

## **Marugame Castle**

Marugame Castle overlooks the city of Marugame, the largest population center in western Kagawa Prefecture, from a hill called Kameyama. It is one of only 12 castles in Japan with a surviving wooden keep from the Edo period (1603–1867). The original castle was built between 1597 and 1602 by the Ikoma family, lords of Sanuki province (present-day Kagawa Prefecture). It switched hands from one daimyo lord to another and was modified and rebuilt several times over the centuries, notably by the Kyogoku family that controlled it throughout most of the Edo period. The castle was officially decommissioned after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, which ended samurai rule over Japan. Its distinctive three-story keep dates to 1660 and is, at 15 meters high, the smallest of the 12 remaining structures of its kind in the country. The keep, along with the Ote Ichino and Ote Nino gates, is designated an Important Cultural Property. Besides its buildings, the castle is noted for its imposing ramparts, which are thought to have made the fortress extremely difficult to invade. The ramparts, the highest of which measures 22 meters from top to bottom, form four terraces between the inner moat and the keep.