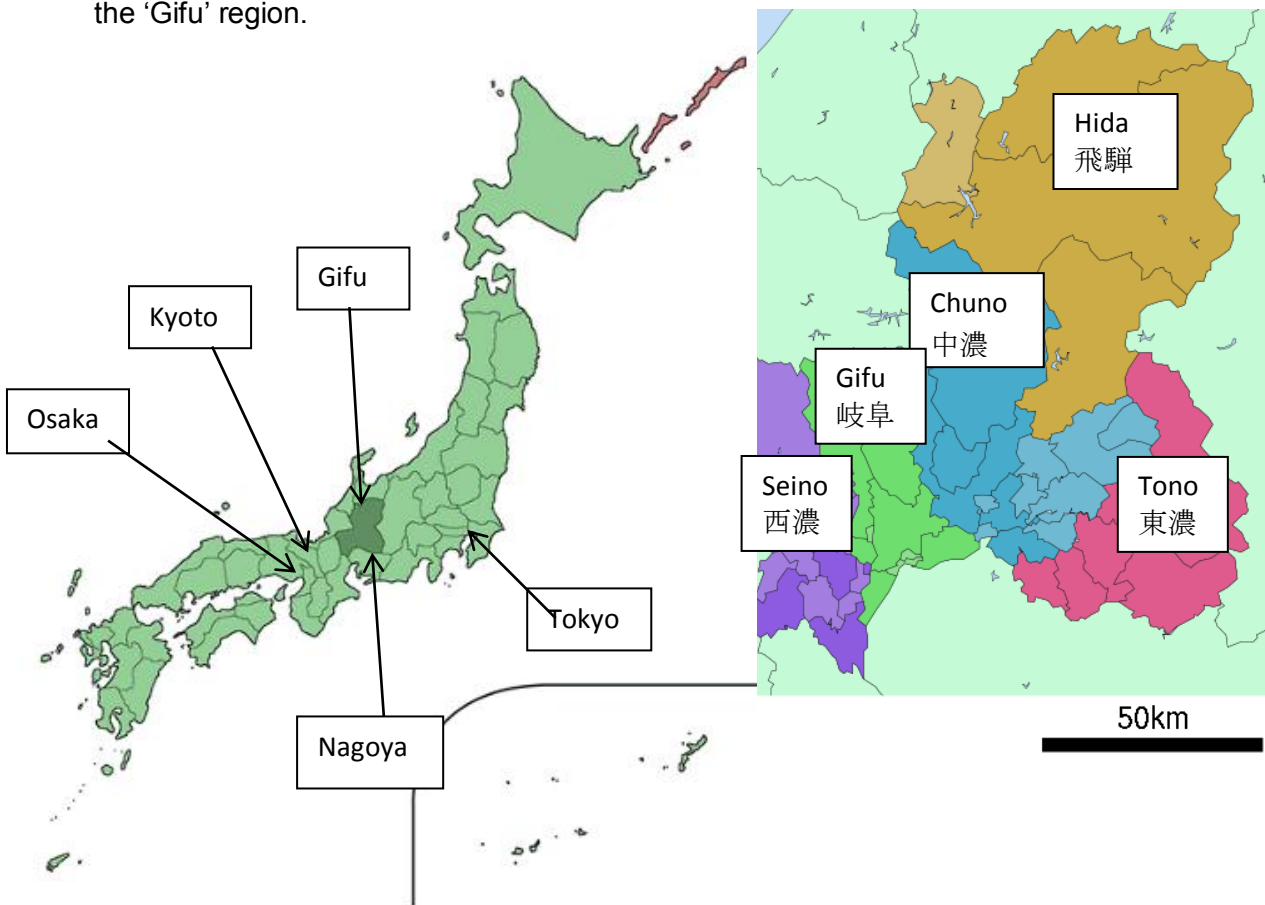


Gifu Guide 2012



Where am I????

Gifu is divided into regions, shown in the map on the right. Sally and Joy are RPAs for the people in the 'Gifu' region.





The JET participants in the Gifu Region live or work in the following areas:

Gifu	岐阜
Nishi-Gifu	西岐阜 (Not an area, a train station near where Gifu City JETs live)
Kakamigahara	各務原
Hashima	羽島
Mizuho	瑞穂
Motosu	本巣
Yamagata	山形
Ginan	岐南
Kitagata	北方

Transportation

Gifu's central location means that it's really well placed for travelling all around Honshu. There are two main railway companies in Gifu- JR (Japan Rail) and Meitetsu (名鉄, a private rail company). Meitetsu has more frequent stops, but is slightly more expensive than JR. The two main train stations in Gifu City are JR Gifu and Gifu Meitetsu (sometimes called Shin-Gifu). They are about 5 minutes walk apart. Meitetsu is to the north-east of JR.

