

## **Kushima Inari Shrine**

A tunnel of vermillion torii gates marks the entrance to Kushima Inari Shrine, which dates from 1480. The shrine was established following the return of lord Omura Sumikore (dates unknown) after he regained control of his lands in a battle with the rival Arima family.

The shrine deity is Inari, the god of rice, agriculture, and prosperity. The wooden halls of the shrine are painted vermillion, and the main worship hall is protected by two fox statues, said to be messengers of the Inari deity.

The shrine stands in the innermost bailey of Kushima Castle, where the Omura family residence was located. Most of the original structures within the bailey were destroyed shortly after the rule of the Tokugawa shoguns ended in 1867. With the restoration of political power to the emperor, Japan began a process of modernization under the new Meiji government, and reminders of the shogunate, including many castles, were demolished.