

Japan's Highest Altitude Mountain Castle with the Original Castle Tower

Bitchu Matsuyama Castle

Map of the Hilltop Climb to the Castle Tower

Takahashi City Tourist Association
(General Incorporated Association)

Ni-no Maru (Second Enclosure of the castle)

This is the most spacious area, providing visitors with a place for sitting and eating boxed lunch. You also have an overview of the castle town.

Tenshu (Castle Tower)

This mountain castle holds its surviving "Tenshu," or "castle tower" at the highest place in Japan. It is about 430 meters above sea level. It has two-levels with two stories but was designed to look like a three-story building. It was constructed to withstand a siege by enemies. Therefore it has two special rooms. One is a room with an "Irori," or a sunken fire place where meals could have been easily prepared when defending the castle. The other is a room called "Shozoku no ma," or the lord's living room. This area has an underfloor space filled with stones, where no enemies could enter. The castle has also a feature "Goshadan" or "Kamidana," a Shinto home altar, placed on the second floor. The Tenshu went thorough restoration activities in 1683 held by Mizunoya Katsumune.

Gozendana

In the old days, the meals were prepared here. Now toilet facilities are located here.

Umayaguruwa (Stables)

This is the place where horses drawn by carts were tied. It is similar to parking lots today.

Dobei (Mud walls)

Half of Dobei is original surviving until now, the remaining half has been re-created. The difference in levels of the wall divides the original wall from the re-created section.

Ohishi Kuranosuke Koshikake Ishi

(The stone on which Ohishi Kuranosuke sat)

The Mizunoya Family did not have any successors after the third generation, which led to the extinction of the family. The successor was Ohishi Kuranosuke from Banshu Ako Domain. The surrender of the castle was made without battle through a discussion with Tsurumi Kuranosuke, "Karo," or principal retainer of the feudal lord of the Bitchu Matsuyama Domain. The story of this successful negotiation has been called "the dialogue between two Kuranosukes."

Ohishi Kuranosuke Koshikake Ishi

(The stone on which Ohishi Kuranosuke sat)

Shimo Taiko no Maru site (Drum Enclosure on the lower hillside)

Onegoya Ruin

Onegoya Ruin

The Onegoya was the building where the lord of the castle spent his days. It also served a function as a political office. The existence of the Tenshu was relatively symbolic while Onegoya was the place where main political activities were conducted. Now the Takahashi Senior High School is located here.

Gozendana (Toilet)

Ni-no Maru (Second Enclosure of the Castle)

Umayaguruwa (Stables)

San-no Maru (Third Enclosure of the Castle)

Dobei (Mud Walls)

Fuigo Toge (Fuigo Pass)

Toilet

Naka Taiko no Maru site (Drum Enclosure in the middle of the hill)

Tenshu (Castle Tower)

Niju-yagura (Two-storied Tower)

Honmaru (Main Enclosure of the Castle)

Niju-yagura (Two-storied tower)

This yagura was constructed on the bedrock, north of the castle tower. It stands on stone walls which were built on the natural bedrock. This is a common characteristic of this castle.

Otemon site

Otemon site

After entering from Otemon, you can see stone walls. The most striking one is a cluster of stone standing on the right side of the gate. Those were built upon natural bedrock, then the dobei was built over the top of them. Natural resources which make this castle most appealing, are integrated with human skill, their collaboration is clearly presented here.

Naka Taiko no Maru site (Drum Enclosure in the middle of the hill)

This is a drum enclosure which was used for information exchange between Onegoya and Tenshu. This drum enclosure, together with another drum enclosure called "Shimo Taiko no Maru," worked together to convey information signaling with the taiko drum beats.

Toilet

Shiromibashi Park Parking Lots







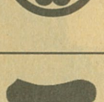
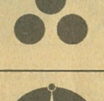






Fuigo Pass

This is a parking lot positioned at the eighth stage of Mt. Gagyū. This was the place where "the Sanfuri no Hoken," or "three treasured swords" to be dedicated to Goshadan were created. In order to create this offering, "the fuigo," or the bellows for forging, were installed here. Fuigo pass was named after this equipment. The 700-meter climb path up to Tenshu starts from here, which will take you about 20 minutes on foot.

Gotenzaka (Goten Slope)

