Gujo City is located approximately in the center of Gifu Prefecture and is a mountainous region that sees a fair amount of snow in the winter months. At its heart is the castle town of Gujo Hachiman, famous far and wide for the Gujo Odori Dance, one of the most famous traditional dance festivals in all of Japan. Another pride of Gujo Hachiman is its food replica-making industry, the largest in the nation. Food replicas, which you will see adorning the shop windows of restaurants all over Japan, were born here in Gujo, and over 60% of them are still made here to this day! Another defining characteristic of Gujo is the immense respect with which the pure, natural waters in the area are treated, creating a truly remarkable harmony between the town and its water sources. Finally, with these brilliantly clear waters, Gujo is home to the best ayu sweetfish in the country! A stroll along the old streets and among the quaint town’s many temples and shrines is a wonderful way to spend an afternoon during your trip to Gifu.

Gujo City is renowned for three things: the Gujo Odori Dance, the food replica-making industry, and the quality of its water.

**GETTING HERE**

- JR Meitetsu Gifu Stations → [Gifu Bus Hachiman Express Line] → 1 hr 10 min, ¥1,520 → Gujo Hachiman Yokamachi Plaza
- JR Gifu Station → [JR Takayama Main Line] → 35 min → Mino-Ota Station → [Nagaragawa Railway] → 1 hr 20 min, ¥1,850 → Gujo-Hachiman Station

**MAIN FEATURE**

**Gujo Odori Dance**

The Japanese summer is marked by the Obon season in which Buddhist memorial services are held in order to honor the spirits of one’s ancestors. Often accompanying these memorials are dance festivals featuring Bon-odori, a traditional type of Japanese dance. Among them, the Gujo Odori stands tall above the rest. Counted as one of Japan’s Three Great Bon-odori Dance Festivals, it is also the longest of them all, held over a period of 30+ nights (not all consecutive) throughout the summer.

The four-day period known as fetsuya-odori, or “all-night dancing,” is the climax of the Gujo Odori during which dancing continues all the way into the wee hours of the morning! Ten numbers make up the Gujo Odori songbook, all of which are simple enough that anybody can jump in and participate, learning by watching other people dancing nearby. Wearing a yukata (light summer kimono) and geta (traditional Japanese clogs) is customary and highly recommended, but don’t hesitate to enter the fray if you can’t get your hands on them!

- Various locations within Gujo Hachiman (Exact venue rotates)
- Mid-July ~ early September (Select nights): 8 pm ~ 10:30 pm (Saturday: until 11 pm; August 13 ~ 16: until 5 am the next morning) (http://www.gujokankou.com/en/02_sightseeing/02_02.html)

**Gujo’s Ayu Sweetfish**

The freshwater sweetfish ayu can only live in pristine waters, and when it comes to ayu cuisine, the purer the water, the more delicious the fish. Given the importance placed on clean water in Gujo, it is no surprise that ayu caught here are regarded as Japan’s gold standard! Best when grilled with salt on a skewer!

**Water: The Pride of the Town**

Throughout Gujo Hachiman, you will find small canals lining the roads that represent the strong bond that exists between the town, its inhabitants, and the clear water that is their lifeline. Originally constructed for fire-prevention purposes, these canals are now used by the locals to wash laundry, rice, and vegetables right in front of their houses! That’s how pristine the naturally flowing water is in Gujo. Of course, keeping it clean requires the cooperation of the entire town, so the fact that it has remained as pure as it is speaks to the vital role water has played in Gujo’s history and culture.

**SPOTLIGHT**

**A Winter Sports Paradise!**

A mere 30-minute drive away from Gujo Hachiman is Gujo’s more mountainous region that is characterized by a high concentration of ski resorts! Since there is heavy snowfall in this area, 11 ski resorts are available to choose from, and each year over 1.5 million enthusiasts make their way here to take advantage of Gujo’s cold winter season. In fact, Gujo has previously hosted the World Snowboard Tour, an official event on the World Snowboard Tour, which speaks to the quality of both the snow here and the slopes themselves! Come enjoy winter sports in Gujo from December to March!

