

Osaka Castle Central Square

Buildings of various styles, from military bunkers to opulent mansions, have occupied the large square in front of the main tower since its construction in 1583.

The large, European-style building on the eastern side was built in 1931 and originally served as the headquarters of the Japanese Imperial Army's 4th Division. The building's brick exterior and art-deco interior—complete with stained glass windows—cost more to construct than the main tower itself. After World War II, the headquarters building was used by occupying Allied forces and, later, by the police departments of Osaka City and Osaka Prefecture. The Osaka City Museum occupied the building from 1960 until its closure in 2001. Another war-era building, the Air Defense Command Center, occupied a bunker to the south of the square until it was dismantled in the 1960s.

The other side of the square was once the location of Kishū Goten, an ornate, Tokugawa-era mansion. In 1885, the Imperial Army had the structure dismantled and moved from Wakayama Castle to Osaka Castle, where it was used to host the emperor during his visits. In 1931, when the new main tower and the army headquarters were constructed, a traditional Japanese garden was added to Kishū Goten. The mansion burned down in 1947, but the garden remains.

In 1898, when the castle was still under the control of the Imperial Army, a stone monument to Hideyoshi Toyotomi (1537–1598) was added to the square. Hideyoshi is remembered for unifying Japan under his rule and ending almost a century and a half of civil war. He built Osaka Castle in the final years of the sixteenth century, but the original fortifications were destroyed in 1615 during the War of Osaka (1614–1615). The memorial stands next to a camphor tree also planted in memory of Hideyoshi, who is said to have placed a similar tree at the center of the castle centuries earlier.