Gifu JR Station

JR Gifu station is the transport hub for this area. Train lines that depart from here, and notable stations, are:

- Tokaido line (東海道線)- east to Nagoya (only 18 minutes by express train), west to Nishi-Gifu, Ogaki and Maibara.
From Maibara you can catch the train straight to Osaka and Kyoto, a cheaper option than catching the Shinkansen from Nagoya that doesn't take that much longer.

- Takayama line (高山線)- east to Kakamigahara, Gero and Takayama

Buses

Just outside the North exit of the JR station is the bus area, where you can catch buses to various parts of Gifu city and beyond. There is an information booth there too. Staff can direct you to the appropriate bus if you know where you want to go but don't know how to get there. They are unlikely to speak much English, however. The tourist office staff on the second floor of Gifu JR (near ticket machines) are likely to speak more English.

Between Gifu JR and Gifu Meitetsu is another bus rank. The buses that leave from here are mostly longer-distance buses, many of them to touristy destinations like Shirakawa-go and Takayama. HINT- If you want to travel up to Takayama the bus is almost half the price of the train and takes a comparable amount of time.

Gifu Meitetsu Station

From Gifu Meitetsu, you can catch:

-Nagoya main line (JR is far more convenient to get to Nagoya)

-Kakamigahara line

-Airport line- takes you all the way to Central Japan International Airport (aka Chūbu Centrair Airport, locally called セントレア). It's incredibly convenient, reliable and clean. It costs ¥1310 and takes 55 minutes. This website has timetables and route maps:

<http://www.meitetsu.co.jp/english/airport-access/centrair/index.asp>

Airports

The nearest airport to Gifu is Central Japan International Airport, which you can easily access in about an hour from Gifu, via a Meitetsu train (see above). Kansai International Airport (near Osaka) and Narita International Airport (Tokyo) are other options.

There are some international flights leaving from Central Japan International airport, but there are far more flights leaving from Kansai airport for cheaper.

For domestic trips, there has been a recent rash of budget airlines offering cheap seats. *Skymark* has flights from Central Airport to Hokkaido or Okinawa. *Peach Aviation* has flights from Kansai to Hokkaido or Kyushu. For more information on those and other budget airlines check out the 'budget airlines' section of <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2364.html>. Most of these sights you can make bookings in English- a quick google search should give you the information.

Bicycles

Gifu is pretty spread out, and the bus system is hard to understand. My recommendation would be to hire a bike for 100 yen if you are planning on spending the day checking out the town. Even if you are just going up to the immigration office or something slightly far from the station, hiring a bike is cheaper and sometimes quicker than catching a bus up and

back again, for those of you who don't mind the exercise. There is a small shed in the car park on the south side of JR Gifu station where you can rent bicycles. You have to show ID and fill in a form. The person at the counter might not speak any English, so here is your chance to practice Japanese or sign language. Not that you have to return it on the same day by 6pm. You also have the option of borrowing it until the next day for an extra 100 yen, but remember you have to return it during opening hours.

