

Visit Hill Castles in **Nishi**harima

+ 1

—Remains of Nine Hill Castles
Dating Back to the 14th to 16th **Centuries**—

Let's go to
the hill castles!

Nishiharima Area Vision Committee
Team for Historic-Site and Food Tourism

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In the Nishiharima area, many castles were located on hills.

From the early 14th to 16th centuries (from around the end of the Kamakura Period to the Muromachi Period), the Nishiharima area was ruled by the Akamatsu clan. Akamatsu Enshin (1277-1350) was the first Akamatsu clan lord to be appointed as the military governor of Harima Province. In 1441, the clan collapsed in the Kakitsu War, which was fought between the clan and troops of the Ashikaga shogunate after shogun Ashikaga Yoshinori was assassinated by soldiers of the Akamatsu clan. After that, the area was temporarily ruled by the Yamana clan, but the Akamatsu clan was restored, taking advantage of the Onin War (1467-1478), and ruled the area again. However, troops led by Hashiba Hideyoshi, a vassal of Oda Nobunaga, who aimed to become the ruler of the whole country, invaded the Nishiharima area and destroyed all hill castles of the Akamatsu clan. After that, peace was eventually brought to the Nishiharima area. In the Edo Period, the Tokugawa shogunate prohibited feudal lords around Japan from having more than one castle, so most castles came to be located on flat land for the reason of comfortableness. This brought the end to the 300-year era of hill castles in Japan.

Why not visit representative hill castles in Nishiharima?

Introduction

This pamphlet is packed with information about the remains of the following hill castles we have actually hiked around and restaurants and cafes using old houses in the Nishiharima area. We would be very happy if many of you could visit Nishiharima with this pamphlet in hand.

- ◆ **Kinoyama Castle:** With many rocky tracts on the way, the remains challenge visitors to struggle over the tough pass to reach it. Since it takes a long time to reach the castle remains, taking some rests on the way is recommended.
- ◆ **Tatewa Castle:** There are some steep slopes and sandy places, so be careful not to slip and fall.
- ◆ **Kanjosan Castle:** There are steps up to the middle of the way to the hilltop, and well-maintained hill trails. Be careful not to be disoriented midway.
- ◆ **Amakoyama Castle:** Despite many rocky tracts, the castle remains are easy to reach. The hill trails offer a beautiful view of the Seto Inland Sea.
- ◆ **Sasanomaru Castle:** Since cars are allowed up to the middle of the way to the hilltop, you can hike to the castle remains lightheartedly only if you are fully equipped.
- ◆ **Chosuizan Castle:** After the torrential downpour in July 2018, some sections of the hill trails are covered with rocks. Some spots are covered with long grass, so be cautious about land leeches in summer.
- ◆ **Hijiriyama Castle:** The hill trails covered with fallen leaves are very slippery. It is recommended that you avoid visiting the remains of this castle on days after rainy days especially.
- ◆ **Rikan Castle:** No hikers are allowed to the remains of this castle. We look forward to being allowed to hike to it!
- ◆ **Kozuki Castle:** The remains of this castle are the easiest to reach after Hijiriyama Castle. The hill trails are well maintained.
- ◆ **Shirahata Castle:** There are many rocky tracts and steep slopes. Since there are also rocks covered with moss, be careful to secure your safety.

Be fully equipped with necessary tools for hikers!

- Loose-fitting outfit and comfortable shoes
- Trekking poles (if necessary)
- Insect repellent spray (Be careful about leeches in summer.)
- Hat or cap
- Plastic bags
- Beverage
- Rain cape
- Towels
- Bell for avoiding animals
- Work gloves
- Carry these items in a backpack.



Glossary

- ◆ **Horikiri (neck ditch):** Artificial dry ditch dug along a hill ridge to prevent entry of enemies, etc.
- ◆ **Kuruwa (bailey):** Flat section of land enclosed by *dorui*, *ishirui*, *horikiri*, etc. inside or around a castle site
- ◆ **Sueki (Sue pottery):** Earthenware produced from the Kofun Period (roughly the 4th-7th centuries) to the Heian Period (roughly the 9th-12th centuries)
- ◆ **Dorui (earthwork):** Artificial earthen bank built to prevent entry of enemies, animals, etc.
- ◆ **Ishirui (stone bank):** Artificial bank of stones built to prevent entry of enemies, animals, etc.

