

Shirakami Shrine: Outline

At the corner of Peace Boulevard and Rijo Dori Avenue, Shirakami Shrine sits quietly, much as it has for centuries. The earliest mention of the shrine—one of the most important places of worship in Hiroshima—is found on a 600-year-old map of the city. However, its history stretches back much further. The shrine has its origins in the practice of affixing white paper to large coastal rocks on islands in Hiroshima Bay to warn passing ships of the danger of collision. The shrine's name preserves this history: *shirakami* means “white god,” but is pronounced similarly to the word for “white paper.”

The first official shrine was erected at the site in 1594 by daimyo lord and founder of what is now the city of Hiroshima, Mohri Terumoto (1553–1625), in order to protect the southern approach to Hiroshima Castle. Under the rule of the Mohri family, Hiroshima became more prominent and so did Shirakami Shrine.

The shrine’s autumn festival, held annually on the evenings of October 28 and 29, is a major city event. The footpaths leading to the shrine are lined with food stalls and carnival games, and dancers perform ritual *kagura* dancing on a special stage.

Despite its busy surroundings, Shirakami Shrine remains an oasis of calm in downtown Hiroshima.