

Uzumimon Gate

Uzumimon Gate was a late addition to Himeji Castle. It was built in the 1620s, some two decades after the daimyo lord Ikeda Terumasa (1565–1613) expanded the fortress to its current size. Originally, the spot was an unbroken stone wall, but a hole was created to make an entryway. This style of gate is not unique to Himeji; *uzumimon* (“embedded gates”) are typically small, simple openings in the earthen or stone walls of Japanese castles. Once the inner gateway was excavated, a walled courtyard and outer gateway were added. Unlike the inner gateways at other castle gates, the one at Uzumimon did not have a watchtower built directly above it. Instead, a large two-story watchtower and guardhouse stood just west of the gate, guarding the castle town’s southwestern corner. The tower gave castle defenders a clear view of wall gates to the north and east, as well as allowing them to monitor traffic along the adjacent Saikoku Kaido, a major trade route.