**Introduction to Hamamatsu Castle Park**

Hamamatsu Castle Park is a verdant oasis in central Hamamatsu. It is a peaceful sanctuary despite its city-center location, and its wide-open spaces are ideal for picnicking, jogging, and enjoying the outdoors. The park surrounds the castle and includes public lawns, a café, and rest areas, as well as an exhibit in the castle keep of materials outlining the history of the castle and the surrounding areas.

Historically, the area was an important fortification during the turbulent period of shifting alliances and rivalries between local clans that began around the mid-fifteenth century. Near the entrance of the main castle gate stands a statue of Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616), who was lord of Hamamatsu Castle before rising to the rank of shogun. Hamamatsu was the place where Ieyasu battled and gained the strength to lead the Tokugawa to victory. The Tokugawa then established their government and ruled over Japan from Edo (present-day Tokyo), from 1603. The castle and park area is now a place for relaxation.

A traditional Japanese garden was added to the park in 1977 to commemorate the golden jubilee of Emperor Showa’s (1901–1989) ascension to the throne. In addition to a varied selection of flora including cherry trees, the garden features wooden bridges and ponds. Just north of the castle is Shointei Tea House, where a tea ceremony of green tea and sweet *wagashi* confections can be enjoyed while overlooking the garden.

Entry to the park is free, however, there is a nominal fee to enter the castle keep.