Tourism

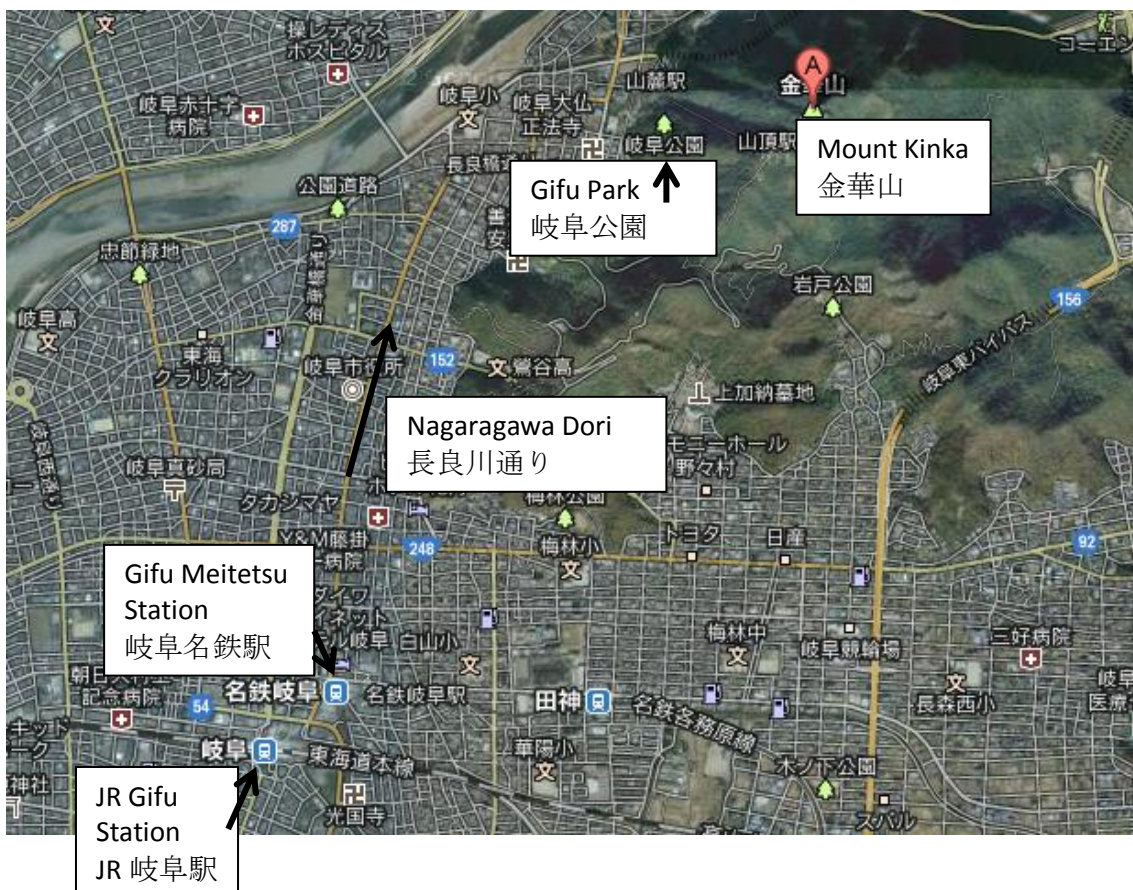
Mt. Kinka (金華山 Kinka-zan) & Gifu Castle (岐阜城)

It's pretty hard to escape the gaze of Gifu Castle, perched on top of Mount Kinka. Pictured on the top of this guide, it's historically significant- Warlord Oda Nobunaga used it as his headquarters from which he attempted to 'unify' all of Japan. Gifu Castle is quite an impressive sight, perched atop Mount Kinka, overlooking the city, river, and surrounding plains.

You can venture up to Gifu Castle to explore the inside (admission 200¥)- there's a small museum with old weaponry, armour, paintings etc. From the balcony, take in the view of Gifu city and beyond. The trip up along the ropeway is fun (roundtrip ¥1050).

The castle is open 9:30am-4:30pm. During summer, it's open for night viewing between July 20 and August 31 (5:30pm-10:00pm), and on weekends and public holidays from September 1 to October 14 (5:30pm-9:30pm).

To get there, take a bus from JR Gifu station or Meitetsu Gifu Station to Gifu Park (岐阜公園, 15 min), and walk 3 minutes to the ropeway. If you're game, you can also hike up Mt. Kinka, following the Uma No Se (馬の背) trail, or the easier Meiso No Komichi (めい想の小径) trail. (Not recommended in the summer heat, winter cold, or when landslides are a possibility!)



Cormorant Fishing (Ukai 鵜飼)

Ukai in the Nagara river has a 1300 year history- the longest unbroken stretch of this kind of fishing in Japan. It is an immense source of pride for people (or at least the tourist office) here... and is apparently the only thing most guidebooks think is worth mentioning about Gifu!

You can experience the wonderment of ukai yourself by booking a spot on a boat, for about ¥3000. Every night from May 11 to October 15, fishing sets off from around 7:30pm. Passenger boats leave before this.



http://www.gifucvb.or.jp/en/01_sightseeing/01_01.html

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- which is why I've included this map for you.

The closest bus stop is Gifu Park (岐阜公園)



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. It has – you guessed it – 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.



