

## **Inuyama Castle: Main Keep**

The main keep of Inuyama Castle features a castle tower (*tenshu*) preserved in the classic style, the oldest of five castle keeps in Japan that are designated National Treasures. The castle has withstood war, natural disasters, and the country's modernization movement when many Japanese castles were destroyed.

Inuyama Castle was built in 1537 by Oda Nobuyasu (d. 1544), uncle of Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582), when there was constant fighting throughout the country as regional warlords fought over territory during the Warring States period (1467–1568). The castle was on the frontline of many important battles because of its strategic location overlooking the Kiso River on the border of present-day Aichi and Gifu prefectures. Control of the castle thus frequently changed according to the victors of these battles and passed back and forth between loyalists of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616).

When the fighting ended with Ieyasu's decisive victory at the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600, the castle stopped changing hands as well. In 1617, the castle was given to Naruse Masanari (1567–1625), a senior retainer of one branch of the Tokugawa family. The Naruse family owned the castle for nearly 400 years, spanning the lives of 12 successive lords. There was a relatively brief break in that ownership in 1873 when the Meiji government ordered many castles to be decommissioned as part of the push to modernize. The castle was taken from the Naruse and many of the buildings were demolished. However, it was then returned to them in 1895, on the condition that they repair damage sustained during the powerful Nobi Earthquake four years earlier. The castle remained as property of the family until ownership was transferred to Inuyama Castle Hakutei Library in 2004, and was the only castle in Japan to be privately owned during that period.