

What to See at the Naegi Castle Site

The castle stands on a natural outcrop of gigantic boulders and commands a 360-degree view of the surrounding territory. The retaining walls in various styles of stonework that can be seen on the mountain were skillfully built among existing rocks and boulders to support the approach and castle structures.

The main gate of the castle is located at the foot of the mountain on the north bank of the Kiso River. A steep path with 48 sharp turns leads to the top of the mountain from the main gate. The main keep (*tenshu*) of the castle stood on the summit, and other gates and buildings originally stood along the path.

1. Site of foot soldier headquarters

There were several buildings at the base of the mountain where foot soldiers would stop to report for duty before entering the castle. Foot soldiers were the lowest-ranking samurai and typically fought on the front lines during battles. The original buildings included a captain's office and facilities for training.

2. Site of Oyagura Tower

A three-story watchtower was built here in the mid-seventeenth century. It was the largest watchtower in the castle complex. The stone walls enclosing the first floor, which was mainly used for storage, remain standing. Loopholes in the walls were used in defense of the north side of the castle.

3. Site of the second enclosure

The *ninomaru* enclosure (secondary circle of defense) was the location of the Toyama family residence and had rooms for retainers to assemble in.

4. Site of the Sengoku well

Despite its high elevation on the mountain near the main keep, this well is known as never having gone dry, even in the worst drought. Its name, “one thousand stones,” derives from the reputation it has held as a well that could provide water for “a thousand” (that is, “many”) people. Clean water can still be drawn from the well today.

5. Site of the weapons storehouse

This storehouse was primarily used to store guns and bows. Most of the foundation and edging stones under the eaves remain as they once were.

6. Site of the Kasagiyagura Tower

A three-story watchtower stood on this site on the west side of the *honmaru* (main enclosure). Note that the structure would have been built on top of a group of huge boulders. It commands a fine view of Mt. Kasagi to the west.

7. The main keep

The main keep of the castle was built on a series of support pillars directly atop two colossal boulders at the mountain’s summit. Its original dimensions were 9 meters wide by 11 meters long. The keep was designed to appear on the outside as three-stories high to deceive enemies. On the inside, however, the true dimensions of the bottom two levels made them too small to be occupied.

8. *Horse-Washing Boulder (The Uma Arai Iwa)*

According to castle legend, after an enemy attacked and cut off the water supply, a horse was led atop this rock (about 45 meters in circumference) and washed with rice to deceive the enemy into believing that the occupants of the castle still had plenty of water.