

Ogyu Castle Site

Ogyu Castle was a large mountain fortress that played a significant role in local armed conflicts from the 1400s to the late 1500s. Its site is located approximately 3 kilometers west of central Matsudaira-go, on a hill some 200 meters above sea level with views toward the city of Toyota and the plains of Nishi-Mikawa. The first known fort on the hill was established by a local warlord named Nagasaka Shinzaemon, who was soon forced to vacate it in favor of Matsudaira Nobumitsu (1404–1488) when the Matsudaira samurai family extended its influence south and west from Matsudaira-go.

Nobumitsu's grandson Norimoto (1446–1537) was eventually put in charge of the fortress, which he expanded and turned into the stronghold of his own branch of the family. This Ogyu Matsudaira family rose in local prominence in the mid-1500s, often fighting other branches of the Matsudaira family for territory and influence. Their strategically located castle overlooked the intersection of two major roads as well as a river. It was protected by dry moats dug into the hillside. Its winding approach and *koguchi* ("tiger mouth") entrance incorporated earthen walls and ramparts to allow defenders to look down on any invaders. Parts of these defensive structures are still intact. Watchtowers stood on the ramparts on both sides of the approach, which winds between several giant boulders that were used as natural fortifications.

The castle keep is thought to have been located on the flattened area near the top of the hill, though what that structure looked like is not clear. On the edge of the summit sits another large boulder that doubles as a lookout. Along the northern side of the hill are remains of narrow terraces fortified with stone that could have functioned as small dams used to collect water for the castle. The largest flattened plot of land within the castle's perimeter is south of the main hill and may have been the site of the Ogyu Matsudaira residence.

Considering that Ogyu Castle is thought to have been abandoned in the late 1500s, the castle site has been relatively well preserved. It provides insight into what Japanese castles were like before the widespread use of multi-story keeps (*tenshu*) and high stone walls.

Walking up the hill to the summit from the nearest parking lot takes less than 15 minutes.