

## **Old West Pillar**

The main keep of Himeji Castle is supported by a pair of massive central columns known as the East and West Pillars. Twenty-five meters tall and close to a meter across at the base, the pillars anchor the building's complex lattice frame, each one supporting roughly 100 tonnes of wood, clay, and plaster.

On display here is the castle's original West Pillar. It was replaced in the early 1960s after three and a half centuries of service. The pillar is made from the trunks of two large trees—the top from hemlock (*tsuga*) and the bottom from fir (*momi*)—which the castle's builders expertly joined together with steel bands and rivets.

Originally, the replacement pillar was to be fashioned from the trunk of a single cypress tree, the same method used for the East Pillar, but the timber selected for the job fractured during transport from the mountains. Engineers responded by reverting to the original design, so the current West Pillar, like the old one, is composed of two sections that meet at the main keep's third story.