

Hara Castle Ruins National Historic Site – Map and Guide



During the rule of the Arima family, the homes and government offices of the elder officials and their men were probably located here. Under the command of Ōe Genemon, 3,500 troops made their defense here during the Shimabara Rebellion.

This is the largest expanse of land within the Hara Castle grounds. Tradition has it that during the rule of the Arima family, the *daimyō* (feudal lord) kept his residence here. During the Shimabara Rebellion, 5,700 residents of Arima, Kuchinotsu, Kazusa, and Mie made their defense in this area.

The castle tower is thought to have been located here during the Arima family's rule. Here Shirō Amakusa's forces also kept their main camp and made their plan of defense. There were 2,000 defense troops and 2,000 reserve troops in this area.

This flat ground located between the main enclosure and Hatoyama Promontory is said to have been a practice ground for horse riding during the Arima age. It is also said that the Shimabara rebels gathered for roll call here. The original wall of the main enclosure survives today.

Residents from Chijiwa to Kuchinotsu totaling 1,400 people made their defense here. On April 5, 1638 (Kanei 15.2.21), the rebels staged a night attack on the Kuroda and Terasawa clans from this location.

During the rebellion, a 2,000 member army made up of troops from every village in the Amakusa Islands defended the castle here. This area was named for them.

In 1648, ten years after the end of the rebellion, a monument was built in memory of all who had died. Shigenari Suzuki, the builder, had been ordered by Izunokami Matsudaira to participate in opposing the rebellion. Afterwards Matsudaira made Suzuki the magistrate in charge of keeping public stability. More than a hundred Zen priests gathered to chant sutras for the purification of the land. There are documents which support Shirō Amakusa's existence, and which are valuable for understanding the circumstances of that era.

On March 18, 1638 (Kanei 15.2.3) Gorōzaemon Arima, a soldier of the shogunate, met Emosaku Yamada, one of the rebel troops, here.



