

## **Historic Himeji**

The samurai who served Himeji's daimyo lords lived in fortified neighborhoods surrounding the castle. Separated by moats and gates from the outer parts of town where merchants and artisans lived, the samurai district served as an important line of defense for the fortress.

The map shown here dates to the 1750s and depicts central Himeji as it was under the rule of the Sakai family (1749–1868). The castle is shown in beige, encircled by the inner moat. The samurai residences appear in light pink, with the names of the families who occupied them recorded on each property. High-ranking officials lived in large residences on the south side of the fortress, near the main gate. The smaller patch of dark pink on the castle's east side marks a residence used by the daimyo lord himself. Surrounding all the samurai residences is the middle moat, its perimeter marked with numerous gates that led to the outer city.

All the samurai residences in Himeji were razed during the Meiji era (1868–1912), when the government converted the castle and surrounding districts to an army base. After World War II, the northeastern section of the old town center became Himeji's administrative hub. The southern section of the middle moat was filled in, but elsewhere the moat and stone ramparts still reflect the former layout of the castle town.