Kinoyama Castle

Elevation: 458 m / Hike from the trail entrance in the Umatate area

Time required: 6 hours (including lunch and rests)

Difficulty level: ★★★★★

Hybrid hill castle combining the features of ancient and medieval castles

Kinoyama Castle was built by Akamatsu Norisuke (1312-1372), the third son of Akamatsu Enshin (1277-1350), as a castle that would replace Shirohata Castle in present-day Kamigori Town. Before that, there had been an ancient hill castle built by the Yamato dynasty in preparation against invasion by Tang or Silla. The Akamatsu clan took advantage of this ancient castle to build extensive Kinoyama Castle. In the Kakitsu War (1441), Akamatsu Mitsusuke (1381-1441) entrenched himself in the castle and was attacked by troops led by Yamana Sozen (1404-1473), resulting in the Akamatsu family's suicide and the fall of the castle.

The observatory rock offers a very beautiful view of the surrounding area. It is recommended that you keep a firm hold on a branch or a rope when walking on steep slopes. Hiking with experienced hikers will help you secure your safety.

Here are both the remains of the ancient hill castle, including *ishirui* (stone banks), and those of the medieval hill castle, including *horikiri* (neck ditches). You can see a very rare example of hill castle remains here.



A foundation stone for a gate to the ancient castle still remains.

On the top of the hill is the Kameike Pond. It is said that there used to be conflict over the water in olden times.



You can see magnificent medieval stone walls.



Tateiwa Castle

Elevation: 250 m / Hike from Nyakuoji-jinja Shrine

Time required: 3 hours

Difficulty level: ★★★

Hill castle with many historic remains, such as kuruwa, huge rocks, ancient tombs, etc.

It is said that the name of Tateiwa (lit.: "shield rocks") Castle came from shield-like huge rocks arranged in a row. The castle is also known as Ota Castle. Akamatsu Norihiro, a grandson of Akamatsu Enshin (1277-1350), is credited with building this castle during the Kenmu era (1334-1338). It is believed that this castle of the Akamatsu clan fell when Hashiba Hideyoshi (1537-1598) invaded Harima Province.

There are many remains of *kuruwa* (baileys) dotted with many huge rocks. Around the castle remains are 44 *kofun* (ancient tombs). You may also find pieces of Sue ware near the castle hill.

Since a TV tower currently stands at the remains of the main bailey, the nearby roads are maintained very well. The main bailey was used as a station for flag or smoke signaling in the Edo period.

It is not very difficult to hike to the hill castle remains. However, be careful not to mistake roads when returning down from the hilltop. Since the hill trail from Nyakuoji-jinja Shrine has steep slopes, it is recommended that you stamp with the entire soles of your feet when hiking the trail up and down.



A midway point on the trail overlooks Route 2.

There are many rocks like shields, after which the castle was named.



Be careful not to slip.



Aoi City

Kanjosan Castle

Elevation: 301 m / Hike from the Rakan-no-sato trail entrance

Time required: 2 hours (including rests)

Gigantic, extensive castle offering panoramic views

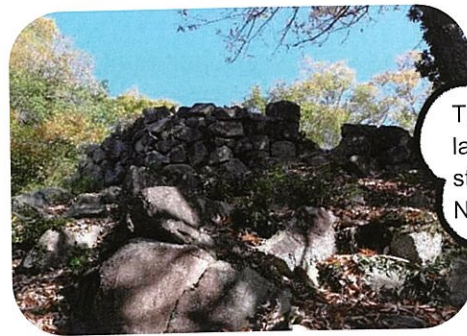
Difficulty level: ★★

Tradition says that this castle was built by a person named Uryu Saemonnojo in the Kamakura Period (1192-1333) and that the castle was named after the letter of gratitude ("kanjo") Ashikaga Takauji (1305-1358) sent to Akamatsu Norisuke (1312-1372), the third son of Akamatsu Enshin (1277-1350), after Norisuke blocked troops led by Nitta Yoshisada (1301-1338) from proceeding at this castle in 1336. The castle is believed to have fallen when Hashiba Hideyoshi (1537-1598) invaded Harima Province. The castle remains were designated as a Historic Site by the Japanese government in 1996.

