

Otemon Gate and Sakuramon Bridge

Otemon Gate is the main entrance to Himeji Castle. It was once a much different structure: a pair of fortified gateways separated by an inner courtyard and topped by imposing guardhouses. The original gate buildings were dismantled during the Meiji era (1868–1912), when the castle served as a base for the Imperial Japanese Army, which needed a wider passage that could accommodate modern vehicles.

The current gate dates to 1937. It was built in the *koraimon* style, with a pair of auxiliary roofs extending at right angles from the gate's inner side to cover the open doors. Although *koraimon* literally means “Korean gate,” the design has little connection to the Korean peninsula, and the term was likely used to suggest an exotic style. The gate faces Sakuramon Bridge, which crosses the moat. The bridge was rebuilt in 2007 based on drawings of the original structure from the Edo period (1603–1867).