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¥42,000,000   



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- Satellite TV & wireless internet
- Each app't comes with fully insured car in garage w/ navigation system

Humming Bird




¥53,000,000   



Development opportunity or family home.

- Located in middle Hirafu.
- Open plan living, dining and kitchen
- House on 100 tsubo's of level ground
- Has a lock up garage

Yuki Yama 1 & 3



¥52,000,000   



Centrally located, luxurious & spacious boutique apartments

- Top of middle Hirafu, only minutes walk to lifts, restaurants, bars, onsens & shops
- Western style kitchen & bathrooms
- Split level design

Freedom Inn

¥195,000,000  



This elegant Inn has great views over Hanazono and offers a wise investor a great opportunity.

- Full brick property of grand proportions
- A short walk to the base of Gondola & Tokyu golf course.
- Potential to convert into a boutique hotel

Mountainside Palace




¥37,700,000   



New quality constructed apartment in the heart of upper Hirafu village

- Great value & location
- Japanese design
- MT Yotel views
- Hurry, last apartment available

Kumajiro

¥45,000,000   



Great value & great rental returns with tremendous redevelopment potential

- Lovely big house located in tumikyjo 1
- Only 1 min walk to restaurant & resort shuttle bus & 5 min walk to Hirafu Village & lifts

publisher's note...

The Powder. It's the reason many of us have been drawn here. Yet without access to the back country we would be unable to really enjoy it to the fullest. This issue we take a look at how Niseko opened up its backcountry and reaped the benefits on the way to becoming the fastest growing ski resort in the world. Reader responses have started piling in and we have Surfanic Stack of the Week winner, who will take home a Surfanic snowboard jacket. We continue to bring you the latest news on the ever changing Niseko real estate market and we introduce you to another few local staff and great little local businesses that help make this place so special. We love to get your emails with your best pictures and feedback so please keep them coming! bevan@powderlife.co.jp

パウダースノー。"粉雪"が人をニセコに引きつけている最大の魅力です。しかし、バックカントリーへのアクセスが無ければ、パウダースノーを十分に満喫する事は出来ません。この号では、ニセコがどのようにバックカントリーをオープンしたのか、そして世界的にも有名なスキーリゾートとして急激な成長を遂げたのかに焦点をあてております。読者意見も続々といただいております。雪に埋もれているニセコらしいベストショットにはSurfanicのスノーボードジャケットをご用意しております。ひきつづき、ニセコでの最新ニュース、不動産情報、個人ビジネスやこのエリアを魅力的にしている事等お伝えしていきます。あなたがお持ちの写真やご意見感想などございましたら、bevan@powderlife.co.jpまでお送りください。

Bevan Colless
Publisher



photo of the week

berry delicious!!
by eriko mentzos

Taken a great snap in Niseko? Get it published for the world to see. Submit entries to ed@powderlife.co.jp

in the loop 

what's on in niseko this week

January 19 - february 1

Saturdays January 19 and 26
Hanazono Saturday Entertainment
12-2 at Hanazono Cafe. Live DJ and there are free giveaways of Redbull and Soyjoy at the base of Hanazono #1.

1月19日(土)26日(土)
12:00~14:00 花園カフェにDJ参上!
花園第一リフトエリアでは Redbull と Soyjoy を無料配布。

Sundays January 20 and 27
Taiko Drum Performances
Free traditional Japanese drum performances, 3.30pm
Sundays outside Hokkaido Tracks office (next to Seicomart).

1月6日(日)13日(日)
太鼓演奏会
地元太鼓演奏グループによる太鼓演奏会。場所はセイコーマート横、北海道トラックス前にて。15:30~

Mondays and Thursdays January 21, 24, 28, 31
Higashiyama Prince Sushi Making Class
Learn how to make sushi the authentic way! 12pm-2pm
1F Otaru Restaurant. Japanese and English. ¥2500. Call 0136-44-1111 for reservations until 5pm the day before the class.

1月21, 28日(月)24, 31日(木)
東山プリンスホテルにて お寿司作り教室
海にも近いニセコ、新鮮なネタでお寿司作りを体験してみませんか。寿司の作り方がその日のうちに習得できます。日本語と英語でのレッスン 参加費 ¥ 2,500 12:00~14:00 すし処小樽にて 予約はアクティビティカウンター tel:0136-44-1111 前日の17:00まで

Tuesdays January 22, 29
Higashiyama Prince hotel
A Day in the Life of a Ski Patroller. Tuesday night 9pm to 10pm. 1F Tea Lounge Hamanasu. Japanese and English.

1月22, 29日(火)
スキーパトロールの一日
ゲレンデや早朝のアバランチコントロールの様子など、ニセコ東山パトロールの活動を、映像や写真とともにご紹介。参加無料、21:00~ 新館1Fティーラウンジはまなす

Tuesday and Friday January 22, 25, 29 and Feb 1
Higashiyama Prince Imo Mochi Making Class.
Learn how to make delicious traditional Japanese potato cake from Kutchan potatoes! 2pm-4pm. 3F Banquet hall. Japanese and English. ¥1500. For reservations call 0136-44-1111.

1月22, 29日(火)25日(金)2月1日(日)
東山プリンスホテルにて 料理教室(いも餅の作り方)
この地域のおいしいじゃがいもを使って、伝統のいも餅を作って

みませんか。日本語と英語でのレッスン 参加費 ¥1,500
14:00~16:00 3F 宴会場にて 予約はアクティビティカウンター tel:0136-44-1111 前日の17:00まで

Saturday January 26 Australia Day Events
Grand Hirafu Australia Day Festival
One of the big events of the season. 5pm to 7pm near the Alpen hotel. ¥100 Hot pot with Australian beef and Japanese vegetables. Snow Flag game, Taiko drumming performance. Firworks display at 9.30pm.

Bollywood meets Backyard Cricket BBQ
Celebrate Indian Independence Day and Australia Day with a game of cricket at Blo Blo. Bangin' Bangra Beats meets Aussie Hip Hop. BBQ ¥1000 From 7pm.

1月26日(土)オーストラリアデーイベント
グランヒラフオーストラリアデーフェスティバル
冬のシーズン中で大きなイベントのひとつ。5pm ~7pm アルペンホテル近くにて。オージービーフと日本の野菜をミックスした鍋を¥100で販売。スノーフラッグゲームや太鼓のパフォーマンスもあります。花火はナイター終了後の9:30pm。

クリケットゲーム&BBQ
プロブロにてインドの独立記念日とオーストラリアデーをクリケットゲームでお祝いします。インディアンミュージックとオージーヒップホップ! BBQ ¥1,000 7pm~



Tell us about your event!
Email kris@powderlife.co.jp or fax 0136 222 011

in the loop



powderlife

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PICK UP POINTS
Hirafu Australia House, Bang Bang, B's Café, A Bu Cha, Senchou 1, Senchou 2, Hotel Niseko Alpen, Komekichi Onigiri Cafe, King Bell Restaurant, Hotel Niseko Scott, Hotel Snow Universe, Niseko Kogen Hotel, Niseko Prince Hotel, Captain Hirafu, Grand Papa Pension, J-Sekka, Barumba, Gentem Café, Welcome Center, Wild Bill's, Hurry Slowly, Java Bar, Woody Note Pension, Barunba, Dragon Wine Bar, Gentemstick Retail Store, NGS, Deep Powder Tours, Ski Japan, Downtown Cafe, NAC, Nathan's, Jo Jo's, Yuki Bar, Fusion, 343, Apre Bar... and more **Higashiyama** Higashiyama Prince Hotel, Black Diamond Lodge **Annupuri** Annupuri Village, Nikko Hotel, Ikoinomura Hotel, The Nook Annupuri, Mokumokutei BBQ House **Moiwa** Hotel Kanronomori **Kutchan** Kutchan Tourist Information Centre, Loaf Lounge, Be, Blue Cielo, Nami Chan Chi, Fuji Confectionary, Shunsai **Sapporo** Sapporo Tourist Information Centre, Sapporo Clock Tower Information Centre **Tokyo** Paddy Foley's, Legend's, National Azabu International Supermarket, Nissin International Supermarket, Khaosan Asakusa Backpackers Hostel **Hakuba** Hakuba Real Estate, The Powderhouse

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SNAP

by eriko mentzos

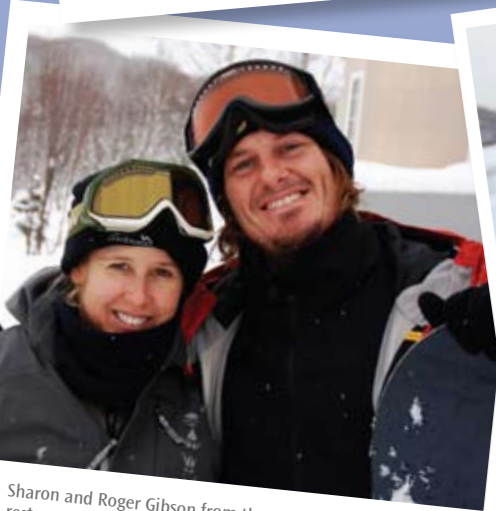
faces on the street



We're loving it! Sapporo city slickers Teru, Takapero, Kotatsu, Kottan, Teppei, Tsukasa, Yokko, Eri, Mami. Fave restaurants Jyuu Okonomiyaki and Moiya's ramen joint. Fave food Sushi!!



Three (and a half!) year old Jasmin and nanny Blesilda on holidays from Singapore. Fave restaurant: Jojo's!!



Sharon and Roger Gibson from the sunny Gold Coast: restaurant Downtown Cafe / food Nabe (meat and vegetable hotpot).



Ryo and Yumiko down from Sapporo. Like to dine at Bang Bang and love to eat soup curry and nabe (Japanese style meat and veg' hotpot).



All the way from Nagoya, between Tokyo and Osaka, Ayano and Tatsu. Fave restaurants are Sencho and A Bu Cha. Ichiban (number one) food is... sushi!!



The Hanabusa family from eastern Hokkaido in town on their Niseko ski trip. Fave restaurant B's Cafe / fave food Soba (buckwheat noodles).

mountain style

Check this chick out! 16-year-old Aussie skier Alli Peacock from Adelaide bags this issue's outfit of the week. We loved the check jacket with fur-lined hood, complete with the zip to keep out the cold and the old school clasp buttons to bring in the style points. We wanted to know where she got the funky checked goggles but she wasn't telling. Respect sister! She can sure strike a cool pose to boot. For being such a cool customer, Alli wins a Niseko fleece jumper from Fusion.



FLASH

niseko social scene

by jimmy edwards



Too cool.. Hakodate's reggae band Junichi and crew provided the tunes while giving gaijin punters a lesson in counting and an elementary class straight from the school of cool..

Yawaraya Reggae Party

Once a month the placid barbecue restaurant is transformed into a hip reggae venue with a selection of the areas coolest reggae acts. A list of Niseko's finest was assembled - sans dreadlocks - to enjoy the beats.



Irie mon! Jen, birthday girl Emily and Jess Geldhart.



Splash's no-ganja policy may have turned some rastafarians away but the staff made sure there was plenty of drink sloshing about.



Staff member Shinobu Tomonaga and fire dancer Keisuke Kishika.



What else to do but chill out with a nice glass of wine? Miyuki and Yukiyo.



Niseko Massage's therapist Amy tells Hirohiko Takenaka his ice bar is very cool!

Fire and Ice Opening

The Fire and Ice bar outside Blo Blo is a work of art. Guests were treated to a fire show and cocktails specially designed to keep them warm. Rug up and get yourself there!



Powder tools

by bevan colless



Vector Glide Bold Telemark

Vector Glide is a progressive Japanese ski and snowboard label who understands that skiing telemark is like swimming butterfly - it's great fun if you're good at it, but you need to go a little slower and take regular breaks. The Bold has an 85cm waist that makes paralleling a piece of cake and will keep you on top of the deep stuff, but also allow you to carve hard turns on the burns. They are handmade in Nagano by expert craftsmen in a 90-year-old factory using only the strongest wood with a unique sandwich construction that makes them extra solid. The Bold is for expert tele-markers who want the highest performance ski they can get. Niseko store Toyru's owner Yutaka Takashi is one of the best telemark skiers in Japan and is a key tester for Vector Glide. He reckons with the Bold they've just about reached perfection. Available from Toyru, opposite the Gondola Chalets. ¥89,250.



Shimano Accublade

Leaders in bicycle components and fishing, Shimano is one of the most successful Japanese companies because they make top quality gear. As of 2005 they announced they mean business in the snowboard and binding boot market with the Accublade step in system. Ridden by many of the best Japanese backcountry boarders, including Niseko pro Tomoki Takaku, this is a quality step-in system that provides top level performance in deep powder or speed carving on the groomers. The boot integrated step in system acts almost like a ski boot, but you can adjust how much foot-roll you want to make them feel like strap bindings with the adjustable base plate bushings. Available for testing at the Moiwa Shimano Test centre, but you have to trek into Sapporo to buy them. Binding ¥32,000, and three boot styles at a reassuringly expensive ¥45,000-¥105,000 for the Flake GoreTex.



Burton Malolo

The Burton Malolo is a great choice for ripping up the Niseko backcountry. A cross between the Fish and the Custom it can do just about everything you'd want a snowboard to do. The 20mm of taper, set back stance and round tail will keep the nose up in the deep fluffy stuff without the rear leg burn, but the Malolo also flies on the groomers and can even spin and jib with ease. The core is solid where you need it along the effective edge, but flexible where you don't. It's no wonder Terje rides it. The 2008 has improved graphics from the ill advised graffiti inspired 2007 model. In a wide range of sizes from 149cm - 166cm. Available from Fusion. RRP ¥73,500



Fusion is Niseko's premier retail store.

