

issue 05 Feb 16 - Feb 29 2008

# powderlife

NISEKO ニセコ

**APRES-SKI  
ONSEN  
BATH-HOUSE BLISS**

**meet the parkitect**  
Hanazono's park designer

**property market**  
Another Japanese bubble?

**a thousand words**  
Another collection of the latest shots





Niseko Property are the experts in finding the perfect lifestyle or investment property in Asia's premier snow resort destination. Our professional and experienced staff will show you how simple and exciting it can be finding a property to suit your needs.

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- Level site suitable for subdivision
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- 80 m in the 80 and 80 m high
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- 80 m in the 80 and 80 m high
- 800 sqm (4600 sqft)

### Izumiyoko 2 Land 83-109

¥38,000,000



- 2200 sqm (20000 sqft)
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### Sakura Apartment

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¥161,000,000



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These are only a selection of our current listings. Please visit our website for other properties and more information.

www.nisekoproperty.com

### publisher's note...

There are so many things that make a winter holiday at a Japanese ski resort special and undoubtedly one of our favourites is relaxing in an onsen (hot spring bath) after a day on the mountain. Indulging in a long soak in an onsen is an integral part of Japanese culture and many would say an almost spiritual experience. Niseko is blessed with a fabulous array of onsens and this issue we take a look at the area's best, along with an overview of the history of onsens and a personal account of a first onsen experience. We received some great feedback on our pictures from issue 4 and thanks to the talented local photographers we have another Thousand Words, double-page pictorial spread. We hope you enjoy this edition - please keep the pictures and feedback coming! Bevan@Powderlife.co.jp

日本のスキーリゾートでの楽しみの一つとして、アフタースキーの温泉は欠かせません。温泉にゆっくり浸かる日本の温泉文化は、体を休めるばかりでなく精神的にも癒されると多くの人が言います。ニセコにはたくさんの温泉があり恵まれた環境にあります。この号では人気の名湯を紹介したり、温泉の歴史や私個人の温泉初体験をお伝えします。前号に掲載したスキー・スノーボードの写真には、多くの反響がございました。この号でも2ページに渡ってニセコでなければ撮れないすばらしい写真を満載しております。ご協力いただきました地元の写真家の皆様にご挨拶いたします。是非この号をお楽しみください。写真やコメントお待ちしております! Bevan@Powderlife.co.jp

Bevan Colless  
Publisher



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

## photo of the week

Riding over Yotei  
by Alan Dunne

Mt Yotei forms a terrific back-drop to the Niseko United and is so stunning it must have been photographed a million times. This was one of our favourites. Josh Kidd built this kicker in his back-yard, worked out the angles and finally got the perfect shot.

## in the loop

what's on in niseko this week

### february 16 - february 29

#### Saturday and Sunday February 16 and 17

##### Kutchan Yukitopia Snow Festival

Races, competitions, activities. Skiing over a cold pool competition (register on the day). Potato sled pulling competition, register by Feb 15 on 0136 22 1108. Most events held behind the Kutchan Public Hall.

#### 2月16日(土) 10:30~18:30, 17日(日) 10:30~15:30

##### 雪トピア フェスティバル

ゲームやアトラクションあり、屋台も並ぶ一番のイベント。ソリでジャガイモを運ぶ雪上ばんば 自慢の鍋を50人分作る鍋大賞。恒例水面滑走トライアルと今年は土曜日にも爆笑滑走トライアルをやりませう。(当日申込可) 倶知安公民館裏 中央公園にて

#### Saturdays February 16 and 23

##### Hanazono Saturday Entertainment

12 noon - 2pm at Hanazono Cafe. Kamonohashi performs with a live DJ great for the kids! There are free giveaways of Redbull and Soyjoy at the base of Hanazono #1.

#### 2月16日(土) 23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 February 17 and 24

##### Taiko Drum Performances

Free traditional Japanese drum performances. 3.30pm  
Sundays outside Hokkaido Tracks office (next to Seicomart).

### イベント情報をお寄せください! Tell us about your event!

ed@powderlife.co.jp 0136 222 000

#### 2月17日(日) 24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~

#### Monday February 18

##### Solo Taiko Drummer at Yuki Bar

Toshihiko Arakawa from Sapporo will be performing a solo Taiko drumming routine to celebrate Chinese New Year. They will be opening a cask of Sake which will be handed out free. From 8pm.

#### 2月18日(月)

##### 雪場にてソロの太鼓演奏会

札幌の太鼓奏者、荒川寿彦さんがソロで太鼓を演奏します。鏡割りも行われ、お酒が振舞われます。雪場で旧正月をお祝いしましょう! 8pm~

#### Mondays and Thursdays February 18, 25, 21, 28

##### 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.

#### 2月18, 25日(月) 21, 28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 February 19, 26

##### A Day in the Life of a Ski Patroller

Higashiyama Prince Hotel, Tuesday night 9pm to 10pm.  
1F Tea Lounge Hamanasu. Japanese and English.

#### 2月19, 26日(火)

##### スキーバトロールの一日

ゲレンデや早朝のアバランチコントロールの様子など、ニセコ東山バトロールの活動を、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

#### Sunday February 24

##### Namara Ippatsu 'Big Air' Comp at Hirafu

More than 100 skiers and snowboarders will compete to see who can make the biggest and most stylish air. From 8.30am at the big jump above the Scot Hotel.

