

Preserving Matsumoto Castle for Future Generations

Historic Sites around Matsumoto Castle

Five buildings of Matsumoto Castle are designated National Treasures: the Great Keep, the Northwest Tower, the Roofed Passage, the Southeast Wing, and the Moon-Viewing Tower. However, in its heyday Matsumoto Castle was an elaborate complex of multiple baileys, moats, stone walls, and gated entrances. Many of these structures were designated National Historic Sites in 1930.

The grounds of Matsumoto Castle today consist mainly of the first and second baileys. During the Edo period (1603–1867), the castle was surrounded by a much larger third bailey that extended all the way to the Ōtemon Gate in the south, near to where Yohashira Jinja Shrine is located today. With the rapid modernization that marked the advent of the Meiji era (1868–1912), the local government decided that there were more beneficial uses for the expansive castle grounds. Workers filled in the moats and flattened the earthen embankments, turning the third bailey into a public, urban space.

The first and second baileys were protected as National Historic Sites in 1930 during the Showa era (1926–1989). However, much of the grounds was still occupied by non-protected buildings, such as a courthouse and a school. These other facilities were later relocated to protect the historical integrity of the site, after which the castle grounds were turned into what is now Matsumoto Castle Park. While very few sections of the moats remain, a section of the outermost moat and one segment of the earthen embankments are also preserved as National Historic Sites.

The image below was created by overlapping an illustrated map of the castle, created in 1728, with a map used for urban planning created in 2004. Residential and commercial buildings now occupy most of the land reclaimed from the outer moat and outermost moat.

史跡標柱、昭和 5 年に指定されたことが書かれている	A marker commemorating the National Historic Site designation in 1930.
わずかに残された総堀	The last remaining section of the outermost moat.
西総堀土塁公園	Nishi-sōbori Dorui Park, a preserved segment of the earthen embankments.
『享保 13 年（1728）秋改松本城下絵図』による城郭と城下町の復元図（平成 16 年の都市計画図に重ねてある） 町名は同上絵図に載っている名称を主とし、絵図にな	Note: A recreation of the <i>Kyōhō jūsan-nen aki aratame Matsumoto jōka ezu</i> (Map of the castle town, 1728) has been overlaid atop an urban planning map from 2004. The names of the various areas have been taken from the former, 1728 map; names that do not appear on that map are marked in parentheses.

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Preservation of Historic Sites

After the Edo period ended in 1867, many structures at Matsumoto Castle were demolished. The buildings that remained included the five main structures of the castle, the Ninomaru Goten, and a tower located at the southern corner of the second-bailey wall. However, the Ninomaru Goten burned down in 1876, and the tower was eventually demolished as well, leaving only the castle itself and a few sections of the walls and moats.

In the 1950s, the five buildings of the castle underwent massive repairs, and portions of the walls of the Kuromon Gate and the inner moat were restored. The aim of these renovations and all subsequent work on the areas designated National Historic Sites has been to restore them to the way they looked between 1850 and 1860. Other major projects include the reconstruction of the inner portion of the Kuromon Gate in 1960 and the Taikomon Gate in 1999. The continuing efforts to preserve not only the parts of Matsumoto Castle that are designated National Treasures but also those designated National Historic Sites represent a collaboration between researchers, experts, and local staff.

Although the stone-wall foundation of Matsumoto Castle has stood for over 400 years, sections of it occasionally bulge out or collapse. Repairing the foundation is an important part of preserving the castle for future generations. In 2014, a portion near the Uzumimon Gate was repaired after having been damaged by an earthquake three years earlier. At that time, a part of the stone wall to the west of the Ninomaru Goten site was also repaired after the roots of a nearby zelkova tree intruded into it. Rebuilding the Edo-period walls requires considerable time and expense, but the work has been made possible with aid from the national and prefectural governments.

A large project is currently in the works to recreate the southern and western portions of the outer moat that were reclaimed in 1919. This is just one part of the continuing efforts to restore the castle to its nineteenth-century appearance.

平成 23 年の地震によって傷んだ埋門 南側石垣の改修	Repairs to the stone wall near the Uzumimon Gate that had been damaged by an earthquake
ケヤキの根によって傷んだ内堀の二の 丸御殿跡西側石垣を改修	Repairs to the stone wall near the Ninomaru Goten site that had been damaged by tree roots