Its breadth of product has something for everyone, a stylistic fusion where both Japanese and international design come together to deliver a complete selection of the latest high tech snow fashions for men, women and children.



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Demo is committed to being the best rental store in Niseko and strongly supports local trade by only buying Japanese supplied equipment. Demo's quality service will ensure customers are on the snow in minimum time and with the best equipment available.

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LOCATION



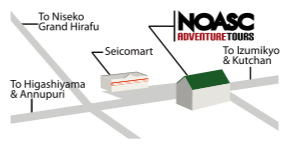
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NISEKO GATE POLICY

how niseko opened up its back country and reaped the benefits

by kristian lund and joel westcot

There is a science to avalanches. And gravity, it has been said, is a bitch. Any slope steeper than about 45 degrees sheds snow naturally and consistently. Few slopes in Niseko fit this category. Most fall between 20 and 45 degrees, a range that holds snow and allows it to build up, and with so much snowfall, it can really, really... really build up. A number of factors can trigger the load to slide and while the risks can be assessed, there is one thing that cannot be calculated – when it's going to go.

For those unfamiliar with the mountains, it's hard to believe such light, fluffy snow can be so deadly. For an indication of just how heavy accumulated powder snow can be, you only need to take a drive out and about the countryside surrounding Niseko – frequently you'll see old houses and sheds collapsed in on themselves. Snow sliding off a roof onto a parked car can easily smash a windscreen or put a very nice dint in a roof or bonnet. Take a few thousands roof loads of snow and drop them off the top of a mountain and you get a feeling for how serious even a small avalanche can be.

In 1999 two local mountain guides took two seasonal workers, Yuko and Hitomi, on a snowshoe tour through the Harunotaki (summer waterfall) bowl – the big, cliff-lined, out-of-bounds valley to the left of Hirafu when looking up at the mountain from the village. It was a beautiful, sunny, early spring day - so picturesque it would have been hard to imagine anything bad could come of it. Perhaps fooled into a false sense of security, they made a fatal mistake. They trekked through the bottom of the gully and took a break and the face slid. When snow slides it goes in the direction of least resistance – down. Where the group was standing was the lowest point of the dip in Harunotaki meaning that, like a funnel, everything above them was headed

there had been a slide and could he go and have a look. Within 15 minutes he was on the scene and found the hapless guide probing frantically. "He was pretty panicked and told me there were three people down there," says Ross. "He was working near where they were standing and I went and had a look around the base of the trees just below because that's where people will often end up. A little while later he found something. You know you've hit a body if the probe bounces back after you push down – imagine poking yourself with a pen. So we started digging."

An hour and 20 minutes after the avalanche they found the girls, Yuko on top of Hitomi, under 2.5m of snow. Yuko was dead. But by landing

For those unfamiliar with the mountains, it's hard to believe such light, fluffy snow can be so deadly.


their way. Through learned instinct, one guide scrambled as high as he could up the gully wall. As the avalanche reached him he got buried up to his waist. The other three weren't as lucky and as the wall of snow hit them, they were swallowed up and buried.

Australian Ross Carty, former ski patroller and now owner of NOASC adventure company, had just got on the quad lift above the Alpen Hotel. He got a call on his mobile telling him

on her friend, she had created an air pocket for Hitomi and perhaps saved her life. They found the other guide about five metres further down the hill. He was curled over on his side and was also lucky to be alive.

What triggered the slide is not known but one of the theories is that it was a skier or boarder who had ventured into the out-of-bounds bowl. Unfortunately, riding untracked powder snow can be an irresistibly seductive pursuit, and except for the first half hour of any day, you'll be lucky to find such virgin canvas within Niseko. It doesn't take more than an hour or two for most of Hirafu's off-piste powder to get cut up. It's about this time powder junkies are lured out of bounds.





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It was not long after the Harunotaki avalanche that Niseko United conceded they couldn't stop people venturing out of bounds. So, in association with the Department of Forestry and various other local bodies, they agreed to allow off trail and back country access to the greater public under certain circumstances. Part of this agreement was that a firm set of rules be established. All bodies concerned agreed on what is known as the 'Niseko Local Rules' and it's under these rules that skiers and boarders are now free to enjoy (almost) the whole mountain.

In terms of freedom to ski and ride where you want, Niseko is somewhat of a pioneer in Japan, and to a certain extent matches other forward thinking resorts around the world. In fact, it actually allows more freedom than many resorts in the US who don't allow back country access at all. If one is caught ducking a rope into back country they may well end up in the back of a police car. Niseko follows the lead of resorts across Europe, the US and the southern hemisphere by allowing backcountry access through specific gated points on the ski area boundary.

The individual who was pivotal in the instigation and implementation of the Niseko Local Rules, and subsequent freeing up of the backcountry, is a local man named Akio Shinya. In the small community of Niseko he is a man who needs no introduction. For 20 years Shinya-san has been assessing avalanche conditions in the Niseko area. With out Shinya-san, Niseko may not have such a liberal back country policy, there would be much less terrain to ride, and many would argue the area may not have even boomed to the extent it has in recent years.

Shinya-san was born in Sapporo and moved to Niseko 34 years ago. Since then he has operated his small family run lodge Woodpeckers. He's a highly experienced mountaineer both at home and abroad. "I've climbed many big mountains across Asia – The Himalayas, China, Pakistan, Russia... Actually I've done more than 10 expeditions to the Himalayas. I've climbed a few of the famous peaks there – first I did Mt Chamlang, Mt Batura and my last expedition was Mt Rakapushi in 1992. That was my most challenging climb."

Shinya-san started avalanche testing and promoting avalanche awareness in Niseko at a time when he was one of the only people in the area with a sound knowledge of avalanche risk assessment and prevention. Over many years selflessly passing on his knowledge, he's come to play an important role in the greater Niseko community of mountain users, essentially becoming a self-appointed guardian to the area.

During the winter, everyday for four months after finishing the daily house keeping chores in his lodge, Shinya tests for and writes an avalanche report for the ski areas around Niseko – "Last winter I wrote 103 reports," he says with an obvious sense of satisfaction. He writes the report based on a combination of meteorological data, standard snow pack/ avalanche analysis, and from his own vast knowledge of the area and its local characteristics.

Every morning he takes the first gondola to the top of Annupuri and stays at one of the designated backcountry access gates from about 9am until noon. He also has a protégé, Ohta-san, who helps with the daily operation by digging pits - a pit is a term given to an approximately metre by metre cavity dug into the snow to reveal the cross section of the snow pack. This is a standard technique used to gather information about avalanche likelihood for the day. Ohta-san does this in other areas such as Hirafu, Harunotaki and Mizunosawa, assessing the gathered information and relaying it to Shinya-san.

If you do venture into the Niseko backcountry you may well meet Shinya at one of the entry gates. He'll advise you in Japanese or English of the day's problematic or dangerous areas, and may even give you advice as to where the best powder is to be found. Shinya laughs that sometimes he still has to chase people who duck ropes where they shouldn't. He does all this off his own bat.

He is amazingly dedicated to the safety and enjoyment of skiers and boarders. If you are lucky enough to meet Shinya-san throw out an 'otsukare sama desu' (thanks for your hard work) as everyone who enjoys the backcountry should be truly thankful for his efforts. This is a man with a big heart who really cares for Niseko's skiers' well being.

An exciting point to note for the future is that among many others, Shinya-san would like to see some of the areas that are permanently closed under the current local rules, opened. Any skier or boarder with a lust for the extreme who has been to Niseko has gazed longingly up at the infamous Harunotaki, or out over the wide, untracked fields under the Higashiyama Gondola. As is, these are very real avalanche risks. Despite its tame appearance, under the gondola is a convex slope putting it at high risk of slab avalanche. But with management, there is a possibility these areas could be opened safely. In the meantime, don't push your luck by riding there or you risk pushing their opening further back.

With or without the aforementioned terrain Niseko is now a phenomenal place to ski and snowboard. For some who don't know the history of the Local Rules, they may seem limiting and restrictive but they are in fact there for everyone's safety and are a huge improvement on previous mountain policy. International resorts such as Jackson Hole, Squaw Valley, Treble Cone, Chamonix, and hundreds of others safely open potentially dangerous terrain through careful management and a ski at your own risk policy. If history is anything to go by, it's likely Niseko will follow their lead and open up even more exciting new terrain for riders to enjoy... safely.

ROSS CARTY'S BACK COUNTRY SURVIVAL TIPS:

Avalanche and back country travel comes down to common sense – don't be gung ho and think you know everything. A lot of people get into trouble because of arrogance and inexperience.

Don't be pushed by others. Always be wary. Always ski from a safe place to a safe place. Ski to a place where you wouldn't expect an avalanche to happen.

If you are going back country go with buddy. If you're not sure, don't ski down the same slope at the same time – if it slides who's going to come and dig you out?

There are a lot of companies around and a lot of experienced locals. Talk to people and find out which places you shouldn't go. Look at the maps – the areas that are off limits are that way for a reason – they are avalanche prone and people have died there.

If the gates aren't open then jump on a backcountry tour – go cat skiing, go to Moiwa, go to Chisenopuri and get an onsen and a lift ticket thrown in. Go to Iwanai and ski down slopes overlooking the ocean.

You always want to stay away from south facing slopes in the northern hemisphere because they get the most sun. If they are loaded and they get wet, that's when they're going to slide. If you're on the mountain and you're looking at Yotei, that's east. Harunotaki is south facing. If you're skiing on a south face at 11 or 12 then exercise caution. Don't go into steep areas around that time. Avoid areas where if something happens you can't get out.

Have the right equipment – an avalanche beacon, a probe and a shovel and know how to use them correctly. Companies here can teach you how.

Avalanche info:

Shinya's daily avalanche report Nadare website <http://niseko.nadare.info>
Canadian Avalanche Association website www.avalanche.ca

Wanna go backcountry?

NSA Niseko Snow Adventures
0909 757 4083
NOASC 0136 23 1688
Black Diamond Tours 090 2054 TOUR
NAC 0136 23 2093
Hokkaido Powder Guides (Furano)
0167 22 5655

SNOW GO

A 63-year-old ski resort employee in Maebashi died a day after falling 15 meters from a gondola. The man, whose job it was to help skiers out of the moving lift, got stuck in the door of the gondola while retrieving a glove left behind by a passenger.

Four climbers on Mount Yarigatake in Gifu were killed by an avalanche, but three others in the group survived.

A woman died and 11 others were injured when a Tokyo tour bus slid off the road and rolled 5 meters down a snowy embankment in Aomori.

BRIGHT IDEAS

After considering nearly 4200 designs submitted by the public, the government chose the logo for July's G8 summit in Hokkaido: a 'green seed bursting to life surrounded by an earthly blue.'

The government declared it wants 30 percent of Japanese homes powered by solar panels by the year 2030. It also aims to increase the power capacity of the panels by a factor of 30.

Panasonic has unveiled a rear-view camera and monitor system for cars that automatically switches on when the vehicle is put into reverse.

NHK and Mitsubishi have collaborated on an anti-piracy system that targets movie-goers who videotape films by adding a watermark containing information like the name of the cinema and what time the screening was held.

HOLIDAY SHOPPING

A customer at a supermarket in Sendai bit off more than he could chew after

discovering a series of 2cm-long nails embedded in rice cakes he had just bought.

A 68-year-old man was pushed to the ground and killed by a motorcyclist he had tried to warn away from a no-parking zone in front of a grocery store in Osaka.

A 32-year-old Coast Guard officer, upset that his request for holiday leave was denied, went AWOL by stealing a small rescue boat from the vessel he was stationed on.

It was announced that a guard at a detention center in Nagoya killed himself after being accused of entering the cells of women under solitary confinement and 'fondling their bodies.'

Two Japanese men were found dead in the ashes of a hut in a remote region of forest on New Zealand's North Island. One of the men was a tourist and the other a New Zealand-based fishing guide.

TAX DOLLARS AT WORK

About 75 cops and firemen joined in the search for a loaded shotgun that was lost by a pheasant hunter in a forest in Aichi Prefecture.

A police superintendent in Yokohama admitted his involvement in a sham Tokyo 'healing salon' that used high-pressure sales techniques to get customers to pay for 'spiritual purification.'

The ruling LDP says it is set to introduce legislation that will legalize casino gambling.

A 'fuel shredder' that processes spent nuclear material at a power plant in Aomori Prefecture leaked some 800 liters of oil, which prompted

officials to declare a 'grade-B' emergency. About 100 elementary school students and teachers in Tochigi were hit with norovirus after eating contaminated cake during a school lunch.

THE YEAR IN FIGURES

The National Police Agency reported that 5,743 people died in traffic accidents on Japan's roadways in 2007, the seventh consecutive annual decrease and the first time in 54 years that fatalities totaled fewer than 6,000.

The agency also reported that just 78 traffic deaths were reported over the New Year holidays—the lowest figure since it started keeping track in 1970.

The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare reported that the number of births in Japan in 2007 was 3,000 fewer than 2006, the sixth time in seven years that the figure dropped.

The Internal Affairs and Communications Ministry announced that fiscal 2006 was the worst year for official corruption in a decade. A total of 191 local politicians were involved in 159 criminal cases, including embezzlement and bribery.



