

# Inuyama Castle, characteristics and perception from a Westerner's perspective



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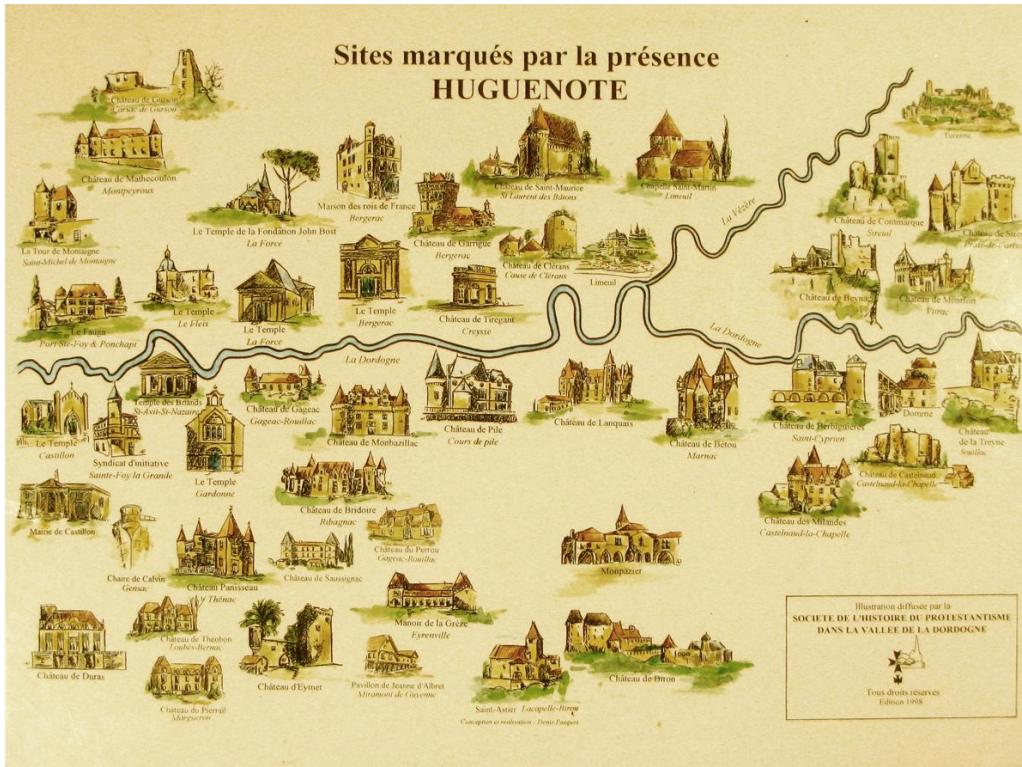
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# French castles

- Difficult to esteem the precise number of castles in France → Ministry of Culture lists around 11.000 but these include only the classified castles
- It is estimated that the real number of castles is around 45.000
- The castles are spread across the French territory, but some regions count more than others, such as the Loire Valley and the department of Dordogne, which is bynamed the *country of 1001 castles*

# Some castles in the French “Vallée de la Dordogne”



- Most of the castles in the Dordogne region were built between the XII and the XV century
- Made out of stone, notably in order to be resistant to fire
- Many of them still exist today; are inhabited or open to the public
- Having passed important parts of my childhood in France and particularly in the Dordogne region, I saw and visited various castles over the years
- Image → ostentatious, grey and solid