(B) http://www.gujokankou.com/en/02_sightseeing/02_03.html

Gujo’s Food Replicas: Blending Art and Technology, the Old and the New

If you have ever traveled around Japan before, you undoubtedly will have seen the food replicas in the window displays of restaurants everywhere. There to entice customers and give them a concrete idea of what they can expect to be served, these replicas are a unique part of modern Japanese culture. Stuningly similar in appearance to the real thing, these replicas were first conceived right here in Gujo Hachiman! The father of food replicas - Takizo Iwasaki - was a native of this town, and it was here that he had his critical epiphany. As the story goes, as a child, Takizo saw a drop of hot wax fall from a candle into a puddle of cold water and was struck when, upon touching the surface, the drop bloomed into the shape of a gorgeous flower! This image would stay with him and become his inspiration as he aimed to develop a realistic way to mimic the appearance of food. Back in those early days, wax was thus used as the replica material, but today modern technology has taken on a much greater role. Wooden resin is currently the preferred ingredient, as it is both longer-lasting and more malleable than wax! However, while technology has allowed food replicas to be more faithful to the original dish, today’s replica-making workers are every bit the artists that were in the past. It takes over a decade to acquire the necessary repertoire of techniques, and the path to becoming a master is really no different than any traditional Japanese craft, from wood carving to lacquering. Working under a master and spending years perfecting the most basic of skills is required. In many ways, then, food replica-making is a true member of the long and proud tradition of Japanese crafts! At the same time, though it inherits this history, replica-making is innovative! Creating replicas that freeze moments in time - such as a bowl of ramen spilling over - is a novel technique now so frequently used that replicas can almost be described as being more realistic than the real thing! In addition, replicas are not necessarily restricted to food; food replica masters will also take orders for prosthetic limbs, for example, adapting their skills to the needs of the world around them! A craft that is a fusion of many elements, then, replica-making is a great source of pride in Gujo City.

Sample Kobo さんっぷる工房

Housed in a 150-year-old building, this food replica shop is one of the most popular destinations in Gujo Hachiman. When you enter the store, a variety of food-themed replica goods greets you, making this an ideal place to buy souvenirs that are extremely memorable and easily portable! In the back of the store is the workshop where all the goods are made, and it is arranged so that customers can come into the room to catch a glimpse of the production process. Finally, you can also try your hand at making a food replica as they did in the old days, with wax (at a cost • reservation required) 956 Hashimotocho, Gujo City 9 pm - 5 pm ● New Year’s holiday period (length of period varies)  Gujo Hachiman Jokamachi Plaza ➔ [5-minute walk] 0575-67-1870 http://www.samplekobo.com (JPN)

Chocolate replica keyholder with a purchase of ¥1,000 or more (No expiration date)

Sample Village Iwasaki サンプルビレッジいわさき

Creating food replicas from wax is an original Japanese craft that has been pursued since the Showa era (1926 ~ 1989). Sample Village Iwasaki was in fact the very first replica production company, started by the father of food replicas himself, Takizo Iwasaki. Here, you can purchase some wonderful, realistic replicas, watch the skilled workers making the replicas, and even try creating some yourself! From deep-fried vegetable tempura to lettuce, each type requires different techniques, so be sure to try a variety of them (at a cost • reservation required) 250 Jonancho, Hachiman-cho, Gujo City 10 am - 4 pm (replica creation is until 3pm) Gujo Hachiman Jokamachi Plaza ➔ [5-minute walk] 0575-65-3378 http://www.iwasakimokei.com (JPN)

One food replica keyholder for those signed up for the food replica workshop (Valid until March 31, 2021)
**Daihachi**

This restaurant is housed in an old *gassho-zukuri* thatched roof building and allows guests to savor the various flavors of Gujo City. From Hida beef and river *ayu* to edible wild plants and wild boar meat, you can experience the variety that comes with being in the middle of a bountiful natural environment. *Open: 11 am - 2 pm, 5 pm - 8 pm (Winter: 11 am - 2 pm, 5 pm - 9 pm) - Irregular closing days (Open on all weekends and holidays)  

