

Itsukushima Jinja Shrine

Itsukushima Jinja Shrine sits atop a small peninsula jutting out from Okuki harbor. Fronted by three bright-red torii gates, the shrine is dedicated to the goddess Benzaiten. However, it is best known today as a symbol of recovery and international friendship, thanks to a recent series of events with a near-miraculous conclusion.

Originally the shrine had two torii, both of which were washed away by the tsunami following the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. Over the course of two years, parts of the gates drifted some 7,000 kilometers across the Pacific Ocean, before washing up on two different beaches in Oregon. The top rails (*kasagi*) of the two torii were discovered within a month of each other, and through the efforts of the curator and director of the Portland Japanese Garden, were returned to the shrine. Four years and nine months after their disappearance, the two torii were restored to Itsukushima Jinja. A third gate was added to commemorate the new friendship between the cities of Portland and Hachinohe.