高知城

国指定重要文化財

Important Cultural Property
Kochi Castle

The Unique Kochi Castle

Kochi Castle is the only castle in Japan still in possession of all its original Edo period architecture in the main citadel. Originally the site of Odakasa Castle (built in the mid-1300s), Chosokabe Motochika moved here from Oko Castle (in present-day Nankoku City) in 1587, only to relocate to Urado Castle three years later due to difficulties caused by flooding from the nearby rivers. Yamauchi Katsutoyo relocated here from Kakegawa (in present-day Shizuoka Prefecture) thanks to his achievements in the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600. In autumn 1601, he set about building the castle.

Katsutoyo appointed Dodo Echizen, a famous castle builder, as chief magistrate, and proceeded with the castle's construction using stones and wood from the surrounding villages. However, because of construction difficulties, the third citadel of the castle was not completed for 10 years, by which time Katsutoyo had already been succeeded by the second lord, Tadayoshi. In 1727, the castle was mostly destroyed in a large fire, leaving behind only the main Otemon Gate. Restoration efforts were started immediately, but due to economic struggle the restoration process took more than 20 years. The castle was abandoned during the Meiji Restoration and completely demolished save for the main citadel and Otemon Gate. The castle site is now a public park. Its nickname is 'Hawk Castle' from the shape of the tower's eaves.

Kochi Castle Points of Interest

石樋

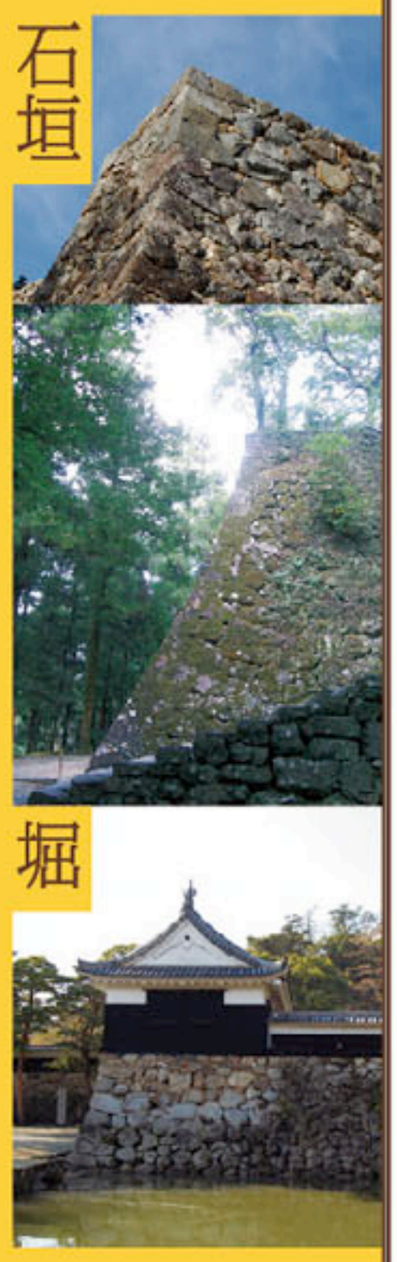
Stone Gutters

Preventing damage caused by Kochi's large amount of annual rainfall is just as important as fortifying the castle against attacks from enemies. There are many underground water canals running through various areas of the castle grounds, which all drain from 16 stone gutters in the castle walls. Stone gutters on the main citadel are still active. It is possible to see the structure of an uncovered water canal and a stone gutter on the third citadel.

防御

Castle Defense

There are many strategic points around Kochi Castle that tell us of its importance as a base of military operation. At several places, the stone walls form L-shapes in order to eliminate blind spots and allow arrows to be shot from all directions. There are walls with circular, triangular, and square-shaped holes, which are called yazama-bei. Invaders can be shot at from these holes. The castle tower is equipped with stone dropping holes and iron spikes placed around the walls. Due to these devices, it was almost impossible for attackers to invade the castle tower.



石垣

Stone Walls

The castle's stone walls were designed by Anoshu, a group of technical specialists from Omi (in present-day Shiga Prefecture). Taking into consideration the large amount of rainfall, the walls are built using the nozurazumi method, making them difficult to collapse and allowing efficient drainage. The walls may appear haphazardly built, but they are actually piled up in a very sturdy fashion.

Also, be sure to see the beautifully interconnected stonework, using the uchikomihagi method on the walls on the north end of the Cedar Terrace and at the site of the Iron Gate. On the third citadel, the walls that Chosokabe Motochika built were recently excavated and can be seen.

堀

Moat

The moat currently surrounding the castle is about one-third of its original length and only half as wide. Also, the earthen walls on the inner bank of the moat were removed. All these changes make the scenery very different from back then. Water for the moat used to be drawn in from the Enokuchi River which runs north of the castle.

