

Kushima Castle: Main Bailey Site

On this site stood the single-story residence of the lord of Omura within the main enclosure (*honmaru*) of Kushima Castle. The castle had no central keep but was protected by Omura Bay and a system of inner and outer moats that effectively made the castle site an island.

Kushima Castle was built in 1599 on the orders of Omura Yoshiaki (1569–1616), the first daimyo lord of the Omura domain. Yoshiaki was given the title by imperial regent Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598), then de facto ruler of Japan, for his support in Hideyoshi's campaign to conquer Kyushu in 1587. On Hideyoshi's death in 1598, Yoshiaki took steps to maintain his control of Omura, anticipating the power struggle between the rival Toyotomi and Tokugawa families. He ordered the construction of Kushima Castle on Omura Bay, and moved his family from their smaller inland castle to this more fortified position after the castle was completed. The main bailey was on the north side of the castle complex, closest to the mainland, and was protected by two walled compounds with residences for the lord's retainers.

The Tokugawa shogunate came to an end in 1867, when the political power of the emperor was restored. The new Meiji government ordered many castles to be demolished in a bid to strip regional lords of their power and modernize the country. Most of the buildings of Kushima Castle were razed, but the Omura family was allowed to keep the Kajiyama Goten, a smaller residence in the southern corner of the castle grounds. Sumihiro (1831–1882), the last lord of Omura, was born at Kushima Castle but lived most of his life in Edo, which later became Tokyo. Omura Shrine was relocated from an inland site to the castle grounds in 1884 to enshrine generations of the Omura family.