



Commemorative printing

SUWA TAKASHIMA CASTLE

- Admission fee Adults 310 yen (200 yen), Children 150 yen (100 yen)
* Prices in parentheses apply if coming in a group of 20 or more.
- Holidays Closed the 2nd Thursday in November and from Dec. 26–31
- Open Hours 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (to 4:30 p.m. from Oct. 1 to March 31)



Inquiries

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Access

- Coming by JR Chūō Line
10 minutes by foot from the Suwa-ko (Lake Suwa)
Exit at Kamisuwa Station
- Coming by Expressway
Approx. 15 minutes from the Suwa exit
on the Chūō Expressway

TAKASHIMA CASTLE

In 1590, Hinenō Takayoshi, a member of the clan of Japan's then-ruler, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, was appointed daimyō (feudal lord) of the Suwa domain, with a stipend of 27,000 koku (roughly 135,000 liters) of rice. The previous daimyō, Suwa Yoritada, was aligned with Hideyoshi's erstwhile ally, the powerful warlord Tokugawa Ieyasu. The Kyoto-based Hideyoshi had transferred Ieyasu to the Kantō region—where modern-day Tokyo is located—both as a reward for previous services and as a strategic move to keep him distant, and Yoritada was also transferred to Musashi Province in that same region as part of the process. Takayoshi was an expert castle builder. Within a year of his transfer he had surveyed the land and completed his designs for a castle. Construction began in 1592 and in 1598 Takashima Castle was complete. The waters of Lake Suwa reached to the edges of the castle, making it seem as though the structure was suspended on top of the lake; for this reason, it was also known as “the floating castle of Suwa” and vaunted as being an impregnable water citadel. In 1600, Ieyasu came out on top in the power struggle that followed Hideyoshi's death in 1598 by defeating the Toyotomi clan's forces at the Battle of Sekigahara. Suwa Yorimizu, the son of Yoritada, had remained allied with Ieyasu, and as a reward in 1601 he was sent back to Suwa to be the lord of his clan's former domain. For the next 270 years, until the time of the clan's 10th and final daimyō Tada'aya, Takashima Castle maintained its dignified presence as the residence of the Suwa clan.

However, in 1871—three years after the Meiji Restoration brought the Tokugawa shogunate to an end—the old feudal domains were abolished and replaced by a modern, prefecture-based administrative system. In keeping with this, the decision was made to dismantle the castles, which were symbol of the old feudal system. The castle keep (tenshukaku) was torn down in 1875, and the following year the site of what had been the main bailey (honmaru) was opened to the general public as Takashima Park. Suwa residents have become greatly attached to Takashima-jō, and in 1970 many parts of the castle were restored, including the castle keep, the “cross-bar” (kabuki) gate, and the corner turret (sumi-yagura). Some of the original stone walls also remain, and today it is still possible to imagine what the castle was like when its lord was in residence.

Suwa Family Crest



Lords of Takashima Castle (the Takashima daimyō)

1 st	Yorimizu	1601~
2 nd	Tadatsune	1640~
3 rd	Tadaharu	1657~
4 th	Tadatora	1695~
5 th	Tadatoki	1731~
6 th	Tadaatsu	1763~
7 th	Tadakata	1781~
8 th	Tadamichi	1816~
9 th	Tadamasa	1840~
10 th	Tadaaya	1868~

An Overview of Takashima Castle as Built

The main enclosures—the honmaru, ninomaru, and sannomaru—were arranged in a direct line typical of the hilltop castle-style (renkakushiki). The entire fortress was of the water castle (mizushiro) type, bounded as it was by Lake Suwa and several rivers. Procuring tiles for the roof of the castle keep to withstand the cold of Suwa was difficult, and so it unusually was tiled with thin planks of hinoki cypress (copper plating was used for the restoration). The stone walls were originally formed using natural stones that were piled without any processing. In 1876, most of the walls were repaired and today a section of them remains visible.

Honmaru

The main bailey was the site of the three-story castle keep, the daimyō's residence and study, offices for domain administration tasks (goyōbey), and tasks related to land and human resource use (kōrikata), the kitchen (makanakata), and the like. Many other structures also stood here, including a Nō stage and even a store room for frozen rice cakes (kōrimochibeya), a delicacy that would be given to the daimyō as a special form of tribute.