A Brief History of Kochi Castle

- **1601** Yamauchi Katsutoyo comes to Tosa, takes residence in Urado Castle and begins construction of a new castle on Mt. Odakasa.
- **1603** Completion of the main citadel and the stone walls of the second citadel. Lord Yamauchi moves into the castle on August 21. Mt. Odakasa is renamed Mt. Kochi.
- **1610** The characters of Mt. Kochi's name are changed to reflect the meaning 'high wisdom' (高智), instead of 'in the middle of rivers' (河中).
- **1611** Completion of the third citadel. The castle is now mostly completed.
- **1727** A large fire in the castle town destroys most of the castle except for Otemon Gate.
- **1729** Fukao Tatewaki is appointed to oversee the reconstruction of the castle.
- **1749** Restoration of the castle tower, watch towers and gates are completed. This castle tower still stands.
- **1753** Restoration is near completion, 25 years after commencement.
- **1846** Repairs on the castle tower.
- **1874** Kochi Castle is opened to the public as a park.
- **1934** Kochi Castle is designated as a National Treasure (redesignated as an Important Cultural Property under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties of 1950).
- **1948** Commencement of general repair work on all castle buildings.
- **1959** Completion of repair work. Designated as a Historical Site.
- **2001** 400th Anniversary Festival.
- **2010** Repairs on the stone walls of the third citadel are completed.

Stamp

Entry Fee: Adults (18+) 400JPY

Group discounts available Open: 9am to 5pm Closed: December 26th to 31st

高知城管理事務所 http://kochipark.jp/kochijyo/
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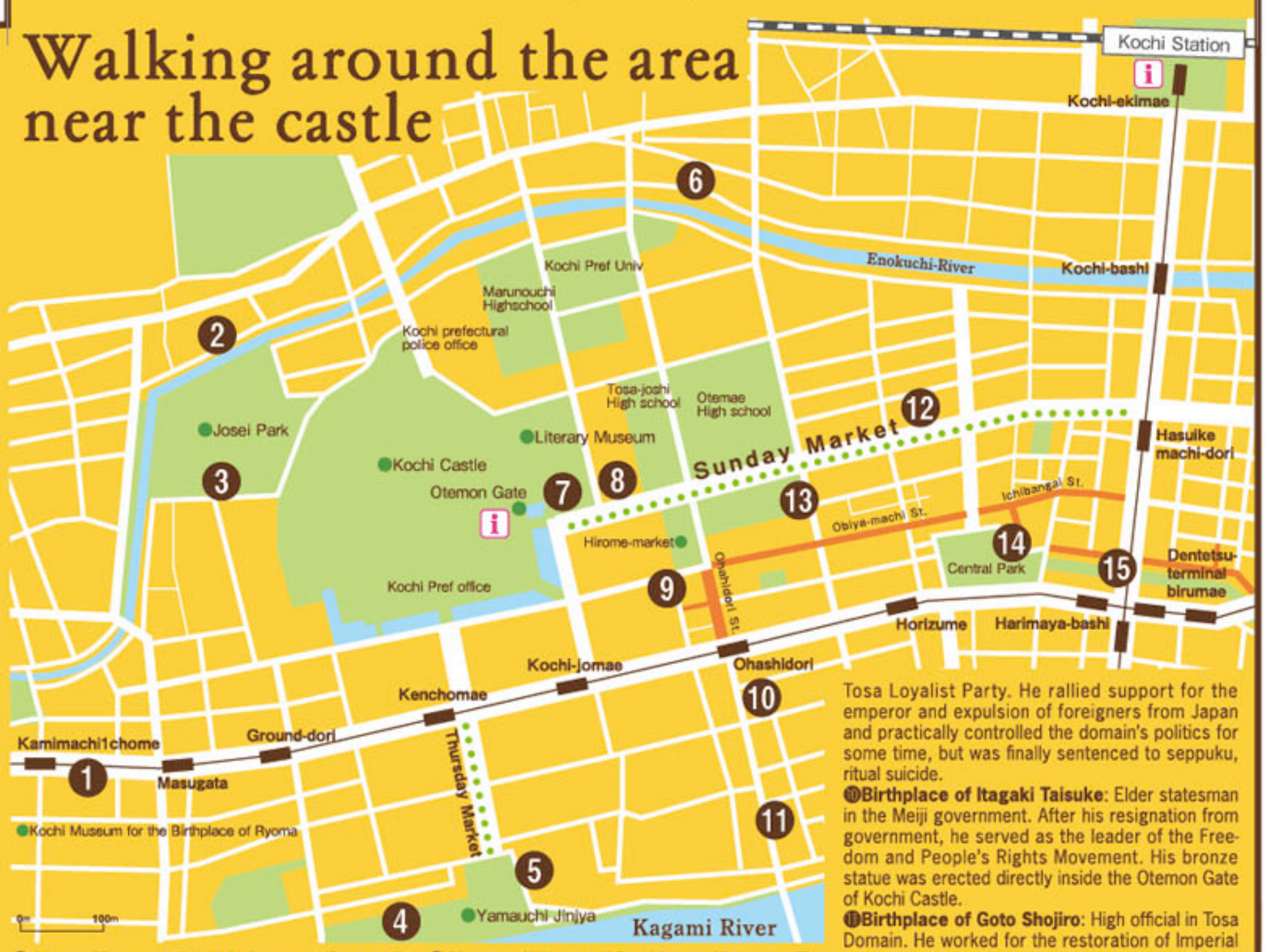
Walking around the area near the castle



