



Electric Unazuki

An electric car glides through the hot spring resort of Unazuki

Unazuki hot spring is located in the city of Kurobe, Toyama Prefecture, at the foot of the Northern Alps. The Kurobe Gorge is a famous sightseeing spot where viewing the natural scenery from the Torokko train traveling the length of the gorge is a particularly popular attraction. Toyama Bay is also not far away so in terms of the palate, it is possible to enjoy both seafood and mountain vegetables.

Aiming to become a low-carbon sightseeing area, Unazuki hot spring launched the Denki Unazuki Project in April 2010. (“Denki” is the Japanese for “electricity.”) Modeled on Zermatt, the world famous mountain resort at the foot of the Matterhorn in Switzerland, the concept is to turn environmentally friendly urban planning into a spark that ignites interest among visitors. Local tourism operators and building contractors got together to start up the project, inspired by a proposal made by Professor Hiroyuki Uesaka at Toyama University of International Studies, who has researched the advanced initiatives to protect the environment at Zermatt, including the ban in prin-

ciple on driving gasoline-powered vehicles.

They started with a car rental service of three electric cars and twenty electrically assisted bicycles for sightseeing in the hot spring town and its surroundings. The electric cars can travel about 100 kilometers, which is enough for a leisurely day of sightseeing in the surrounding tourist areas. In December, the town started a demonstration trial of a small generating facility that uses the water for fire prevention that flows through the town to charge the electric cars.

Satoshi Ohashi, director of the executive committee for the Denki Unazuki Project, comments, “We have arranged for convertible electric cars with cute designs that make many visitors feel that they want to try them. Recently, there has been an increase in visitors who come because they want to drive the electric cars.” The initiative already seems to be pio-

Map of Unazuki and Kurobe



neering new visitors.

There is a typically Japanese hydraulic power station in the upper reaches of the Kurobe-gawa river, which flows through Unazuki hot spring, and the high level of interest in green energy among local people has also provided backing for the project.

“At present, we are developing an electric bus for ferrying visitors from Unazuki Station to the spa

hotels. Recently, there has also been an increase in visitors from Asia including China and Taiwan. We want to continue to work hard to attract visitors from all parts of the world to enjoy the natural surroundings and tourism through green energy.”

The electric car rental closed for the winter season in the middle of December, but the service will re-open in the spring.

KOUTO TOKYO • LIGHTOPIA

The Kouto Tokyo • LIGHTOPIA light festival was staged in the vicinity of Tokyo Station from December 21 to 29, 2010. It was the fifth anniversary of the event, which draws approximately 2 million visitors every year. The organizers set up an Ambient Candle Park at Wadakura Fountain Park near Tokyo Station, displaying 600 cylindrical lanterns with illustrated messages drawn by prominent persons and children on the themes of Earth, the Environment and Peace. Emerging into view in the candlelight, the hundreds of illustrations created a magical atmosphere.

In addition, using white LEDs linked together in the shape of a beautiful white necklace, the Koryu light installation adorned the stone walls of the Imperial Palace moat nearby. Here and there could be found glittering tapestries of light in the shape of elephants, birds or fish, bringing to mind biodiversity, the theme of the tenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP10), which was held in Japan just two months earlier.

In a square in the business district in front of Tokyo Station, carnations, pansies and other colorful flowers were interwoven with light in the Flower Fantasia display. Green, red and blue LED lights twinkling in

the beds of flowers brought exclamations of delight from visitors.

Kouto Tokyo • LIGHTOPIA uses green energy generated from natural sources of energy. The organizers purchased a Certificate of Green Power for 2,000 kWh of green energy generated by hydraulic power to supply all the power used for the event. Electricity consumption was also kept in check by choosing LEDs for most of the light sources.

“The conservation of power progresses every year. The scale of the event hardly changes from one year to another, but compared to the year before last, we have reduced power consumption for the event to one third,” comments the PR manager for Kouto Tokyo • LIGHTOPIA. “We want to enjoy this signature winter light show in a way that is ecologically sound.”



The Flower Fantasia display opposite Tokyo Station, in which flowers were interwoven with LED lights

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