Gate to the Path

List of Castle Lords and Their Crests

	Akiba Family Since 1240 Mitsuhikiryo	<i>Akiba Saburo Shigenobu</i> , who distinguished himself in the <i>Jokyu</i> Disturbance in 1240, came to this area to start his new post as “ <i>Jito</i> ”, an agent in charge of a lord’s manor. He built a fort on <i>Omatsuyama</i> , the peak of <i>Mt.Gagy</i> , starting the history of <i>Bitchu Matsuyama Castle</i> .
	Takahashi Family Since 1331 Sankaihishi	<i>Takahashi Kurozaemon</i> became the lord of the castle, but the reason for succession remains unclear. The fort area was expanded to cover <i>Komatsuyama</i> around this time. Here the castle tower still remains.
	Koh Family Since 1335 Kasanekuginuki	<i>Kohno Morohide</i> took charge of the castle. He was a son of one of <i>Kohno Moronao</i> ’s cousins. He became the lord of the castle with an arrangement made by <i>Hosokawa Yoriyuki</i> , but he was expelled to the <i>Bizen</i> domain after 7 years in the castle.
	Akiba Family Since 1362 Maruni mitsuhikiryo	After expelling <i>Kohno Morohide</i> , <i>Akiba Shigeaki</i> became the lord. <i>Akiba</i> ’s reign continued for five generations.
	Ueno Family Since 1504 Futatsuhikiryo	<i>Ueno Yoriyasa</i> restored <i>Ankoku-ji</i> , one of the temples that <i>Ashikaga Takauji</i> , the first shogun of the <i>Muromachi Shogunate</i> , ordered to construct all over the country. The temple was renamed “ <i>Ankoku Raikyu-ji</i> ,” after <i>Yoriyasa</i> ’s death.
	Sho Family Since 1533 Gunpai uchiwa	The <i>Sho</i> family entered the castle after defeating <i>Ueno</i> , and ruled for two consecutive generations. They later competed to keep lordship of the castle with the <i>Mimura</i> family, who was supported by the <i>Mohri</i> family. The combined forces of the two families, <i>Mimura</i> and <i>Mohri</i> defeated the <i>Sho</i> family, leaving the lord dead at the <i>Sho</i> family’s demise.
	Mimura Family Since 1566 Marunikenkatabami	After defeating the <i>Sho</i> family, the <i>Mimura</i> family moved from the <i>Nariwa Kakushu Castle</i> . <i>Mimura Motochika</i> became the lord after his father <i>Iechika</i> , who was assassinated by <i>Ukita Naoie</i> . Then the <i>Mohri</i> family and the <i>Ukita</i> family joined hands, which prompted the <i>Mimura</i> family to break away from the <i>Mohri</i> family. <i>Mohri</i> ’s forces of 80,000 warriors defeated <i>Mimura</i> , leading to the fall of the castle. (This battle is called “ <i>Bitchu Heiran</i> ”)
	Mohri Family Since 1575 Ichimonji ni mitsuboshi	<i>Mohri Terumoto</i> became the lord of the castle after defeating the <i>Mimura</i> family. <i>Mohri</i> engaged in battle against the <i>Oda</i> family over power of the <i>Bitchu</i> area. This castle had served as the foothold in <i>Bitchu</i> for the <i>Mohri</i> family until they were defeated in the Battle of <i>Sekigahara</i> , where they were forced to retreat to two domains jointly called “ <i>Bo-cho</i> .”
	Kobori Family Since 1600 Hanatsuki shippo hanakaku	After the Battle of <i>Sekigahara</i> , <i>Kobori Masatsugu</i> entered the castle as “ <i>Daikan</i> ,” a local magistrate for the <i>Tokugawa</i> family. <i>Masakazu (Enshu)</i> succeeded <i>Masatsugu</i> after his unexpected death. <i>Enshu</i> reformed the castle building and <i>Onegoya</i> , and created the temple garden in <i>Raikyu-ji</i> .
	Ikeda Family Since 1617 Maruni agehacho	The <i>Ikeda</i> family came from the <i>Inaba Tottori Domain</i> . <i>Ikeda Nagayoshi</i> developed new rice fields and expanded the castle town. After <i>Nagayoshi</i> died, his son <i>Nagatsune</i> took his place as the lord.
	Mizuno Family Since 1641 Maruni nihon omodaka	The <i>Ikeda</i> family had the castle confiscated due to the lack of a successor, and the castle went under the management of the <i>Bingo Fukuyama Domain</i> . <i>Mizuno Katsutoshi</i> , the lord of the domain was appointed as “ <i>Zaiban</i> ,” the caretaker of a domain without any lord.
	Mizunoya Family Since 1642 Hidari mitsudomoe	After shifting its territory from the <i>Shimodate Domain</i> to the <i>Nariwa Domain</i> , the <i>Mizunoya</i> family became the castle lord. <i>Katsutaka</i> conducted an excavation of the <i>Takahashi River</i> and opened <i>Tamashima Port</i> . Under the reign of <i>Katsumune</i> , the castle town was organized and the castle itself went through restoration activities. The family formed the basis for the domain but after the third generation, the family line ended.
	Asano Family Since 1694 Marunitaka no hachigai	Following the demise of the <i>Mizunoya</i> family, <i>Asano Takuninokami</i> came from the <i>Banshu Ako Domain</i> to accept <i>Bitchu Matsuyama Castle</i> . <i>Ohishi Kuranosuke</i> took care of the castle as the castle keeper or “ <i>Jodai</i> ” for one year.
	Ando Family Since 1695 Noborifuji	The <i>Ando</i> family entered from the <i>Kozuke Takasaki Domain</i> . <i>Nobutomo</i> became the lord after his father’s death and he was appointed as <i>Roku</i> of <i>Tokugawa Shogunate</i> . <i>Nobutomo</i> was well known as a cultured person of tea ceremony and <i>haikai</i> poetry.
	Ishikawa Family Since 1711 Janome	The <i>Ishikawa</i> family from the <i>Yamashiro Yodo Domain</i> was given entrance to the castle. They were then transferred to the <i>Ise Kameyama Domain</i> exchanging posts with <i>Itakura Katsuzumi</i> .
	Itakura Family Since 1744 Kuyodomoe	<i>Katsuzumi</i> from the <i>Ise Kameyama Domain</i> was given entrance to the castle. The domain school of “ <i>Yushukan</i> ” was established. At the end of the <i>Tokugawa</i> regime, <i>Katsukiyo</i> supported <i>Tokugawa Yoshinobu</i> and was appointed as “ <i>Roku Shuza</i> ,” or the head of “ <i>Roku</i> .” He hired <i>Yamada Houkoku</i> and succeeded in political reform of the domain. In the <i>Boshin War</i> , he was considered as a rebel and the Emperor’s enemy, but remained faithful to <i>Yoshinobu</i> .