❶**Stone Monument of Sakamoto Ryoma's Birthplace**: Head of Kaientai, a trading corporation, famous for his efforts in forming the Satsuma-Choshu Alliance, as well as for drafting the Eight Point Policy for a new government. The Ryoma's Birthplace Memorial Museum is near this monument

❷**Terada Torahiko Memorial Museum**: Well-known physicist and essayist who was a close friend of Natsume Soseki, a famous novelist, and was the model for one of the characters in Soseki's novels such as I Am a Cat and Sanshiro.

❸**Chidokan Gate**: Domain-run school established in 1862. Only the front gate is left.

❹**Tosa Yamauchi Family Treasury and Archives**: Collection of old documents and artistic crafts as well as items possessed by Tosa lords.

❺**Yamauchi Family Nagaya Row House**: Lodgings for guards at the Yodo's residence. Designated as an Important Cultural Property.

❻**Okawasuji Samurai Residence Museum**: The only samurai residence that remains near the castle. Traditional Japanese residence built in the shoin style with a gatehouse.

❼**Site of Nonaka Kenzan's Residence**: Chief retainer in the early formation of Tosa Domain, he was responsible for maintaining harbours and building irrigation systems, as well as improving forestry, thus laying the groundwork for Tosa's economy. In the end, he was overthrown.

❽**Birthplace of Yamauchi Yodo**: The 15th lord of Tosa Domain known was one of the "four wise lords". He played a prominent role on the main political stage. Though he originally supported the movement for the Union of Court and Shogunate, his thoughts were swayed by the opinions of Sakamoto Ryoma and Goto Shojiro. He later petitioned to Tokugawa Yoshinobu for the restoration of imperial rule.

❾**Monument of Takechi Zuizan**: Leader of the Tosa Loyalist Party. He rallied support for the emperor and expulsion of foreigners from Japan and practically controlled the domain's politics for some time, but was finally sentenced to seppuku, ritual suicide.

❿**Birthplace of Itagaki Taisuke**: Elder statesman in the Meiji government. After his resignation from government, he served as the leader of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement. His bronze statue was erected directly inside the Otemon Gate of Kochi Castle.

⓫**Birthplace of Goto Shojiro**: High official in Tosa Domain. He worked for the restoration of Imperial rule and became a politician of the Meiji government.

⓬**Sunday Market**: The largest street market in Japan, which has lasted over 300 years. Held from sunrise to around 4pm.

⓭**Monument of Yoshida Toyo**: The highest-ranking official in Tosa Domain. A visionary, he served Yamauchi Yodo in the last days of the Tokugawa Shogunate, but was assassinated by some members of the Tosa Loyalist Party by order of Takechi Zuizan.

⓮**Site of Risshisha Society**: Political society established in 1874 by Itagaki Taisuke, Kataoka Kenkichi and others that played an important role in the Freedom and People's Rights Movement.

⓯**Harimaya Bridge**: Bridge famous for being in the Yosakoi folk song. It was built by two wealthy merchants, Harimaya Sotoku and Hitsuya Dosei, to make visiting each other more convenient.

Lord's Reception Suite

9 Japan's Only Lord's Reception Suite

The structures in the main citadel include the Castle Tower, the Lord's Reception Suite, a storehouse, the Corridor Gate, East and West Row Houses on stone walls and the Black Iron Gate. Even among the 12 castles in Japan still possessing their original castle towers, Kochi Castle is the only one in which the Lord's Reception Suite remains. They are designated as Important Cultural Properties. The East Row House was used as storage for weapons, and the West Row House was a guard post. The storehouse kept important documents. The Black Iron Gate was used by the lord on ceremonial occasions. The Lord's Reception Suite consists of a guard room, an entrance hall and several other chambers. The main chamber's floor is a step higher than the rest of the rooms. On the west side, there is a small room used to hide warriors. The motif carved into the decorative transom expresses Kochi's stormy seas. The original design was luxurious and included many gilded decorations, but became decidedly simple upon reconstruction.

