

Moon-Viewing Tower (*Tsukimi Yagura*)

The Moon-Viewing Tower was constructed between 1633 and 1634, during the rule of Matsudaira Naomasa (1601–1666). Unlike the three original structures of the castle, the tower was built in peacetime and wasn't designed to withstand an attack. Instead, the tower was built as a place to entertain important guests, including the shogun himself.

In contrast to the narrow windows of the Great Keep, the Moon-Viewing Tower was fitted with sliding wooden doors on three sides that could be removed to afford a sweeping view of the main bailey and second bailey. Elements such as the elegant vaulted ceiling and vermillion-lacquered veranda indicate that the tower was likely built as a place where guests could enjoy a view of the moon above the surrounding mountains.

In 1615, the Tokugawa shogunate (1603–1868) prohibited the construction or expansion of castles, and they allowed repairs to an existing castle only by explicit permission. The construction of the Moon-Viewing Tower may have been made possible because Naomasa was a grandson of the first shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616). The tower is said to have been built for a planned visit by the third shogun, Tokugawa Iemitsu (1604–1651), who would have passed through on his return from a pilgrimage to nearby Zenkōji Temple. However, a rockslide forced Iemitsu to take a different route, and he never visited Matsumoto.

Matsumoto Castle is one of only three surviving castles that have a moon-viewing tower. This tower is uniquely connected directly to the keep rather than being a detached structure.