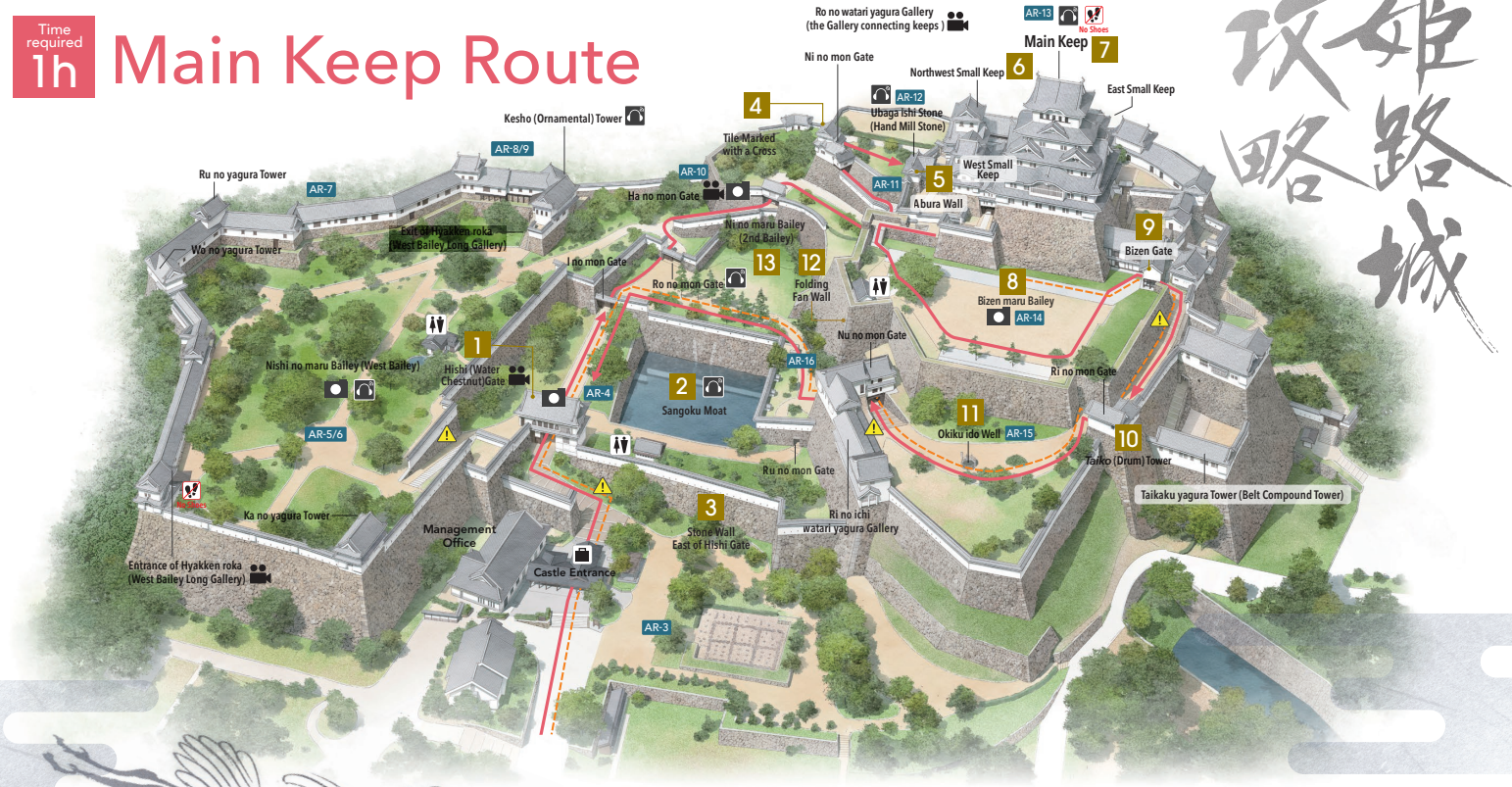


Time required **1h** **Main Keep Route**

攻姫路城



Wheel-Chair Route

HIMEJI Wi-Fi

See Himeji Castle in greater detail through video. Watch video.

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**1 Hishi (Water Chestnut) Gate**

This elegant gatehouse serves as the castle's main entrance and was used by its lords and their high-ranking retainers and guests. Unusually, one side of the structure sits atop a stone wall, while the other side follows a more standard design and contains a guardhouse. The gate takes its name from the image of a water chestnut over the entrance.



**2 Sangoku Moat**

This large, square pond served as both a defensive feature and the castle's water reservoir. The pond is filled by rainwater carried by drainage ditches from around the castle. Originally, it was part of a large trench that lay between the West Bailey and the inner castle, but most of the trench was filled in when Ikeda Terumasa (1565-1613) rebuilt Himeji Castle in 1601.



**3 Stone Wall East of Hishi Gate**

The elegant curve of this wall is more than an aesthetic flourish—its shape allows it to withstand the pressure from the large volume of water in the reservoir behind it. The extra-large stones add to its strength as well as suggesting wealth and power. The white plaster is both beautiful and fire resistant.



**4 Tile Marked with a Cross**

One of the tiles on the gable of this gatehouse is decorated with a cross. Some believe it to be connected to Kuroda Kanbei (1546-1604), a Christian warlord who had a fortress at Himeji before the current castle was built. The tile's actual provenance remains a mystery.



**5 Abura Wall**

This is the earthen core of a wall that was once covered with white plaster. Made from a mix of sand, clay, and small stones, these walls are almost as solid as concrete.



**6 Northwest Small Keep**

One of three small keeps, this one is located to the northwest of the main keep. The other two are on the east and west sides. This is the largest of the three—externally, it appears to have three stories, however, it actually has a five-floor configuration consisting of four internal floors and a basement.



**7 Main Keep**

Himeji Castle is a masterpiece of traditional Japanese wooden architecture. The castle's central keep, at over 45 meters high, is one of the tallest wooden keeps ever built in Japan. From the outside, the keep appears to have only five stories, but inside there are seven floors, including a basement within the stone foundation.



**8 Bizen maru Bailey**

Originally the residence of the daimyo lord Ikeda Terumasa as part of the Hon maru Bailey (1st Bailey). It once had a highly decorative reception room that was destroyed by fire in 1882.



**9 Bizen Gate**

The Bizen Bailey to the east of the keep was originally the daimyo lord's residence, and this gate was the only way inside. A cleanly cut, rectangular stone in the wall next to the gate is of particular note—this stone is actually a coffin that was dug up and repurposed by the castle's builders. Stones were taken from all over to build the massive walls of the castle, and similar stones can be seen scattered throughout the castle grounds.



**10 Taiko (Drum) Tower**

This solidly fortified tower defends the eastern side of the castle. Completed around 1599, it is one of the oldest extant parts of the castle. Despite being named "Drum Tower" during the Edo period (1603-1867), it was actually used as a guardhouse. The current name originated in the late 1800s when the tower was used to store taiko drums.



**11 Okiku ido Well**

In a famous ghost story, a female servant named Okiku was held responsible for having lost a plate and thrown down the well.



**12 Folding Fan Wall**

The gracefully steepening curve of the wall looks like the curve of a folding fan, hence its Japanese name, the *ōgi no kōbai* or "folding fan slope." The shape of the wall makes it both resistant to earthquakes and particularly difficult to climb.



**13 Ni no maru Bailey (2nd Bailey)**

This bailey has many nearby gates and towers, such as the Hishi Gate, built to deter invaders. If invaders did get in, they were forced into narrow passageways or sectioned-off spaces that gave a fighting advantage to the castle's defenders.