



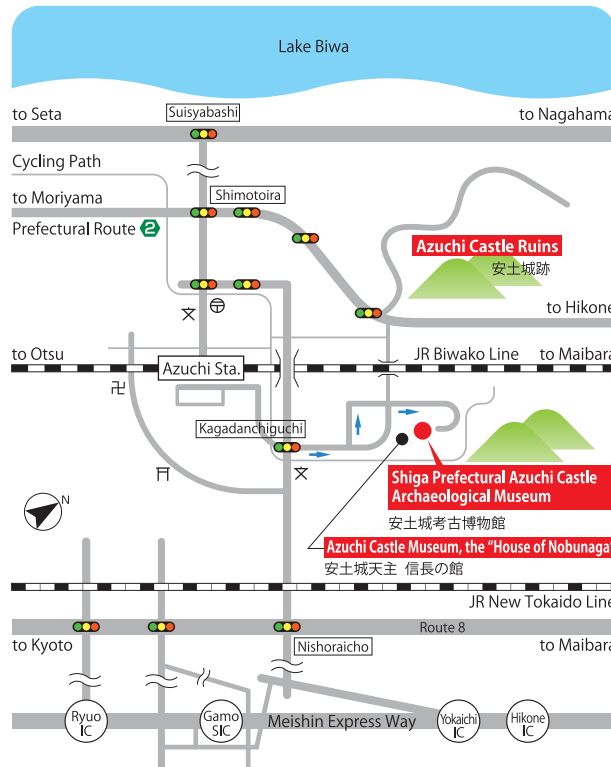
Azuchi Castle Ruins from the sky



Terrain model of Azuchi Castle Ruins  
(in Shiga Prefectural Azuchi Castle Archaeological Museum)

### Access

- 25 minutes on foot from Azuchi Station on the JR Biwako Line.
- About 10 minutes from JR Azuchi Station by rental bicycle available at the station.
- About 5 minutes by taxi from JR Azuchi Station.



### Hours and Fees

- Hours for entering the Mt. Azuchi area: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
(The hours are subject to change depending on the season.)
- Fees for entering the Mt. Azuchi area: 700 yen.  
(Elementary and junior high school rates: 200 yen.)

**Publication:** Shiga Museums Support Committee

**Editing:** Shiga Prefectural Azuchi Castle Archaeological Museum

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平成29年度 文化庁 地域の核となる美術館・歴史博物館支援事業  
Supported by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan in the fiscal 2017

# Azuchi Castle Ruins, A Special Historic Site

The Castle that Oda Nobunaga Built as a Base  
for Unification of Japan



A gilded tile from Azuchi Castle (from the collection of the Shiga Board of Education)

Shiga Museums Support Committee

Shiga Prefectural  
Azuchi Castle Archaeological Museum

## History of Azuchi Castle

Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582) began to construct the Azuchi Castle complex in 1576 to serve as a base for unification of Japan. Craftsmen employing the highest technology of the day were engaged for the creation of the fortification. Three years later, in 1579, the keep or main building (*tenshu*) of the castle compound was completed and Nobunaga established it as his residence. However, after the death of Nobunaga in 1582, the keep and central section of the castle compound burned down. When Oda Nobukatsu (Nobunaga's son) succumbed to Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the era during which the Oda clan ruled the whole country came to an end. Stripped of its role, Azuchi Castle fell into disuse. Sokenji Temple, which Nobunaga established within the Azuchi Castle compound, has continued to serve as guardian and oversee the castle ruins up to the present day.



Remains of the fire-damaged castle (provided by the Shiga Board of Education)



Pieces of burnt tile and pottery shards (from the collection of the Shiga Board of Education)

The Azuchi Castle ruins were designated as a national special historic site in 1952 and are protected cultural properties. The Shiga Prefectural Board of Education conducted the Azuchi Ruins Special Historic Site Survey Project from 1989 to 2008, in order to ensure the preservation of the Azuchi Castle ruins long into the future and promote access and widespread use of the ruins. Based on the results of this survey, maintenance and restoration work on a major road (Otemichi) running from the main castle entrance to the Kuroganemon Gate was carried out, as well as restoration of the earthworks, stone walls, and stone steps along the road.



Traces of the Otemichi road (provided by the Shiga Board of Education)

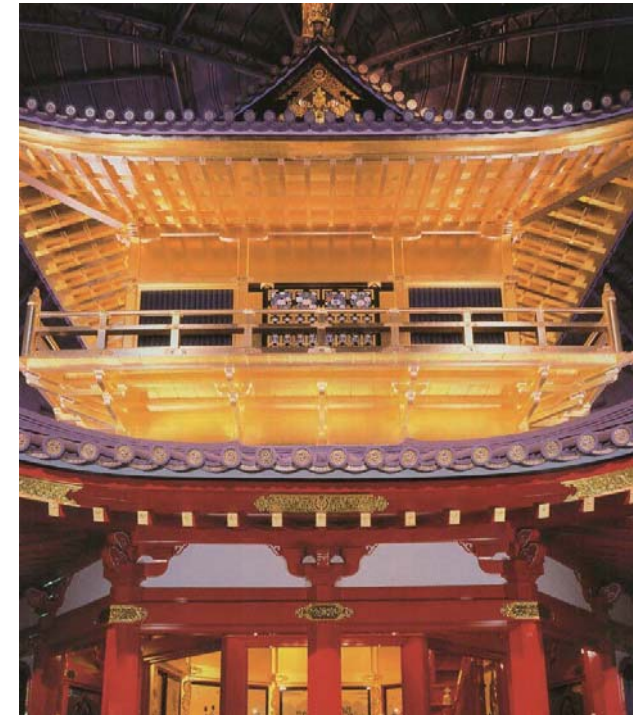


Otemichi road following restoration

## Structure of Azuchi Castle

Azuchi Castle, unlike previous Japanese castles, was not primarily a facility for actual combat purposes; rather, it was a structure intended to represent authority and serve as a strong visual and material demonstration of political power. In particular, the luxurious main keep or castle tower (*tenshu*) stood as a salient symbol of authority.

Azuchi Castle set new structural precedents for Japanese castles. Architectural elements such as the construction of a high main tower on top of the base of a stone wall, and the use of tile roofing, both first utilized in Azuchi Castle, were widely adopted in the design and construction of subsequent castles. In this sense, Azuchi Castle can be recognized as the starting point of early modern castle architecture in Japan. However, the castle also incorporated the defensive functions characteristic of castles of the earlier era, built on mountain slopes and ridges. In this sense, the design of the castle reflects the structural conventions characteristic of the preceding era of widespread warfare. In sum, Azuchi Castle can be considered a castle which represents the transition from the middle ages in Japan to the early modern period.



Full-scale replica of the main keep of Azuchi Castle (in Azuchi Castle Museum, the "House of Nobunaga"; Naito Akira restoration supervision)