

Honmaru-goten Palace

Honmaru-goten Palace is one of the few surviving examples of an Edo-period (1603–1867) palace built for a branch of the imperial family. It differs significantly in form and design from Ninomaru-goten Palace, the former shogunal residence in Kyoto.

From the rounded lines of the roof to the simplicity of the embellishments, Honmaru-goten Palace is understated in its elegance while the shogun's palace is imposing and opulent. Interior sliding doors and partitions are painted with classical court motifs such as lacquered carts overflowing with flowers. Some partitions are papered with woodblock print wallpaper depicting clouds, cranes, and other delicate designs in silver or ochre.

The palace's four buildings were moved to their present location in 1894 by order of Emperor Meiji (1852–1912). They were originally part of Katsura-no-miya-goten Palace, the residence of the Katsura-no-miya family. The family was one of four cadet branches of the imperial family,

established to provide successors to the Chrysanthemum Throne in the event the main line failed to produce an heir. Princess Sumiko (1829–1881), an aunt of Emperor Meiji, was the last head of this family and died without an heir.

Honmaru-goten Palace offers a glimpse into the life and, in particular, the aesthetic taste of a princely family. It is designated an Important Cultural Property.