

Third Bailey (*Sannomaru*)

The large plaza just inside the Otomon Gate was once filled with buildings. Known as the Third Bailey (*sannomaru*), this was the administrative center of Himeji domain and the primary place of work and leisure for the lords of the castle and their retainers. Built by the Honda family, lords of Himeji from 1617 to 1639, its sprawling, palatial buildings shared space with tea houses, gardens, and ponds. A broad avenue 21 meters wide ran between the buildings of the complex toward the imposing white keep.

During the Meiji era (1868–1912), the Japanese government turned the castle into an army base and cleared all the buildings from this area to build soldiers' barracks. Today, two rows of gray flagstones mark the edges of the old central avenue and the foundations of the pre-Meiji structures.