

Tokushima Castle Museum and the Omotegoten Garden

Tokushima's rich history and culture are showcased at this museum located in Tokushima Central Park on the former castle site. Visitors can learn about the lives and influence of the prefecture's onetime lords, the Hachisuka family. The museum also provides insight into how such features of local culture as the Awa Odori (Awa dance) and the indigo industry fit into the overall history of the Shikoku region.

Although Tokushima Castle no longer stands, the extensive Omotegoten Garden remains. It is located next to the museum and can easily be viewed in the same visit.

Hachisuka Iemasa (1558–1638) completed the castle's construction in 1586, following his appointment as the first lord of Tokushima. It was torn down in 1875, like many other castles during the early years of the Meiji era (1868–1912), when such structures were viewed as relics of Japan's feudal past. Today, the stone walls are all that remain.

The Tokushima Castle Museum opened in 1992 on the same site. Its design reflects the traditional style of residential architecture, as it would have looked during the Edo period (1603–1868) when it was home to the Hachisuka family. Exhibits show their cultured and multifaceted lives, with artifacts such as armor, swords, and kimono. The family also appreciated art, and the collection includes some fine examples of paintings and decorated screens.

The museum displays historic maps and diagrams, giving a detailed look at life in Tokushima when it was a thriving castle town. Life-sized models of homes and shops depict the lives of the common people. A section on naval history includes the *Senzan Maru*, a whaling ship for the exclusive use of the Hachisuka lord in the late Edo period. Historians believe it is the only vessel of its kind in existence. *Senzan Maru* is designated a National Important Cultural Property.

Outside the museum, visitors can explore the Omotegoten Garden, formerly the front garden of the castle. It features such traditional elements as a landscaped pond and a *karesansui* rock garden. The warlord Ueda Soko (1563–1650), who studied under the legendary tea master Sen no Rikyu (1522–1591), oversaw construction of these grounds around 1600. Today the garden is a designated Place of Scenic Beauty.

A number of bridges crisscross the garden, including one that is 10.5 meters in length and made from a single unfinished piece of green chlorite schist stone. Visitors can stroll the garden freely. Children will enjoy exploring the garden's hidden charms and spotting the fish, turtles, and birds that make their home in and around the pond.