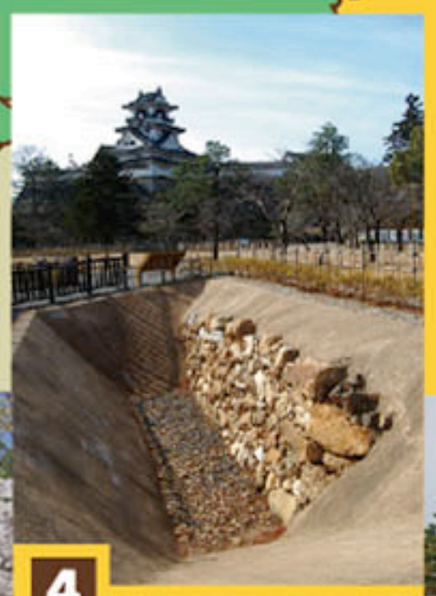
8 Castle Tower

本丸

The castle tower is 18.5 meters tall, and has a fourfold façade (interior structure: 3 layers and 6 floors). It was rebuilt in 1749 sticking true to the original building design. Characteristic points include the design of the roof gables and the railed walkway painted with black lacquer. On the northeast corner are spikes on the wall known as "ninja repellants", which are unique to Kochi Castle.

6 The Plum Terrace

Taking a left from the Cedar Terrace will lead you into the Plum Terrace, which was formerly a horse-riding ground. Going down to the west from here will take you to the site of a kitchen area and the site of the Hachimangu Shrine, which existed before the castle was built. Common people were allowed to visit this shrine only on special occasions. There were three shrines on the castle grounds: Hachimangu, Suwa Daimyojin, and Itsukushima Myojin. Together these shrines were called "The Three Castle Shrines".



4 The Third Citadel

There used to be a palace here where castle ceremonies and annual events were held. Due to the repair work carried out recently on the stone walls, remains of an old wall built during the time of Chosokabe Motochika were excavated and are presently exhibited.

7 Towards the Main Citadel

The top floor of the two-storey gate named Tsumemon serves as a corridor between the main citadel and the second citadel. During the Edo period, it was also called Hashiroka, meaning corridor bridge. The second floor was used as guardrooms where even chief and middle-ranking samurai were on duty here. The name of Tsumemon comes from "tsumeru" meaning being on duty. The entrance and exit of the first floor were positioned diagonally so that it would not be easy for enemies to pass through the gate. Salt was stored on the first floor in case of siege. Hidden portholes were built in the walls of the second floor. There is a corridor gate at the entrance to the main citadel.

1 Otemon Gate

This structure is two-storyed with a watch room above the gate doors, magnificently situated directly in front of the castle. There is a box-shaped area in front of the gate, where attacks could be launched on potential invaders from the watch room and the surrounding walls. The means of defense were dropping stones down onto invaders, and firing guns and arrows. You can see carved letters ウ, エ, ケ and シ used in the construction of the gate on some of the stones.

2 Between Otemon Gate and the Cedar Terrace

After turning left upon entering the Otemon Gate, and climbing the stone steps, you will arrive at the Cedar Terrace. These steps are purposefully designed to be difficult to go up, but easy to go down. There is a well currently covered over, which contained high quality drinking water. While the feudal lord lived here in the second citadel, water was drawn from this well every day at 10am, noon and 4pm. When the lord left or came back to the premises, his family and attendants would come to this area to see him off or welcome him home.

Tsumemon Gate

3 Site of the Iron Gate and Tsumemon Gate

After climbing the stone steps to the right of the Cedar Terrace, you will arrive at stone walls made using the uchikomihagi method for extreme durability, and also see the site of the Iron Gate. The gate doors were reinforced with many small iron plates. The pathway inside the gate is purposely built to turn 90 degrees, making it difficult for potential enemies to pass through en masse. This was a vital defense point for the castle. Here you can also see left-over wedge marks from when rocks were split to reconstruct this wall. Going past the site of the Iron Gate, you can see the third citadel on the right, and the second citadel above on the right. Above on the left are the main citadel and the castle tower. The Tsumemon Gate painted black is directly in front at the top of the steps. Invaders would naturally be guided to the Tsumemon Gate and up the last of the stone steps, where they would be stormed by arrows and gunfire from three directions.

5 The Second Citadel

There was a palace here where the feudal lord lived. At the northeast side, there used to be buildings named Kagu Yagura which stored furniture and Sukiya Yagura which stored things like tools for tea ceremonies. These names reflect the contents of what were stored. At the very west was Inui Yagura, a three-storey building, which was said to look just like a small version of the castle tower.