

SANRIKU RAILWAY KOTATSU TRAIN



02 MARCH 2017 LANCE GILES SPOTS

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Nothing brings relief from the cold like a [kotatsu](#), especially in northern Japan. As you may be aware, a [kotatsu](#) is a low table with a blanket and heater bundled together. They're wonderful. Some say they are dangerous—once you get in, you don't want to get out. But alas! Why be stuck under your *kotatsu* indoors when you could be out and about **and** under the *kotatsu* all at once? Preposterous! Except on the [Sanriku Railway's kotatsu train](#).

The [Sanriku Railway](#) (三陸鉄道) runs along the coast of Iwate (岩手) in two lines, north and south. Both lines sustained heavy damage from the earthquake and tsunami disaster on March 11th, 2011, and reconstruction of the railroad finished in 2014.

Until March 26th, passengers traveling between Miyako (宮古) and Kuji (久慈) can [get cozy under a kotatsu](#), as they take in Iwate's natural beauty. The *kotatsu* train runs twice a day: once from Kuji to Miyako, departing at 12:13pm; and once from Miyako to Kuji, departing at 3:05pm. Miyako can be reached by bus or the Yamada Line (山田線) from Morioka City (盛岡市). The Hachinohe Line (八戸線) connects to Kuji.

The *kotatsu* isn't the only special part of the train ride. There is an in-train event, called *namomi* (なもみ), which is similar to Akita prefecture's *namahage* (なまはげ) event. The *namomi* is a kind of demonic entity, represented by people in ogre costumes, that put on a show. *Namomi* is an event which is traditionally held in the town of Iwaizumi (岩泉町) from the 14th through the 16th days of the Lunar New Year. Men dress as demons and parade around the neighborhood, essentially scaring children and admonishing them for their bad behavior. After doling out their punishment, they're very friendly. It's good ol' fashioned family fun. On the *kotatsu* train, when the train enters a long tunnel, the lights are cut and the demons appear.

In addition to the original Sanriku Railway Nanbu Senbei (南部せんべい; rice crackers with toppings, including nuts and pumpkin), other foods, beverages and special meals featuring local ingredients are also available for purchase on the train. There are three food options: sea urchin and [abalone bentō](#), sea urchin-topped rice, and a scallop [bentō](#).

The Sanriku Railway began the *Namomi* event back in 2005 to promote tourism and local culture. It has maintained the tradition ever since, although there was a disruption of service in 2011 due to the earthquake and tsunami disaster.

Passengers wishing to experience the *kotatsu* seating must make reservations in Japanese—feel free to use our Izanau [Concierge service](#) to assist you.



[Image source](#)

Train information:

December 17th, 2016 ~ March 26th, 2017: Saturdays, Sundays, and national holidays
January 3rd, 2017 ~ January 5th, 2017: Every day

[Top image source](#)

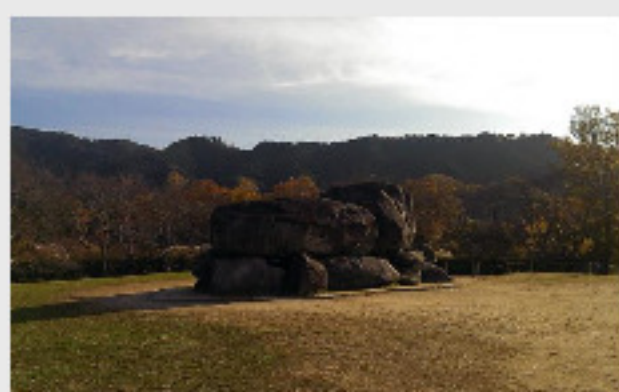
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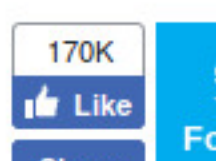
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