

The Hayashi Residence

The Hayashi family were influential in Kochi, and their house was the base for the Liberty and People's Rights Movement during the Meiji era (1868–1912). The home was restored and updated in 2018, with a focus on preserving original design elements and materials. Many of the original features, including hidden stairways and escape routes, are reminders of the politically volatile days of the early Meiji era.

The house was built in 1889 by Hayashi Yuzo (1842–1921), the son of a samurai. Hayashi was a member of the new Meiji government that was established after the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate. However, after disagreeing with government policies, he resigned his post and instead supported the rebel forces in Satsuma that eventually staged an uprising against the Meiji government in 1877.

Hayashi was imprisoned for seven years for sending arms to the rebellion leaders and planning an attack on a government arsenal in Osaka. After his release, he was active in a series of political movements starting with the Liberty and People's Rights Movement and used his home as a gathering place for fellow activists and supporters.

The residence was designed with features to protect Hayashi and his cohorts from political enemies. A hidden room overlooking the entrance served as a lookout, where servants watched over the approach to the house. A tatami room on the second floor features removable panels in the floor of the tokonoma alcove for a quick escape to the floor below.

Two rooms at the front of the house were used to host political meetings. These large rooms have tatami flooring and are separated by sliding panels which can be opened up to accommodate around 100 people. Rare woods are used throughout, including cherry and Japanese ash, one of the world's rarest hardwoods. As part of the recent renovation, modern sliding glass doors and bench seating were installed along the veranda which surrounds the main rooms. Modern comforts such as air conditioning units are concealed behind decorative wooden slats in the ceiling. Woodwork throughout the house displays original techniques like *kanawatsugi* joinery, a traditional method of holding wood together without nails. The house was seismically retrofitted and modernized while keeping close to the original design. The historic residence is free to visit.

As part of the renovation, new facilities were added to the house to create a community space. A modern cafe echoes the traditional design of the house and reuses some of the original materials as decorative elements. Light meals are available, along with information about activities, and local products to buy. New restroom and shower facilities have been installed for visitors to refresh after their travels, and bike rentals are available. The Hayashi Residence is on a popular cycling route around Sukumo. Enkoji Temple, one of the 88 temples on the Shikoku Henro pilgrimage route, is within easy cycling distance.