STATS

5 Number of people in Kanto who choked to death while eating mochi rice cakes on New Year's Day

4 Rank of Tokyo as the world's 'most important city', according to the UK's Independent newspaper. Japan's capital trails only London, New York and Paris

-16,000 Growth of Japan's population in 2007, the second straight year the figure decreased, according to a survey by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare

5 Number of hospitals that turned away a critically injured accident victim in Osaka, who died shortly after being admitted to the sixth

1.8 Meters of snow that fell from the roof of a house in Hakuba, Nagano, killing its 74-year-old owner

Compiled by Reg Dunlap from reports by Japan Today, The Japan Times, The International Herald Tribune/Asahi Shimbun, Mainichi Daily News, AP, Kyodo and Digital World Tokyo (www.digitalworldtokyo.com)



LIFTIE Sensei

name Shinya Uehara
nickname sensei (teacher)
age 30 hometown Nagano
time in niseko about 7 years
do you like powder? yes
ski/board snowboard since when? 9 years ago
why did you move to niseko? Niseko was the middle of my travel route
what languages do you speak? Japanese
trips overseas Guam
where do you want to go next? Somewhere with nice scenery
favourite... colour black brand Shimano
food Genghis Khan restaurant Loft bar don't like drinking onsen
Yukichichibu course side of every course
where else in the world do you want to go skiing? Whistler
how long will you be in niseko for? Don't know yet
what does niseko need? A cheap snowboard shop
what's something nobody knows about niseko? The mush spot is awesome (what the??) and bread from Saito bread factory is delicious
what's a must have item for niseko? Goggles
what's your life philosophy? Anything is ok if it's fun!

名前 ウエハラ シンヤ
ニックネーム 先生
年齢 30 出身地 長野
ニセコ来てどのくらいですか? 7年くらいパウダースノーは好きですか? はい!
スキーヤー?スノーボーダー? ボーダー
スキー/スノボ経験 9年
なんでニセコに来たんですか? 旅の途中で...
話す言語は? 日本語
海外に行った事はありますか? グアム
次はどこに行きたいですか? 景色の綺麗なところ
好きな...色は? 黒ブランド
は? シマノ食べ物? ジンギスカン レストランは? ロフトバーは? 酒きらい温泉は? 雪杖父 コースは? 全コース脇
ニセコ以外でこのスキー場に行きたいですか? ウィスラー
ニセコにはどのくらいいる予定ですか? 未定
ニセコに必要なものは? 格安ボードショップ
ニセコについて自分だけが知っていると思う事は? あの場所のマッシュは楽しい
ニセコであんまり知られていない事は? 斉藤製パンは美味
ニセコで絶対必要だと思うアイテムは? ゴーグル
あなたの人生観は? 楽しければOK!!



TICKET BOOTH Hashi

name Yumiko Hashimoto
nickname Hashi
hometown Nagasaki
time in niseko 3 years
like powder? Um, yes!
ski/board snowboard when did you start? 6 years ago
why did you move to niseko? I came for the winter but I thought Niseko is a great place to live for a year
what languages do you speak? Japanese. English in the future
trips overseas Canada
where do you want to go next? Maybe America?
favourite... colour black and white brand puma
food sweets restaurant Utari bar Cafe Grove onsen
Yusenaku course L course, Osawa
how long will you be in niseko for? Hopefully forever!
what does niseko need? Fast food
what's something nobody knows about niseko? There is an ostrich farm!
what's a must have item for niseko? Baba shirts (under-shirts for old people usually very warm...)
what's your life philosophy? Thinking I am lucky to meet people!

名前 ハシモト ユミコ
ニックネーム ハッシー 出身地 長崎
ニセコ来てどのくらいですか? 3年
スキーヤー?スノーボーダー? スノーボーダー
スキー/スノボ経験 6年
なんでニセコに来たんですか? 冬を目的に来ましたが、一年を通してとても過ごし易いと思ったから。
話す言語は? 日本語。英語は...これから?
海外に行った事はありますか? カナダ
次はどこに行きたいですか? アメリカかな...
好きな...色は? 黒・白
ブランドは? プーマ
食べ物は? お菓子 レストランは? うたりバーは? カフェ・フープ
温泉は? 幽泉閣 コースは? L字コース、大沢
ニセコ以外でこのスキー場に行きたいですか? ニセコでいいニセコにはどのくらいいる予定ですか? 一生いれたらいいですネ!!
ニセコに必要なものは? ファーストフード
ニセコについて自分だけが知っていると思う事は? カフェ・フープの常連になる...裏メニューが注文出来る事!ダチョウ牧場がある事
ニセコで絶対必要だと思うアイテムは? ばばシャツ
あなたの人生観は? 人との出会いに幸せだと思う事



SKI PATROL Toshi

name Toshinori Ohashi
nickname Toshi age 37
hometown Niseko Town
time in niseko I was born here!
do you like powder? Yep, I love it!
ski/board Both
when did you start? Skiing 30 years ago, snowboarding 17 years ago
what languages do you speak? Only Japanese
trips overseas? Italy, France, Korea, Taiwan
where do you want to go next? A warm place like Hawaii
favourite... colour Red brand Patagonia
food Meat restaurant Utari (their hot pot gible is great)
bar Don't know onsen Hotel Yotei course Osawa
how long will you be in niseko for? Until I die!
what does niseko need? More powder snow... and more powder snow!!
what's something that nobody knows about niseko? The fishing is great in summer
what's a must have item for niseko? Very warm, warm clothes!
what's your life philosophy? Make a lot of friends!

名前 オオハシ トシノリ
ニックネーム トッシー
年齢 37 出身地 ニセコ町
ニセコ来てどのくらいですか? 生まれた時から
パウダースノーは好きですか? 大好き
スキーヤー?スノーボーダー? スキー+スノーボード
スキー/スノボ経験 スキー30年、スノーボード17年
話す言語は? 日本語
海外に行った事はありますか? イタリア、フランス、韓国、台湾
次はどこに行きたいですか? ハワイとか暖かいところ
好きな...色は? 赤
ブランドは? パタゴニア
食べ物は? 肉
レストランは? うたりのもつ鍋は最高!
バーは? 特にな
温泉は? ホテルよう
コースは? 大沢
ニセコ以外でこのスキー場に行きたいですか? ティネ
ニセコにはどのくらいいる予定ですか? 死ぬまで
ニセコに必要なものは? もっともっとたくさん
ニセコについて自分だけが知っていると思う事は? 夏の釣りのスポット
ニセコで絶対必要だと思うアイテムは? 暖かい服
あなたの人生観は? 友達をたくさんつくる

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Fine dining in Niseko... inside Kamimura

kamimura

by Vanessa Gibson

Tetsuya. It is a name that stops Australian foodies in their tracks. The story of a young Japanese man arriving in Australia with no English, no money and no experience who went on to establish one of the best restaurants in the world has become dining folklore. Now right here in Niseko, we have our own version of Tetsuya who has a similar tale to tell – Yuichi Kamimura. In 1999 Kamimura-san arrived in Australia with no money and no English and Tetsuya's was the number one ranked restaurant in Australia despite being located in a tiny room in Sydney's inner west. Kamimura-san had some experience as a kitchen-hand in Japan and being newly arrived in Sydney, needed a job badly. He waited outside Tetsuya's for four hours for his chance to ask the boss for a job. Tetsuya saw a lot of himself in Kamimura-san and decided to give him a chance. They ended up working side by side for five years and the restaurant moved into its current expansive central city location, and on to being ranked the fourth best restaurant in the world. Kamimura-san then returned to Japan where he opened his own restaurant in Sapporo, his wife Miyuki as the only other staff member. Some expatriate Australians convinced Kamimura-san to pack up and open in Hirafu, and we're all fortunate to have him here.

We ate at Kamimura just three days after their opening and the restaurant was already faultless, with none of the customary teething problems that take many new Hirafu restaurants a season to smooth out. We were greeted by a friendly maître d' and were instantly made to feel very welcome and comfortable. The staff was all very professional, all spoke excellent English and could not be faulted on their service or knowledge of the menu.

Kamimura-san sticks with what he knows best - a set 10 course degustation menu. The menu will essentially stay the same for the season, but they keep a record of your dining so if you book again, they will provide a new menu for you. The food is modern Japanese fusion incorporating Hokkaido's finest delicacies, and the menu can be adjusted for particular tastes. On the night we dined, my pick of the courses were the Spanish caviar and snow egg tartare of Hokkaido salmon, the grilled scallop with black truffle crème, and the roasted wagyu with Niseko potato puree. Absolutely delectable! All courses were presented almost like pieces of artwork, with attention to detail and some served on beautifully hand crafted wooden plates.

The wine list is extensive, most from Australia and New Zealand but a good selection of old world wine and some great French champagne, all surprisingly reasonably priced for a fine dining restaurant. If you're lucky, Kamimura-san may come to your table for a chat. I didn't walk out feeling overly full, but very content and wondering when I may have a chance to dine there again!

All in all Kamimura is an asset to Niseko and a very impressive experience. It's a good idea to get in now whilst the waiting list is reasonable as I imagine in time you will be booking it with your flight!

Open nightly. Course menu ¥13,000. Located in Yama Shizen
Bookings essential.
0136 21 2288

night life

by Kaori-chan

Saturday January 19

Java Bar DJ Maco and guests.
Funky beats to drink and dance to. Free.
Blo Blo's Spud bake
¥100 Kutchan potatoes, straight from the fire with sour cream and butter. From 7pm.

Sunday January 20

Blo Blo
Flaming Sanchez & his cocktail revolution.
Java Bar Sunday Sessions
Christian plays his mellow tunes.

Monday January 21

Java Bar Karaoke and Toss the Boss
Toss Tracey for every drink - call it right & your drink is free + Karaoke with a twist.

Tuesday January 22

BBQ night at Blo Blo
¥1000 for plate of BBQ, salads, a beer and free Fire dancing show from 10pm
Niseko Darts @ Wild Bills
Bill's always becomes lively after dart.

Wednesday January 23

POWDERLIFE KUTCHAN PUB CRAWL
¥1,000. Pay at Powderlife office 2F Australia house. Girls free. See the quirky places that make K-Town great. Leaves from Seicomart bus station at 7.30 sharp. includes some free drinks and more.

Thursday January 24

Java Bar: Live Music: Micko & Christian
Two great local musos playing all your favourite tunes with a relaxed vibe.

SYNX at Saison Club

Top venue just outside Hirafu, great sound, comfy couches, free karaoke, dancing and more. ¥1,500 includes one drink, snack & shuttle from Seicomart leaving 8.30. Returns 10.30 or Midnight.

Saturday January 26, Australia Day

Red Bar Dance Party from 10pm
¥1,000 including free drink. DJs Maco, Unique and Takahiro(Sapporo).
Java Bar Australia Day Party
DJ Takahiro Nishikawa (Prev D.C.T)

Sunday January 27

Java Bar Sunday Sessions with Christian

Monday January 28

Java Bar Karaoke and Toss the Boss.
BBQ night at Blo Blo

Niseko Darts @ Wild Bills

Wednesday January 30
POWDERLIFE KUTCHAN PUB CRAWL
¥1,000 leaves 7.30. Seicomart bus stop

Thursday January 31

Java Bar: Live Music: Micko & Christian

SYNX at Saison Club (see Jan 24 listing)

Friday February 1

Red Bar Party Night
¥1,000 includes a free drink. Headline DJ: Koji Eguchi from Sound Discovery Tokyo.



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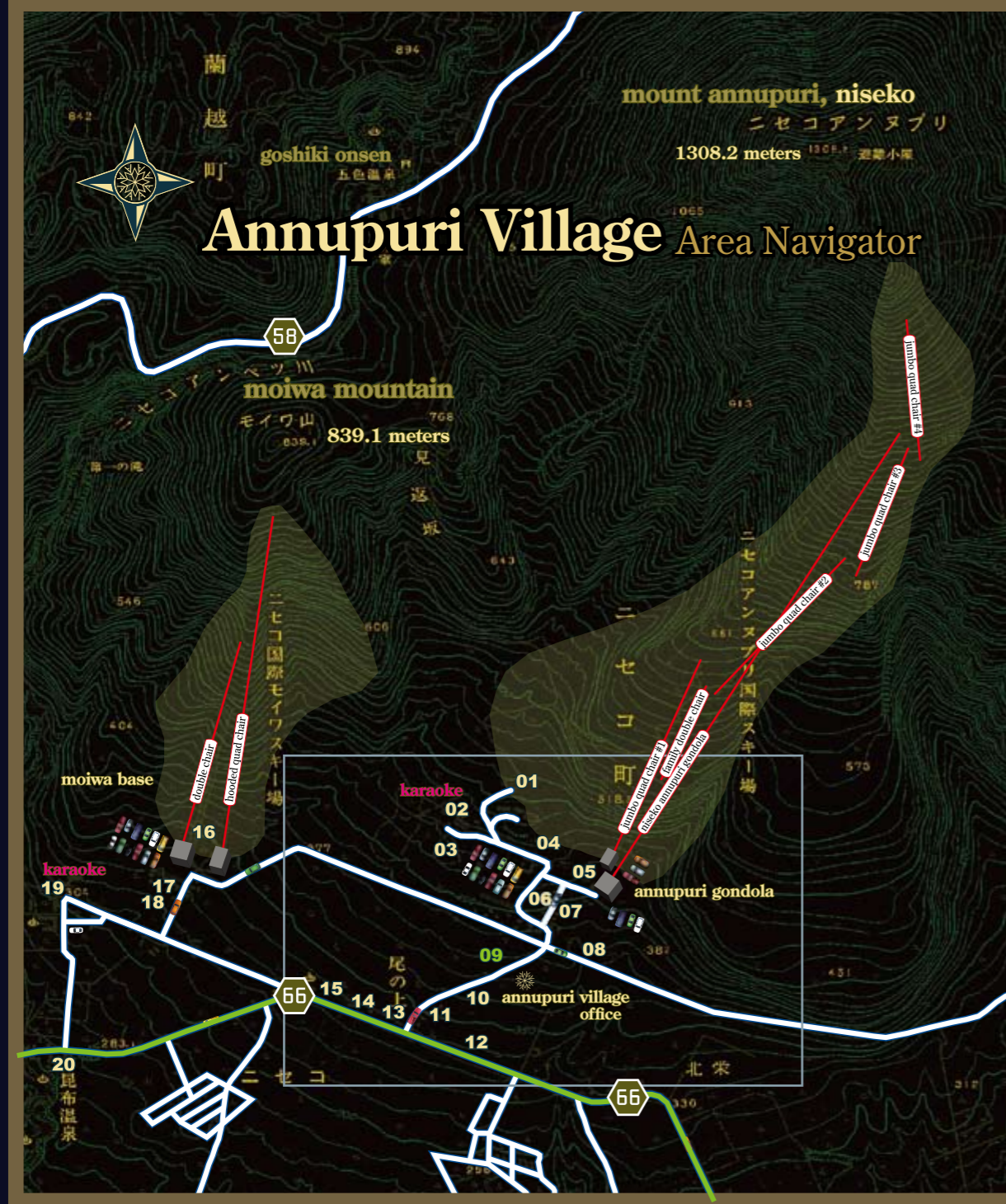
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Restaurant Supur