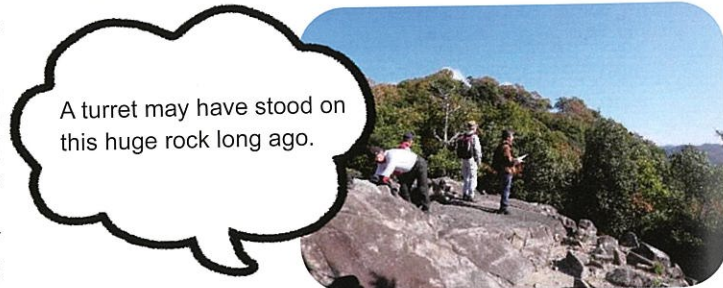
The hill trails are well maintained and are relatively easy to hike. However, be careful not to slip when walking on rocks.

The extensive castle site offers wonderful panoramic views. Many remains of building foundations, stone walls, etc. are well preserved. It is thought that the remaining stone walls date back to renovation in the Warring States Period (the late 15th to late 16th centuries), instead of the construction of the castle. There are also other remains, including those of a well and the main gate.

Since a hill trail to the castle remains starts at Rakan-no-sato (an outdoor activity facility), it is recommended that you hike to the remains in autumn, when the Rakan-no-sato Momiji Festival (popular for a scarecrow contest) is held.



There is one of the largest clusters of stone walls in Nishiharima.



A turret may have stood on this huge rock long ago.



Ako City

Amakoyama Castle

Elevation: 259 m / Hike from the trail entrance in the Kono area

Time required: 2 hours (including lunch and rests)

Enjoy a view of the Seto Inland Sea over the Chikusa River

Difficulty level: ★★

No details are known about when the castle was built. After the Amako clan's invasion of Harima Province (1538), the castle was temporarily owned by the Amako clan. The then castle lord is thought to have been Amako Yoshihisa (1540-1610).

Legend says that, when troops of the Mori clan faced difficulties attacking the castle, protected by the surrounding natural fortress from the front, an old woman living near hamlet at the foot of Amakoyama Hill taught a secret path to the Mori troops, who thus gained the key to attacking the castle and succeeded in seizing it.

Amazingly huge rocks are exposed shortly west to the hilltop, looking as if they are almost falling. These rocks are thought to be a trace of the way of protecting the castle by rolling rocks down from the hilltop at invaders.

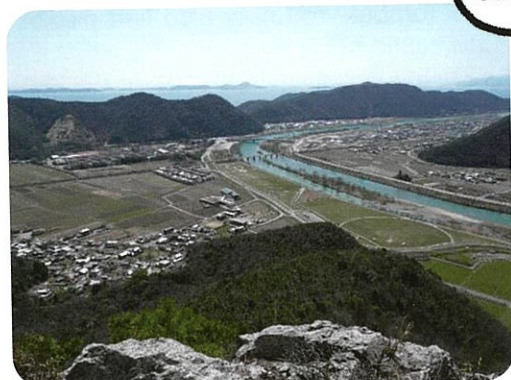
The trail to the hilltop is well maintained and relatively easy to find. Since the remains are located near the sea, you can enjoy a view of the Seto Inland Sea on your way to the remains. At the former main bailey on the hilltop is Amako-jinja Shrine.



A sign at the shrine on the hilltop says that this is the former site of the hill castle.



Enjoy a wonderful panoramic view of the Seto Inland Sea.



Shiso City

Sasanomaru Castle

Elevation: 324 m
Hike from Momijidani Park

Time required: 1 hour

Difficulty level: ★

Hill castle presumed to have been Kuroda Kanbe's "castle of Yamasaki"

It is thought that Sasanomaru Castle was built by Akamatsu Akinori, a grandson of Akamatsu Enshin (1277-1350), during the Jowa era (1345-1350). The castle fell along with Chozuisan Castle when Hashiba Hideyoshi (1537-1598) invaded Harima Province.

Sasanomaru Castle is presumed to have been the "castle of Yamasaki" where Kuroda Kanbe (1546-1604) lived according to the Chronicle of the Kuroda Clan, but no conclusive evidence has been found.

