

## **Odani Castle Sengoku Historical Museum**

Today, all that remains of Odani Castle is a series of hilltop earthworks that command sweeping views of Nagahama and Lake Biwa. Before hiking to the top, visitors can tour the museum at the base of the hill, which introduces the history of the fortress and the daimyo who fought to control it.

Odani Castle was the bastion of the Azai family, the samurai lords who governed this part of Ōmi Province in the sixteenth century. In 1570, the Azai were defeated in battle by a powerful rival, Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582), and they retreated to Odani Castle. The two sides clashed for three years, until Nobunaga's vassal Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598) finally stormed the fortress and captured it.

The castle museum displays maps, diagrams, and dioramas, as well as descriptions (in Japanese) of members of the Azai family, who governed for three generations. The Azai had complicated ties to their enemies: Azai Nagamasa (1545–1573), the last Azai lord, was the brother-in-law of Nobunaga, his nemesis, and Nagamasa's own daughter later married Hideyoshi.

The castle's fortifications lay along two parallel mountain ridges that meet at a 495-meter peak. Hiking the full 5-kilometer circuit takes about two and a half hours.