Restaurants, Bars & Cafés

Many young Japanese and foreigners alike are likely to be located in Tamamiya-dori (玉宮通り), a small street running north of Gifu JR station. The simplest way to get there is to walk along the walkway/overpass leading from the second floor of the station and down the steps to the left of the Circle K convenience store, to reach ground level. Follow this street north for a couple hundred meters, crossing another road, and you will end up walking past some of the establishments below.

Marquee

An Aussie bar popular with expats, this has a wide range of foreign beers, food you're familiar with, and is run by long term Gifu resident Chris Gifford, who will talk your leg off but is a great source of information about Gifu. Keep an eye on their facebook page- we run a 'coffee club' here about once a month, which is simply an event where you go to meet other people living in Gifu City over a cup of coffee. Walk straight up Nagarachashi Dori from Meitetsu station and it's on the right hand side near the giant mechanical crab.

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.

Scrum

Located just above Bierhall on "Gaij Alley", Scrum is a New Zealand themed rugby bar! Most important fixtures are played here on the TV and a wide range of brews from around the world can be sampled. Also, a few pool sharks are usually in attendance.

Nomad

This bar is situated just behind 'Loft' and Meitetsu Gifu station. It's cosy and has no TV, with a great atmosphere and nice bar staff.

Natural Café

One of the quirkiest restaurants/café's we've found in Gifu. The ground floor is a ceramics workshop. Upon entry, don't freak out if you're greeted by a friendly, tortoise. Don't worry, he moves at a glacial pace. The restaurant itself, with an arty/south-east Asian décor, is up a flight of stairs. They serve delicious modern-Japanese and Thai-style dishes, and have an extensive selection of delicious drinks and desserts. Live music is also played here occasionally. Follow Nagarachashi Dori (road) up from Meitetsu station and it will curve to the right not far before Gifu Park. The natural café is not far past the curve. Take the same bus as you would to Gifu park.

El Paso

El Paso is Gifu's ever popular Tex-Mex joint. A small space with friendly staff but excellent food and wacky decor. A bit on the pricey side but well worth it. The restaurant is pretty small so booking in advance is advised.

Eiji's Yakitori place

Eiji's serves wonderful grilled meat on a stick (chicken, pork, beef) and other delicacies (like アスパラベーコン, or aspara-bacon- asparagus wrapped in bacon). There's also beer, ume-shuu (Japanese plum wine) and the other usual suspects. The menu has even been translated into English by a former JET.

Bottom's Up

This is an after midnight kind of place, also really popular with the ex-pats but also locals. Usually the karaoke is cranking- just how you like, at the bar in front of everyone. Follow Nagarabashi Dori until DonQuijote (ドンキホーテ large variety store, hard to miss with all the bikes and junk out the front), turn left and walk for another 10 minutes, and it's on the left hand side.



Immigration Offices (名古屋入国管理局岐阜出張所)