The castle remains are located on Saijosan Hill, which is affectionately called "Momiji-yama" ("Maple Hill") by the locals, so the hill trails to the remains are well maintained. The extensive site of the main bailey has stone monuments, and the Ninomaru bailey offers an excellent panoramic view. Cars are also allowed up to the middle of the way to the hilltop.

Most of the existing remains are *dorui* (earthworks) and *horikiri* (neck ditches), and there are few obvious remains, such as those of *ishirui* (stone banks). Therefore, it is recommended that you check signs that explain about the remains.

Hiking in autumn, when the Saijosan Momiji Festival is held, is recommended.



The stone monument at the former main bailey on the hilltop says that here was a castle long ago.



The former site of the main bailey is extensive.



The former site of the Ninomaru bailey has an observatory.

Shiso City

Chozuisan Castle

Elevation: 584 m / Hike from the trail entrance at Isui Elementary School

Time required: 3 hours and 30 minutes (including lunch and rests)

Difficulty level: ★★★

Medieval hill castle with large stone walls in the northwest part of Harima

Chozuisan Castle is thought to have been built by military governor Akamatsu Norisuke during the Northern and Southern Courts Period (1336-1392). After the Kakitsu War (1441), the castle was used by the Uno clan, who struggled to the last moment to resist troops led by Hashiba Hideyoshi (1537-1598) invading Harima Province but was eventually defeated, letting Hideyoshi seize the castle in 1580. This marked the end of the Warring States Period in Harima Province.

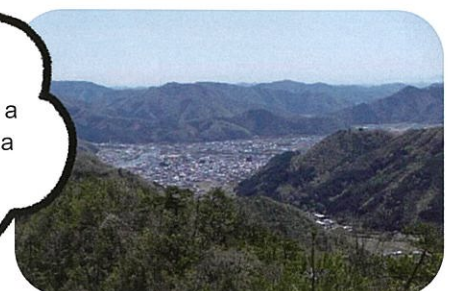
Since some sections of the hill trails are very rough under the influence of the torrential downpour in 2018, hiking the trails requires special attention. It is recommended that you hike slowly while taking rests appropriately.

The stone walls at the main bailey on the hilltop are very tall and deserve seeing. The hilltop also offers a wonderful panoramic view of surrounding hills, including Sasanomaru Castle and Hijiriyama Castle.

At the former site of the main bailey is Shintoku-ji Temple, creating a sacred atmosphere different from other hill castles.



There are very high stone walls, a rare example on a hilltop.



Hijiriyama Castle

Difficulty level: ★

Elevation: 168 m / Hike from the trail entrance at Hichiriki-jinja Shrine

Time required: 30 minutes

Castle overlooking the city, used as the headquarters of Hideyoshi's troops



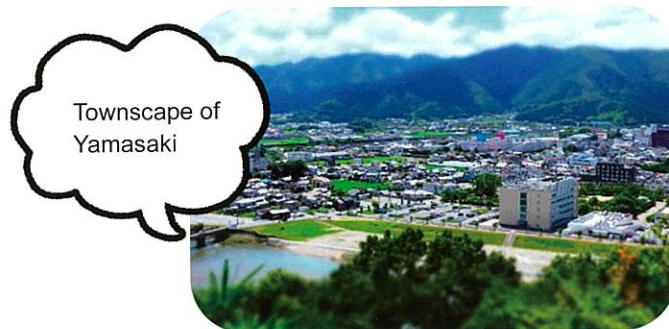
Hijiriyama Castle is thought to have been built by the Shimomura clan in the Warring States Period (the late 15th to late 16th centuries). The castle was located on Hijiriyama Hill to the east of the present-day Shiso City Hall.

When Hashiba Hideyoshi (1537-1598) invaded Harima Province in 1580, his troops captured this castle first to attack Chozuisan Castle. That was because Hijiriyama Castle offered an overall view of Chozuisan Castle and Sasanomaru Castle, useful for the troops to attack those castles. Hideyoshi's troops set up their headquarters at Hijiriyama Castle and seized Sasanomaru Castle and then Chozuisan Castle, where the Uno clan entrenched themselves. Hideyoshi thus conquered Harima.

