

## **Minakuchi Okayama Castle Ruins**

The castle was built in 1585 on the orders of warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598), and one of his retainers was installed there. With its high stone walls and tiled roofs, it was the first structure of its kind in the area, and the local people are said to have been awed by its scale.

The construction of the castle marked a major turning point in the history of the Koka ninja. The castle represented a change from the existing system of cooperative self-government by the local community to a system of regional rule by a unified government.

In 1600, after Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616) seized power in a country-wide power struggle, Minakuchi Okayama Castle was attacked, causing the resident lord to flee. Ruling authority over Koka changed again after Ieyasu became shogun. The castle was later abandoned and dismantled.

A second, much smaller fortification, Minakuchi Castle, was built in 1634 at the foot of the mountain where Minakuchi Okayama Castle had

stood. Its purpose was to provide overnight lodging for the third shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu (1604–1651), on a visit to the area. It is said that stones from the old castle were used in the new structure.

Only a small portion of Minakuchi Okayama Castle's stone walls remain, but the outline of the structure is still visible on the mountainside. The entire area has been turned into a park, and visitors can enjoy a panorama of the city from the summit. The castle site has been designated a National Historical site and is a 15-minute walk from Minaguchi Station.