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- | | | | |
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| 01 Northern Resort Annupuri | 0136-58-3311 | 11 Karabina Restaurant | 0136-50-2850 |
| - Eclat Restaurant | - | 12 148 Niseko | 0136-50-2800 |
| - An-non Restaurant | - | 13 Niseko Ski Service | 0136-58-3568 |
| 02 Hotel Ikoinomura Onsen | 0136-58-3111 | 14 Bistare Kana | 0136-58-3330 |
| 03 Moku Moku Tei | - | 15 Yugokorotei Onsen | 0136-58-2500 |
| 04 Nook Annupuri | 0136-58-2021 | 16 Niseko Moiwa Ski Resort | 0136-59-2511 |
| 05 Ticket Center | 0136-58-2080 | 17 Pow Com Cafe | 0136-54-2820 |
| 06 Lucky Fingers Bar | 0136-58-3280 | 18 Shimano Test Center | - |
| 07 Eff Eff Restaurant | 0136-58-3162 | 19 Kanronomori Onsen | 0136-58-3800 |
| 08 Cafe Grove | 0136-54-2525 | - Culinet Restaurant | - |
| 09 Annupuri Village Chalets | 0136-59-2111 | - Creo Restaurant | - |
| 10 Rakuichi Restaurant | 0136-58-3170 | 20 Grand Hotel Onsen | 0136-58-2121 |



tel: 0136-59-2111 fax: 0136-59-2112 www.annupurivillage.com
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photograph by neil hartmann



Moku Moku Tei This all-you-can-eat & drink barbecue restaurant has a seemingly endless array of different meats, seafood and vegetables that you barbecue at your table. Reasonable priced, large scale and close to the Ikoinomura onsen across the street, Moku Moku Tei is a nice place to whoop it up with friends and family.

Lucky Fingers Bar Inside the stylish and modern *Annupuri Lodge* lies a quirky, kitschy bar with purple velvet walls, odd statues and a real roulette table. In addition to the whole James Bond vibe, Lucky Fingers is known for its great bar food and wine, friendly staff, and the occasional wild party. A cozy hang for those in the know, this fun bar is quickly becoming an Annupuri institution

Cafe Grove Friendly and intimate restaurant that also doubles as an internet cafe, this is a nice place to sample some well-prepared Japanese dishes and enjoy the woody secluded atmosphere. This place has a certain karma that makes it a must stop for Annupuri vacationers.

Karabina Do not, I repeat, do not go to Annupuri without having dinner at this family-run Japanese izakaya-style restaurant. This place receives richly-deserved raves from its customers and even simple things like its fried potatoes to the more complex Arab stew and Japanese pork kakuni taste unusual and delicious. A great place to order lots of dishes for sharing, kick back a few Kirins and get convivial.



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resrvations: 080-3426-5732 niseko148@lapis.plala.or.jp



Omoshiro Box

Although Eriko Tanikaga is a wanderer at heart, she's come to settle in the middle of Hirafu. Her little clothing and souvenir shop Omoshiro (interesting) Box, in the middle village just down from the traffic lights, is just as its name says - an interesting little space that houses an endless supply of fascinating tales from across Japan and the world. Most of her stock is sold on consignment from a range of Japanese suppliers. Anything made in third world countries is sourced through Fairtrade Organisation, who ensures decent working conditions and payment for its suppliers. The shop actually occupies the lower level of a pension whose owner, with the selfless generosity so common among Japanese in the area, doesn't charge her rent, instead taking just a small portion of any profit as payment. If you're looking for a unique and interesting souvenir, piece of clothing, jewellery and lots more, that comes with good karma free of charge, go for something out of the Box.

JAM Bar

One cool little bar that sometimes gets overlooked in favour of its bigger, brasher brothers, is JAM Bar. It's got nothing to do with the fruit conserve but instead took its name from its musical roots, basically meaning get together and improvise. It's located in what was until last season, one of the busiest little bar and pub streets in Hirafu - alongside Wild Bill's and the old Fatty's semi-trailer bar. With Fatty's gone and Hank's around the corner also history, Jam is getting a little lonely, but inside the doors it's still very much alive and kicking. Owner Shinya Katou was at one stage Hokkaido's number one alpen snowboarder, although he gave that up after breaking his back. These days he's happier cruising in the powder, and at night mixing drinks and playing tunes for his local regulars and the ever-increasing number of foreign holidaymakers keen to chill out in this classic little Japanese bar.



Yunosato Desk

Yunosato Desk make furniture, but they are artists rather than mere manufacturers. Business partners Shintaro Tashiro and Takeshi Sasaki share a love of wood, and each piece they create is handmade without using nails or screws. It really has to be seen to be truly appreciated, but joins are held firm by slots and fingers of wood. Each and every piece is meticulously designed and laboured over and nothing they put out is anything less than absolute perfection. Their workshop and showroom is a disused school at Rankoshi, about 20 minutes drive from Hirafu. Even if you have no intention of buying or ordering anything it's worth a trip just to admire their work. Bring a Japanese speaker so you can gain an insight into just how much work goes into each piece. Their stuff isn't cheap, but once you know what goes into it you'll know why, and if you can afford it, will be happy to part with the money.

IXSM Travel

IXSM Travel owner Shinji Hirose is an ideas man but he just wishes he had more time to bring all his pearls of wisdom to life. In fact, he often has an idea, opens his big mouth and someone else does it before he's even had a chance. The travel agency is the main part of his business - organising day tours and package tours - to Japan, around Japan and especially anything to do with Hokkaido and Niseko. If you want to get out and about in Niseko or Hokkaido during your stay, Shinji's your man. Even if you don't know what to do, you can be sure Shinji will be able to give you a few ideas! Among his other services, he rents and sells mobile phones, does car rental, offers a medical translation service for a fraction of the price of others around town, and even helps organise ski and snowboard competitions. If there's something you need in Niseko, call Shinji. If he doesn't already offer it, he (or someone else) probably will by the next time you're in Niseko!



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in focus tatsuo hayadashi

This issue we meet the creator of the local course map and the painstakingly created and immensely popular village map, both contained in every issue of Powderlife. For everyone who has marvelled at the intricate details in the village map, we meet its designer Tatsuo Hayashida. Tatsuo-san also develops the Niseko United course map and we find out his story and get our regular three top tips on things to do in Niseko.



How did you come to live in Niseko?

I was born and raised in Kanagawa, where I was working as a 'salaryman', and I used to holiday in Niseko for snowboarding. I always felt a sense of freedom here that I never had in Honshu, so in 2002 when I saw and advertisement for a river rafting guide with NAC I made the move.

What did you do with your winters?

Mostly I snowboarded! I also managed 'Hokkaido Backpackers' one year, which is now Black Diamond Lodge. I did anything that didn't take much of my time.

How did you end up designing the course map?

I did some design work for Ross Findlay (owner of NAC) and the owner of Mountainside Palace, who then introduced me to Tokyu (owners of Grand Hirafu). They commissioned me to do the course map and village map in the same year.

How did you design the first course map?

I used a combination of the previous course map, my own knowledge of the mountain, the topographic map of the area and by physically checking.

Everyone loves the village map! It's now outside the police station and in the street in the middle village. How did you design it?

I first wanted to do a very simple design for the map, but I was ordered by Tokyu to draw a picture of each house. It was a lot of extra work!

Did they pay you extra?

No, but it ended up being very good for me.

In what way?

Well I'm able to sell it more easily now and many people say 'Good job' to me.

How do you design the picture for a new building?

I go there and take a picture or get a photo from the owner. I try to make the colours and shape exactly the same as the building. It takes time and attention to detail.

How do you decide what buildings go on the map and which don't?

Well initially I was contracted by the Kutchan Tourist Association, and I could only include members. But now I have various clients so it depends on who is using it. The new Niseko Promotion Board want everyone to be there. As a favour to my friend I have had his green house down in lower Hirafu next to Yotei cottage from the first village map, even though he doesn't do any accommodation or business! He is happy to see it there.

With all the changes going on in the village, how do you keep up?

These days many people contact me. I'm always driving around the area and if I see a new restaurant, business or apartment I peek in to see what the business is. But to be honest I don't like seeing the new businesses - because it means I need to draw a new house and more work! Even the roads have changed recently.

Do you still snowboard regularly?

Now my wife and I have a small daughter, so we don't get out much. Just an occasional tag team of minding duties vs skiing.

What are your top three tips for visitors to Niseko?

1 Try snow shoe trekking at Lake Hangetsu. It's not difficult and everyone from children to grandparents can do it together. It is beautiful out there beside a big frozen lake.

2 Take a bath in Yakushi onsen. It's an old onsen but very beautiful. It's on the onsen bus route.

3 Eat a meal at Jyu Okonomiyaki, near Annupuri. It's delicious!



hokkaido's culinary transformation

from food bowl to gourmet
by greg lund

Hokkaido is one of the world's great undiscovered tourist treasures. As global warming increasingly impacts on popular tourist destinations around the globe, Hokkaido is just starting to come into its own. The powder snow that blankets the ski resorts in winter is one legacy of its location off the coast of Siberia, but in addition, it is just far enough north of the equator to escape the humidity which makes mainland Japan almost unbearable in summer. In short, it's the ideal all-year round holiday destination. As more foreign ski visitors come to feel comfortable with Niseko, they might think about spreading their wings and taking in the best of the rest of this magic island - 'The Garden of The Gods'.



Kakiemon oysters and taraba crab

Anywhere outside Japan these days, mention the word Hokkaido, and images of powder snow immediately leap to mind.

Mention Hokkaido to a Japanese, however, and the image has always been of food. Particularly seafood and dairy products.

But just as the ski scene is undergoing a revolution in Hokkaido, so too the local food industry is seeing its own dramatic transformation.

In the past, Hokkaido was always seen by Japanese city dwellers as the 'food bowl' of Japan - where, because of its wide open spaces, beef cattle had room to grow, dairy herds produced milk and butter and processed cheese, abundant fish and crab species - like the huge Taraba crab pictured - were popular in mainland markets, and potatoes and corn were words synonymous with the northern island.

Today, the food association is still strong, but the emphasis has shifted dramatically from that of a bulk provider to the masses, to the home of a thriving gourmet culture that is not only attracting the attention of Japanese epicureans, but also starting to make a name on the world stage.

All over the island, creative visionaries are quietly downsizing all of the broad food categories into stunning little pockets of award winning culinary excellence, and demand for their produce is soaring in the highest priced restaurants and hotels throughout Japan.

Specialist Tokachi cheeses are now winning Gold Medals in European competitions; superb sausages and hams are being made from pigs fed on whey; beer-fed, massaged beef from Biratori, Mitsuishi and Shiraoi is now rivalling Kobe and Matsuzaka on the mainland; organic production of specialist vegetables has hit great heights; and even shellfish have started, for the first time in Japan, to have 'brand' names, like the much sought-after Kakiemon oysters from Akkeshi, near Kushiro. Even some Hokkaido wines are beginning to emerge as possibilities for the future, with a lot of work going into viticulture development, though it is probably safe to say their time has not yet come.

Closer to home in Niseko, observant visitors will have noticed that the town logo for Kutchan is a skiing potato. When the snow is not covering all of those broad acre fields around Kutchan, the whole countryside is wall-to-wall potato crops. But now, instead of the one standard product, growers have some 30 exotic varieties of seeds to choose from, and demand for some - like the Inca no Mezame, a small, nutty flavoured potato said to resemble the original South American product - makes them hard to obtain locally.

Ezoshika, the hardy Hokkaido deer, is also now being farmed for the first time in the Hidaka region, and chefs are finding ways of turning the healthy, but difficult to use, meat into exquisite venison steaks, pates and terrines.

Niseko visitors are fortunate to have culinary geniuses of the calibre of Noriko Masubuchi (Wine & Food Bar Dragon), Yuichi Kamimura (Kamimura) and Haradasan (Hidden Kitchen Kame), whose creations show the best of what Hokkaido has to offer. No-one should leave Niseko without sampling Noriko-san's venison.

Greg Lund is a former diplomat who has lived and worked in Japan for much of the past 30 years, the last five in Hokkaido.