Due to the torrential downpour in July 2018, some fallen trees are found along the trail to the hilltop. However, you can hike to Atago-jinja Shrine located directly under the hilltop and enjoy a panoramic view of the townscape of Yamasaki. While enjoying the view, you can imagine how the hill helped find approaching invaders and how strategically important the castle was.



Anyone could easily find approaching invaders from here.



Townscape of Yamasaki

Rikan Castle

Difficulty level: —

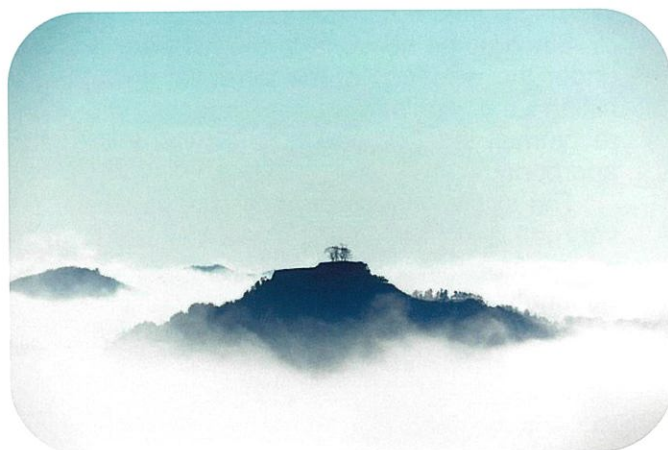
Elevation: 373 m
No hikers allowed now

Enjoy a beautiful view of the "cloud-piercing castle" in morning mist

It is thought that Rikan Castle was built in 1349 by Bessho Atsunori, a member of the Akamatsu clan, as a northern protection for Shirahata Castle and that the Bessho clan served as castle lord generation by generation. In 1578, however, the castle was attacked by troops of the Amako clan, an ally of Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), and finally fell.

After the Battle of Sekigahara (1600), Rikan Castle passed into the Ikeda clan's possession. The existing remains are those of the castle after major renovation conducted by castle lord Ikeda Yoshiyuki in 1601, including long stone walls with a height of nearly 10 m. The renovated castle seems to have included a donjon. The remains of the castle seen high in the sky are also called "Kumotsuki-jo" ("the cloud-piercing castle").

The remains of the castle were designated as a Historic Site by the Japanese government in October 2017. However, because of the risk of the stone walls falling, no hikers are currently allowed to the hill. Therefore, you can only enjoy a distant view of the remains from the foot of the hill.



Sayo Town

Kozuki Castle

Difficulty level: ★

Elevation: 140 m / Hike from the trail entrance at the Kozuki Historical Museum

Time required: 1 hour

Castle on the border between the three provinces of Harima, Bizen and Mimasaka, with a history of conflict and tragedy



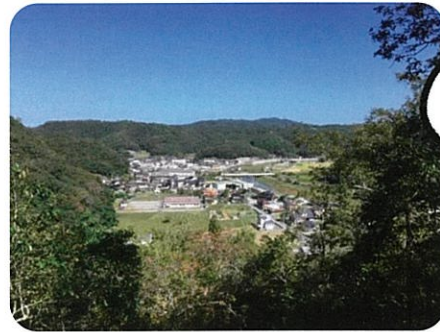
Kozuki Castle dates back to the early 1300s (around the end of the Kamakura Period), when Kozuki Kagemori, a member of the Akamatsu clan, built a castle of the same name on Taiheizan Hill. After that, the Kozuki clan relocated the castle to Kojinyama Hill, the current place of its remains, but the Kozuki clan fell in the Kakitsu War (1441). After conflict between the Yamana, Akamatsu and Amako clans, Kozuki Castle passed into the Akamatsu clan's possession.

In 1577, Hashiba Hideyoshi (1537-1598) seized the castle during his invasion of Harima Province and commented that the castle was an important base located on the border between three provinces. His troops' attack on Kozuki Castle is notorious for slaughtering all people at the castle mercilessly.

After that, members of the Amako clan, including Amako Katsuhisa and Yamanaka Shikanosuke, seized the castle. When attacked by the Mori clan in 1578, however, the Amako clan surrendered the castle and eventually collapsed there.

