GETTING HERE
JR Gifu Station → JR Takayama Main Line • Limited Express Wide View
Hida • 1 hr 20 min • ¥3,360 → Gero Station

MAIN FEATURE
Gero: A Hot Spring Steeped in History and Legend

The spring water bubbling forth from beneath the Hida River has been known and used for its recuperative properties ever since the Tenryaku era (947 ~ 956), giving Gero Hot Spring over a millennium of storied history. It really came to the forefront of Japan’s hot spring scene, however, during the Edo period (1603 ~ 1868) with the coming of esteemed Confucian scholar and philosopher Hayashi Razan. A distinguished servant of four successive shogun military commanders starting with Tokugawa Ieyasu, Hayashi proclaimed the best onsen in the land to be Gero, Arima (in Hyogo Prefecture), and Kusatsu (in Gunma Prefecture). He based this list both on his own personal experiences and on hearsay from others, and with the weight of his word, this ranking soon became fixed and accepted throughout Japan.

As legend has it, the “Medicine Buddha” Yakushi Nyorai, disguised as an injured egret, healed its wounds by going into the Hida River, thereby alerting the nearby villagers that there was something special about the water. This led to the discovery of the hot spring source in the river and thus the founding of Gero Hot Spring. The egret is therefore an important symbol in the history and heritage of Gero, and for this reason you will find its image all throughout the hot spring town. There is an abundance of public baths, spas, and ashiyu foot-baths in this district, making it the perfect location for a stroll in a yukata (summer kimono)! If you stay at a hotel or inn in Gero, you will be given a yukata there which you can wear outside; many places also offer rentals of colored yukata for women, to make the experience of the onsen district even more memorable!

“Funsenchi” Bath
Located right on the riverbed of the Hida River near the original hot spring source, the “Funsenchi” open-air onsen bath has become a symbol of Gero Hot Spring. This “fountain pool,” as the Japanese goes, is free for anyone - of either gender - to enter. A bathing suit is required, however, given how revealed the bath is to its surroundings. It offers a view of Gero’s hot spring town and the Hida River that is second to none, so do have a soak in it when visiting!

“Yu-meguri Tegata” Hot Spring Pass
Available for purchase at the Tourist Information Center next to Gero Station, at participating ryokan inns, and at souvenir shops, this Hot Spring Pass is the perfect solution for onsen lovers looking to try out a selection of different hot spring baths. The pass enables you to use the baths of any three ryokan of your choice from among the 20+ participating locations! You can keep the pass itself as a keepsake of your time in Gero! Valid for 6 months after purchase. ¥1,300

SPECIALTY PRODUCT
“Ryu no Hitomi” Rice
A new strain of rice discovered accidentally in Gero in 2000, “Ryu no Hitomi” (“Eye of the Dragon”) has garnered a slew of awards and a wealth of attention in just a short amount of time. With grains 1.5 times the size of other strains, higher elasticity and stickiness, a stronger fragrance, and an unusually sweet taste, “Ryu no Hitomi” is now definitively among the elite, premium rice brands in the country. Along with having won the grand prize at the annual International Contest on Rice Taste Evaluation, “Ryu no Hitomi” was also chosen as the best rice in Japan in 2007, 2008, and 2010 in a contest that surveys the general Japanese public! Be sure to get your hands on some while in Gero!

Available at the souvenir shop Shirasagi Yokcho
780 Yunoshima, Gero City ⑨ 9 am ~ 9 pm None ⑩ 0576-25-4580

From Mt. Ontake towering at 3,067 meters to Hida Kanayama located at 220 meters above sea level, Gero City lies over a vast area with a topography of many ups and downs. For this reason, visitors can see both sakura cherry blossoms in the spring and autumn foliage for longer periods of time than they would be able to elsewhere, as different parts of Gero bloom and peak at different times. Gero City is most famous for Gero Hot Spring, one of Japan’s Three Great Hot Springs. Gero Hot Spring is not just one hot spring that exists in Gero City; rather, the name encompassing the incredible number of different onsen that result from the spring water sprouting forth from the ground all over the city. Among these is Noigoro Hot Spring, one of the few onsen in Japan located at high altitude that remains open throughout the winter season. Gero is also home to bountiful natural environments, so you can refresh your body and your soul by immersing yourself in nature and (literally) in hot springs!
Enjoying Gero’s Many Ashiyu Foot-Baths

