

## **First Torii**

The First Torii gate marks the start of the main approach to Tsurugaoka Hachimangu along Wakamiya Oji Avenue. The torii spans the road about 500 meters from the ocean and is, at 8.5 meters tall, the largest of the three torii gates along the 1.8-kilometer avenue that is the main thoroughfare running through the heart of the city. The avenue was built by Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147–1199), the founder of the Kamakura shogunate, who wanted to model his capital—the new center of power in Japan—on Kyoto, the imperial capital. In Kyoto, a central avenue named Suzaku Oji led through the city from the south to the imperial palace, and Yoritomo had this pattern replicated in Kamakura, with the Wakamiya Oji terminating at Tsurugaoka Hachimangu. The First Torii was completed in 1180, followed by Wakamiya Oji in 1182. The torii has been rebuilt several times.

According to legend, the current stone torii was constructed on the initiative of Eyo (also Oeyo; 1573–1626), the wife of second Tokugawa shogun Tokugawa Hidetada (1579–1632). The deity Hachiman came to her in a vision and promised that in exchange for building a great torii, she would be blessed with a son. Eyo and the shogun had high-quality granite brought from faraway Bizen Province (present-day Okayama Prefecture). Ferrying the stone by sea to Kamakura and building the torii proved to be very time-consuming and the work was often interrupted. Eyo did have a son, Iemitsu (1604–1651), who succeeded his father as the third shogun, but the project was not finally completed until 1668, when Hidetada and Eyo's grandson Tokugawa Ietsuna (1641–1680) was the fourth Tokugawa shogun. The great stone torii is designated an Important Cultural Property.