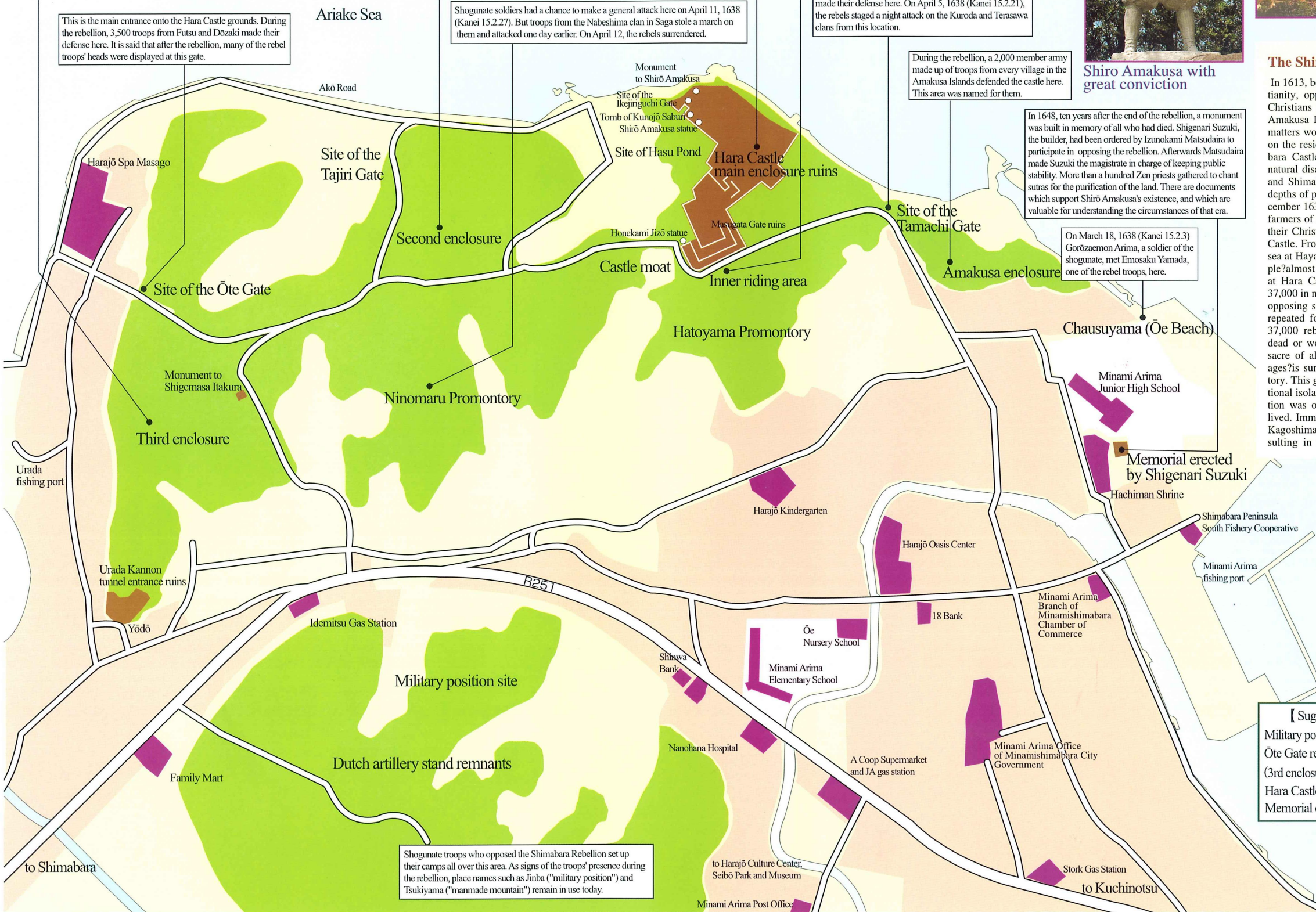
Shiro Amakusa with great conviction



Hara Castle main enclosure ruins

The Shimabara Rebellion 1637-1638

In 1613, because of the government's prohibition of Christianity, oppression of the Christians turned to violence. Christians on the Shimabara peninsula and in the nearby Amakusa Islands suffered terrible persecutions. To make matters worse, brutal labor and heavy taxes were imposed on the residents of the peninsula in order to build Shimabara Castle. Because crops were repeatedly bad due to natural disasters which struck for several years, Amakusa and Shimabara area farmers were driven into the lowest depths of poverty. Revolts broke out in many areas. In December 1637, under General Shirō Tokisada Amakusa, the farmers of Amakusa and Shimabara, united on the basis of their Christian faith, met and shut themselves up in Hara Castle. From the Amakusa side, 14,000 people crossed the sea at Hayasaki-Seto. From the Shimabara side, 23,000 people almost the entire population of the peninsula gathered at Hara Castle. The rebels are said to have been over 37,000 in number. 125,000 government troops stood on the opposing side. After offensive and defensive battles were repeated for about three months, on April 12, 1638, all 37,000 rebels and thousands of government troops lay dead or wounded, and the rebellion was over. The massacre of all the rebels, men, women, and children of all ages is surely one of the saddest events in Japanese history. This great rebellion led to the establishment of the national isolation policy. After the rebellion, forced immigration was ordered to fill the towns where the rebels had lived. Immigration was carried out many times from Oita, Kagoshima, and Kagawa prefectures and other areas, resulting in the present-day population of the Shimabara



Shogunate troops who opposed the Shimabara Rebellion set up their camps all over this area. As signs of the troops' presence during the rebellion, place names such as Jinba ("military position") and Tsukiyama ("manmade mountain") remain in use today.



【 Suggested Walking Route of Historical Sites 】
 Military position site - Urada Kannon tunnel entrance ruins - Ōte Gate remains - Monument to Shigemasa Itakura (3rd enclosure) - Second enclosure - Honekami Jizō statue - Hara Castle main enclosure ruins - Tamachi Gate site - Memorial erected by Shigenari Suzuki

- facilities and institutions
- scenic areas and historic sites
- residential areas and shopping districts