While it should be evident from the name alone, a foot-bath (called ashiyu in Japanese) is a hot spring bath meant for submerging solely one’s feet. Having said this, the genius of the foot-bath is that, simply by relaxing your feet in the bath, you are able to warm your entire body! Other attractive points of the foot-bath are the ease with which you can enter it - since there is no need to take off your clothes - and the ability for anybody to use the bath together, regardless of gender. Ashiyu have been shown to help improve blood circulation, relieve shoulder stiffness, and provide comfort to those who are sensitive to the cold. Because of all this, though your feet are the only body parts in the onsen, foot-baths induce a wider relaxing effect. In all, there are ten ashiyu in Gero’s hot spring district (refer to map for precise locations), most of which are free for anyone to use. Each has its own distinct character and flavor, so trying out a couple of them is a highly recommended way to enjoy the town! Note, however, that there are no towels available for use at any of the foot-baths, so be sure to bring one along if you intend to make use of the ashiyu!

Notes of caution upon using hot spring baths:
1. Wash your body thoroughly with soap before entering the bath. This is especially important for women in order to remove all makeup. This cannot be stressed enough, as if any amount of makeup remains, it will block the skin pores, thereby preventing the onsen water from doing its job.
2. Do not put the small towel you bring with you into the bath water. Instead, place it aside or atop your head.
3. After getting out of the bath, (as previously mentioned) do NOT take another shower or rinse yourself off. If you do so, the hot spring minerals will be washed away before they can act on your skin.
4. Similarly, avoid toweling yourself off thoroughly. Instead, do so as lightly as possible in order to prevent the dissolved minerals from getting wiped off.

The correct etiquette for taking a bath and tips for bringing out the full potential of Gero’s water:
1. Limit yourself to three onsen baths per day.
2. Stay immersed in a bath for no more than 10 minutes if it is very hot or 30 minutes if it is on the warm-but-not-hot side.
3. Make sure to hydrate sufficiently before and/or after using the bath.

Gero’s Famed “Water of Beauties”

The miracle effects of Gero’s onsen water that make it worthy of one of Japan’s Three Great Hot Springs:
• Gero’s hot spring water has been shown to help in the treatment of rheumatism, motor dysfunction, neurosis, and neuroparalysis. In addition, it is thought to promote post-illness recuperation as well as overcoming one’s fatigue. Its effects are such that places like hospitals and beauty salons have used the hot spring water from Gero in the treatments that they offer!
• The water makes one’s skin velvety smooth and beautiful, which is why it is particularly popular among the ladies! Gero’s is an alkaline hot spring that, with a PH of 9.2, has soap-like qualities that remove impurities and keratin from one’s skin and leave it with a smooth finish. In order for this result to be achieved, however (this point will be repeated), one should NOT shower again after getting out of the onsen bath!

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Gero and Frogs...What’s the Connection???

Just as with the egret motif mentioned previously, you will find images of frogs wherever you look in the town of Gero. However, the reason for the frog motif, unlike for the egret, is not all that profound! It’s quite simple: the “ribbit” sound that a frog makes is, in Japanese, “gero!” You will even find a Kaeru (“Frog”) Shrine in town filled with icons and depictions of frogs in every corner. Frog-themed souvenirs and cute frog illustrations of all kinds dot the townscape; the only things missing are real frogs themselves!

Frogs everywhere, including on manhole covers!

Gero Museum of Hot Springs

At this museum, one of the very few in Japan to specialize in hot springs, you can learn about them from both scientific and cultural perspectives! From the natural process by which onsen water sprouts up from the ground to the different types of hot spring water that exist to the healing effects that they have, there is a whole lot to learn! You can also experience first-hand the benefits of hot spring water via a special “Yakushi no Ashiyu” foot-bath that consists of two tubs, one with hot spring water and one with ordinary, cold water. Just by walking through both tubs, your blood circulation will improve - one of the many health benefits of onsen! ➤ 543-2 Yunoshima, Gero City 9 am - 5 pm (Last entry: 4:30 pm) ¥400 (Elementary school students: ¥200, Children younger than school-age: free) ➤ Thursday (Or the following business day instead when Thursday is a holiday), December 30 ~ 31