#### 2月24日(日)

##### なまら一発杯 2008

毎年恒例のなまら一発杯がグランヒラフにて開催されます。キング第一ベアリフト横でスキーヤー・スノーボーダーがビッグジャンプに挑戦します。参加希望の方は23日までに要申込。8:30~





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**Hokkaido Tracks, NGS, Nisade, The Niseko Company, Outdoor  
 Travel Japan, Hokkaido Travel, Annupuri Village and Scott  
 Adventure Sports.**

### 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, Hirafutei Prince Hotel, Captain Hirafu, J-Sekka deli, Gentem Café, Welcome Center, Wild Bill's, The Brick, Java Bar, The Red Bar, Dragon Wine Bar, Gentemstick Retail Store, NGS, Deep Powder Tours, Ski Japan, Larry Addler, Downtown Cafe, NAC, Nathan's, Jo Jo's, Yuki Bar, Fusion, 343, Apres Bar... and more **Higashiyama** Higashiyama Prince Hotel, Black Diamond Lodge **Annupuri** Annupuri Village, Nikko Hotel, Ikoimura 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

## powderlife

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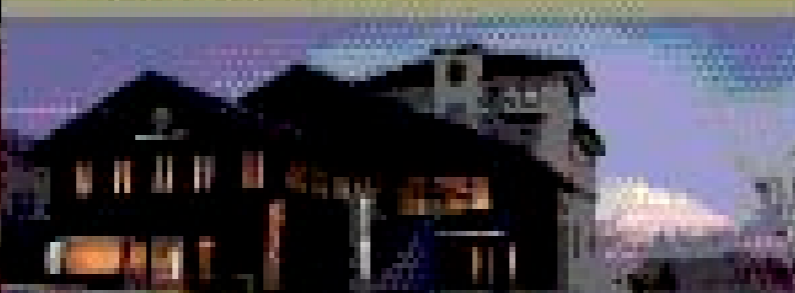
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## White January figures in

Official stats prove it - we had a lot of snow in January! In fact it was the second biggest January we've had in six seasons. The final figure was 3.24m after getting just 1.77m in December. But the season total is now up to almost 7m which is just shy of last year's total of 8.39m. The biggest single dumps came on the 9th and the 17th with 33cm and 35cm. There were only four days where it didn't snow at all and the average was just over 10cm a day. At the time of going to press there was a buzz about town we were in store for a very big mid-February storm. Let's hope it keeps coming for the remainder of Niseko's peak season this year.

## Swedish skiers drop into Niseko

Three Swedish friends living in Chamonix, France posed the question to each other over a few drinks one night: "What would you do if you had a year off work and few money restrictions?" All three decided the ideal year would be to ski all the continents of the world on a non-stop skiing journey. They promptly tidied up their affairs, employed a film production company to produce a DVD of their trip and packed their bags, cameras and skis and took off in May 2007. They recently arrived in Japan for this leg of their trip and were lucky enough to encounter a few rare bluebird days along with the ubiquitous great snow while they were here. Being on the home leg of their journey to 35 countries and more than 70 ski areas, they rated Niseko's snow up with the best they have experienced. They also loved the quality of the food, the friendliness of the people and the chance to experience a really different culture as key elements of their Japan experience. From Niseko, the verticals move onto China, Tibet, through to the Middle East and back to Europe to complete the journey in April. For more information on the "Verticals" see: [www.verticalwayaround.com](http://www.verticalwayaround.com).



The Vertical Way Around: Ski 35 countries in 12 months

## Avalanche deaths highlight dangers

A couple of chilly reminders to always exercise caution in the mountains, even inside ski resorts. In two separate incidents at mainland resorts this month, two women died in an avalanche and seven snowboarders spent two nights lost before being found. Police called the snowboarders discovery alive 'a miracle'. Some of the snowboarders in their 30s and 40s had some food and portable stoves, although they did not have tents or other winter climbing gear. "We spent the nights eating candy in a cottage that was like an abandoned hut," Kyodo news agency quoted one of the survivors as saying. Hundreds of rescuers, including soldiers and police officers, had conducted a massive operation on the 1,346-metre mountain where the men had gone missing. The mountain was covered with two metres of snow.

## Snow monkeys beating the cold in Hokkaido

Watching the contemplative, human-like faces of snow monkeys soaking in an onsen is an experience unique to the snow-covered mountains of Japan, but most people will tell you that you can't see them in Hokkaido. While the snow monkey, or Japanese macaque, is not native to the northern island, a troupe of 70 inhabits an onsen in Hakodate on the southern tip of Hokkaido. Twenty were brought over about 30 years ago to make a snow monkey onsen attraction. The venture was almost a flop as the original members couldn't be persuaded to take the plunge. Park owners eventually enticed them in with food, and now they can't get them out. The most famous place to see them in the wild is on the mainland at Yamanouchi in Nagano, home of the 1998 Winter Olympics. If you can't make it down there, check them out in the botanical gardens of Yunokawa in Hakodate, Hokkaido's most famous onsen district, about three hours drive or train south of Niseko.

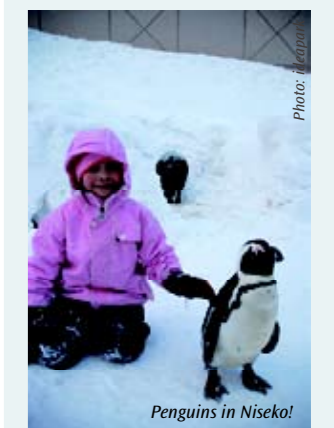


Seeking the warmth: rare Hokkaido snow monkeys



## Surfanic jacket giveaway

It seems that no matter what you buy these days it's iPod compatible. And Surfanic are right on their game with the Royal iPod Jacket with a soft control pad on the sleeve. So cool! These things aren't in shops yet but Powderlife has one to give away to readers. To win, simply email [ed@powderlife.co.jp](mailto:ed@powderlife.co.jp) and tell us why you deserve it. Haven't got an iPod? Don't worry, you'll feel you need to buy one soon to make use of all your iPod compatible gear!



Penguins in Niseko!

## Alpen Hotel's penguin parade

The Alpen Hotel has a pet penguin and a whole farm yard of exotic animals for kids to play with. If you've never seen an emu or a llama in the snow, head up to the Mate Kids Park behind the hotel. There's also a goat, ducks and a mini-pig. You can touch and feed the animals and get your photo taken with them. Entry is ¥500 and kids under three years of age are free. From 10.30am till 4pm daily and until 10.30pm on Saturday as a night zoo.



**IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH**

A four-year-old Shizuoka boy whose **heart and lungs stopped** after falling into a frozen reservoir in Aichi has made a full recovery despite the fact that his body temperature had dropped to 28C.

A new DVD that shows people how to **work out while performing everyday tasks** includes such exercises as 'sock removal repeats,' 'one-legged teeth cleaning' and 'exercise for those sick of Billy's Boot Camp.'



**THE WAGES OF SIN**

Police in Kawasaki believe a 53-year-old construction worker who assaulted 20 women **gave ¥10,000-¥100,000** to each of his victims as 'hush money'.

It was revealed that a 28-year-old transportation official with the Tokyo Metropolitan Government **used forged Pismo train credit cards to claim refunds** of over ¥6 million because he 'needed money to buy a model railroad and repay loans'.

Police in Saitama accused eight people—including a 70-year-old orthopedist—of **staging fake auto accidents** in an insurance scam that netted ¥20 million since 2004.

A **Tokyo court ordered McDonald's Japan to fork over ¥7.55 million** in overtime pay to a 46-year-old former manager at one of its Saitama locations.

**THE ANIMAL KINGDOM**

A court in San Francisco told the US military to take into account **the plight of the dugong** when it relocates its Futenma air base to the northeast coast of Okinawa.

It was announced that Japan's Coast Guard dispatched a **team of officers to 'protect' its whaling fleet** from environmental activists. Previous actions against the whalers have included the hurling of stink bombs.

It was reported that a miniature horse borrowed from a zoo in Nagoya for 'reproduction purposes' died in a fire at a zoo in Aichi.

**HERE AND THERE**

Kijima Amusement Park in Oita Prefecture has created a **2kg dessert called the Queen Fruits Parfait**, which is free to anyone who can finish it. The parfait, which costs ¥3,800, contains pancakes, cream puffs, three varieties of ice cream, and 'a healthy serving of seasonal and frozen fruits.'

A 40-year-old woman from Machida became the **first Japanese female to ski across the South Pole**.

A **note attached to a balloon** that was released by an elementary school student in Kawasaki in 1993 was found by a fisherman in the sea off Chiba. The student, now a 21-year-old undergraduate at Waseda University, said he was 'so happy someone read my letter.'

**REACHING OUT**

A 23-year-old Fukuoka man who lay down on a road and **pretended to be injured** was arrested for sexually assaulting a 30-year-old woman who came to his aid.

It was reported that a Japanese astronaut has been preparing for his trip to the International Space Station by throwing a boomerang because **'it remains unknown how boomerangs fly in space.'**

A Cabinet Office survey revealed that 45 percent of **Japanese feel 'uneasy' about using the internet**.

At the **Oh\*Love screaming contest** in Nakatsu, Oita Prefecture, a 24-year-old single woman who shouted "I want a boyfriend" was runner-up to a 70-year-old man who declared his love for his wife.

**STATS**

- 8,349,200**  
Number of foreign visitors to Japan in 2007, the first time the figure has topped 8 million, according to the Japan National Tourist Organization
- 290,000**  
Estimated number of visitors to the prefectural government building in Miyazaki since former comedian Hideo Higashikokubaru became governor in April
- 3**  
Number of visitors arrested for taking nude photos of themselves in front of the building last month
- 34 percent**  
Degrees on a new rating scale proposed by 'a confederation of confectionary wholesalers' to gauge the hardness of rice crackers
- 71**  
Age of Tomiyasu Ishikawa, believed to be the oldest person to scale the highest mountain on each of the seven continents, after he summited the 4,897m Vinson Massif in Antarctica

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](http://www.digitalworldtokyo.com))

**UK media to plug Niseko**

NISEKO could be set for a UK invasion next winter after a delegation of the nations' most influential ski journalists came to town.

The Niseko Promotion Board organised a dinner in Hirafu attended by the visiting media – from major newspapers including The Financial Times, The Telegraph and the Daily Mail – and representatives of Niseko's business community.

One local attendee Julian Bailey, a UK expat and sales and marketing manager for Hokkaido Tracks management, said the visitors were speaking very positively about the resort which would translate into good press for Niseko in the UK before the next season.

"The general feedback was that they felt fairly confident Niseko was at the beginning of a fairly big boom in terms of the international ski press and how it's seen internationally," Bailey said.

"Basically Niseko and Revelstoke in Canada are the two places in the world that everybody is very excited about.

"It's such an interesting place, it's full of so many stories and dimensions and Japan itself makes it a whole fascinating new destination, rather than just Canada or the States or Europe.

"They were very bullish in their views on Niseko and expect it is about to go through some very serious changes now."

The tour was organised by Inghams, one of the UK's major travel companies.

Inghams moved into Hokkaido last season and now have a full-time representative on the ground in Niseko.

Bailey said Inghams was a 'volume company' and would be working towards bringing 'very significant' numbers of people here.

"They'll be looking to charter flights to bring that sort of volume of people out here," he said.

"If they can't do that then it probably won't be worthwhile for them."

Until now it has been difficult to bring large numbers of UK people out here, but Bailey said if Inghams can make it cheap and easy enough it could happen, which would mean big things for Niseko.



**Moiwa Towers open**

THE Moaiwa Resort Towers were officially opened at a ceremony at the resort on February 1.

The two towers are 10 and 11 storeys high and contain 109 fully furnished apartments, 40% of which have been sold.

A spokesperson for developer Citimark Fox said a new lift would connect the towers with the existing ski lifts at the base of the mountain.

They also said the Moaiwa Development team was in discussion with Niseko United regarding the joining of mountain passes and there was a 'strong chance' it would become a part of the Niseko United, possibly in the next two to three years.

**Niseko ripe for business**

AS Niseko enters a new era of growth, a band of young entrepreneurs are moving in to stake their claim on the resort.

