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Castle Tower

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.

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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.

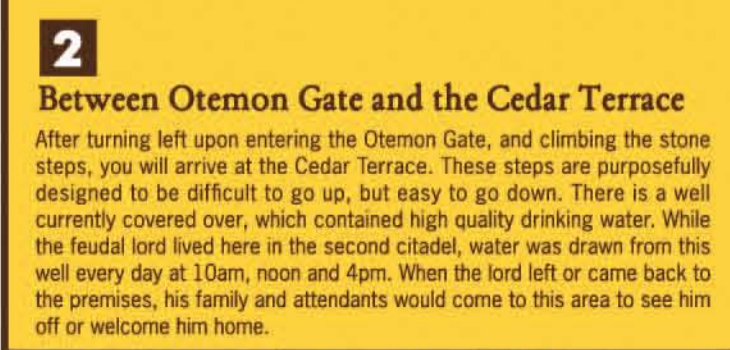
Routes to the Main Citadel

- Direct Route**
8min
Take the stairs near the Otemon Gate straight up to the top.
- Scenic Route**
20min
Through the Cedar Terrace to the Plum Terrace, passing the Third Citadel. This route is not very well known, but allows a more scenic view of the castle landscape.



1 Otemon Gate

This structure is two-storied 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.



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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.



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.



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".



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.

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.