

## Ote Ichino Gate (Marugame Castle)

The Ote Ichino Gate on the north side of Marugame Castle was the fortress's last line of defense. It was intended to stop enemies who had made it past the east-facing Ote Nino Gate and through the *masugata*, a square between the two gates placed at right angles to each other to slow down attackers. Both gates were built in 1670 by the Kyogoku family, which controlled the castle at the time and sought to reinforce its defenses. The castle entrance originally faced south, but the Kyogoku moved it to the opposite side and constructed the twin gates to complement the high stone walls of the fortress, which had already made it extremely difficult to storm. The two gates, along with the castle's wooden keep, have been designated Important Cultural Properties.

The roof of the gate is decorated with *onigawara* tiles and *shachihoko* sculptures on both ends. The former are ornaments that depict the fierce face of an ogre (*oni*), believed to scare away demons and evil spirits, while the latter are fish-shaped figures that were thought to protect a structure from fire by spraying water from their mouths. The two-story interior of the gate, which is open to visitors, is distinguished by its six brattices, or alcoves with removable floorboards. These were features designed for use by defenders to shoot or throw objects at enemies below. Ote Ichino is also referred to as Taikomon ("drum gate"), because the castle lord's retainers would beat drums within the gate to announce the time. This practice was revived in 2006, and drums are now used to announce noon from the gate every day.