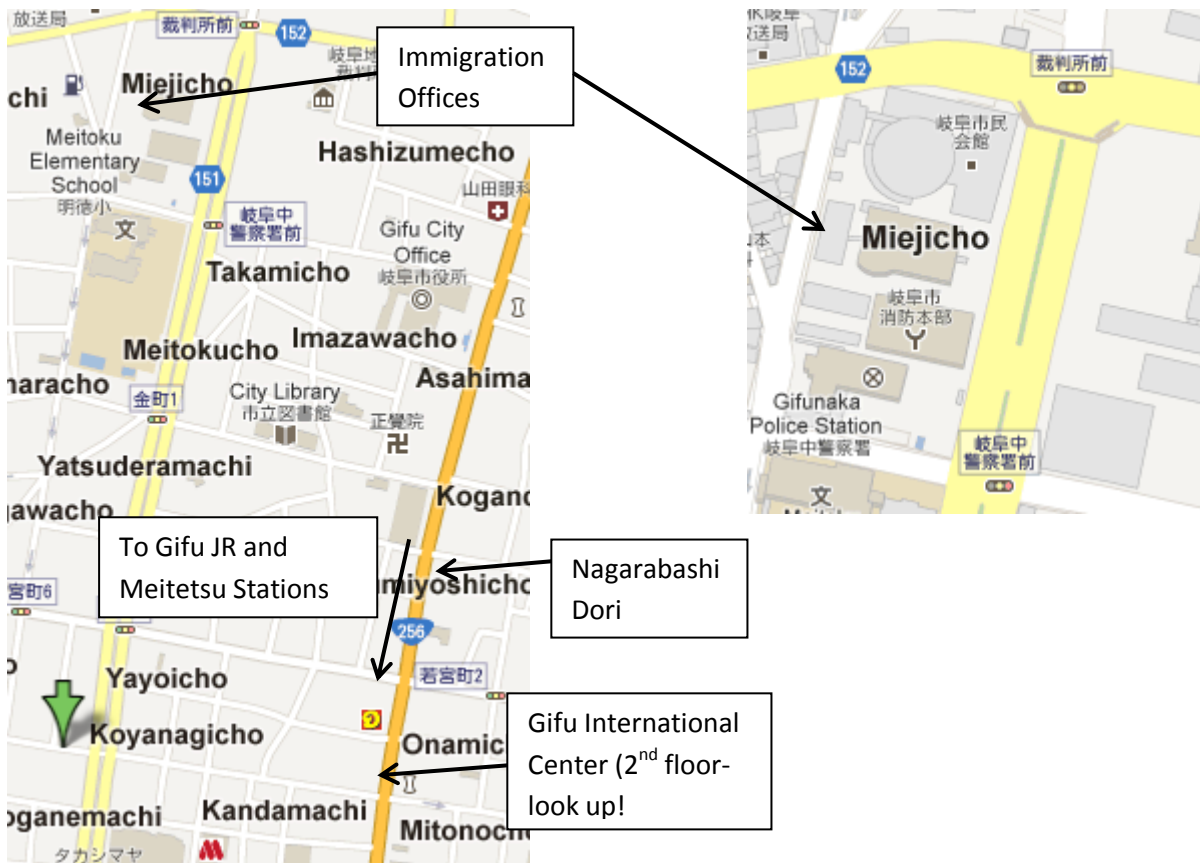
You shouldn't have to go here because everyone on the JET programme already has their visa, but I thought I would put this in for reference, or for people bringing over partners.

Anything to do with your visa will be processed here.

The office moved in March this year, so ignore any old information you see about it being near the JR Gifu Station.

International Center

This is a support center for foreign people living in Gifu prefecture. This means we conduct activities that promote multicultural awareness among people living here, as well as translating and interpreting services in Portuguese, Chinese, Tagalog and English. This is where Gifu RPA Sally works as a CIR. One very cool thing we do is three way interpreting over the phone between individuals and government agencies (ie immigration, tax, city hall, police, NOT your internet provider or your boyfriend). This only costs the price of the phone call. You'll have some separate documents about this from Sally soon.



Different Parts of the Gifu Region

山形Yamagata

<http://www.city.yamagata.gifu.jp/index.html> (Japanese only)

Yamagata City is made of up three smaller villages, Takatomi, Ijira, and Miyama.

Yamagata City is a 35 minute bus ride north of Gifu City.

Ijira (伊自良) is in the western part of Yamagata City and the big attraction is Ijira Lake (伊自良湖). It's nestled between the mountains and is a very scenic spot. There are many activities you can do in the lake during all four seasons. In spring the cherry blossoms bloom, in summer it is a place to go and beat the heat, in the fall one can observe the changing leaves. In winter there's fishing for smelt, a small fish that lives in cold lakes. Fishing can be done year round, and there are many cold soba shops you can visit around the lake.

Miyama (美山) is the northern section of Yamagata City. The Mugi River is famous, and so is ayu, (sweetfish) that come from the river. Miyama has a lot of natural beauty, and one can go there to look at the rivers and mountains and feel refreshed, which is what many people do during the hot summer months. Miyama Forest (Miyajima no mori, みやまの森) is a great place to view fireflies in the summer.

There are two Chinese restaurants on the main road in Takatomi (along the bus route). One is called Taiwan Ramen (台湾ラーメン), and the building is red in colour, a few steps away from the bus stop at Takatomi Kita-machi (高富北町). It has certain set menus which are cheaper than ordering things individually, however, the taste is more geared towards the Japanese tongue (not as strong in flavour). The owners and people who run the restaurant speak Chinese and Japanese. The other place is called Seika (成華). It's run by a

Taiwanese owner and his Japanese wife. Their Chinese food tastes a lot more authentic. The restaurant is smaller, and the price is slightly higher, but the food is a lot better.

各務原 **Kakamigahara**

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

This city's biggest draw card is the annual cherry blossom festival and hanami (花見), held along the Shin-Sakai-gawa during the last week of March and first week of April. Kakamigahara is one of the best places in Japan to view and photograph sakura (桜).