The hill trails to the remains of Kozuki Castle are well maintained. Because of the short time required to reach them, the Kozuki Castle remains are recommended as the first castle remains for beginners to hike around. You can enjoy a wonderful view even on the way to the hilltop.

The former site of the castle is well maintained and so friendly even to beginners.



Enjoy a panoramic view of the town at the foot of the hill.

Kamigori Town

Shirahata Castle

Difficulty level: ★★★★★

Elevation: 440 m / Hike from the trail entrance at the western foot of the hill

Time required: 4 hours (including rests)

"Castle that never fell" with a white flag flying down



Watch your step.

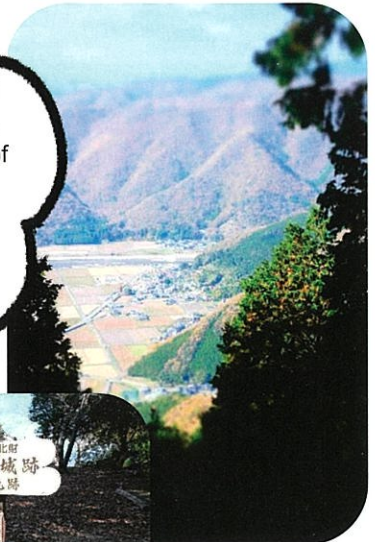
Shirahata Castle was built by Akamatsu Enshin (1277-1350) in 1336. Just as with Kanjosan Castle, Akamatsu Enshin blocked an invasion by troops led by Nitta Yoshisada (1301-1338) at Shirahata Castle, which is consequently famous as a "castle that never fell." The castle remains were designated in 1996 as a Historic Site by the Japanese government.

The name of Shirahata Castle came from the legend that a white flag ("shirahata") flew down from Iwashimizu Hachimangu Shrine in Kyoto, dedicated to the guardian deities of the Minamoto clan, to this castle. This legend implied that the Akamatsu clan was a warrior clan that was a legitimate heir to the Minamoto clan.