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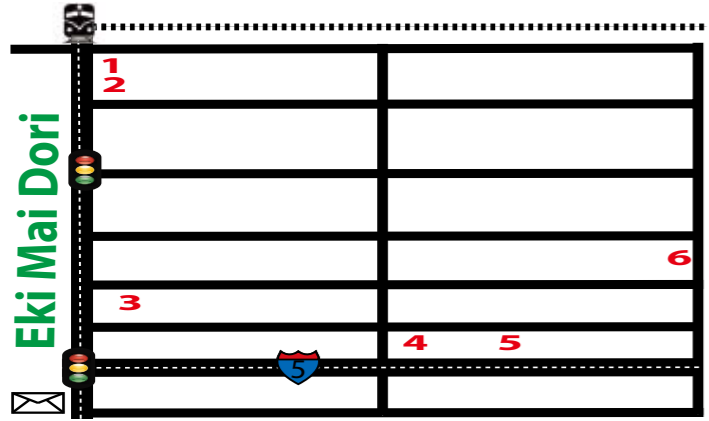
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Niseko Map.com



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going dutch in Kutchan

by magnus alexander

Hokkaido people like their food strong. They use a lot of salt and flavouring to really make their dishes go zing. But Kutchan restaurant Bleu Cielo's chef Shinji Kawaguchi says there's enough flavour in Hokkaido's rich ingredients without needing to zoop them up with additives. He needs nothing more than a camp oven, a few vegies and a bit of meat to create a full flavoured feast. "I'm not the master here – the dutch oven is," he says as he admires one of the heavy black pots that are prepared in the kitchen before being placed onto the table for guests to dip into.

Like many in the area, Shinji-san is a mad keen skier from the mainland who was drawn to Hokkaido by its snow and mountains. His mother often worked in small coffee shops and restaurants when he was growing up and he often helped her cook. When he finished high school he trained to be a chef and 20 years later he can't imagine doing anything else. He's been in Niseko for 10 years now and worked for the past six years at popular restaurant Jojo's, in the NAC adventure centre. But with an ever-present hankering to do his own thing and take 100% control over his work, the self-proclaimed perfectionist moved on and opened Bleu Cielo midway through last year.

It was actually one of his jobs at NAC that inspired Shinji-san's house specialty. He used to take summer wilderness camping trips in central Hokkaido. He and his guests would load their camping gear and provisions into kayaks, paddle down stream and camp overnight under a star-filled Hokkaido night sky. The guests must have given new meaning to the phrase 'happy camper' when Shinji-san lifted the lid of their camp fire oven and they smelt the aroma of gourmet chicken and vegetables. Even more so when they awoke to the bread he had awoken before dawn to make and bake.

There's plenty more on Bleu Cielo's Italian-influenced menu but his hot pots (and his chocolate cakes for that matter) will give any Western grandmother's a damn good run for their money.

Blue Cielo is on the first street in from Route 5 in the Kutchan food and entertainment district – find the Loaf Lounge and you're almost there.

Buses to Kutchan leave from the main street near Seicomart. The bus stop is a few small signs on the roadside opposite PowPow. Buses leave every half hour or so during the day and cost ¥380. The night bus is free and leaves every hour or so from 5pm. Timetable on the back of the resort's course map.

Niseko Linwood Village



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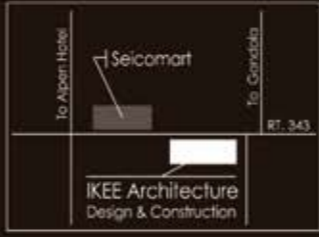
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Hakuba purchase boosts potential

Hakuba's dreams of emulating Niseko's international success have received a boost with the purchase of one of its resorts by private equity fund giant Warburg Pincus.

Located in Nagano and host of many events of 1998's Winter Olympics, Hakuba is regarded as main island Honshu's number one skiing region.

Warburg Pincus have bought Hakuba 47, a trendy 15 year old resort near Happo-one (roughly pronounced ha-po-ne), Hakuba's premier resort.

Second generation US/Japanese investment banker Kenta Takamori teamed up with Warburg Pincus after working individually on acquiring a ski resort in Japan for over a year.

"I have conviction in the potential of Japan's mountains and in the potential to turn around ski resorts in Japan", Takamori said.

"I worked with a couple of private equity firms over the past year, but finally teamed up with Warburg Pincus to acquire Hakuba 47."

Citing the youth of the resort, Takamori said there was excellent base development potential, and they plan to work with the existing management to create an 'international, environmentally friendly resort'

There is talk that Happo-one and Hakuba 47 may be linked by gondola or cable car in the future as well.

Happo-one is an old favourite of skiers because of its steep, big mountain terrain, and Hakuba 47 has a bit more backcountry access.

Hakuba Real Estate manager Mick Baker said there had been a definite increase in international tourists to Hakuba over the past two seasons.

Chinese and Korean tourists are the largest in number, followed closely by Australians.

Plans for Hirafu skyscraper

Several credible local sources believe a Tokyo-based development company plans to build a 40-storey tower block in Hirafu, despite tough new building guidelines set to become legislation early next year.

Such buildings are often found in Japanese ski resorts - nearby Rusutsu has a 24-storey hotel and Tomamu has twin 36-storey towers.

The area of interest is believed to be on the west side of middle Hirafu, possibly around the Sun Sports Centre, towards St Moritz.

One high profile real estate figure who had also heard of the plans from several sources, expressed concern over the development becoming a blot on the landscape in the area.

"It does make me wonder who would buy these apartments, but the investors are obviously confident that they can sell them."

Until now developers have generally adhered to local guidelines, despite not being legally enforceable.

feature property



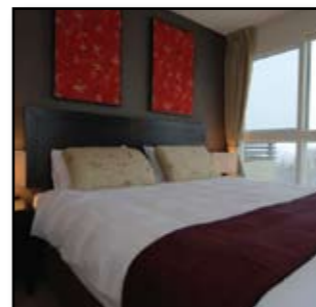
The view from 502.



The Freshwater Penthouse 502

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This brand new penthouse is one of the few remaining apartments in the village ready for occupation this season. Featuring only 11 apartments The Freshwater delivers boutique luxury in a superb location. The views to Mt Yotei from the living/dining/kitchen and bedroom are unbeatable and unlikely ever to be blocked due to the zoning regulations. Featuring designer kitchens including Miele appliances and DeLonghi espresso machine. This fully furnished apartment includes a Bose Lifestyle system with all the luxury you could want in a home away from home.



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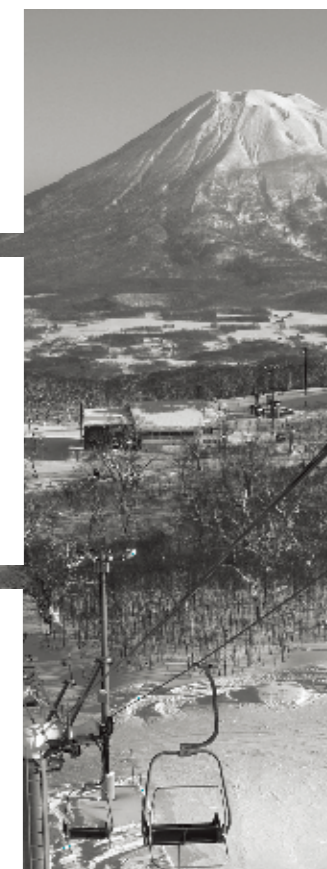
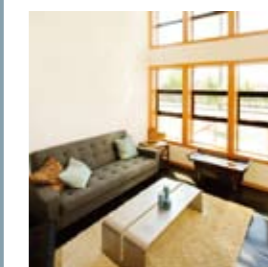
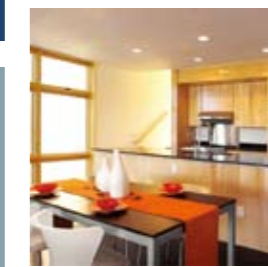
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financing in niseko

how to secure your piece of white gold

by ruskin mclennan

The demand for property in Niseko continues to grow. 2007 saw the sale of a number of large tracts of land not just in Hirafu Village but also Hanazono, Higashiyama and Annupuri. This demand was driven partly by developers looking for locations for larger style destination resorts and individuals looking for an alternative to Hirafu Village. The apartment market continues to grow and rental returns have become less important as the demand for luxury apartments increases.

Obtaining finance for purchases in Japan is challenging, particularly for non-residents. Many purchasers of property in Niseko have simply paid cash or have financed their purchase by drawing down on the equity on their home or other assets. Paying Australian interest rates can be justified if your property is returning a capital growth rate greater than the effective interest rate.

In Europe it is now common to travel throughout the property markets of Europe and purchase holiday or investment property. They may often borrow against their existing home equity and use part or all of the property they are purchasing as collateral. They will be supported by their local pan European bank.

This practice has been less common for Australians as holiday homes in places like Bali or Thailand are subject to an unstable government, title uncertainty, and complex ownership structures. Japan has a system of title that is similar in structure to Australia's torrens title system and is certainly less complex than European titles. The big Australian banks have been looking closely at the Niseko market and we anticipate that they may offer part financing of property purchases in 2008. The demand and opportunity for the Australian banks is simply too good to ignore.

Financing now

It is still difficult for foreigners to obtain financing through a Japanese bank, particularly without permanent residency. So how do you finance your purchase in Niseko?

Ideally a yen loan is the best way to purchase your property. Japanese interest rates are at historically low levels and many banks will provide a loan in Yen. However many people also finance their purchase in Niseko in their home country using their existing finance arrangements.

When you obtain finance outside of Japan it is not possible to use the Japanese property as collateral.

Australia

The NAB appears to be the most progressive at providing loans in Japanese Yen at Japanese interest rates.

The loan will be secured against a nominated asset in your country of residence. The asset should have a value of 120% of the amount of the loan and you should have a good relationship with the bank and a good income history. There is no centralised contact and we strongly suggest you discuss financing prior to coming to Niseko.

Hong Kong

In Hong Kong the Westpac and Commonwealth banks are the most progressive and will provide yen loans with the appropriate collateral depending on your financial situation. However they are not promoting these services and I have encountered clients who have had some difficulty in obtaining these loans.

The loan can be serviced in Japanese Yen through your Japanese income which will minimise your exposure to currency fluctuations.

ANZ Japan Expat Mortgage Summary

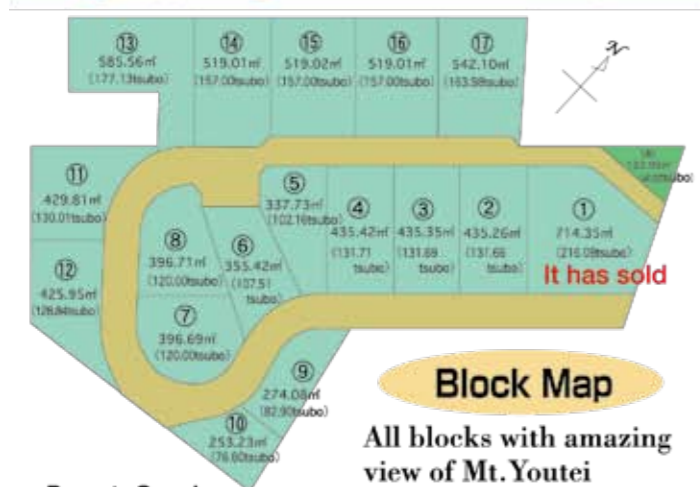
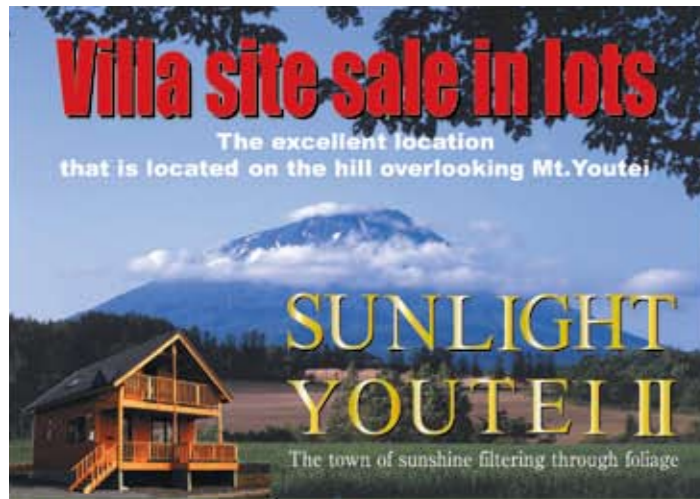
The Australian and New Zealand Banking Group Ltd (ANZ) have offices in Tokyo and Osaka, so are on the ground in Japan to assist with your requirements.

Their standard Expat Dual Currency Mortgage requires the borrower's main source of income to be in Japanese Yen. For certain clients who are investing in Japanese property they are able to seek an exception to that requirement enabling ANZ to assist Australian (or other) tax residents. All clients need to provide an Australian or New Zealand property as security to release equity which can be used to purchase Japanese property.

ANZ can:

- Offer JPY finance secured against approved Australian or New Zealand property.
- Offer JPY interest rates based on ANZ cost of funds plus 1-1.25% margin.
- Apply standard Expat Mortgage terms for Japan based investors.
- Consider Australian or New Zealand based applicants on a case by case basis.
- Provide a loan structure that generally allows for trusts and companies.
- Provide approval/pre-approval within 5-7 working days, followed by a 4-6 week settlement process.