Photo: Jessica Savage



Kakamigahara is also home to the 'Japan Rhine' Hanabi (花火 fireworks festival), held annually on August 10th on the banks of the Kiso River, beneath Inuyama Castle.

It's jointly held by Kakamigahara and Inuyama City.

For all you mallrats and those hankering for a Starbucks fix, there's AEON- possibly a rival for Gifu-ken's biggest mall- and arguably the 'classier' option (It's carpeted and a little newer!). AEON is just off Route 21.

犬山 **Inuyama**

<http://www.city.inuyama.aichi.jp/english/index.html>

True, this town is not in Gifu; it's not even in Gifu-ken, but in Aichi. But there's so many weird and wonderful things here, we had to mention it. It's the next town east of Kakamigahara- about 10-15 minutes on the Meitetsu train (Inuyama line) from central Kakamigahara. Plenty to amuse!

Inuyama Castle (犬山城 Inuyamajo)

Overlooking the Kiso River, it is lauded as one of Japan's top three castles and claims to be the oldest castle in Japan (built 1440).

Little World

An open-air museum consisting of buildings from all four corners of the globe. If you ever get tired of Japan, you can go inside the buildings and imagine you are in Peru, or Germany, or Thailand... sort of. You can get a bus straight there from Inuyama station significantly cheaper than a plane, and only 20 minutes. Maybe not so exciting for you, but for many of your students this will be their only experience of 'overseas', so ask them about it!

Japan Monkey Center & Park

Japan's biggest monkey centre with over 70 species of monkey represented! It has an impressive array of monkeys, by any standard. Watch out for the lemurs and squirrel monkeys- they're energetic little guys. Truly a unique experience, especially since it incorporates a monkey amusement park (for humans, that is) alongside the zoo enclosures. To get there, take the monorail from Inuyama Yuen station. (Warning: Animal rights activists probably won't be impressed by some of the enclosures.)

Meiji Mura (明治村)

Another open-air museum displaying buildings and objects from Meiji-era Japan, and other countries. Staff dress up in traditional clothes from the era to help you imagine that you've stepped back in time... if that takes your fancy. These theme parks are all over Japan but this is probably the closest, for all you Gifu-ites. 20 minutes by bus from Inuyama station.

本巢 **Motosu**

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

This town's claim to fame is Malera (pronounced 'morera'; モレラ)- officially Gifu Prefecture's biggest mall, and touted as one of the largest malls in Japan. You can pretty much buy everything you need there. For those looking to furnish their apartment, Kahma (カーマ) sells kitchenware, air coolers, plants, bikes and furniture, while Eiden (エイデン) has your electronic needs covered. And for those looking to be tight with the purse strings (ie. most JETs!), the 100 yen shop Daiso (ダイソー) has a fair range as well. If you're missing any food from home, like tacos or Tim Tams, your best bet is the Jupiter import foods store. There's also a bunch of restaurants, clothes stores (including foreigner-size-friendly Uniqlo) and a cinema. Motosu is about 45 minutes drive on the 157 from Gifu city. You can also get the bus bound for Malera from bus stop 9 outside Gifu JR station (around 45 minutes). Or, board the Tarumi line train at Ogaki (25 minutes to the mall).

As a side note there is also Masa 21 (マサ21) it is just over the Nagara river and about half way to Malera. Catch the same bus from stand 9 heading to Gifu university (岐阜大学) Masa is a pretty decent mall in its own right, has a good supermarket, foreign food store (Kaldi Coffee), food court etc... and there is also a really good Indian restaurant opposite it which does a great curry and one or two of the staff speak decent English (and probably half a dozen other languages as well!)

根尾 **Neo (officially part of Motosu City)**

Neo is a picturesque little village in the north-west corner of Gifu. It's a beautiful mountain town with a clean river and some little waterfalls that are great for swimming! Neo has an onsen that's quite nice too and is home to a few small campgrounds as well. You might even spot some monkeys scampering around by the side of the road. By far the most impressive thing about Neo is that it is home to the oldest cherry blossom tree in Japan! The people of Neo are very proud of this tree and have been taking care of it for over 1500 years.



