

Yonago Castle Town

Castle towns like Yonago were zoned so that samurai, who were trained for defense, lived in a walled district close to the castle. Merchants, artisans, and other commoners lived in districts separated from the samurai by moats, gates, and other barriers. In Yonago, the samurai residences have all but disappeared since the start of the Meiji era (1868–1912), when the samurai class was abolished. The former samurai district is now filled with modern businesses and government offices. The commoners' district, however, largely avoided development, and maintains its original urban scale and atmosphere.

The cherry tree-lined Kamo River is actually a moat that once separated the commoners' town from the samurai district. This intimate waterway is fronted by many traditional white-plastered warehouses built by merchants who used the river for transporting their goods, as well as shops, residences, and other buildings. The neighborhood is primarily two-story in scale, and many traditional shophouses line the narrow streets. Newer construction has largely maintained this human scale. There are only a few very large homes and establishments, like the traditional Sakaguchi residence and its 90-year-old Western-style office building next door. The Kamo River is crossed by numerous picturesque low bridges, and regular boat tours take passengers from this waterway to Lake Nakaumi and back through the Shinkamo River near Yonago Castle.

Yonago's commoners' town is bounded on the opposite side of the former samurai district by a very old temple district called Teramachi (temple town). Ten temple complexes and the monks who oversee them are part of everyday life in this area of Yonago.