Ruskin McLennan is Managing Director of Niseko Property



Block Map
All blocks with amazing view of Mt. Youtei

Property Overview

- Location: 114-12 Aza Kabayama Kutchan-cho Abuta-gun, etc
- Access: 12 min from JR Kutchan station by car
- Total floor-area ratio: 150%
- Electricity and telephone facilities load money: 250,000 yen ~ 350,000 yen One division (Type of laying underground)
- Facility/Water supply: Public management water service, Electricity: Hokkaido Electric Power Co., Inc., Telephone: NTT, gas: Individual propane, Drainage: U-type side ditch (set up septic tank)

Company overview

License: No. 026660, certified by Governor of Ishikari Prefecture in Hokkaido
Member of the whole country Corp. Business Society Housing Land and building

COSMO Maruzen Cosmo Firm limited liability company
2-2 Kita 14 Higashi 5 Higashi-ku, Sapporo-shi, Hokkaido, 065-0014 JAPAN
http://www.mz-cosmo.jp
e-mail: cosmo@hscb-jsd.com phone: (011) 733-6611

Local Business Partner

License: No. (5)3455, Certified by Governor of Shinbeshi Prefecture
YUI HOME PLANNING CO., LTD.
Kita 2-jo Higashi 1-choume Kutchan-cho Abuta-gun, Hokkaido, 044-0002 JAPAN
e-mail: yuihome@extra.ocn.ne.jp phone: (0136) 22-2711



HOKKAIDO REAL ESTATE

Expert property investment and sales advice in Niseko
Japan - Asia's hottest skiing destination.

Hokkaido Real Estate is one of Niseko's market leaders, extremely professional and with a strong track record. Find out more about the lifestyle or investment opportunities of our diverse range of properties - please call us on 0136 21 6211 or drop by our office at 2F Mountain Side, 190-6 Aza Yamada (50 metres east of Seicomart - towards Kutchan).

Contact JASON KING for further information

Mobile: 080 5587 5052

Email: jason@hokkaidorealestate.com

Web: www.hokkaidorealestate.com



Niseko An'nupuri
Niseko Grand Hirafu Hanazono Area
Niseko Higashiyama

FOR YOUR SAFETY
Regardless of how you enjoy your snow sport, always show courtesy to others and be aware that THERE ARE INHERENT RISKS in all snow recreation activities. These risks include rapid changes in weather and surface conditions, collisions with other people as well as natural and artificial hazards such as rocks, trees, stumps, bare spots, mo towers and snowmaking equipment. Common sense and personal awareness can reduce such risks. Observe the code below and share with others the responsibility for a great experience.

ALPINE RESPONSIBILITY CODE
1. Know your ability and always stay in control.
2. Take lessons from qualified professional instructors to learn and progress.
3. As you proceed downhill or overtake another person, you must avoid people below and beside you.
4. Do not stop where you could obstruct a trail a run or are not visible from above.
5. When entering a trail, a run or starting downhill, look uphill and give way to others.
6. Always use chairlift restraining devices where provided and always use proper devices to prevent runaway equipment. Ensure equipment is in good condition.
7. Observe and obey all signs and warnings. Keep off closed trails or runs and keep out of closed areas.
8. Before using any lift you must have the knowledge and ability to load and unload safely.
9. Do not ski, snowboard, ride a lift or undertake any other alpine activity if you are impaired by drugs and alcohol.
10. If you are involved in, or witness an accident, alert the Ski Patrol, remain at the scene and identify yourself to them.

KNOW THE CODE: IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY
Strictly off limits
Entry into areas marked "Strictly Off Limits" is prohibited even to experts with special equipment (e.g., avalanche beacon, shovel, radio).
Those who wish to enter an uncontrolled area are required to comply with Niseko An'nupuri rules posted at designated gates and lift bases.

on piste and off

A few good weeks of snow has finally covered up most of the sasa grass and opened up a lot more terrain. There's now definitely enough snow out there for it to avalanche so we can't stress enough how important it is to check the avalanche information EVERYDAY, at the backcountry gates or at <http://niseko.nadare.info>.

All back country gates are now open so we thought it was worth reprinting NOASC owner Ross Carty's backcountry safety tips from this issue's cover story:

Avalanche and back country travel comes down to common sense - don't be gung ho and think you know everything. A lot of people get into trouble because of arrogance and inexperience. Always ski to a safe place - where you wouldn't expect an avalanche to happen.

Go with a buddy. If you're not sure, don't ski down the same slope at the same time - if it slides, who's going to come and dig you out?

Talk to experienced locals or people and find out which places you shouldn't go. Look at the maps. The areas that are off limits are that way for a reason - they are avalanche prone and people have died there.

Stay away from south facing slopes in the northern hemisphere because they get the most sun. If they're loaded and they get wet, that's when they're going to slide. If you're on the mountain and you're looking at Yotei, that's east. If you're skiing on a south face at 11 or 12 then exercise caution. Don't go into steep areas around that time. Avoid areas where if something happens you can't get out.

Have the right equipment - an avalanche beacon, a probe and a shovel and know how to use them correctly. Companies here can teach you how.

Surfanic Stack of the Week



Aussie Ben Gillespie is this week's Surfanic Stack of the Week winner... while it's not 100% obvious from this snap, Ben's mates assure us this was a killer wipe out! In fairness to Ben, he did also include some shots proving he can grab and spin with the best of them. For his modesty, Ben's won himself a Surfanic jacket. Prove you're worthy and be in the running to win some tough new Surfanic gear. Submit your best stack pic at powderlife.co.jp.

Niseko Free Passport Bus
- ski area shuttle bus

The 'Niseko Free Passport Bus' conveniently links each of the ski slopes is free to holders of the Niseko All Mountain Pass. More runs this season make the shuttle even more convenient. See reverse for timetable.

※Holders of the Niseko All Mountain Pass must present pass on boarding the bus. (12-point ticket holders forfeit 1 point).
※Those without the All Mountain Pass can ride the bus for the regular fare.
※Period of operation is subject to change due to amount of snowfall.
※Hours of operation are subject to change due to weather conditions.

Niseko All Mountain Pass

Use days (valid)	Regular Season Price			Reduced-rate season & Spring Season Price		
	Adult	Senior (Age 65+)	Age 7-12	Adult	Senior (Age 65+)	Age 7-12
12-point	¥3,000	¥2,800	¥2,400	¥3,000	¥2,800	¥2,400
8-hour	¥4,800	¥3,600	¥2,800	¥4,800	¥3,600	¥2,800
1-day	¥6,200	¥4,800	¥3,000	¥6,200	¥4,800	¥3,000
2-day	¥9,400	¥6,800	¥4,300	¥9,400	¥6,800	¥4,300
3-day	¥13,800	¥9,900	¥7,800	¥13,800	¥9,900	¥7,800
4-day	¥18,400	¥13,200	¥10,400	¥18,400	¥13,200	¥10,400
5-day	¥23,000	¥16,500	¥13,000	¥23,000	¥16,500	¥13,000
6-day	¥27,600	¥19,800	¥15,600	¥27,600	¥19,800	¥15,600
7-day	¥32,200	¥23,100	¥18,200	¥32,200	¥23,100	¥18,200
8-day (10 Days)	¥36,800	¥26,400	¥20,800	¥36,800	¥26,400	¥20,800
9-day (11 Days)	¥41,400	¥29,700	¥23,400	¥41,400	¥29,700	¥23,400
10-day (12 Days)	¥46,000	¥33,000	¥26,000	¥46,000	¥33,000	¥26,000
11-day (13 Days)	¥50,600	¥36,300	¥28,600	¥50,600	¥36,300	¥28,600
12-day (14 Days)	¥55,200	¥39,600	¥31,200	¥55,200	¥39,600	¥31,200
13-day (15 Days)	¥59,800	¥42,900	¥33,800	¥59,800	¥42,900	¥33,800
14-day (16 Days)	¥64,400	¥46,200	¥36,400	¥64,400	¥46,200	¥36,400
15-day (17 Days)	¥69,000	¥49,500	¥39,000	¥69,000	¥49,500	¥39,000
16-day (18 Days)	¥73,600	¥52,800	¥41,600	¥73,600	¥52,800	¥41,600
17-day (20 Days)	¥78,200	¥56,100	¥44,200	¥78,200	¥56,100	¥44,200
18-day (21 Days)	¥82,800	¥59,400	¥46,800	¥82,800	¥59,400	¥46,800
19-day (22 Days)	¥87,400	¥62,700	¥49,400	¥87,400	¥62,700	¥49,400
20-day (23 Days)	¥92,000	¥66,000	¥52,000	¥92,000	¥66,000	¥52,000
21-day (24 Days)	¥96,600	¥69,300	¥54,600	¥96,600	¥69,300	¥54,600
50-hour	¥45,000	—	—	¥45,000	—	—
30-hour	—	—	—	¥21,000	—	—
Season Pass	¥150,000	¥120,000	¥75,000	—	—	—

※8-hour tickets are valid for 8 hours after entry through the gate on the day of purchase.
※A deposit is required for the key card.
※All day tickets are good for night skiing on the final day of the ticket.

Regular Season
December 15 (Sat), 2007 - March 16 (Sun), 2008

Reduced-rate Season
November 23 (Thu) - December 14 (Fri), 2007
March 17 (Mon) - April 6 (Sun), 2008

Spring Season
April 7 (Mon) - May 6 (Tue), 2008
※Spring Season: 8-hour Ticket ¥3,500

Deposit for Niseko All Mountain Pass Keycard

A deposit of 1000 yen is added to the lift fee when the ticket is purchased. The deposit is refunded when you insert the key card to a refund machine.

※Refunding machines are located at each ski area.
※The deposit will not be refunded for damaged or expired cards.
※For more information, please contact our staff.

In Case of Emergency

Should you require assistance as a result of illness or injury, or discover someone in need of help, contact a nearby member of staff or phone one of the emergency numbers below:

Niseko An'nupuri TEL.0136-58-2080
Niseko Higashiyama TEL.0136-44-1111
Niseko Grand Hirafu TEL.0136-22-2167

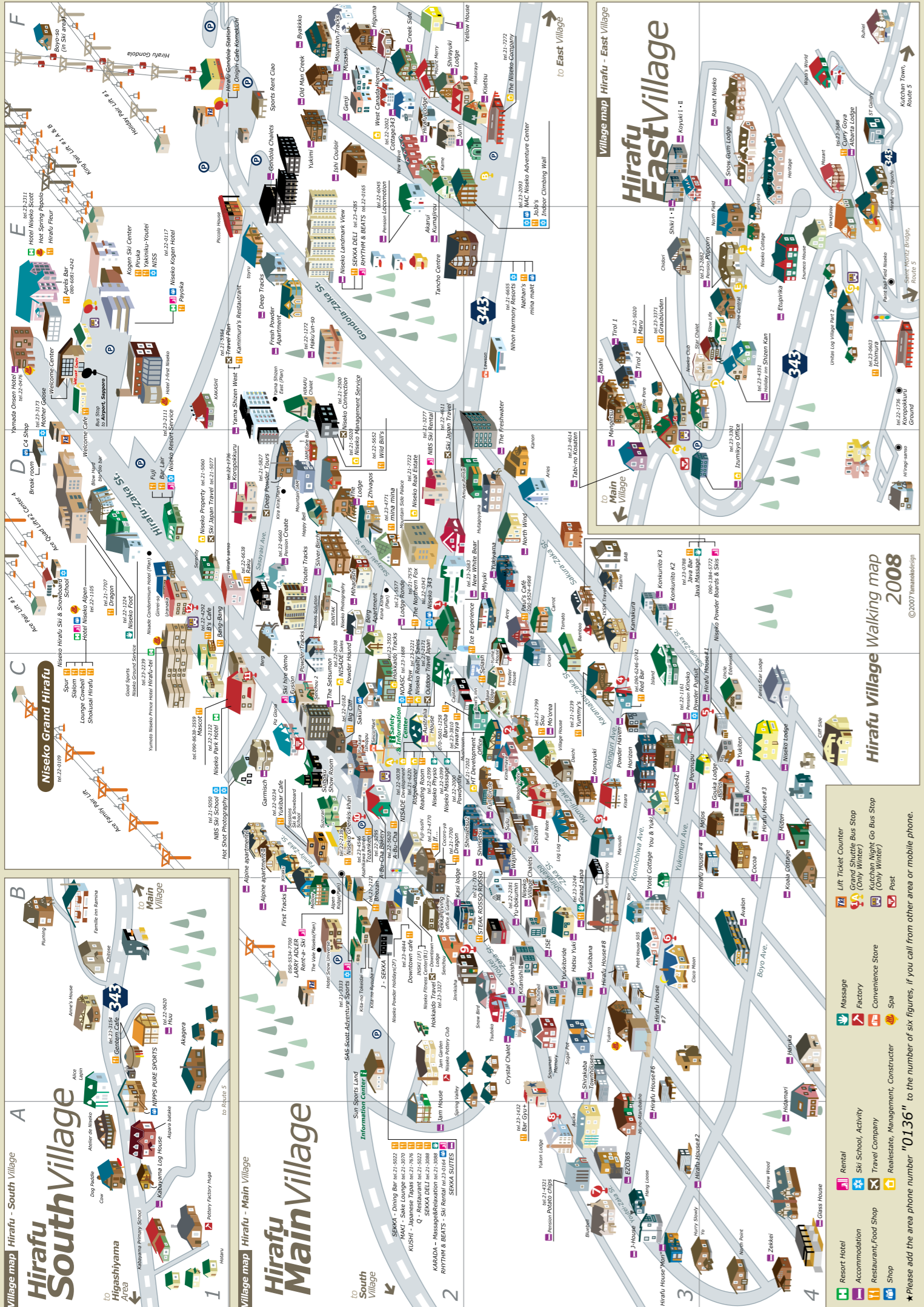
*Niseko Mountain Patrol will immediately come to your assistance.