Over the past five years the core resort industries – accommodation, travel arrangements, ski schools and tours – have been hammered out among the early players to arrive.

But now it's become apparent that as the resort grows there's a need for a whole range of perimeter services and businesses.

It's almost a blank canvas where anyone with the ability and gumption to try to start a business in a foreign country can enter a lucrative market with few or no competitors.

Tess Stomski, managing director of Niseko Cuisine which started this season, had been working for an in-home/apartment catering service in a ski resort in

France where there were 40 businesses in the same field.

"We came over here for a holiday and realised there wasn't a single business doing it here," Stomski said.

"I'm still surprised there's no one else doing it, although I think give it another year and there will be more."

Michael Davenport, real estate consultant, translator, advisor and director of Niseko Consulting, said it's the beginning of a soft industry boom and the early players will have the upper hand.

"It's really a land of opportunity here at the moment - there's so much room for so many services," Davenport said.

"There's a long way to go but the sooner you get in and establish yourself the better chance you've got in the long term – you can be the first in a particular sector. So many businesses will sprout up in the next few years and through natural selection the good ones will come through and should enjoy some pretty successful times. It's all in the beginning stages at the moment so it's pretty exciting."

Niseko Photography founder Aaron Jamieson is another bright young spark who, with co-founder Mathew Hollingsworth, spotted an opportunity and went for it. "I reckon it's a perfect time for fun and interesting industries to start adding another element to Niseko," Jamieson said.

"Accommodation and skiing have been nailed. I think now the focus will move towards interesting activities, alternatives to skiing, and all the fun, interesting things that make a Niseko holiday more than a ski trip."



Niseko Cuisine's Anna Coussens and Tess Stomski

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# SNAP

by eriko mentzos

## faces on the street

Where elee in the world have you been skiing, and how does Niseko compare??



Hong Kong expats Julie, Lionel and Jinus have skied extensively in Europe and the US and reckon Niseko has 'the greatest snow' and great food!



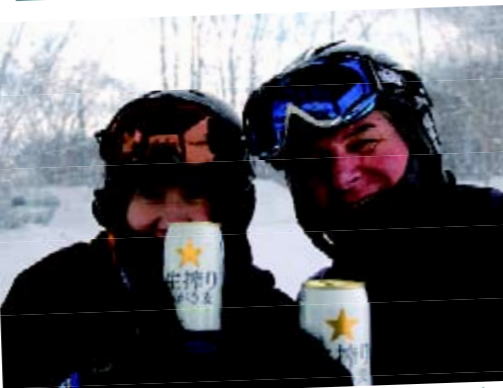
Mr Elephant and Takako's crew up from Tokyo: "The snow here is better than the mainland!"



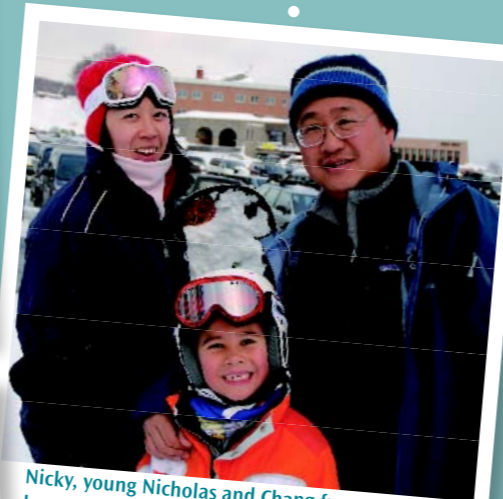
Fiona, Christopher and Adrian are across from HK and say the snow is better than Switzerland and China.



Hikaru and Sayaka are up from one of Japan's other skiing Meccas, Niigata, and love the size of Niseko's ski fields and (you guessed it) the soft, light snow!



Emi and Tom from Sapporo show their support for their city's beer brand. They've skied all over Hokkaido and reckon that like Muhammed Ali, Niseko is the greatest!



Nicky, young Nicholas and Chang from HK have been skiing in Europe and the US and reckon the powder is first class, as is the food.



Madoka and little Yugo-kun from Sapporo; and all from Osaka Yoko (back middle), Mitsuhiiko, right Ikuko. They haven't done much skiing outside Japan but love Niseko's light snow, the size of the mountain, the onsens and the international atmosphere.

## mountain style

Who was it that said anyone can look good in a pair of jeans? We don't know but they were right! Niseko's own Hara Takeshi and his Japanese original North Face Gore Tex denim pants are proof. Working at local retail store Niseko 343 we'd expect Hara-san to be well kitted out and he doesn't disappoint with his uber-cool two-tone orange North Face summit jacket, and top of the line red accessories; Giro helmet, Smith turbo-fan goggles, Hestra leather gloves and red boots. Nice one brother! He probably doesn't need any more gear but we're awarding him a Niseko fleece from Fusion anyway!



# FLASH

## niseko social scene

by jimmy edwards



Lovely ladies fresh from an 'L' themed fancy dress party Ivy (LA chick), Lucy (licorice all sort), Anna (Lara Croft) and Fiona (Liza Minelli). Across from Shanghai for the Chinese New Year.



Olivia and Louise from Melbourne were chuffed with Hirafu's nightlife.



Dave, Meg, Jen, Helen, Dan, Duncan and Anna from Singapore. According to their shirts, they have a black belt in keeping it real... aiiight!

### Red Bar Friday Night Party

OK, OK the secret's out... the Red Bar has the best Friday night party in town! The February 9 event saw punters party till dawn to DJ Koji Eguchi's block rocking beats.



Nisade's Jonathan and Hokkaido Tracks' Jay, who had a great time after he squeezed through the fridge door!



Powderlife's word whiz Simone (plus one) with husband Toby.



The reason Nisade's such a success... Caitlin, Ai, Lisa and Yuko.

