

Ōtemon Gate

The Ōtemon Gate that once stood at this location was used by the lord of Matsumoto Castle and other high-ranking visitors. The gate divided the outer town, where commoners and low-ranking samurai lived, from the fortified district that encircled the castle. The Ōtemon Gate was torn down in the first decade of the Meiji era (1868–1912), but its position relative to the castle and the outermost moat is shown by the red circle on the map (upper right).

The Ōtemon Gate comprised two gates at opposite ends of an enclosed square called a *masugata*. A gate at the southwestern corner of the square connected it to the town, and a much larger and grander gate on the north side led toward the castle.

The square was almost completely surrounded by the outermost moat, making it difficult to scale or breach the walls. This design functioned to create a bottleneck, allowing a small number of defenders to hold off attackers attempting to force their way into the inner castle district.

When the gate was torn down, some of its stones were reused to build Sensaibashi Bridge to the south. Excavations in 2012 also uncovered a portion of the square's eastern stone wall. From this, researchers determined the original size and orientation of the gate. They also discovered roof tiles stamped with the crests of the Mizuno family, who ruled between 1642 and 1725, and the Toda family, whose latter period of rule lasted from 1726 to 1869.