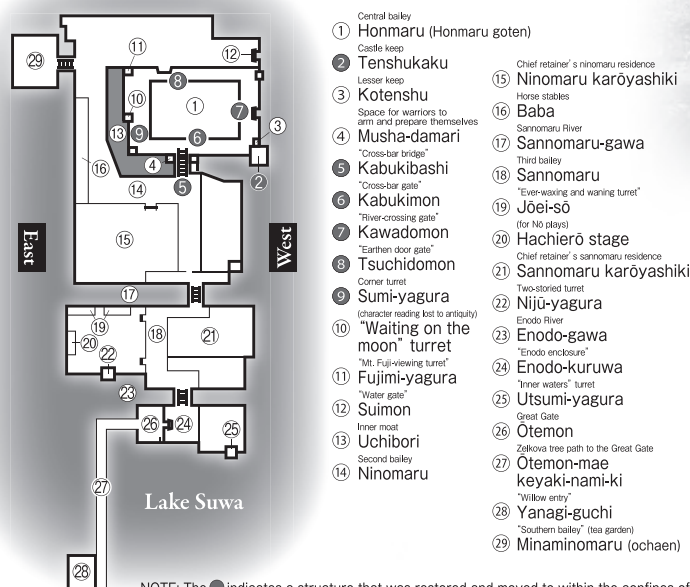
Ninomaru

Structures in the second bailey included a residence for the chief retainer (ninomaru yashiki) as well as a staff workroom (sakujiya), rice store storeroom, treasury, and stables. The ninomaru yashiki was refashioned into the daimyō's domain school “Chōzenkan,” following the so-called Ninomaru ikken, a peasant uprising during the rule of 6th daimyō Tada'atsu that resulted in damage to the structure.

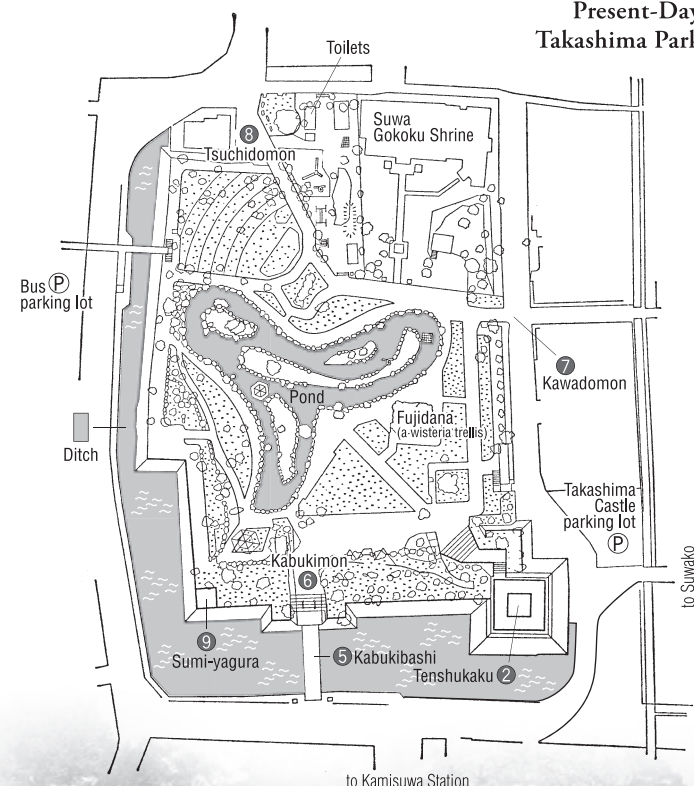
Sannomaru

The third bailey enclosed more residences for both the daimyō (sannomaru goten) and the chief retainer (sannomaru yashiki), as well as an office (kanjōsho) for managing the daimyō's accounts. Tadamichi, the 8th daimyō, also built a rice storeroom called Jōei-sō so he would have grain for providing relief measures to the peasantry during years of bad harvest.

Takashima Castle Guide



NOTE: The ● indicates a structure that was restored and moved to within the confines of present-day Takashima Park. (please refer to the figure to the upper right)



Castle Keep Overview

Total area: 381 m²
Height: 20.2 m (shachi: 1.7 m), three-stories
Shachi (“tiger-fish” rooftop decoration): 1.7 m long, weighting 250 kg
Keep base platform (tensudai): 1254 m (stone wall)

●1F: Local history display (187 sq. m, 13.8 m on each side), Space for thematic exhibitions.

The kajinoha formal Suwa family crest is emblazoned on the main entrance, symbolizing the dignity of the castle. A staircase-cupboard (hakodan) leads upstairs to the right, while to the left is a 10-tatami mat-sized ready room (yunomiba, lit. “tea-drinking room”) where guards were stationed.

●2F: Takashima Castle Museum (141 sq. m)

Comprised of three rooms: a large, 20-mat-sized room the daimyō used for war councils, a 15-mat room beyond it for meetings with the shōgun's emissaries, and a third space where those emissaries would stay on their visits. A veranda called the hamaen ran around the outside, which during battles would be used for monitoring enemy movements and launching dart as defense during attacks.

●3F: Takashima Castle Museum and Observation Deck (53 sq. m)

To the left were two 8-mat spaces set aside for retainers' recreation, while to the right were two 6-mat spaces called the takibi no ma (“room of the burning hot”) for the daimyō to hold confidential meetings. Calligraphy and other works drawn by each daimyō over the years were pasted to the sliding doors (fusuma) of each room.