### Kal's Gyu Bar B'day Bash

After squeezing through Gyu Plus's mini fridge door, Nisade's joint-president Kal Bragg got a warm surprise reception. Happy Birthday mate!



Corny girls... but so are these captions! Java Massage duo Sooz and Narelle just about ready to let their hair down.



"Sorry boss, I don't think I can do the report tomorrow!" Powder TV's powder angel Chika.



### Java Bar

With so many big name acts recently - Christopher Ernst, Kablam, and regulars including Koji Takahiro - the J-Bar has been the place to be seen this season!

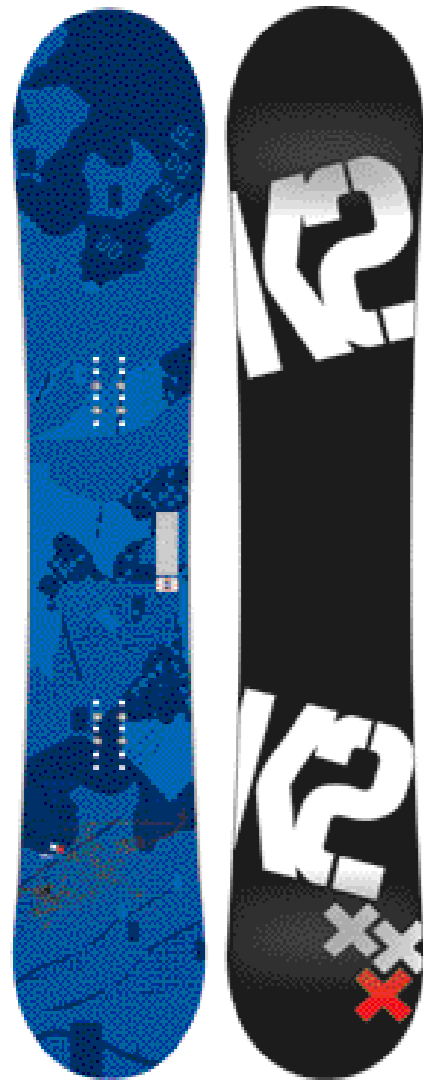


Sex in the City meets Niseko... the little village is really coming of age! Belinda, Liz, Lynda and Tamara from Sydney.



# Powder tools

by bevan colless

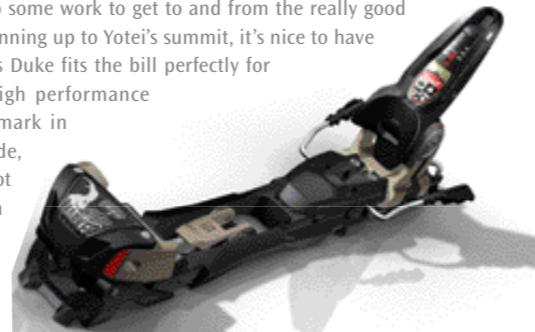


## K2 Eldorado

The Eldo is like a good wine, it just keeps getting better with age. Despite being in production for almost two decades, K2 keep refining and improving it to ensure this big mountain powder munching machine remains near the top of the pack. The dampening pods under the bindings eliminate 83% of vibrations at high speeds. Its new multi superlight core provides the highest level durability at the lightest weight, while its Hybritaper Tip technology reduces swing weight as you float over back country kickers and slice your way through Niseko's freshest produce. Available from Fusion ¥51,000.

## Marker Duke Alpine Ski Touring Bindings

Let's face it, these days in Niseko you have to do some work to get to and from the really good stuff. So when you're trekking back to base or skinning up to Yotei's summit, it's nice to have a binding that lets your heel come up. "Marker's Duke fits the bill perfectly for Niseko skiing", says local pro Tom Costa. A high performance freeride binding on the way down and a telemark in transit. To switch from touring mode to ride mode, you must take the ski off, pop up the underfoot lever, then put the ski back on. This system guarantees the binding won't inadvertently open in ski mode; a nice thing to know when you're 50 feet in the air and coming down fast. ¥53,000, but sold out everywhere.



## Surfanic Royal iPod Jacket

The iPod has penetrated almost every aspect of life and up and coming cool winter sports brand Surfanic figures if you can't beat 'em, join 'em! They produced this top quality Royal jacket - just plug in your iPod and use the controls on the sleeve to listen to your favourite tunes. They pack in all the high tech features at a fraction of the price of other brands. You get fully sealed seams, super soft chin, heat release lining strip, goggle pocket, ski pass holder, mobile caddy holder so you can use your mobile without removing your gloves and most importantly for Niseko, a zip-out powder skirt with snow seals that snap to pants. Available for £125 from www.Boardwise.com and from Niseko retail stores next season. To win one now email ed@powderlife.co.jp and tell us why you deserve it.

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# shoukai < introducing >

by Eriko Mentzos



## LIFTIE Uraaaaa

**name** Masayoshi Ura  
**age** 35  
**resort** Higashiyama  
**hometown** Kutchan  
**time in niseko** Since I was born!  
**do you like powder?** I love it!  
**ski/board?** Ski & board  
**when did you start?** Skiing 30 years ago, and boarding five years ago  
**why did you move to niseko?** I got a job at the Higashiyama Prince Hotel  
**what languages do you speak?** Japanese (Hokkaido dialect)  
**trips overseas?** None  
**where do you want to go next?** A warm place... or Canada  
**favourite... colour** Blue  
**brand** UNIQLO  
**food** Chinese food  
**restaurant** Yakitori Restaurant Kazu  
**bar** Alter's Bar & Aoitori-onsen  
**onsen** Makkari Onsen  
**course** Zangi Course  
**where else in the world do you want to go skiing?** Whistler  
**how long will you be in niseko for?** Until I retire  
**what does niseko need?** A nightclub  
**niseko's secret?** There are many species of delicious wild bamboo in the mountains here.  
**what's a must have item for niseko?** Anti-sting ointment  
**what's your life philosophy?** Safety first!!



