

Hiroshima Castle

Nicknamed “Carp Castle,” this towering fortress was built between 1589 and 1599. With its accompanying castle town, it laid the groundwork for Hiroshima to grow into a thriving industrial city. The castle’s formidable stone walls, keep, and triple moats (only one of which remains) were built by Mohri Terumoto (1553–1625), a powerful warlord who ruled over much of the present-day Chugoku region, which includes Hiroshima. The location for the castle, on the Ota River delta, was chosen because the flat land was relatively easy to build on and defend.

Terumoto was forced to abandon his stronghold following the 1600 Battle of Sekigahara, after which Japan became unified. Hiroshima Castle eventually passed to the Asano family, in whose possession it remained until the end of the Tokugawa period of rule by the samurai class, and the beginning of “modern” Japan, after the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Into the twentieth century, the castle became a key facility for the Japanese Imperial Army. The original tower was designated a National Treasure in 1931, and in the later years of World War II, armies were stationed here in preparation for an Allied invasion.

The atomic bomb of August 1945 destroyed the timber-built castle. In 1958, the castle tower was reconstructed in concrete, and is now a museum displaying mainly pre-modern artifacts and offering hands-on activities such as the chance to try on samurai armor. The sweeping view from the top of the tower is one of Hiroshima’s finest.