Gero Hot Spring Fireworks

Every year in Gero, some of the most talented pyrotechnicians in the country put together stunning fireworks performances that light up the sky! Gero’s specialty, it could be said, is musical fireworks, with the fireworks perfectly set to the timing of the tunes. The “Fireworks Story” performances that kick off each new year, while not musical, have particular themes that are embodied by the dazzling explosions of color in the sky, with a different theme every day.
• The annual winter fireworks performances known as “Fireworks Story” early January - March (Every Saturday): 8:30 pm - 8:45 pm
• Gero Hot Spring Winter Musical Fireworks August 3: 8 pm - 8:45 pm
• Gero Hot Spring Winter Musical Fireworks December (Every Saturday): 8 pm - 8:15 pm, December 24 (Special Christmas edition): 8 pm - 8:30 pm

Kaan Kankou data/language/e/
Gassho Village  下呂温泉 合掌村

An open-air museum that re-creates a village of thatched roof houses akin to World Heritage Site Shirakawa-go, the Gero Hot Spring Gassho Village offers a glimpse into the lifestyle of days long gone. The houses themselves, totaling ten, were moved from either Shirakawa-go or its companions in Gokayama (in Toyama Prefecture). Some houses display old tools and items, while others act as workshops where you can try your hand at crafts such as Japanese paper-making. But the most distinctive element of this museum is the Shirasagi-za Shadow Play Theater, where local legends are told in dynamic fashion by a theater troupe that specializes in kage-e shadow play.

Idenyu Morning Market  下呂温泉 いでゆ朝市

Held every morning except during the winter, the Idenyu Morning Market is a great place to get some local sake, folk crafts, pickled goods, and other specialty products of Gero at good prices. It also represents a chance to interact with the locals manning the market stalls!

Nawashiro-zakura Cherry Trees  萌代桜

This famous cherry blossom location has a mystical allure that most other sakura viewing spots simply cannot match. The two sister Nawashiro-zakura Cherry Trees, both around 400 years old, are located right beside a rice paddy that, when flooded with water, produces a stunning crystal-clear reflection. Furthermore, when the trees are illuminated in the dark of night after the buds have begun to open, the sight becomes all the more captivating! The trees take their name from nawashiro, the Japanese word for “rice seedling nursery beds,” because they bloomed right around the time when the villagers had to begin preparing those nurseries as they entered the rice-planting season.

keichan

keichan is a local dish of Gero Hot Springs (and other places in Gifu as well) where chicken meat is mixed with a soya-sauce or miso-based tare sauce and then cooked on a hotplate with cabbage and other sorts of vegetables. In Gero Hot Springs when barbecuing at home, making keichan is considered standard procedure. The fascinating aspect about keichan, however, is the fact that the taste and preparation method will vary depending on the restaurant or family that’s making it, so be sure and discover a style that you like the best!

keichan Sugi no Ko 1311 Ogawa, Gero City, Gifu (11 am ~ 3:30 pm) Monday 0576-25-7011 http://www.suginoko.net

Bosenkan 望川館

With a 3,630-square-meter Japanese garden perfect for taking a stroll and an open-air hot spring bath that holds 220 tons of water, this ryokan inn has many points in which it takes great pride.

Hotel KUSAKABE Armeria 下呂温泉 ホテル くさかべ アルメリア

You can get a complete view of downtown Gero City from our outdoor observation-deck baths because of the high elevation of our facility. Our hotel is equipped with great public spaces and quality services like an Aromatherapy spa, entertainment shows, and a Japanese-style bar.

Kawakamiya Kasuitei 川上屋 花水亭

With a beautiful sukiya-zukuri architectural style that incorporates many features of traditional tea ceremony houses, this inn prides itself on its “pure Japanese” elegance. You can enjoy local ingredients as part of the kaiseki cuisine - a traditional Japanese meal served in many courses - presented in the evening.

Kissenkan Chikusuitei 吉泉館 竹翠亭

At this ryokan, you can enjoy kaiseki-style meals prepared specially with vegetables grown in the inn’s own garden. The view from the outdoor hot spring baths is also superb.

Ogawaya 小川屋

This Japanese-style inn is located right in the heart of the Gero Hot Spring district and overlooks the beautiful Hida River. Perhaps the most unique element of this ryokan is its “Tatami-buro” hot spring bath, a large one around which Japanese tatami straw mats have been laid, something you rarely, if ever, see!
This hotel's wonderful Japanese-style rooms boast a fantastic view of the town of Gero and the mountains on the opposing riverside. Of the 44 rooms, a full 20 of them have their own private open-air hot spring baths attached, something that not many hotels can say.