## TICKET AND CAFE Lynda

**name** Tamaki Fukita  
**age** 33  
**resort** Moiwa  
**hometown** Sapporo  
**time in niseko** 10 years  
**do you like powder?** I love it too much!  
**ski/board?** Mainly snowboard  
**when did you start?** 16 years ago  
**why did you move to niseko?** The powder snow called me!  
**what languages do you speak?** Just Japanese  
**trips overseas?** Thailand, Singapore, US, Canada, Cambodia, Italy  
**where next?** Nepal!!  
**favourite... colour** Green and brown  
**brand** Tokyo Hemp Connection, Little Eagle  
**food** Avocado and shrimp  
**restaurant** Mina Mina  
**bar** JAM Cafe Bar  
**onsen** Niimi Onsen  
**course** Blueberry  
**where else do you want to go skiing?** Kurodake  
**how long will you be in niseko for?** So far, I'm thinking of settling down here  
**what does niseko need?** Japanese culture  
**Niseko's secret?** Well, that's a secret :-)  
**What's a must have item for Niseko?** Mama-san gumboots  
**What's your life philosophy?** 'ALOHA!'



## SKI PATROL Yasu

**name** Yasutomo Matsuura  
**age** 29  
**resort** Annupuri  
**hometown** Chiba  
**time in niseko** 8 years  
**do you like powder?** Yes!  
**ski/board?** Ski  
**when did you start?** 14 years ago  
**why did you move to niseko?** I love this resort and I wanted to work here  
**what languages do you speak?** Just Japanese  
**trips overseas?** No  
**where do you want to go next?** Nowhere, I love Hokkaido!  
**favourite... colour** Blue  
**brand** Patagonia  
**food** Chinese food  
**restaurant** Koshu Yatai  
**bar** Don't drink  
**onsen** Yusenkaku  
**course** Dynamic Course  
**where else in the world do you want to go skiing?** Asahidake  
**how long will you be in niseko for?** No plan to move yet!  
**what does niseko need?** More and more tourists!  
**niseko secret?** Sometimes electricity goes through the ropes on the ski fields  
**what's a must have item for niseko?** Rubber boots  
**what's your life philosophy?** Get along well with everyone!

# hanazono's parkitect

by kristian lund

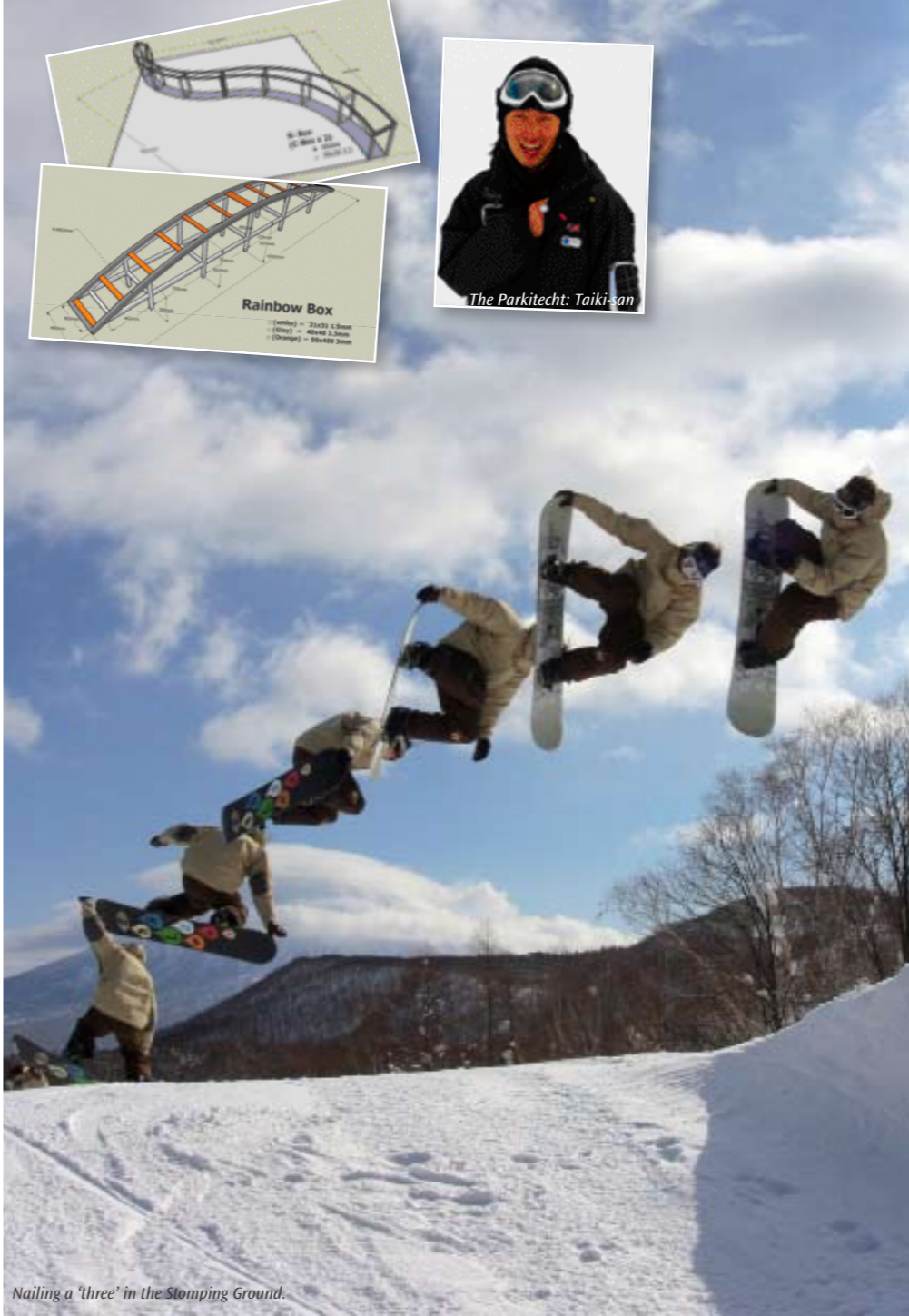
What do you get when give a park rat architecture software and some creative license? A parkitect, and one of the best terrain parks in Hokkaido.

