

Himeji Castle

Most of the Himeji's castle town has been replaced by modern roads and buildings, but the castle's white keep still watches over the city. Built at the start of the seventeenth century and at the close of a long period of civil war, Himeji Castle was a crucial power base for the Tokugawa shoguns, and their appointed daimyo lord was effectively in control of western Japan. Although the roughly 250 years of Tokugawa rule was characterized by peace, most of the fortress's buildings were designed for warfare—nearly 1,000 gun and arrow slits dot the castle walls. The fortress contains more original buildings than any other Japanese castle today. In addition to the main keep, there are smaller subsidiary keeps, gatehouses, towers, and galleries. The mansions of the elite samurai families are lost, but the remaining structures hint at life among the Edo ruling class

The castle is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a National Treasure.