Photo: Julie Beck

The best time to see Usuzumi Sakura is usually in the first few weeks of April when the blossoms change from a light pink to a greyish-white. To find out more about the tree and history of the area, there's a full museum dedicated to Usuzumi Sakura in the same park with videos, displays and everything you could dream to find about a cherry blossom tree. This summer, the cherry blossoms from Usuzumi Sakura will be sent into space. Yes, it really is *some* tree! Finally, your tour of Neo can be complete when you visit the earthquake museum and get up close with the fault line of the 1891 Mino-Owari Earthquake- the largest earthquake to hit Japan. Comforting thought, hey? Neo is located off Highway 157 about a

1 hour drive from Gifu city. If you want to take the train, get on the one-car Tarumi line train from Ogaki. Neo is the last stop, about a 50 minute ride.

Festivals (祭り)

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! And there are plenty more in neighbouring regions and prefectures.) Why not get a group together and go?

Gifu City

For further festival details and directions, go to http://www.gifucvb.or.jp/en/02_event/index.html

Bairin Park Plum Festival: early March

Where: Bairin Park

What: Plum blossom viewing- one of the first flowers to emerge every spring.

Dosan Festival & Gifu Festival: first weekend in April

Where: Downtown area

What: Includes a parade of floats honoring Dosan Saito, a warlord. 'Gifu festival' involves another parade of floats and lanterns, from Inaba shrine to Kashimori shrine via Kogane shrine.

Tejikara Fire Festival: second Saturday of April

Where: Tejikarao Shrine (Kuranomae). Take the Meitetsu Inuyama line to Tejikara (手力) station.

What: Men carry portable shrines with firecrackers exploding above them.

Nagaragawa Cormorant Fishing Opening

Where: The banks of the Nagaragawa

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

Chunichi Newspaper Nagaragawa Fireworks Festival (last Saturday of July)

Nagaragawa National Fireworks Display (first Saturday of August)

Where: The banks of the Nagaragawa

What: 'Rival' fireworks displays, held 2 weekends in a row. Fireworks are set off from the Nagara riverbed with Mt. Kinka in the background.

Tejikara Fireworks Festival: second Sunday in August

Where: Nagaragawa Park

What: A 'repeat' of the festival held in April. Portable shrines, fireworks, drums and loincloths.



Gifu Nobunaga Festival: first weekend in October

Where: Downtown area

What: Held in honor of Oda Nobunaga, who aimed to unite Japan from his headquarters in Gifu castle. Warrior procession, horses, flea markets, a marching band...

Hashima

Takehana Wisteria Festival: late April-early May

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

10 mins on foot from the Hashima-Shiyakushomae station on the Meitetsu Takehana line.

What: Takes place after the cherry blossoms have passed. You can view the purple flower clusters of hanging wisteria. These wisteria are over 250 years old and have been designated a prefectural natural treasure. On May 3, floats parade through town.

Yamagata

Chestnut Festival: second Sunday of October

(Furusato Kuri-matsuri, ふるさと栗祭り)

Takatomi (高富) is locally known for delicious Reihei chestnuts. To celebrate this there is a Chestnut festival at the beginning of October in Yamagata City. 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.

Neo

Usuzumi Sakura Hanami and Festival: early April

Where: If you're driving, follow the signs which remind you every 100 meters that you are approaching Japan's most magnificent treasure. If you're taking the train, follow the parade of families and obaa-chans who will inevitably be making the pilgrimage too.

What: See Japan's oldest cherry tree in all its blossoming splendour.

Kakamigahara

Sakura Matsuri (Cherry Blossom Festival): late March/early April

What: A canopy of cherry blossoms overhanging the river. Truly like another world.

Where: On the banks of the Shin-Sakae River and Citizen's Park. Take the Takayama JR Line train east from Gifu City and get off at Naka (那加) station.

Daianji River Firefly Festival: June

What: Fireflies flit around the river at dusk, creating a dream-like atmosphere! Peak viewing is June 15-25. Fireflies appear at around 7:45pm and stay for a couple of hours.

Where: Take the Meitetsu Kakamigahara line (runs between Gifu and Inuyama) to Unumajuku (鵜沼宿), the first stop West of Shinunuma (新鵜沼). Then 15-20min walk: turn left out of the station and walk North towards the mountains. You'll pass a MiniStop Convenience Store. Turn right up the hill (there will be a forest on the left, and a stone wall on the right). Walk until you reach the "river", a stone lined creek. Turn left and keep walking uphill towards the woods. There will be signboards with fireflies and lights along the way. Follow these past the construction until you find the quaint park on your right. If in doubt, simply keep following the river/road uphill towards the woods.