

The History of Matsumoto Castle

Before the Construction of Matsumoto Castle

(1) Various Mountain Castles

Even before Matsumoto Castle was built in the late sixteenth century, the surrounding mountains were dotted with castles. During the many regional conflicts of the Warring States period (1467–1600), warlords called “daimyos” built networks of wooden or stone castles to defend their territories. These are a few representative examples of the fortifications that stood in the mountains surrounding the Matsumoto basin.

1. Hayashi Castle (Ōjō and Kojō)

Hayashi Castle was built by the Ogasawara family, who governed Shinano Province (now Nagano Prefecture), of which Matsumoto domain was a part. Hayashi Castle stood in what is now the Yamabe District of Matsumoto. It comprised two separate structures called “Ōjō” and “Kojō” that were located on opposite ends of a horseshoe-shaped mountain ridge. In 1550, the powerful daimyo Takeda Shingen (1521–1573) attacked the area, and the Ogasawara abandoned Hayashi Castle. Portions of the stone wall that surrounded the central bailey at Kojō still remain today.

2. Kiriwara Castle and Yamabe (Nakairi) Castle

These two castles were located deep in the mountains beyond Hayashi Castle. Kiriwara Castle belonged to the Kiriwara family and was positioned on a strategic mountain pass. Yamabe Castle, also called Nakairi Castle, belonged to the Yamabe family. Its 2.5-meter-high stone walls are still visible at the site today.

3. Haibara Castle

Haibara Castle was a large castle located in what is now the Nakayama District of Matsumoto. It is not known which warlord built this castle.

4. Shinagura Castle

Located in what is now the Okada District of Matsumoto, Shinagura Castle was controlled by the Gochō family.

5. Kokūzōsan Castle

Kokūzōsan Castle originally belonged to the Aida family and stood in what is now the Aida District of Matsumoto. Following the defeat of the Ogasawara family by the armies of Takeda Shingen in 1550, Kokūzōsan Castle occupied a frontline in the fighting between Takeda and his longtime rival, Uesugi Kenshin (1530–1578). Uesugi was based in Echigo Province (now Niigata Prefecture), to the north of Matsumoto.

6. Hirase Castle

Located in what is now the Shimauchi District of Matsumoto, Hirase Castle was controlled by the Hirase family. The Ogasawara family took refuge at Hirase Castle after being forced to flee Hayashi Castle in 1550. It was from Hirase Castle that the Ogasawara family planned their counterattack.

7. Inukai Castle

The Jōyama District of Matsumoto once belonged to the Inukai family, and they built a fort at this site in the 1400s. Today, the area is a popular place to view cherry blossoms in spring.

8. Igawa Castle

Unlike other castles in this region, Igawa Castle was built on the plains rather than in the mountains. It was the original base of the Ogasawara family until the construction of Hayashi Castle.

9. Shimizu Castle

It is thought that Shimizu Castle was controlled by the Shimadachi family, who were retainers of the Ogasawara family. The castle occupied what is now the Shimadachi District of Matsumoto. Although little remains at the site today, Shimizu Castle is another example of a castle built on the plains, like Igawa Castle.

稲倉城	Shinagura Castle
伊深城	Ibuka Castle
平瀬城	Hirase Castle
早落城	Hayaochi Castle
横屋入城	Yokoyairi Castle
犬甘城	Inukai Castle (Jōyama)
桐原城	Kirihara Castle
深志城	Fukashi Castle
清水城	Shimizu Castle
林城	Hayashi Castle
中入城	Nakairi Castle
井川城	Igawa Castle
檜垣原城	Haibara Castle
小屋城	Koya Castle
赤木城	Akagi Castle
八間長者城	Hakken-chōja Castle

『わたしたちの松本城』P.58 から	Source: <i>Watashitachi no Matsumoto-jō</i> (Our castle, Matsumoto castle), p. 58.
井川城	Igawa Castle
若宮八幡跡	Former Site of Wakamiya Hachiman Shrine

(2) Fukushima Castle

It is thought that prior to the construction of Matsumoto Castle, the site was occupied by a smaller fortification called Fukushima Castle. However, little is definitively known about this earlier structure or how its layout might have influenced the subsequent layout of Matsumoto Castle.

During the early Muromachi period (1336–1573), the small township of Fukushima-gō was ruled by the Sakanishi family, and it is thought they had some form of fortified manor there. It was only later, in 1504, that a retainer of the Ogasawara family named Shimadachi Sadanaga (d. 1517) built Fukushima Castle.

The Ogasawara family controlled the area around Matsumoto for many years, but in 1550 a neighboring daimyo named Takeda Shingen (1521–1573) attacked Hayashi Castle and drove Ogasawara Nagatoki (1514–1583) to the north. Shingen then established his regional headquarters at Fukushima Castle, and it is likely that he made repairs and expanded the fortifications.

Shingen's descendants controlled Fukushima Castle until 1582, when the Takeda family was wiped out by Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582). The area then came under the control of the warlord Uesugi Kenshin (1530–1578), who placed Fukushima Castle in the hands of one of his retainers. Ogasawara Nagatoki's son Ogasawara Sadayoshi (1546–1595) later took back control of Fukushima Castle, and to mark the return of the Ogasawara family to the area, he gave the region a new name: "Matsumoto."

Despite their victory, the Ogasawara family did not remain in Matsumoto for long. In 1590, only eight years after their long-awaited return, they were relocated to eastern Japan. This relocation was ordered by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598), the most powerful daimyo at the time, who granted control of Matsumoto to his ally Ishikawa Kazumasa (d. 1592).