



Fire engulfs Japan's World Heritage-listed Shuri Castle

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A fire tore through Japan's World Heritage-listed Shuri Castle on Thursday, reducing the main hall of the more than 500-year-old landmark to a skeleton.

1. One of Japan's World Heritage sites has been destroyed by fire.
2. Flames tore through Shuri Castle on Thursday, reducing the main hall of the over 500-year-old reconstructed landmark to a mere skeleton.
3. Firefighters on the southern island of Okinawa received the first call around 2:47 a.m., public broadcaster NHK said.
4. Local media quoted the city's mayor confirming that the castle's dragon monuments had been blackened and said the north and south halls had been destroyed.
5. Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary spoke at a press conference.

JAPANESE CHIEF CABINET SECRETARY, YOSHIHIDE SUGA, SAYING:

"I know Shuri Castle, a World Heritage site, is an extremely important symbol of Okinawa. I feel my heart ache and extend my heartfelt sympathy to the people of Okinawa."

6. The wooden castle, painted bright red and enclosed by curved stone walls, sits on a hill overlooking Naha.
7. It was due to be a scheduled stop on the 2020 Tokyo Olympic torch relay route.
8. The city's fire department said that while the castle had exterior sprinkler systems, its halls did not - as this wasn't required under local fire codes.
9. Shuri Castle has been destroyed by fire several times, most recently in the Battle of Okinawa in 1945.
10. After World War 2, it served as a university campus until the mid 1970s.
11. Once restored, it re-opened as a national park in 1992 and was designated a World Heritage site in the year 2000.