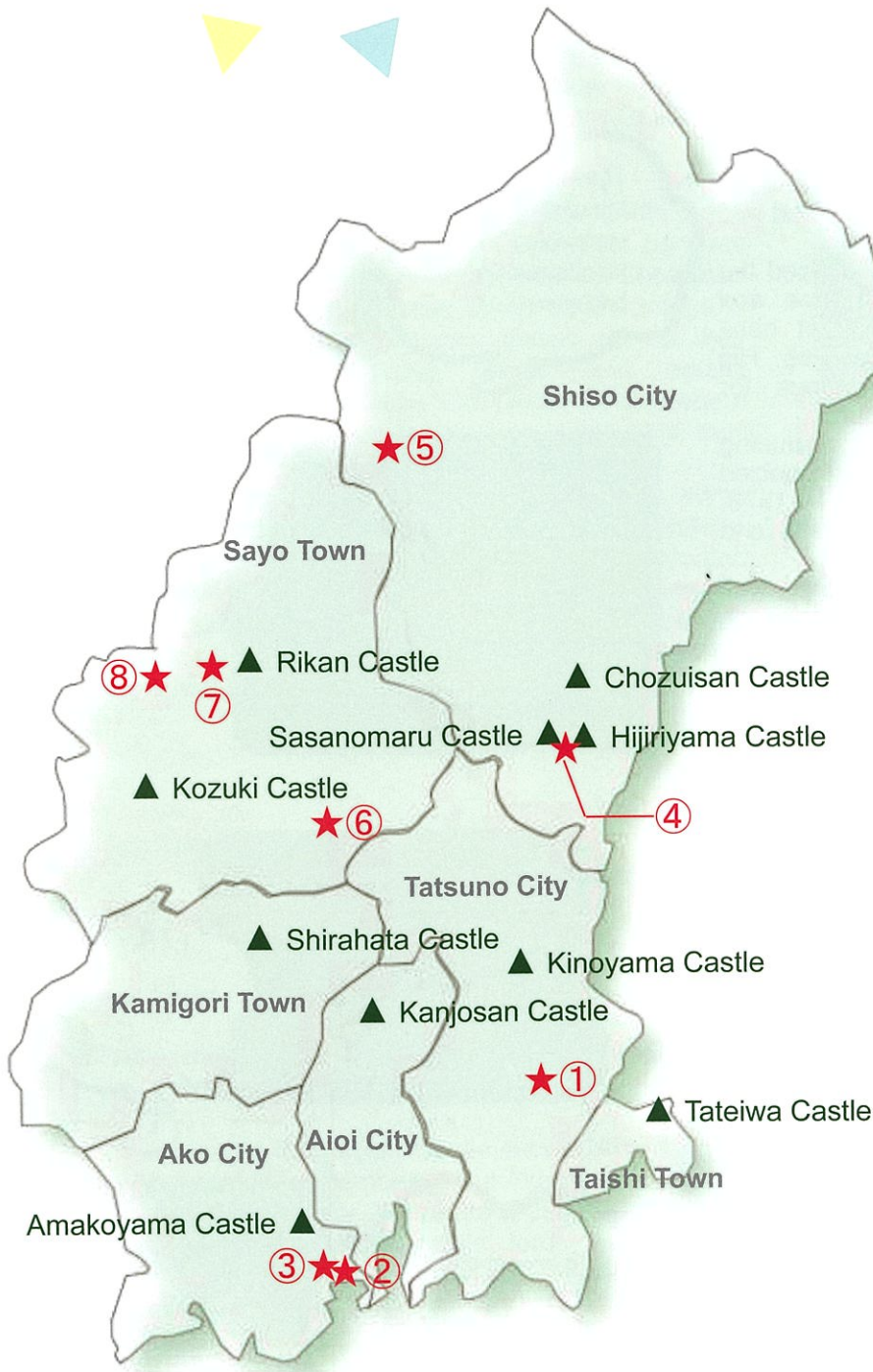
The hill trails to the remains are rough and dotted with stones covered with moss, so you must watch your step. It is said that these stones were rolled down from the hilltop to block the invasion by Nitta Yoshisada's troops. Because of many trees currently covering the hill, you cannot get an overall view of the surrounding area from the remains, but the hilltop offers a view of some part of the area at the foot of the hill.

On the occasion of the Shirahata Castle Festival, guided tours of the remains are offered to visitors.

To ensure the view of the surrounding area, the hilltop is cleared of trees. Therefore, the winds blow upward from below.



Have lunch in an old house
in the middle of a castle tour



Event Information and Access

"Nishi-Harima Travel Diaries"



Sayo Town

⑧ Old House Dining Doman
796-6 Saikane, Sayo Town
Tel.: 0790-87-0839
Closed: Mondays, Tuesdays
and Wednesdays



Tatsuno City

① Sweets & Coffee Saku
106 Kawara-cho,
Tatsuno-cho, Tatsuno City
Tel.: 0791-72-8239

Closed: Thursdays and the
third Friday of every month



Ako City

② Japanese Cuisine Nijo
788 Sakoshi, Ako City
Tel.: 090-7365-5000

Closed: Mondays,
Tuesdays, and Wednesdays



Ako City

③ Nonki
2022 Sakoshi, Ako City
Tel.: 090-1240-7461

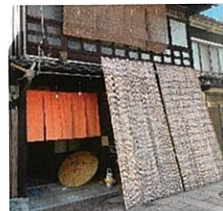
Closed: Tuesdays, and
Wednesdays



Shiso City

④ Café Yusan
403 Yamasaki,
Yamasaki-cho, Shiso City
Tel.: 0790-60-5768

Closed: Sundays, Mondays
and national holidays



Shiso City

⑤ Yurari Farm & Café
313-1 Hitsuno, Chikusa-cho,
Shiso City
Tel.: 0790-71-0471

Open only on Wednesdays,
Thursdays, Fridays and
Saturdays



Sayo Town

⑥ Old House Café
moku × moku
240 Tsurudani, Sayo Town
Tel.: 070-2311-3636

Open only on Saturdays,
Sundays and national holidays



Sayo Town

⑦ Jardin et Café Étranger
459 Hirafuku, Sayo Town
Tel.: 090-6069-1435

Closed: Mondays and
Tuesdays