- Complimentary morning coffee (Valid until March 31, 2021)
- 10% discount on the ¥13,000 lodging plan (Not including tax) (Valid until March 31, 2021)
- Hot sake served in bamboo for groups of two or more (No expiration date)

**Izumizaka**

This restaurant, set in a 100-year-old house, serves local cuisine such as Hida beef, *hoba* miso (miso paste and vegetables grilled over a magnolia leaf), and savory pancakes made with locally grown onions. Enjoy *teppanyaki*-style cuisine cooked on an iron griddle before your eyes. *Open: 11 am - 2 pm, 4 pm - 9:30 pm - Irregular closing days (Open on all weekends and holidays)  

- One soft drink or glass of wine (No expiration date)

**Sample Kobo Kitamachikan**

An extension of Sample Kobo's main shop, the Kitamachikan is a food replica-themed café whose soft-serve ice cream made with extremely rich milk is incredibly popular. You can also buy replica goods here in addition to at the main store. *Open: 7-9 Tonomachi, Hachiman-cho, Gujo City - 10 am - 5 pm - Irregular closing days*  

- One complimentary item off the menu (No expiration date)
- 10% discount on the ¥13,000 lodging plan (Not including tax) (Valid until March 31, 2021)
- Complimentary morning coffee (Valid until March 31, 2021)

**Shinbashitei**

A tasteful restaurant along the Yoshida River, Shinbashitei features seasonal cuisine, from wild sweetfish in the summer to *shishi-nabe* wild boar hot pot in the winter. *Open: 268-3 Sakuramachi, Hachiman-cho, Gujo City - 11 am - 2:30 pm, 5 pm - 8 pm - Irregular closing days*  

- 50% off for independent travelers (Valid until March 31, 2021)

**Sougian**

Sougian is located just above Sogi Spring, one of the very first water sources chosen for Japan’s “100 Remarkable Waters” list. Our Sougian Parfait is very popular and features the image of a Gujo Odori dancer. Please relax and enjoy our tea, the beautiful scenery, and sounds of the running water from the neighboring river. *Open: 82-10 Homachi, Hachiman-cho, Gujo City, Gifu - 11 am - 5 pm (last order at 4:30 pm) - Wednesdays - 5-minute walk from Gujo Hachiman Jokamachi Plaza  

- One green tea or roasted green tea with an order of dessert (Valid until March 31, 2021)

**Takara Gallery Workroom**

It’s said that Gujo Hachiman is the birthplace of silkscreen printing, and even now the tradition is continued and passed down as one of the local industries. We are a studio that was established in order to spread the word about this printing technique to as many people as possible, and provide a place where one can experience silkscreen printing firsthand. We offer printing workshops where you can create a *tenugui* hand towel (a must-have accessory for the Gujo Odori) or tote bag by combining your favorite patterns and colors! Our workshop includes a small gift shop, where you can purchase an assortment of goods ranging from screen-printing items to hand towels and wrapping cloths that were created with a variety of dying methods. Reservations are required for printing workshops. *Open: 470-28 Shimadani Hachiman-cho, Gujo City, Gifu - 10 am - 5 pm - From ¥1,000, Wednesdays and the 4th Tuesday of the month  

- 10-minute walk from Gujo Hachiman Jokamachi Plaza  

**Bizenya**

The oldest Japanese *ryokan* inn in Gujo Hachiman, Bizenya boasts a beautiful garden where guests can enjoy the changing colors of the seasons. *Open: 264 Yanagimachi, Hachiman-cho, Gujo City - 1 night + 2 meals: from ¥13,000 (Not including tax and other charges) - Gujo Hachiman Jokamachi Plaza - 1-minute walk*  

- Complimentary morning coffee (Valid until March 31, 2021)

**City Hotel Yoshidaya**

Located in the center of Gujo Hachiman, City Hotel Yoshidaya offers Western-style hotel rooms that are bright, clean, and comfortable, with three-quarter beds, baths, and wireless internet connections available. *Open: 160 Tonomachi, Hachiman-cho, Gujo City - 1 night + 2 meals: from ¥15,000 (Not including tax) - Gujo Hachiman Jokamachi Plaza - 1-minute walk*  