When Hanazono's head park designer Taiki-san came to Niseko four years ago, the park was barely a few kickers and rails. Now riders can toy with eight features on the one line. The advanced line kicks off with one of the biggest and best half pipes in the region, leading into the Stomping Ground and two running 6m and 7m table-tops. There's also an 8m flat rail into a steep landing, a 6m step up jump, and after a bit more snow the park's centrepiece - a 12m table.

"It's a good flow for the rider," says Taiki-san. "It's getting better and it's started to get famous but it's still not enough - I still have bigger ideas."

That's pretty exciting to hear considering Hanazono is serious about continuing to improve the park. They've just invested in a top of the range PistenBully park cat and hired a top shaper from Australia - where there isn't much powder so a good park is an essential feature of their resorts.

One of the major new features of the park this year is an old bus which not only looks extremely cool but has created a buzz among park riders. The bus itself has an interesting story. It was driven from the mainland by an old guy who parked it at Hanazono a few years ago and lived in it while he built a house. The house is now finished and with no use for the tiring old bus, he donated it the the resort.



Nailing a 'three' in the Stomping Ground.

That's one way to ride a bus



The Parkitect: Taiki-san



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# APRES-SKI ONSEN

## Bath-house bliss

by derek chamberlain

Soaking naked in the steaming hot waters of a public onsen is a Japanese institution. Traditionally used simply as public bathing places, today they play a central role in directing Japanese domestic tourism - Japanese will tailor a holiday specifically to enjoy an onsen in a new location. From the time they are children, most Japanese regularly go to onsens with their families, and adults will go with friends and even workmates. In fact, the experience is said to bring people closer together and break down barriers, even social inhibition. For many foreigners, walking completely naked and unguarded through a public place for the first time, even if everyone is of the same gender, is generally a strange and possibly daunting experience. But once submerged to the neck, gazing across a dreamlike snow-covered landscape through a vale of steam, even the most self-conscious gaijin can forget everything and enjoy a simple pleasure the Japanese have been engaging in for centuries. The total mind and body relaxation experienced in the hours after leaving an onsen is perhaps the only thing that can beat it. Niseko is blessed with a rich bounty of natural hot spring water which is as almost as much of a drawcard for the domestic tourist market as the snow.



Higashiyama Prince Hotel's onsen

photo:niseko photography

### a short history of onsen

Many onsens are as shrouded in myth and legend as they are in steam. One of my favourite onsen legends is the tale about the creation of the Oigami Onsen. They say that way back in the dawn of time the Snake God of the Akagi Mountain Shrine fought with the Centipede God of the Nantai Mountain Shrine. The battle was long and hard and the first casualty was the God of Akagi who was wounded and forced to retreat. Having found a place to rest he dropped his bow and where it landed, a hot spring erupted. He bathed in the spring which healed his wounds and allowed him to return to the battle and defeat the Nantai Mountain God. The Oigami area gets its name from this mythical battle - Oigami literally means 'the chased God'.

Onsens are a recognized and treasured cultural tradition in Japan and have been around for almost 1500 years. The first onsens were what are now called rotenburo, or outside baths. They were naturally occurring rock-pools filled with water heated and infused with minerals after passing through, or near, the earth's inner core or volcanic magma. There are believed to be as many as 14,000 hot springs in more than 150 locations around Japan.

The original onsens, being natural pools, were all mixed gender bathing and stayed that way even after buildings were built around them until the mid 1800s and the Meiji Restoration period. There are still some mixed gender onsens operating in rural areas around Japan today which provide a culturally authentic experience. Even in onsens with separate baths, children under the age of eight are allowed to accompany either parent into the onsen. Some places have baths separated only by a screen so that children can pass back and forth.

Though hot springs have been used since biblical times as places of healing, it has only been in the last thirty years that scientific evidence has been found

to support what everyone else already knew. Each hot spring, with its different temperature and different mineral content, is helpful in dealing with different disorders or ailments. Just about any hot bath will be good for blood circulation and long-term rehabilitation, but hot springs are also good for neurological disorders, joint inflammation, menopausal discomforts, chronic skin diseases, diabetes, digestive disorders, high blood pressure, and clearing out arteries. It is also a great way to relieve stress. The body and mind relax, people come together without all the imposed formalities of the social structure and, surrounded as most hot springs are with the serenity of nature, they ease the spirit and mind. It has been said that the only thing a hot spring can't heal is a broken heart.

In 1949 a Hot Spring Bill was passed which set down the legal definition of an Onsen, requiring it to be naturally occurring spring with a minimum temperature and mineral content. There are 14 recognized types of mineral waters, and four classifications of hot spring based on water temperature.

Hot springs have been in use around the world for thousands of years, they are mentioned in the Bible and by ancient Greek philosophers as places of healing. The earliest mention of onsens in Japan is in the Kojiki, written c. 680, which mentions a legendary prince, Yamatotakeru, who lived in the 4th century and became the 11th Emperor of Japan who, the story goes, visited Sabakoyu Onsen to be cured of an illness after his father tried to have him killed. In the Manyoshu written c. 759 there is a legend about Prince Shotoku (574-622) who visited the Dogo Onsen.

But even with all we know of the ancient world the true history of the hot spring will never be known. We will never know who the first person was to take the plunge, nor where the first 'bath' was established. Given the popularity of hot springs and spas today, and the tourist dollars invested in them, it's hard to make any definitive claims, but, in Japan, they've been enjoying the luxury of the onsen for 15 centuries, and that's a tradition not to be sneezed at.