# Château de Montfort (Vitrac, France)

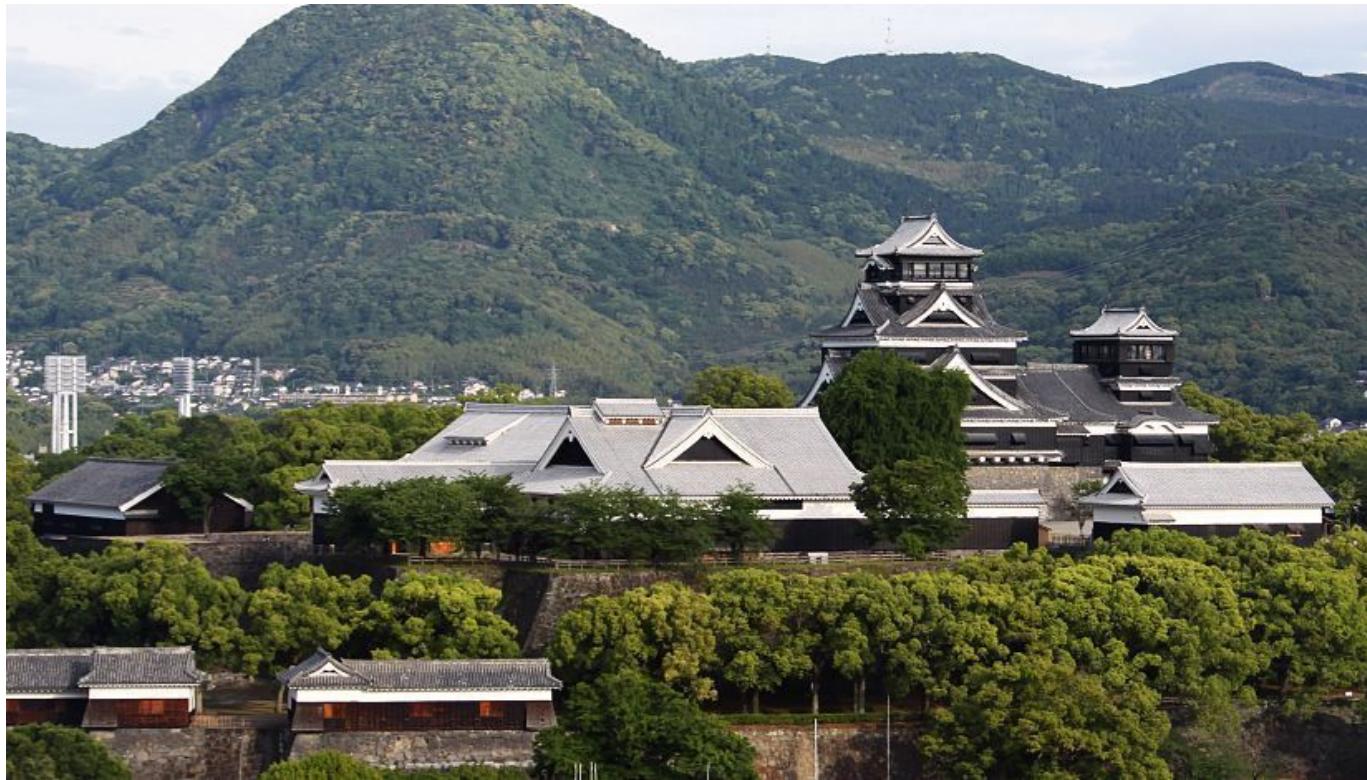


Source:  
<https://www.guide-du-perigord.com>

# Japanese castles

- Out of the tens of thousands of castles present in the XVI century, only 12 castles remain today in original condition across Japan
- Oldest of them → Inuyama Castle, dating from around 1440, but current structure was built in 1537, under the instructions of Oda Nobuyasu
- Visit of Kumamoto Castle and Odawara Castle, but due to renovation works (Kumamoto Castle) and COVID-19 prevention measures (Odawara Castle), entering was not possible
- Distinguished outside of Japanese castles awoke personal curiosity about their inside; the structure as well as the atmosphere

# Kumamoto Castle



Source:  
<https://www.japan-guide.com>

# Inuyama Castle

- Constructed at the northernmost point of the Owari Province (western Aichi)
- Base of the alluvial fan shaped by Kiso River
- Connecting point for the mountainlands upstream and plains downstream of Kiso River
- Was seen as an important relay point for Kiso River wood-transportation
- Built on top of a hill (Shiroyama) at a precipice of around 85 meters high

# Inuyama Castle, view from far



Source: <https://www.aichi-now.jp>

- Inuyama Castle was constructed during a period of war, and the castle lord switched frequently due to its important location
- A Japanese castle typically is protected through moats, ramparts, ditches and other structures
  - The symbolic building within the premises of the castle is the donjon
  - Two types of Japanese donjon: borogata and sotogata. The Inuyama Castle has a classic borogata donjon

