

Kuromon Gate

(1) Inner Gate (*Ichino Mon*)

The Kuromon Gate is now the only entrance to the main bailey. Prior to the late nineteenth century, however, this entrance was reserved for use by the castle lord and high-ranking visitors. A smaller gate located in the northeast of the main bailey would have been used by samurai and workers going about their daily activities.

The word *kuromon* literally means “black gate,” but this name was not necessarily chosen because of the structure’s color. Rather, it reflected the gate’s intended purpose. At the time the gate was built, the color black was associated with formal, public affairs. Buildings and rooms sometimes had “black” in their names to reflect their public-facing roles or uses.

The original Kuromon Gate was demolished in 1871, and the current inner gate was rebuilt in 1960. It is said that, because there were no surviving blueprints available, the architect Ichikawa Kiyosaku based the gate on one at Nagoya Castle. Roof tiles preserved from the castle repairs that took place in the 1950s were reused when constructing the inner gate in 1960. Many of these roof tiles bear the family crests of the different lords that ruled Matsumoto Castle over the centuries.

(2) Outer Gate (*Nino Mon*) and Courtyard (*Masugata*)

The inner square of the Kuromon Gate was created as an additional defensive measure: enemies attempting to enter the main bailey would be completely exposed to musket fire while attempting to cross the square. The current outer gate was rebuilt in 1989.

Taikomon Gate

During the Edo period (1603–1867), the Taikomon Gate was the main entrance to the second bailey. Like much of the castle, the gate and portions of the surrounding stone wall were demolished in the Meiji era (1868–1912).

The current Taikomon Gate was built in 1999 based on an illustrated map of the castle grounds from the early 1700s. The cypress wood used for the gate is 400 years old, but 140-year-old pine timbers were used for the gate’s large, horizontal beams. The gate’s eastern side is equipped with loopholes and an *ishi otoshi*, through which defenders could shoot bows and muskets.

The construction date of the original Taikomon Gate is unknown, but it is believed that it was built between 1590 and 1613, when the castle was ruled by the Ishikawa family. Roof tiles covered in gold leaf dating from this period were discovered during excavations around the Taikomon Gate and are now displayed at the Matsumoto City Museum.

(1) Drum Platform

The original Taikomon Gate was named after the drum tower on its north side, which was the location of a *taiko* drum and a bell. These instruments were used to announce

the time or alert the surrounding town in the event of an attack.

(2) The Genba Stone

The single largest stone at Matsumoto Castle, called the “Genba Stone,” is located at the corner of the Taikomon Gate. The stone measures 4.5 meters in height and 1.5 meters across and weighs an estimated 22.5 tons. It would have taken an incredible amount of manpower to transport the stone to the castle.

Legend says Ishikawa Yasunaga (1554–1642), the second lord of Matsumoto Castle, rode atop the Genba Stone as it was dragged from the mountains. When one of the laborers complained, Ishikawa dismounted the stone, cut off the man’s head, and stuck it on the end of a spear. Climbing back up the rock, he hoisted the spear high in the air and yelled for everyone to start moving again. Thus, the Genba Stone is said to be named after Ishikawa, who served as the top official in a government office called the *genba no kami*.