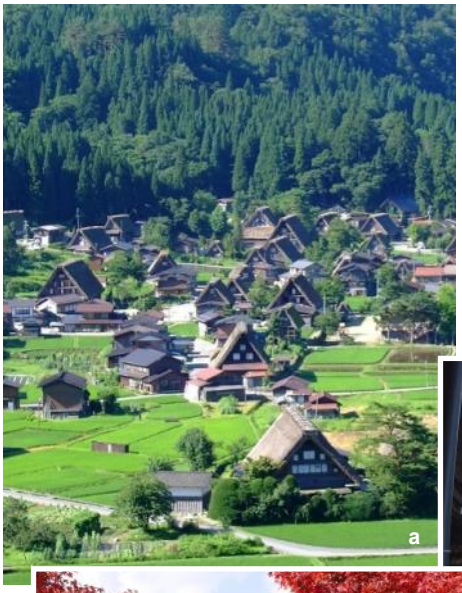
岐阜県～日本の原風景

Gifu Timeless Japanese Landscapes

Viewing the 3,000 metre high Northern Alps from the expansive Nobi Plain, that's Gifu Prefecture. The lives and culture of the people have been shaped by the clear streams and the landscape as it changes through the four seasons. In the ancient streetscapes of Takayama and in the postal towns along the Nakasendo, the key transportation route in the area, you can experience the nature, culture, traditions and history of Japanese landscapes untouched by time.



Gifu is proud of its … PLACES

World Heritage Site – Shirakawago Visitors come from around the world to visit Shirakawago [photo a] which was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1995. The passing of the seasons are fully appreciated here—cherry blossom in spring, fresh and vibrant green in summer, colourful leaves in autumn and deep snow in winter. The *kayabuki* roofs are born of centuries-long know-how, and people still go about their daily lives under the steep thatched roofs, passing on their traditions to the next generation.

Takayama Hida-Takayama flourished under shogunate control and the vestiges of that period are still to be found in "Hida's former capital". San-machi Street is lined with historic buildings and normally throngs with tourists [b].

Magome-juku Magome-juku is very popular with Western tourists. You can see beautiful Mount Ena, and lattice-fronted townhouses, teahouses and souvenir shops line sloping cobblestone streets [c].

… FOOD

Hida beef Japan's number one wagyu brand is Hida beef. It is a refined gentle pink with fine streaks of marbled fat. It melts in the mouth—a masterpiece of meat. You should definitely try Hida beef when you come to Gifu.

Dojo-hachiya persimmons With a 1,000 year history, the Dojo-hachiya persimmon is called the king of dried persimmons. They are grown in Minokamo city which happens to be the sister-city of Dubbo City in NSW.

… CRAFTS & SKILLS

Ceramics Tajimi, Toki and Mizunami Cities are famous for Mino-yaki. This area is Japan's largest manufacturer of ceramics accounting for 50% of domestic production. Visitors can try their hand at making their own.

Traditional Japanese paper – washi Among Gifu's Minowashi paper, the Honminoshi papermaking technique is registered on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List. When the British Museum and Louvre Museum use paper to repair Eastern artworks, 80% of the paper they use is Honminoshi paper. In Mino City you can experience making paper using the same tools and natural materials as the professional papermakers do, as shown below.

Woodwork In Gifu, traditional carpentry techniques live to this day. This craftsmanship is employed for building many shrines and temples including Yakushiji, Todaiji and Horyuji's Yumedono pavilion. These techniques were also used in the recreation of Heijo Palace and Heian Palace showing the golden age of Japanese architecture and "Hida skills" which still flourish.

Blades and cutlery Seki City produces internationally renowned blades and cutlery. While preserving traditional blacksmithing techniques, new products with a modern edge have also been developed. Overseas visitors enjoy the experiential activities on offer, including blacksmithing, sword-making and *iai-giri* demonstrations. *Iai-giri* is the art of quickly drawing your sword to make a cut and returning it to its scabbard, shown left in mid-cut!

CONTRIBUTED BY INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DIVISION, GIFU PREFECTURAL GOVERNMENT