

AKASHI CASTLE



Construction of Akashi Castle was ordered by Tokugawa Hidetada, the second shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate. In 1615 in the Summer Campaign of the Siege of Osaka, the Tokugawa shogunate defeated and destroyed their long-time enemy, the Toyotomi clan. However, many of the Toyotomi clan's allies remained in western Japan. The shogunate decided to build a castle in Akashi, which was a suitable location for observing both the people travelling along the Saigoku highway as well as the ships in the Seto Inland Sea.



This Akashi Castle, along with Himeji Castle which was located between the Kinai region and western Japan and whose lord was a hereditary vassal daimyo of the Tokugawa shogunate, was intended to deter the Toyotomi clan's allies from attacking the shogunate. The construction of the inner citadel (honmaru) and second citadel (ninomaru) was directly supervised by the Tokugawa shogunate while the walls, gates and towers (yagura) were constructed by the hereditary vassal daimyo Ogasawara Tadazane. Construction began in 1619 and was completed the next year.



The Tatsumi Yagura (southeast tower) and the Hitsujisaru Yagura (southwest tower) which are still standing today were rebuilt after being destroyed in a large fire in 1631. Much of the wood used in the towers is pine, and is the same wood that was used 400 years ago.



Both towers are three-story yagura. Tatsumi Yagura and Hitsujisaru Yagura appear to be the same size, but Hitsujisaru Yagura is actually slightly larger and wider. It is said that Hitsujisaru Yagura was used as the tenshukaku (main keep) for Akashi Castle. Both towers have kara-hafu and chidori-hafu (hafu are decorative gables that are characteristic of Japanese architecture) and are highly aesthetic.



The two towers are open to the public on weekends and on public holidays in spring and autumn (but closed on rainy days) from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Tatsumi Yagura is open in April and October, while the Hitsujisaru Yagura is open in March, May, September and November. Entry is free, no reservations are required, and there are often volunteer guides who are available to explain the towers.



Inside the castle grounds at the Musashi garden, a Japanese Tea Ceremony experience is offered in April, May, October and November.





We especially recommend that you visit Akashi Castle in late March and early April, because the Hyogo Prefectural Akashi Park, which includes Akashi Castle, has been designated as one of the 100 best cherry blossom viewing locations in Japan, and the scenery during this season is very beautiful.



In 1995, Akashi Castle was seriously damaged by the Great Hanshin–Awaji Earthquake. Portions of the tower walls peeled off, and the stone walls collapsed in several places, including at the bases of the towers. In order to repair the stone walls under the towers, the towers themselves were raised on jacks and moved along a rail. This was the first time this technique of whole structure relocation was used in Japan.



Akashi Castle has been designated as one of the top 100 castles in Japan, and both towers are designated as Important Cultural Properties of Japan. Visiting Akashi Castle is also very convenient, as it is only five minutes on foot from Akashi Station. Please come and visit Akashi Castle.