N.F.P.P Niseko Mountain Patrol
Rescue Patrol crews are identified by their black or red uniforms with NFPP on the back.

Niseko Local Rules

Niseko Local Rules are official rules that stipulate the freedom and the safety of all skiers, snowboarders and hikers. These rules have been officially established by the Niseko An'nupuri Avalanche Prevention Committee, the Niseko Mountain Resort Committee, the Niseko Free Passport Committee and the Hokkaido Shiribeshi Alpine Accident Prevention Committee.

- Nunobiki (Gully between An'nupuri & Higashiyama area), Mizuno no Sawa (Gully under earth Higashiyama Prince Gondola) and Haru no Taki (Gully/Gulf west of Hirafu area) are designated "strictly off limits areas" by the Niseko Local Rules. Whoever riding these areas WILL have their lift pass confiscated.
- Ducking the boundary ropes is prohibited. If you do, your lift pass WILL be confiscated. Use designated access gates to go out of bounds. These gates are the gateways to the Back Country.
- The area outside the mountain resort boundaries (Back Country, including the Peak) are National Forests & Parks, and are not controlled or supervised by the resort. Niseko Local Rule proclaims that hiking & riding these area involves danger and if you do, do it AT YOUR OWN RISK.
- During hazardous conditions, the gates will be closed and out of bounds riding will be strictly restricted.
- The "Niseko Avalanche Information" is the official information posted by the "Niseko Avalanche Research Center". These info can be found at lift stations and access gates.
- You will be responsible for the cost of your rescue in the back country area.
- Niseko Local Rules insist that all resort users respect the instructions of the Ski Patrol and Shiribeshi Mountain Patrol.
- The Mountain resort and the locals respect the freedom of the visitors, are concerned about their safety, and in turn, expect the visitors to respect the Niseko Local Rules.



where to...

- Eat & Drink
- Stay
- Play
- Relax
- Outside Hokkaido

Java Bar & Java Massage



The Java Bar has some of the best coffee & cocktails in Hirafu. A relaxing lounge bar that is perfect for enjoying a quiet drink after a long day's skiing. Mix of local & overseas visitors. Live music, reggae and local DJ Maco.

Open till late. Wireless Internet Hotspot during the day. Java Massage has qualified Australian massage therapists for your essential massage. Open 10am to 9pm daily. Simultaneous massage available.
Map ref: C 3 www.Niseko-Info.com T. 0136 23 0788


Restaurant Maru



We are a traditional Japanese "Don Buri" restaurant with a great atmosphere. Expect huge servings of pork, tempura, sashimi, seafood and more on rice. We have set menu or 'Izakaya' style to share dishes with your friends.

11.30-15.00, 17.00-21.00
ボリューム満点の丼物、定食、居酒屋メニューヒラフ近郊は送迎有り(要予約)
Map ref: E3
www.NisekoMaru.web.fc2.com T. 0136-22-5020

Paul's Café Niseko



The only Belgium beer café in Japan owned by a Belgian, comes to Niseko. Specializing in Belgium beers and rotisserie chicken. More than 30 beers on tap and on bottles. Real Belgium waffles and more... A full meal or just a beer, don't hesitate and come in.

Map ref: D 3
www.paulscafe.jp T. 090-9524-4968


Bang Bang



Owner Masa Saito chooses some of the best ingredients in Japan for his extensive menu. Wagyu beef, Hokkaido crab, 5 types of salmon and yakitori are the highlights.

アフタースキーの楽しいひと時を厳選食材で創る料理と飲み物でお過ごしください。
5.00-11.30pm. Closed Wednesdays.
Map ref: C 1
<http://www.niseko.or.jp/bangbang> T. 0136-22-4292

Ichimura Soba



Ichimura soba serves top quality soba (buck wheat noodles) that are made fresh on the premises. A beautiful wooden premises looking out towards Mt Yotei is the perfect location to enjoy some of the best soba you will find anywhere in Japan. Tempura Soba ¥1,300
11.00-15.00, 18.00-20.00 Closed Tuesdays

Map ref: E 4
www.Niseko-Ichimura.com T. 0136-23-0603

SAS Snowsports



Scott Adventure Sports (SAS) provides Ski and Snowboard Lessons in English and Japanese. Kids semi private lessons, Mountain Guiding and Snowshoeing Tours are favourites. SAS Hire provides a range of ski and snowboard gear from beginner to powder skis and boards. Summer activities are exciting - rafting, ducky, canyoning and mountain bike tours. Our office is next to Hotel Snow Universe.

Map ref: B 2
www.sas-net.com T. 0136-21-3333

Grand Hirafu Ski Hire



Try on Japan made ski! Japan made high performance skis are available at Niseko Alpen Rental corner and Niseko Kogen Ski Centre Rental. We select Ogasaka skis which are popular in Japan. Ogasaka is available only in Japan. Let's have a trial run to see difference.

Map ref: C 1
www.grand-hirafu.jp/en/mountain/rental.html
T. 0136-22-0109

Niseko Hirafu Ski & Snowboard School



Ski & Snowboard school in Niseko mountain resort Grand HIRAFU. From beginner to expert. Our specially trained ski pros who speak English help you to improve your skiing or riding!

Map ref: D 1
www.grand-hirafu.jp/en/mountain/school.html
T. 0136-22-0921

Black Diamond Tours



We offer Hokkaido's best ski and snowboard trips period. Our guides will take you straight to the best lines, hidden zones and secret stashes wherever we go. Choices range from resort tours, multi-day trips, backcountry gear rental and car rentals.

BDのバックカントリーツアーは、自分のレベルに合わせてツアーを組み、ツアー後は五色温泉も楽しめます
www.blackdiamondtours.com T. 0902054TOUR(8687)

Niseko Auto



Niseko Auto is a licensed auto and auction dealer offering weekly and monthly 4wd rentals, sales and repair as well as exporting overseas. Add a vehicle to your rental property or take the ultimate souvenir home and save thousands of dollars by letting us locate and send you your dream car.

www.nisekoauto.com T. 090-2055-6074

Bonbori Souvenirs & Foot Massage



The perfect souvenir shop also does foot massage during the day! We specialise in original Japanese character calligraphy based souvenirs including 3,500 T-Shirts and much more. We also offer foot massages from 1pm - 3pm.

Souvenir shop opens from 3pm - 8pm.

Map ref: B 2
T. 0136 21 2366

Niseko Massage



Sports and relaxation massage in five star luxury. Niseko Massage has highly qualified Australian massage therapists using a range of essential oils in beautifully appointed rooms. Conveniently located in Australia house opposite Seicomart. Amy and Carmen will assist your recovery from skiing and revitalise your body and mind.

Map ref: C 2
www.NisekoMassage.com T. 0136 22 0399

Captain Hirafu Pension



Captain Hirafu B&B is one of a kind. Liam & Mika have created a beautiful "home in the heart of Hirafu" for their guests with their great hospitality. Warm, cozy and comfortable with outstanding Japanese service.

Map ref: C 2
www.CaptainHirafu.com T. 0 136 22 60 28

Australian Alpine Club Niseko



The Australian snowsports club with its own Niseko lodge. The lodge has eight western style guest rooms (with ensuites), dining, bar and kitchen facilities. Membership is available (to all nationalities) for A\$6,500 and members also enjoy reciprocal rights at five other Australian Alpine Club lodges. Commercial bookings are available.

Map ref: D3 www.aacniseko.com T. 0136 22 3006

Niseko's Black Diamond Lodge and Restaurant



Located just a short 300m from the Higashiyama resort lift the Black Diamond Lodge is a local favourite. Ski to the lodge or take the free shuttle bus and come and check out our great Western and Japanese menu or our private snow park. Meals from 900yen, rooms from 5500yen.

www.bdlodge.com T. 0136-44-1144


HAKUBA REAL ESTATE



Property sales and development in the Hakuba Valley and surrounding area. Hakuba Real Estate provides a professional and experienced service to our valued foreign clients. We offer the best selection of local properties and guarantee you trouble free results.

www.hakubarealestate.com T. 0261 75 3073
mobile 090 13459636

POWDERHOUSE



Powderhouse is a boutique lodge at the base of Hakuba 47 resort. Magnificent views of the Hakuba Valley and surrounding mountains. Fabulous food, personalized service, transfers to and from Nagano.

www.powderhouse.jp T. 0261 75 3343
mobile 090 88921224

Khaosan Tokyo Guesthouse



Tokyo expensive? No way! Stay at No.1 hostel group, Khaosan Tokyo Guesthouse for just ¥2000/night! Located at a central part of Tokyo, Easy access to Narita Airport and a big bonus of FREE 24 hour internet! Just one minute from Asakusa station with great riverside view from the rooftop. If you come once, you'll be hooked!"

www.khaosan-tokyo.com T. 03-3842-8286

Hirafu Village Walking map 2008
©2007 NisekoInfo.jp

- Resort Hotel
 - Accommodation
 - Restaurant, Food Shop
 - Shop
 - Massage
 - Factory
 - Convenience Store
 - Spa
 - Rental
 - Ski School, Activity
 - Travel Company
 - Real Estate, Management, Constructor
 - Lift Ticket Counter
 - Grand Shuttle Bus Stop
 - Kichijiro Night Go Bus Stop (Only Winter)
 - Post
- ★ Please add the area phone number "0136" to the number of six figures, if you call from other area or mobile phone.

AIRPORT

New Chitose Airport 0123 23 0111
www.new-chitose-airport.jp/language/english

New Chitose was opened in 1991 and became Japan's first 24-hour airport in 1994. It services Sapporo and Niseko with direct international flights from various Asian cities and Australia. The Tokyo to Chitose route is the busiest domestic route in the world. It is the largest airport in Japan by land mass.

Getting From New Chitose To Niseko

On arrival at Chitose international airport, visitors not on a full travel package have a few options to complete this last leg of their journey to Niseko and back. Although the trip is only 110kms, due to icy roads and no direct train route, it takes two to three hours.

BUS

The bus is the most convenient and commonly used form of transport from the airport. Buses depart about every 30 minutes from the airport to Niseko. They take about three hours, including a rest stop halfway and a dropoff at Rusutsu. ¥2,300 - one way and ¥3,850 for a round trip.

The buses disembark at six designated bus stops within the greater Niseko United Resort. You will find two different points to get off at each of the main ski areas.

Whiteliner Buses

www.whitelinerbuses.com.....011-242-2040

Chuo Buses

www.chuo-bus.co.jp/kikan/ski...011-231-0500

Donan buses

www.donanbus.co.jp/ski...0123-46-5701

Hokkaido Resort Liner

www.access-n.jp/ski_info.html.011-219-4411

CAR RENTAL

If you are comfortable driving in the snow, renting can be convenient as it allows you to take a trip to Kutchan to stock up the fridge before returning the car. One way hire from Chitose to Hirafu is about ¥7,000 for six - 24 hours. Nippon Rentacar, Mazda and Orix have offices in the Niseko area. If you want a car only in Niseko, you can contact Black Diamond Lodge in Higashiyama.

Mazda Rent a Car : Chitose airport 0123-45-8756, Niseko 011-231-0118 (drop off and pick up in Niseko only available on weekdays)

Nippon Rent a Car : Chitose airport 0123-26-0919, Niseko 0136-43-2929

Orix Rent a Car: Chitose airport 0123-22-0543, Izumikyō (Hirafu) 0134-25-0543, Black Diamond Lodge : 0136-44-1144

TAXI

A standard taxi from Chitose to Hirafu will cost about ¥30,000. Prai Taxi charges 20,000 for a small taxi (3-4 people) or ¥33,000 for a jumbo (8-10 people). Call 011 207 5166 or www.prai.co.jp.

TRAIN

This is the most scenic way to get to Niseko. Unfortunately there is no direct train from Chitose to Kutchan station (the closest major station). All trains run through Sapporo and Otaru. The journey takes about three hours and the cost is about ¥2,600 for an unreserved seat. If you want a reserved seat, you can ask at JR information desk, B1 Chitose airport. www2.jrhokkaido.co.jp/global/index.html The train schedules are subject to change so it is best to call the numbers below or visit: www.japanrail.com.

Airport.....0123-45-7011
 Sapporo.....011-222-7111
 Otaru.....0134-22-0771
 Kutchan station.....0136-22-1310
 Niseko station.....0135-44-2104

INTER-RESORT TRANSPORT

A shuttle bus connects the Grand Hirafu, Hi-

gashiyama and Annupuri ski areas. There is a private company bus which costs ¥500 and a free shuttle bus which is included in your all mountain pass. See the timetable on the course map for more information. If you have a 12-point ticket, one point per trip is needed. Others need ¥500 for adult and ¥300 for child per ride.

Kutchan Night Bus

A free bus runs from Grand Hirafu ski area to Kutchan station every night. Step out from Hirafu village and enjoy shopping, eating, and drinking in Kutchan.

Taxis

Kutchan hire.....0136 22 1212
 Misora hire.....0136 22 1171
 Niseko hire.....0136 44 2635

AIRLINES

ANA.....0120 029 222
 British Airways.....03 3570 8657
 Cathay Pacific.....03 5159 1700
 China Airlines.....03 5520 0333
 JAL.....0120 255 971
 Korean Air.....0088 21 2001
 Qantas.....0120 207 020
 Singapore Airlines.....03 3213 1174
 Thai Airways.....03 3503 3311
 United Airlines.....0120 114 466

BANKING

Yes, we all know Hirafu needs an international ATM! Until then, use the post office in Kutchan open 8.45am to 7pm on weekdays, 9am to 5pm on weekends and holidays. You can also withdraw from the 24-hour Citibank ATM at 3F Chitose airport and the 7-Eleven near Kutchan station. Most of the cards with Cirrus and PLUS marks are accepted at these places, but round cornered cards are not.

