

Dankazura

The Dankazura is an elevated 450-meter pedestrian pathway along the main approach to the shrine between the second and third torii gates. It is lined with cherry trees that usually bloom from late March to mid-April, and azaleas that flower later in spring. The Dankazura was originally built in 1182 by Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147–1199), the first Kamakura shogun and founder of Tsurugaoka Hachimangu. He ordered the construction of a **paved** road stretching all the way to the shrine from the sea. The project was undertaken to pray for the safe delivery of an heir, as Yoritomo's wife Hojo Masako (1156–1225) was pregnant at the time. The design may have also served a defensive purpose: the path once had moats on both sides and appears to become narrower as it approaches the shrine grounds, thereby making it easier to repel an **enemy attack**. The Dankazura has undergone repeated changes over the centuries, including removal of the portion between the First Torii and Second Torii gates in 1878 to make room for the tracks of the new Yokosuka Railway Line. Repairs completed in 2016 included replanting the cherry trees, restoring damaged masonry, and replacing the stone lanterns along the path.