- Complimentary morning coffee (Valid until March 31, 2021)

**Hotel Gujo Hachiman**

Located right alongside the flowing Nagara River, Hotel Gujo Hachiman is one of the largest Japanese-style hotels in the area. Here, guests can enjoy free demonstrations of the Gujo Odori Dance and *taishu engeki* “theater for the masses.” *Open: 208 Yoshino, Hachiman-cho, Gujo City - 1 night + 2 meals: from ¥12,000 (Not including tax) - Gujo-Hachiman Station - 1-minute walk*  

- Complimentary morning coffee (Valid until March 31, 2021)

**Kikumiya**

At this Japanese-style *ryokan*, seasonal ingredients are used as part of the “macrobiotic” approach to dining which emphasizes grains supplemented with local vegetables. You can also enjoy sitting around a traditional *irori* sunken hearth. *Open: 883-1 Sakanamachi, Hachiman-cho, Gujo City - 11 am - 2 pm, 4 pm - 9:30 pm (Summer: 11 am - 2 pm, 5 pm - 8 pm) - Irregular closing days*  

- 15-minute walk from Gujo Hachiman Station

**Takara Gallery Workroom**

It’s said that Gujo Hachiman is the birthplace of silkscreen printing, and even now the tradition is continued and passed down as one of the local industries. We are a studio that was established in order to spread the word about this printing technique to as many people as possible, and provide a place where one can experience silkscreen printing firsthand. We offer printing workshops where you can create a *tenugui* hand towel (a must-have accessory for the Gujo Odori) or tote bag by combining your favorite patterns and colors! Our workshop includes a small gift shop, where you can purchase an assortment of goods ranging from screen-printing items to hand towels and wrapping cloths that were created with a variety of dying methods. Reservations are required for printing workshops. *Open: 470-28 Shimadani Hachiman-cho, Gujo City, Gifu - 10 am - 5 pm - From ¥1,000, Wednesdays and the 4th Tuesday of the month  

- 10-minute walk from Gujo Hachiman Jokamachi Plaza  

**Bizenya**

The oldest Japanese *ryokan* inn in Gujo Hachiman, Bizenya boasts a beautiful garden where guests can enjoy the changing colors of the seasons. *Open: 264 Yanagimachi, Hachiman-cho, Gujo City - 1 night + 2 meals: from ¥13,000 (Not including tax and other charges) - Gujo Hachiman Jokamachi Plaza - 1-minute walk*  

- Complimentary morning coffee (Valid until March 31, 2021)

**City Hotel Yoshidaya**

Located in the center of Gujo Hachiman, City Hotel Yoshidaya offers Western-style hotel rooms that are bright, clean, and comfortable, with three-quarter beds, baths, and wireless internet connections available. *Open: 160 Tonomachi, Hachiman-cho, Gujo City - 1 night + 2 meals: from ¥15,000 (Not including tax) - Gujo Hachiman Jokamachi Plaza - 1-minute walk*  

- Complimentary morning coffee (Valid until March 31, 2021)

**Hotel Gujo Hachiman**

Located right alongside the flowing Nagara River, Hotel Gujo Hachiman is one of the largest Japanese-style hotels in the area. Here, guests can enjoy free demonstrations of the Gujo Odori Dance and *taishu engeki* “theater for the masses.” *Open: 208 Yoshino, Hachiman-cho, Gujo City - 1 night + 2 meals: from ¥12,000 (Not including tax) - Gujo-Hachiman Station - 1-minute walk*  

- Complimentary morning coffee (Valid until March 31, 2021)

**Kikumiya**

At this Japanese-style *ryokan*, seasonal ingredients are used as part of the “macrobiotic” approach to dining which emphasizes grains supplemented with local vegetables. You can also enjoy sitting around a traditional *irori* sunken hearth. *Open: 883-1 Sakanamachi, Hachiman-cho, Gujo City - 11 am - 2 pm, 4 pm - 9:30 pm (Summer: 11 am - 2 pm, 5 pm - 8 pm) - Irregular closing days*  

- 15-minute walk from Gujo Hachiman Station