

### **Bloodied Ceiling**

The original site of Fushimi Castle holds a dark tale from Japan's Sengoku period (1467 – 1600). A garrison of samurai warriors loyal to Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616) found themselves outnumbered by rival warlord Ishida Mitsunari (1560–1600) and his army of 40,000 men. They managed to hold out for two weeks until the castle was set on fire. Seeing that all hope was lost, all 380 samurai gathered in the keep and committed ritual suicide on August 1, 1600.

The blood-soaked floorboards on which they died were later recovered, hidden in a temple in Kyoto, and shared among other temples so that prayers could be offered for the souls of the departed warriors. Sixteen eventually came to be used as ceiling panels at Hosen-in Temple. A number of handprints can be seen in the blood that coats the wood. Some sections also bear indications of helmets or armored breastplates. In one place, a human face is faintly discernible, while in another section there appear to be smeared fingerprints.

The defiance of Fushimi Castle gave Ieyasu sufficient time to marshal his forces. Less than two months after the fall of the castle, he defeated his rivals at the decisive Battle of Sekigahara.