

Hagi Castle, also known as Shizuki Castle, was built in 1604 by the Mori clan. The Mori clan were the rulers of the Choshu domain and were part of an alliance against shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616) at the end of the Sengoku period (1467–1568). Ieyasu's victory at the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600 gave him the power to force the Mori to move to Hagi from their capital of Hiroshima. Despite being sent far from central Japan to a sparsely populated backwater where they were unlikely to threaten the Tokugawa shogunate, the Mori were able to turn Hagi from a remote delta into a major city. Hagi Castle was their stronghold until the late nineteenth century when they left to join the new Meiji government. In 1874 the government dismantled it and many other castles to clearly show that the age of samurai rule had ended. The grounds of the dismantled castle were made into a city park and were registered as a World Heritage Site as part of the “Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining” inscription in 2015.

The park contains several gardens, a Shinto shrine to the Mori family built in 1878, and a teahouse that was moved here in 1889. In spring, over 500 Yoshino cherry trees make this a perfect spot for *hanami*, the custom of celebrating the seasonal change and appreciating the blossoming flowers with an outdoor picnic.

Hagi Castle was organized into the following sections:

- The Hon Maru, the inner ring of defense of the castle and the location of its main keep and living quarters
- The Tsume Maru, a small fortress inside the Hon Maru on top of Mount Shizuki
- The Ni no Maru, the middle ring of defense that contained various gardens, temples, and shrines
- The San no Maru, the outermost ring of defense and the residential area for high-ranking samurai, beyond which lay the area for tradesmen that comprised the castle town