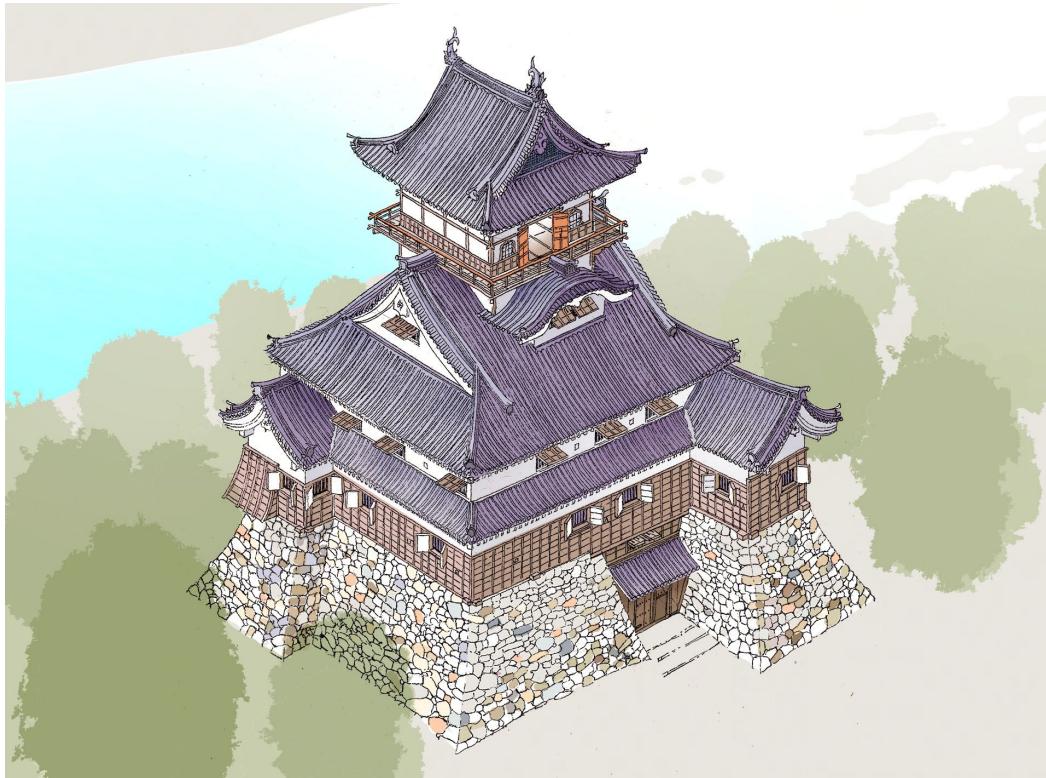
# Inuyama Castle



Source: <https://www.aichi-now.jp>

- Unlike ordinary buildings, the number of floors seen from outside and the number of actual floors of borogata donjon do not always correspond
- The roofs seen from outside are counted as “layers”, whereas the interior floors are counted as “floors”
  - The donjon of Inuyama Castle has three external layers, but consists of six internal floors, four above ground and two below
- Among the five castles designated as National Treasures, Inuyama Castle is the only that visitors can venture out on the cornice and observe a 360 degree view of the surroundings

# Donjon, Inuyama Castle



Source: <https://inuyamajo.jp>

# Perception of Inuyama Castle, from a Westerner's perspective

- Entering for the first time a castle without shoes
- Important presence of wood
- Steep, straight wooden stairs (European castle may have steep stairs, but usually in spiral form and made out of stone)
- Jodan-no-ma (platform) → tatami room
- Very different atmosphere → in contrast to the castles I had entered before in Europe, Inuyama Castle felt less “ostentatious” or “anonymous” and more “welcoming”



Source: <https://inuyamajo.jp>

# Conclusion

- Many French castles still exist today; are inhabited or open to the public whereas only 12 castles remain in original condition across Japan → Inuyama Castle, the oldest, being one of them
- The donjon of Inuyama Castle has three external layers, but consists of six internal floors, four above ground and two below
- Among the castles designated as National Treasures, Inuyama Castle is the only where visitors can observe a 360 degree view of the surroundings
- Important presence of wood & Jodan-no-ma (platform) → tatami room
- Very different atmosphere → compared to the castles entered before in Europe, Inuyama Castle felt less “anonymous” and more “welcoming”

Thank you for your attention

どうもありがとうございました