

## Ruins of Japan's Northernmost Ancient Forted Government Office

# An Historical Site-Ruins of Akita Castle



East gate of Akita Castle's outer perimeter

### About Akita Castle

The ruins of Akita Castle are what are left of the large-scale provincial government office that was located on the Japan Sea side of the Tohoku Region (Dewa Province) during the Nara and Heian Periods (710 - 1191). Akita Castle was the ancient political, military, and cultural center.

Akita Castle was originally called Ideha no Ki (Fort Ideha) when it was built in 733 in Takashimizuoka, Akita. It came to be called Akita Castle around 760. During the Nara Period (710 - 793), the ancient provincial government office was set up there to govern Dewa Province. It is also believed to have played an important role as a base for trade with provinces to the north including Tsugaru (Aomori), Watarishima (Hokkaido), and Bokkai (northeastern China).

The importance of the site was recognized and about 90 hectares were designated a national historic site in 1939.

### Research and preservation of Akita Castle

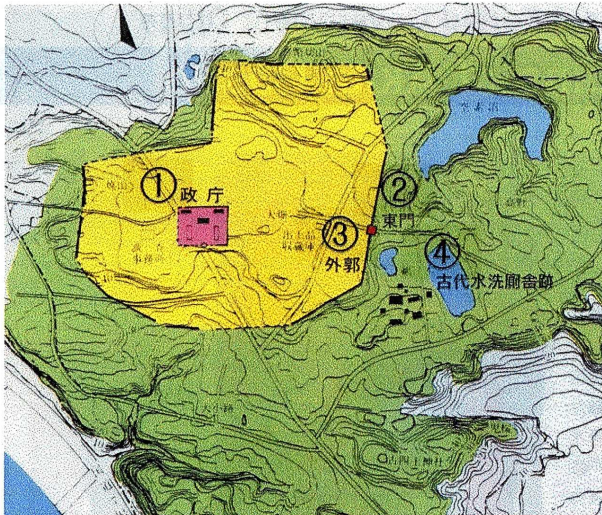
The Japanese government itself excavated the site during the four years from 1959 to 1962. The Akita City Board of Education has been excavating the site year round since 1972.

In 1988, work began to turn Tateana Jukyo (dugout), Hottatebashira (turret), Ido (well), and other sites uncovered by the excavations into a historical park. As part of that work, the east gate of the outer perimeter and a part of the Tsuiji (pounded soil) Wall, which were reconstructed in their actual size over four years beginning in 1994, come back to life 1,200 years later to teach us about ancient history.

Tsuiji Wall at western edge of the outer perimeter

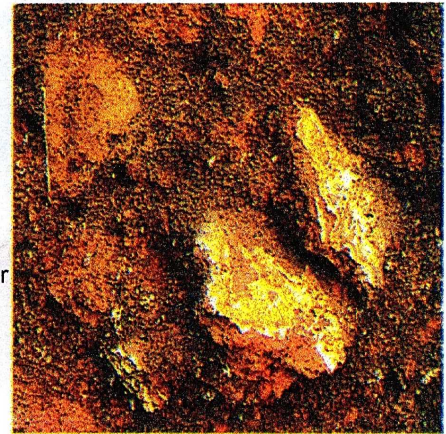


The site of the main government office building (as seen from the east)



- ① Seicho  
(the old government office)
- ② Higasi-mon  
(the east gate)
- ③ Gaikaku  
(the outer perimeter)
- ④ The site of the former  
flush lavatory

White wall of main building



## Extent of Akita Castle-Outer perimeter

Akita Castle, which was built on the hills of Takashimizu, was surrounded by Tsuiji Wall, an earthen wall with a tile roof. Tsuiji Wall was about 550 meters in length from east to west and north to south, with a total length of 2.2 kilometers. This is called the Outer Tsuiji Wall. A wall with a base of 2.1 meters and a height of about 3 meters was built by repeatedly pouring soil and pounding it down. The thick earthen wall and tiled roof were symbols that showed the power of the legal government to the Emishi, the people who lived in this region at the time.

## Center of the castle-Seicho

Located in about the center of the outer Tsuiji Wall is a rectangular section 94 meters long east to west and 77 meters long north to south, which is called the Seicho (government offices). The Seicho was the central part of Akita Castle. The internal politics of Dewa Province and ceremonies for domestic and foreign delegations were conducted in the main building and the square in front of it. Gifts were often given to and banquets held for the Emishi who would periodically pay tribute to demonstrate their obedience and seek a stable life.

The Seicho area was set on fire during a great rebellion by the Emishi in 878. Excavations have uncovered burnt sections of white wall and charcoal from that fire.

### [ Exhibit of objects unearthed at the ruins of Akita Castle ]

Hours: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (must enter by 3:30 p.m.)

Closed: Winter (December - March)

Entrance fee: Free

Access: About 25 minutes by bus from Akita Station (get off at Gokoku Jinja bus stop)

About 15 minutes by taxi from Akita Station

[ The east gate of the outer perimeter and the historical park in the Unoki area can be viewed at any time.]

Akita Castle Ruins Excavation Office TEL 018-845-1837



Model of the Seicho in Akita Castle