

## **Special Historic Site: Kumamoto Castle**

The scale and splendor of Kumamoto Castle, with its distinctive black-and-white coloring, place it among the top three castles of Japan. A castle was already standing in the southwest area of the current castle grounds when Kato Kiyomasa (1562–1611) was made lord of the northern part of Higo Province (now Kumamoto) in 1588. He started construction in 1599 on a new castle at Mt. Chausu to the northeast of the old site, completing the Dai-Tenshu main keep in 1600. When initial construction of the castle was finished in 1607, it had one keep, 49 turrets, 18 turret gates, and 29 castle gates, with 5.3 kilometers of surrounding walls. The Sho-Tenshu small keep was completed some decades later. The castle survived the 1877 Satsuma Rebellion and two major earthquakes—one in 1889 and another in 2016. A major restoration project is currently underway.