CREDIT CARDS

Japan is still a predominantly cash society. Most small bars and restaurants in Niseko do not accept credit cards, but larger hotels, restaurants and hotels often do.

American Express.....0120 020 120
 MasterCard.....03 5728 5200
 Visa Card.....00531 44 0022

CURRENCY

You can exchange your money into Yen at the bank, post office, and most inbound travel operators. Please bring your passport - it may be more convenient to change with your hotel. You can also exchange USD travellers cheques at banks or at Kutchan post office.

DRIVING

When driving on icy roads the number one thing to remember is to drive slowly. Make sure the windscreen and back and side windows are thoroughly de-iced on the outside and de-steamed on the inside before setting off - don't simply clear a 'porthole' to look through. Maintain at least a five-second gap between you and the vehicle in front. Use a high gear to avoid wheel spin, but take care not to let your speed creep up. Brake gently to avoid locking the wheels. Never brake if the vehicle skids, instead, ease off the accelerator and steer slightly into the direction of the skid until you gain control.

ELECTRICITY

Standard voltage is 100v AC. You can use many higher watt items without a problem but higher wattage devices such as hair dryers may not run on full power. Plugs are the flat two blades type. Many recent buildings have 240v with Australian shaped plugs.

EARTHQUAKES

In the event of an earthquake, stay out of elevators, stand in a door frame and watch for falling objects. The safest places are in large open areas such as parking lots of ski areas, schools, parks etc. Your accommodation is likely to have an emergency earthquake pack.

EMERGENCIES

Police110
 Ambulance and Fire.....119
 Emergency Interpretation.....03-5285-8185
 Japan English Helpline (nationwide emergency assistance).....0570-000-911

ETIQUETTE

Japan is perhaps the most courteous country in the world. Say excuse me (sumimasen) and thank you (arigato) regularly. Do not eat while walking, or wear your shoes on tatami mats or in most indoor residences. A bow can be used to say thank you, sorry, hello, goodbye and excuse me. It is impolite not to return a bow. The deeper the bow, the more polite it becomes.

EATING

At most casual dining Japanese restaurants (izakaya) meals are ordered for the table and shared. You will often receive a small snack with your first drink which may or may not be billed. Rest your chopsticks across the top of the bowl or plate - never leave them sticking out of the rice!

DRINKING

It is tradition in Japan to pour from a bottle into your guest's small glass regularly. Kam-pai is the Japanese word for cheers - use it readily! Also please remember to stay well behaved when under the influence. Poor behaviour by drunken Australians in Niseko has received national media attention in Japan. Remember you are an ambassador for your country at all times while you are abroad.

TIPPING

Although tipping is not generally done in Japan, some restaurants and bars will include a service fee for groups.

GARBAGE

Hokkaido has some of the strictest garbage separation rules in the world. Please try to follow them, follow the signs on the bins to the letter.

ONSEN (HOT SPRING BATH)

Buy a ticket, strip down - no swim suits allowed, keep your clothes in a basket, your valuables in a locker. Take a little towel only into the onsen with you, wash and scrub your body well before you go in to the bath. You can fill your towel with cold water before you enter the onsen. Do not put your towel into the onsen water - leave it on your head and squeeze the cold water out when you get too hot (it's best not to bring drinks into the onsen). After bathing rinse off under the shower. Finally dry your body well before you walk back into the changing room.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Although there are rumours of an English speaking clinic opening in Hirafu in 2008/9 season presently you will need to go to Kutchan for most medical services. If you can't speak Japanese you will need to bring a translator, or one may be provided at the hospital.

Kutchan Kousei Hospital

The major hospital servicing the area is located 4 blocks from the main intersection of Kutchan. They have an X-ray, a slightly ageing MRI and medical dispensary. No appointment necessary, orthopaedics cases taken in the morning only. It will take you most of the day. Address: North 4 East 1-2, Kutchan-cho Tel: 0136-22-1141

Niseko Physio

Located on the second floor of Australia House, staffed with Australian physiotherapy graduates from North Sydney Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Centre (Australia's leading knee clinic). Primary care also available. Sports injuries, back and neck pain, braces and taping. Appointments preferred but not essential. www.NisekoPhysio.com Telephone 0136 22 0399.

Ueda Orthopedic Clinic

A privately run orthopaedic clinic providing

more time efficient service than the hospital. X-ray, medical dispensary. 1-4, South 3-jo West3, Kutchan 0136-22-1386

INTERNET

Most accommodation in Niseko will have internet access. If you have a laptop, you can try finding the free wireless hotspots in cafes and bars around the village. Try Pow Pow, the Java Bar or B's café.

MOBILE PHONES

3G phones only will work in Japan. You can hire a phone from IXSM travel 0136 21 5855 or Go Mobile 03 4496 4344. For longer term stays the three big carriers have stores in Kutchan:

au.....0136-21-5616
 Soft Bank.....0136-21-2588
 NTT DoCoMo.....0136-21-6868

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Domestic Calls

Green and grey public phones take coins or pre paid telephone cards, available from convenience stores or at some phone card dispensers in some booths. Local calls don't require the "0136", unless made from a mobile phone.

Directory Assistance

Dial 104 (toll call) and then ask for an English speaker. You must know the location and name to get a number.

International Calls

International direct dial can be made using any of the following prefixes, 001 (KDDI), 0041 (ITJ) and 0061 (IDC). They will cost you.

Calling Cards

Brastel The most popular international calling card service is available in Niseko. Known for its flat 24 hour rates as low ¥6 per minute to Australia from any type of phone using a non-toll free access number. Brastel has excellent customer service available in over 20 languages and the card is available at several locations in Hirafu and can be recharged at IXSM travel or by your credit card. New subscribers get five free minutes. Toll-free: 0120 659 534. www.brastel.com

Kazak Rates from ¥20 for one minute to Australia. The kazak card is the highest selling card in the Niseko area. Kazak card is available from your hotel front desk, Piz Gloria convenience store and from most inbound tour operators. 0123 36 4000

POST OFFICES

Look for the red "T" symbol. Stamps and the post office box are at Piz Gloria convenience store. For other services you will need to go to the post office in Kutchan.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Kutchan Tourism Information Centre

Located on Eki-mae Dori opposite Best Denki, the newly opened tourist information centre provides an excellent English speaking service for visitors. They dispense brochures and can help you book accommodation. 0136 22 1121

The Niseko Grand Hirafu Welcome Centre

At the main bus stop in Hirafu parking lot the Welcome Centre has a wide range of brochures and transport information. They can also help with booking accommodation if you've arrived without a booking - you risk taker you. 0136 22 0109.

WALKING ON ICY ROADS

About 1/3 of all injuries in Hirafu are caused by people falling on the street. Wear shoes with good grip, buy and attach rubber sole covers with metal studs. Take small steps, walk slowly and never run, keep both hands out of your pockets and free for balance. Walking with two ski stocks is a great idea and protect yourself instead of the objects being carried.



Professional Sports Massage in Five Star Luxury

Come and visit Niseko Massage to soothe your tired muscles and revitalise your body and mind. Our highly qualified and experienced massage therapists will tune your body and prepare you for your next day on the mountain.

Our rooms are luxuriously appointed with comfortable massage tables, all with arm rests. We are conveniently located on the second floor of Australia house, opposite the Seicomart.

If you prefer we can visit your hotel and perform the massage in the comfort of your own accommodation. Appointments are preferred but not essential.

Our Sessions

We can cater each massage to suit your specific requests. We perform oil massages using a combination of Swedish, Remedial and Sports Massage techniques. We can also perform a range of assisted stretches to aid your recovery.

90 minute, full body Oil Massage: ¥14,000

The total recovery package - think of it as having one with "The Lot". Relax and drift away as we invigorate every last one of your tired muscles. The 90 minute massage is the ultimate in relaxation and recovery. Perfect for when you have pure indulgence in mind.

60 minute, full body Oil Massage: ¥10,000

The perfect remedy to revive your whole body. We can concentrate on any problem areas whilst still ensuring your legs are rejuvenated.

30 minute: "Leg recovery" massage: ¥6,000

We will use our extensive experience to revitalize your tired legs. If you are not sure your legs are up to another day on the slopes, pop in for one of these. Fast, affordable and effective.

45 minute, full body massage: ¥8,000

A little bit of everything while still giving you time to make your restaurant reservation.

Home visits:

All services are available in your hotel for an extra ¥2,000.

All major credit cards accepted.

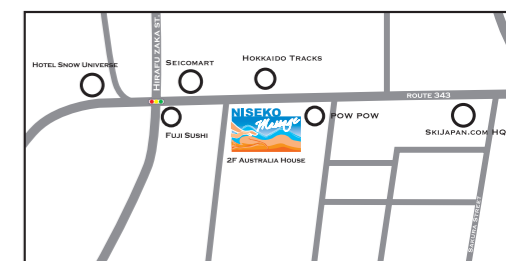
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the last word...

on health: posture

by Bevan Colless



Bevan Colless
Is a physiotherapist exercise physiologist who has spent six years in Japan operating Tokyo Physio and as of 2006, Niseko Physio.

One can see all kinds of different riding and skiing styles on the mountain. The low hunched flapper is a snowboarder that rides at top speed over bumps bent well forward at the waist and with a curved thoracic spine, arms outstretched, flapping like an injured bird. The Quasimodo skier stands upright at the waist but hunches forward from the mid back at high speeds. Sometimes it makes me wonder if these styles are created to increase performance or are just down to poor posture.

As a physio working in Tokyo, most of my clients are expatriate desk jockeys working long hours in front of computers. I often find myself talking about posture. But posture is a simple word that I fear has been blighted as uncool, some might even say daggy. 'Department' perhaps? Sheesh even daggy! While it may not be cool, posture is important. I wish I could preface this article with a tale of my 4th class teacher, Mrs Kristovski warbling incessantly in a slightly eastern European accent about the importance of posture, while making us walk around the room with thick arithmetic books on our heads. Unfortunately it never happened to me, and I want to know why not! We have all seen the grainy newsreels from the 30s and 40s when the school children seemed to spend more time with their books on their heads than they did with their heads in the books, but these days posture hardly rates a mention.

Posture is worth putting some effort into. We've only been walking on two legs for a fraction of our history, so from an evolutionary point we're still kind of getting the hang of this upright thing. There's a lot of upside to having good posture. As well as preventing injuries and pain, having good posture makes you appear

more distinguished, more professional and even more appealing to the opposite sex. Aside from finding a lot of lost change on the ground there really isn't much upside to having poor posture.

So what to do if you want to improve your posture? Certainly genetics and upbringing have led us down one path by the time we are adults, however this is not to say this can't be changed for the worse or the better. To improve posture, the combination is as simple as awareness and exercises. Try to be aware of your own posture throughout the day. If you dropped a plum-bob from the point of your shoulder where would the weight end up? If your answer is 10cm in front of your pelvis, you've got some work to do. The first step is to ensure you have a good curve in your lower back (called lordosis). Then try to arch back from the mid spine (thoracic spine) and pull your shoulders back, down and together. Finally, as my father was always fond of saying to me, 'pull your head in!' - or get your head back over your body where it belongs, instead of having it poked out in front. Pulling your head back in will take a lot of strain from your muscles that are holding your head up against gravity.

To help your postural awareness, try standing up straight and closing your eyes. Imagine you have a chain coming from the top of your head and someone is pulling it upwards, so that you are being elongated just before your feet lift off the ground. Hold this for around 10 seconds, and open your eyes. You'll be amazed that you are actually taller! You can also try it while sitting. Once you've done all that, you should have a spine shaped like a gentle 'S' not like a 'C', and you'll be on your way to better posture.

If you were from a family which emphasised posture, you should consider yourself lucky. If you have children, don't be afraid to give them regular feedback on their posture, they won't get it at school and they will thank you for it in the future.



A classic Quasimodo skier in action.

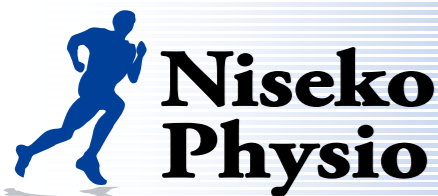
To sum up

Performing regular postural exercises are essential for making and maintaining postural improvements. Performing these regularly will assist you in maintaining a better posture naturally, without needing to think about it. Although it is difficult to recommend exercises that are suitable for everyone, the following are a few basic postural exercises which should help.

PEC-POLE STRETCH Stand with legs shoulder-width apart and hold a pole or a long belt in front of your body. Lift it up and over your head, keeping your elbows locked. If you need to bend your elbows you need to move your hands wider apart. Once they're as close as possible, measure between the hands. 90cm is a good result. 15-20 reps one to two times daily are a good amount. You'll be surprised how good you feel after a set and how quickly you improve.

CERVICAL RETRACTIONS The mother of all neck exercises. Especially good for people with a protruded head. With your palm on your sternum and index finger on your chin, pull your neck back and away from the finger, keeping your face in the same plane (imagine your body is like a filing cabinet and your head is the extended top drawer, which you pull back in). Pull back as far as possible hold for a split second and repeat 10 times. Do this regularly throughout the day, particularly if you have a neck ache.

SHOULDER RETRACTIONS Pull your shoulders back and down and squeeze for three seconds. Try not to lead with your elbows but use the muscles between the bottom part of your shoulder blades. Try to do about 30 of these a day.



We can help with

- ✓ Sports Injuries
- ✓ Back and Neck Pain
- ✓ Braces
- ✓ Taping
- ✓ Post-operative rehabilitation



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