Complimentary morning coffee (Valid until March 31, 2021)

One drink in the Lobby Lounge Evian (Valid until March 31, 2021)

An inn that pours its heart and soul into the Japanese cuisine served here. Additionally, among the guest rooms, nine of them each with its own charms and distinct atmosphere - have attached open-air onsen baths. 1268 Koden, Gero City 1 night + 2 meals: from ¥12,960 Gero Station → [15-minute walk] or [Courtesy car • reservation required] http://www.e-onsen.co.jp/reservation2.html

One drink in the Lobby Lounge Evian (Valid until March 31, 2021)

One of the largest ryokan in the entire Tokai region of Japan, Suimeikan boasts three large communal baths per gender, making it one of the ultimate accommodations for enjoying onsen. 2645 Yunoshiba, Gero City 1 night + 2 meals: from ¥17,400 (Tax not included) Gero Station → [20-minute walk] or [Courtesy car] http://www.suimeikan.co.jp/english/

One tasting set per guest of three famous sake made in the Hida region (Valid until March 31, 2021)

This relaxing location tucked far away from the hustle and bustle of modern life is the perfect second home for people looking to get away. Dinner consists of delicious and creative course meals made from seasonal ingredients arranged in subtle but bold fashions. 2505 Mori, Gero City 1 night + 2 meals: from ¥21,600 (including tax and service charge) Gero Station → [Courtesy car • 5 min] http://www.miyo21.co.jp/english/

Complimentary morning coffee (Valid until March 31, 2021)

Located in an area slightly removed from Gero Hot Spring is Mt. Ontake, referred to sometimes as one of Japan’s Three Sacred Mountains. Tucked away in the mountain’s foothills in the district of Osaka-cho is Osaka Falls, an area blessed with a lush and lively natural environment. There are over 200 waterfalls here (216 over five meters in height, to be exact), making it the place with the most waterfalls in all of Japan! The majority of these were formed when Mt. Ontake erupted 54,000 years ago and its lava, flowing through the area and drastically changing the landscape, solidified into magma rock. With the passage of time, water has eroded this rock (an erosion that continues, albeit slowly, to this day), resulting in the abundance of waterfalls. Each one has its own distinct look and refreshing feel, but aside from the waterfalls themselves, the rocks also take on very unique forms, making Osaka Falls a prime destination for basking in the wonder of Mother Nature! Selected as the very first “Gifu Brand New Treasure,” Osaka Falls is well worth the trip from the center of Gero!


Osaka Falls Courses

There are a total of 13 courses in the Osaka Falls area that take you in different directions to different waterfalls in the vast premises. The courses have varying levels of difficulty, so there is something here for everyone to enjoy, regardless of age, physical stamina, or mountain climbing experience! Split into Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced levels, the courses require differing amounts of time and are priced differently, as delineated below. Note that all Intermediate and Advanced courses require the hiring of a guide. A few Beginner courses do as well, but most of them do not require a guide and are therefore free of charge. In all cases, however, a donation of ¥200 per person, which goes towards upkeep of the area, is requested at the entrance in Gandate Park. Reservation requests and inquiries should be made to the following: NPO Hida Osaka 200 Falls Office E-mail: hidasaka200taki@ever.ocn.ne.jp

¥1,500 ~ ¥9,000, depending on the course (Children: ¥500 ~ ¥2,500) 0576-62-2215 http://www.osaka-taki.com/en/contact/index.html

Perfect for Beginners: The “Mitsudaki Course” (3 hours required)

One of the easiest and most accessible options, the “Mitsudaki Course” features a total of three waterfalls, including the Mitsudaki Waterfall that enters visitors with its gallantly cascading triad of levels. After getting off the bus, take a moment to stop at the “Ichi no Torii” Shinto gate before continuing towards Gandate Park and this popular course. Note: though not required, it is possible to apply for a guide for the “Mitsudaki Course” as well as for other Beginner level courses (the above fee will apply).

Osaka Falls: One of Gifu’s Greatest Gems of Nature

Himeshaga no Yu: Have A Dip in the Nearby Onsen Before Heading Back to Town!

Right near the bus stop is a hot spring facility called “Himeshaga no Yu.” Perfectly situated so you can wipe away the fatigue of trekking through Osaka Falls! The onsen here is of a completely different kind than the water of Gero Hot Spring, and in fact, it is drinkable! Savor some food prepared with this onsen water in addition to soaking in the bath from 10 am – 9 pm ¥650 (Elementary school students: ¥300) Weekly Wednesday 0576-62-3434

Mineral spring rice porridge