

Himeji Castle History

- 1333—With the outbreak of the fighting that would bring down the Kamakura shogunate (1185–1333), Akamatsu Norimura (1277–1350) builds a temporary fort on the hill that would eventually become Himeji Castle.
- 1346—Norimura’s son Sadanori (1306–1374) builds a larger, more permanent fortress on the site.
- 1545—The Kuroda clan takes over Himeji Castle.
- 1546— Kuroda Kanbei (1546–1604) is born in Himeji Castle. He will later become an important aide to Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598), the warlord known as the “unifier of Japan.”
- 1580—Hideyoshi takes control of Himeji, which becomes his base as he brings western Japan under his control.
- 1581—Hideyoshi orders construction of a three-story keep.
- 1583—Hideyoshi moves his base to Osaka and turns control of Himeji over to his brother Hidenaga (1540–1591).
- 1585—Hideyoshi’s brother-in-law Kinoshita Iesada (1543–1608) assumes control of Himeji.
- 1600—Following Hideyoshi’s death, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616) becomes his de facto successor by winning the Battle of Sekigahara (1600). Tokugawa Ieyasu appoints his son-in-law and close lieutenant Ikeda Terumasa (1565–1613) as lord of Himeji.
- 1601— Ikeda Terumasa begins construction of the current Himeji Castle.
- 1609—The main keep and its three subsidiary keeps are completed.
- 1617—The Honda clan takes over the castle after the death of Ikeda Toshitaka (1584–1616), son of Ikeda Terumasa.
- 1618—Honda Tadamasa (1575–1631) begins construction of the West Bailey.
- 1639—The Matsudaira clan become the new lords of the castle.
- 1649—The Sakakibara clan take over from the Matsudaira. Control shifts between the two clans for most of the next century.
- 1749—Sakai Tadazumi (1710–1772) becomes lord of Himeji. The Sakai control the castle until the start of the Meiji era in the nineteenth century.
- 1868—The Meiji Restoration ends the Tokugawa shogunate (1603–1868), and in 1871 the Himeji feudal domain is formally abolished.
- 1873—With the feudal era over, many Japanese castles are ordered demolished, but Himeji is one of fifty-six castles designated for preservation.
- 1910—Limited repair work is conducted on the castle.

- 1931—The main keep of the castle is designated a National Treasure.
- 1934—The first full-scale restoration in the castle's history begins (Shōwa-era Restoration).
- 1945—The city of Himeji is largely destroyed by American air raids, but the castle survives mostly unscathed.
- 1950—Restoration work, suspended during the war, resumes.
- 1956—Complete dismantling of the main keep for repairs is begun. The process lasts nine years.
- 1993—Himeji Castle is designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- 2009—Major restoration work begins (Heisei-era Restoration).
- 2015—The Heisei-era Restoration is completed.