

### **Itsukushima Shrine: Great Torii (O-torii)**

The Great Torii (O-torii) is the symbol of Miyajima and has stood guard over the entrance to the island since 1168, marking the border between the sacred and the secular. The powerful political leader Taira no Kiyomori (1118–1181) is said to have been responsible for erecting the original torii, and the bright red gate has been replaced seven times over the centuries. The present six-pillar style dates back to 1547, and the current torii was built in 1875. Weighing approximately 60 tons, including 7 tons of stones placed within the upper lintel, the structure is held upright by its own weight and is not embedded in the seabed. The twin main pillars were fashioned from more than 500-year-old camphor trees, which are naturally resistant to rot and insects, and the vermilion lacquer coating further helps to protect the wood from degradation. Despite these measures, the constant exposure of the torii to the elements necessitates regular repairs and periodic rebuilding.

The tablet displayed here hung on one side of the fourth torii, built in 1547, and is the same size as the tablets on the current version. “Itsukushima Daimyōjin,” one of the old names for Itsukushima Shrine, is written in copper characters based on calligraphy by Emperor Go-Nara (1495–1557). The tablet was donated by the Ouchi family, who ruled over much of the Chugoku region (which includes Hiroshima and Miyajima) at the time, and bears the Ouchi family crest on both sides. The ornamental frame includes Buddhist imagery—a reminder of how Shinto and Buddhism were closely intertwined in medieval Japan.