

【*Ōhorikiri* and *Tenbin Yagura*】

Large Dry Moat (*Ōhorikiri*)

The *ōhorikiri* is a massive trench that separates the embankments of the Bell Bailey (Kanenomaru) and Drum Bailey (Taikomaru). The trench is spanned by an *otoshibashi*, a bridge that could be collapsed when the castle came under attack to create an impassable 8-meter drop. Charging into the castle, attackers would be forced to stop at the *ōhorikiri*, where they would be exposed to bow and arquebus fire from the pair of three-story turrets on the *tenbin yagura*. Although Japanese castles are often built on a series of raised earthen embankments, the combination of *ōhorikiri* and *otoshibashi* is rare. A similar earthwork lies between the west bailey and outer ward (*deguruwa*).

Tenbin Yagura

This turret, which guards the Taikomaru Bailey and by extension the main bailey, is called the *tenbin yagura*, meaning “scales turret.” The name is an allusion to the balanced, symmetrical structure of the turret, which resembles a scales. This turret’s aesthetically pleasing design is unique among the Japanese castles that remain today. Hikone’s *tenbin yagura* is thought to once have been the main gate of Nagahama Castle, not far from the east shore of Lake Biwa, which was dismantled in the early seventeenth century when the shogunate decreed that each domain could have only one castle.