

Tange Kenzo and Imabari

At the Ehime Prefecture end of the Shimanami Kaido expressway is the city of Imabari. Popular for its sea views and local castle, Imabari is best known to architecture buffs as the childhood home of renowned Japanese architect Tange Kenzo (1913–2005). Although born in Osaka, Tange spent his formative years in Imabari, before going on to become one of the most internationally influential Japanese architects of the 20th century.

Tange's winning design for the Hiroshima Peace Center in 1949 caught the attention of architects around the world, and Tange became one of the first Japanese architects to work overseas, designing buildings and cities in countries including Italy, the United States, France, Saudi Arabia and Nepal. Some of Tange's most famous works in Japan include the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building and the Yoyogi National Gymnasium. Many famous architects learned their craft at Tange's architectural studio, including Isozaki Arata, Kurokawa Kisho, Maki Fumihiko, and Taniguchi Yoshio.

The Seto Inland Sea region is home to many of Tange's buildings, including Kagawa Prefectural Government Hall. But only Imabari has so many Tange designs so close together. Three public buildings, Imabari City Public Hall, Imabari Civic Center, and Imabari City Hall itself, form a public plaza at the core of the city, and all three were designed by Tange. Not only that, but the Imabari and Tokiwa branches of Ehime Shinkin Bank are also Tange designs. For anyone interested in modernist Japanese architecture, Imabari is an essential place to visit.