

Night Eco-Tatsu: A Body- and Heart-Warming Experience

A special program organized by Unzen Onsen townspeople uses the heat from the hells to bring warmth to a very traditional Japanese activity. “Night Eco-tatsu” is held in a plaza in the center of the Kyuhachiman Jigoku, where the stone floor is continuously heated by the thermal activity of the hot springs.

In a traditional Japanese home, people keep warm in the winter by sitting around a low table in a tatami mat room. A heating element is put under the table frame, a heavy blanket or futon is placed on the frame and a table top is placed on that. Then everyone slides their feet under the futon to keep warm on the most bitter winter nights. The table set-up is called a *kotatsu*, and the Unzen planners have named the program using a pun based on the words “eco,” for ecology, and “*kotatsu*.”

Each Saturday night during the winter season, these low tables are set up on the warm stones, and visitors can enjoy the unique atmosphere of steaming hot springs and the open air while sipping tea or enjoying other refreshments. Reservations are accepted for two sittings each night, and the fee is ¥2,000 per person, ¥3,000 per couple (children under six are free of charge).