

Tour of Kanazawa Castle's Stone Walls

Kanazawa Castle is a veritable museum of stone walls. Listen to the whispering of the stones and learn about various building techniques throughout the ages.

Stone Wall Cloister Course Map



Tour of Stone Walls Course

- - - **Inner Castle Route**
① ~ ⑩ About 1.5km
- - - **Outer and Inner Castle Junction Route**
① About 0.4km
- - - **Outer Castle Route**
① ~ ③ About 2.1km

Main Masonry Techniques

Natural Stacking Technique



This technique uses natural stones or stones broken into smaller stones. It can be seen in the old stone walls around the Higashinomaru area.

Rough Stone Stacking Technique



This technique involves arranging rough stones so that their shapes fit together. It can be seen around the Ni-no-maru area and outside other enclosures.

Cut Stone Stacking Technique



This technique involves cutting stones which have already been broken into smaller pieces into shape, resulting in no gaps. It is used in important areas such as stone walls around entrances and exits.

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1 Ishikawa-mon Gate's Stone Wall

The right and left sides of this wall were made using different masonry techniques. The right side was made using the Cut Stone technique, whereas the left side uses the Rough Stone technique, making it a rare example of a wall that uses two different stacking techniques. It is thought to be the result of renovations that were done in 1631.



2 Inner Moat Stone Wall

This inner moat was restored along with Hishi Yagura and Gojikken Nagaya from 1999-2000. It is said that it was made to protect Ni-no-maru after the great fire of 1631.



3 Hishi Yagura, Gojikken Nagaya, Hashizume-mon Tsuzuki Yagura Stone Wall

From here you can see San-no-maru, which was made with the Rough Stone Stacking technique, and behind it you can see Ni-no-maru, which was made using the Cut Stone Stacking technique. The Rough Stone Stacking technique is common in the areas outside enclosures, whereas the Cut Stone technique is more common around vital areas such as entrances and exits.



4 Ninomaru's Northern Stone Wall

The stone walls in this area are made with rough stones which have been arranged by shape and size. It is said to be the most perfect example of the Rough Stone Stacking technique, even being praised by Kaga Clan mason "Hikosaburou Gotoh" as the most eminent stone wall inside the castle.



5 Dobashi-mon Gate's Stone Wall

This stone wall was made using the Cut Stone Stacking technique, and served as the foundation for Dobashi-mon Gate. The hexagonal stone inserted in the wall is said to be modeled after the image of a turtle, an animal associated with water, as a protective charm against fire.



6 Sukiyashiki's Stone Wall

This stone wall was made with the Cut Stone Stacking technique which involves cutting stones into rectangles, and was reconstructed in the Kanbun period (1661-1673). Carved seals, which were said to be carved to indicate the work load when they were cut out. Try looking for the ⊗ and ⊕ carvings.



7 Inui Yagura's Stone Wall

This wall was made using the Rough Stone Stacking technique, but small flat stones were inserted into the gaps between stones in order to give the appearance of the Cut Stone Stacking technique. After many years, some of the stones have fallen out, but you can still see the clever work of the craftsmen of that era.



8 Sanjikken Nagaya's Stone Wall

This stone wall was built using the Cut Stone Stacking technique, but it exhibits rare variation in which the edges of the stones are smoothed down while the inner part remains rough.



9 Kurogane-mon Gate's Stone Wall

The Cutting Stone technique is used on vital portions of the castle. This is also the case with this stone wall, as Kurogane-mon Gate acts as the entrance to Honmaru. The wall is neatly constructed using stones that are cut into polygonal shapes, a very advanced technique.



10 Higashinomaru's Northern Stone Wall

This wall, one of only a precious few, was built using the oldest techniques of all the walls in the castle, allowing us to see what the castle was like when it was first built. It was built using the Natural Stacking technique in which natural rocks and rocks broken into smaller pieces are stacked at a low angle to make a wall.



1 Stone Walls Facing Gyokusen'inmaru Garden

On the slope facing the Gyokusen'inmaru Garden, you can see carefully planned stone walls made with the Cut Stone Stacking technique. These walls were crafted with particular attention to detail, from the height and direction the stones face, to the way they are stacked, resulting in beautiful stone walls. They are an important part of the scenery of the garden.



1 Stone Wall Around Gyokusen'inmaru Nezumita-mon Gate

In this area, there was once a wooden bridge that connected Gyokusen'inmaru and Kanayadamaru (currently in the grounds of Oyama Shrine). The most depressed point in the moat's embankment, preserved with riverbed stones, is where the bridge's support pier (see picture) stood. The stone wall wraps around the top of the embankment. The Nezumita-mon Gate section was added during the Meiji era.

Nezumita-mon Gate and wooden bridge
(Collection of Kanazawa University Library)



Osaka-mon Gate and Otebori Moat in the late Edo period
(Yokoyama Takaaki's collection)

2 Otebori's Stone Wall

This stone wall on the edge of the moat dates back to when Kanazawa Castle was first built. At the time, the place where traders who came to Honmaru via Kahoku-zaka would gather was enclosed by stone walls. The stone wall of the upper level is the support wall for Osaka-mon Gate, and was made by inserting large stones. In 1799, it was destroyed in an earthquake, but was rebuilt the next year.



3 Higashinomaru's Eastern Stone Wall

This is the oldest high stone wall in Kanazawa Castle, built in 1592, when construction of stone walls came into full swing. The wall is 21 meters tall, and is one of a very few stone walls of this scale nationwide constructed during the Bunroku Period (1593-1596).