

## Iwami Castle Site

Iwami Castle was a hilltop fort that in the 1500s was used to guard the main road between Iwami Ginzan and the coastal town of Nima, northwest of the silver mine. Nima was a stronghold of the warlord-led Ouchi family, which battled rival families for control over the mine from the late 1520s onward. The castle was built on the summit of Mt. Ryugan, a rocky outcrop 153 meters above sea level. The hill has steep cliffs to the south and east, making it a natural fortress. These directions were reinforced by the Ouchi, who dug a deep dry moat and built several embankments along the ridges to protect the castle keep, which stood on the narrow summit. The entrance was on the gentler-sloping north side, suggesting that Iwami Castle was mainly designed to protect Nima from enemies approaching from the south. The castle lost its significance and was abandoned after Iwami Ginzan was taken over by the Tokugawa shogunate (central government) in the early 1600s. Its site, now reclaimed by nature, can be climbed by taking a trail from the south side. In autumn, the Chinese trumpet vine (*Campsis grandiflora*) growing along the cliffs produces flowers that paint part of the hillside bright orange.