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photo: niseko photography

Hirafu's Popolo Onsen

## an onsen virgin's first time

I don't know a single foreigner who wasn't at least a little apprehensive the first time they were invited to an onsen, and I'm no exception. I don't have the figure to cause a stir on Maslin Beach but I certainly seem to attract a lot of attention in Japan. That was the root cause of my apprehension - if I garnered so many stares just walking down the street fully clothed, what was it going to be like when I was naked?

Have you ever had that feeling that someone's watching you but when you look around you don't see anyone? That was the feeling I had as I stripped off in the changing room. The only instructions I'd been given were 'Don't soap up in the bath... oh yeah, and use the small towel... you know...' with a vague hand gesture around the mid section. Not a lot to go on. This was my first time at an onsen, and I was with my new father-in-law who still hadn't made up his mind about me yet. One faux pas and I could sour our relationship from the get go. There was, to my mind at least, a lot riding on me doing things right.

My father-in-law had ducked into the toilet and I'd hurried on ahead, hoping to be changed and in the bath before he came back, so I knew it wasn't him staring at me. I whipped off my boxers, grabbed the small towel, and, instinctively, held it where it would hide the most vulnerable portion of my anatomy. I approached the glass doors leading into the bathing room with trepidation, expecting dozens of pairs of eyes to fasten on me the moment I opened it, and steeled my face in an expression I hoped showed only disdainful disconcert.

I opened the door and stepped into a steam-filled half-light. At first I couldn't see anything then a gust from the still open door cleared away the haze and revealed the rock-inlaid concrete floor and swimming-pool sized bath beyond, but no people. I closed the door and edged my way towards the bath.

There were tiled pillars rising out of the water up into the dim recesses of the ceiling and from behind one of these there appeared a bent-shouldered old man. We both stopped and stared at each other for a long moment, then he gathered his towel about his skinny hips and made a dignified dash for the change-room. I was left with the whole bath to myself.

Since then I've been to dozens of onsens and had a wide range of experiences. I've become a little more comfortable stripping off in the change-room while little boys stare at me goggle-eyed, something only little boys seeing their first gaijin seem to do. I learned to ignore everyone when I walked in, affording them the same courtesy they afforded me; learned to rinse off properly before getting into the bath and to use the scrub cloth whilst half-squatting on the little plastic stools to wash myself after. But, most importantly, I learned the joy of stretching out in hot water, letting it ease the ache in tired muscles while I tried to count the stars, or enjoyed the feel of the snow melting on my face. And then, a couple of years ago I learned of the almost religious experience to be had from getting out of a hot bath to roll in virgin snow until you're shivering then jumping back into the bath. Actually, I think it might be time for another onsen now.

Derek is a writer who pays for his predilection by teaching English. He has lived in Sapporo with his wife and 2 children for 13 years.

## niseko's top 10 onsens

Hotel Kanronomori's Paul Haggart is passionate about ensuring Niseko visitors make the most of their Hokkaido holiday by introducing them to the best and often least-known cultural experiences in the area. He also knows a good onsen when he sees one. We asked Paul to list his Niseko onsen top 10, in no particular order.

### Hotel Ikoinomura Onsen

A must-try onsen. Fantastic bathing areas and great outdoor baths with a very natural feel. Located at the Annupuri Ski Field near the Northern Resort Annupuri Hotel and close to the Nook where the Free Passport buses stop. Free internet on the first floor of the Hotel. I recommend combining an onsen with lunch or dinner at the Mokumoku Tei Yakiniku BBQ House, or try some of the amazing cafes and restaurants in the Annupuri area.

### Niseko Grand Hotel

The only onsen in the whole of Niseko that has a large outdoor unisex bathing area. Really natural and some of the area's best sulphuric hot spring water. Great for your skin and good for sore joints. Smocks available for those who aren't sure about the unisex bathing experience. Towels in the bath are also OK. Milky white onsen water.

### Kira no Yu

Niseko Town's own onsen. Very modern setting, this is one of the region's only onsens with a private room that you can hire out. Great for those who want an onsen but aren't sure about the whole onsen experience. Possibly the best teriyaki chicken donburi in the district available in the café at the railway station across the road.

### Hotel Kanronomori

Located near the base of the Moiwa ski field with easy access, try the Mori no Tenkuu Buro - an outdoor bath located on a second floor platform. Sulphuric water, fantastic for the skin and joints after winter sports or summer hiking. Try a Buddhist Ashifumi massage before an onsen. A magical experience!

### Alpen Hotel

Great rooftop onsen really close to the main Hirafu skiing area. Ski in for a really healing experience. The water here has a high nitrium content and is really good for the skin. Ski in and ski out, fantastic!

### Hirafu Tei Prince Hotel

Located on the main road up to the ski area, this is one of the area's more well-known onsens. The Hotel's spring water is rich in nitrium.

### Yugokoro Tei

On the spa bus circuit, this is one of the region's most popular onsens. Amazing outdoor bath area with a pergola over the top of the outdoor onsen. This onsen really puts you in touch with nature all year round. Closing at 11pm, it's also one of the latest closing onsens in the area. Great after Annupuri night skiing.

### Higashiyama Prince Hotel

Visit the main tower complex and enjoy an onsen while overlooking the golf course. The outdoor onsen overflows into a large pond that is home to real carp. The water seems to go on endlessly. This is a really special experience - even though there are no fish in the bath they are really close. During the day head on down to Takahashi Farm (Milk Kobo) for the world's best Choux Cream.

### Koikawa Onsen

This onsen is off the map for most visitors to the area. It was actually one of the main bathhouses when the area had a bustling Geisha district and has an amazing outdoor bath looking out over a waterfall. The building is really traditional giving a real sense of the history of the area. Sulphuric spring water is great for the skin - the Geisha obviously had the right idea.

### Goshiki Onsen

Located around the back of Mt Annupuri, Goshiki is frequented by a few back country skiers who ski in for an onsen. The area is magical in summer with lots of geothermal walks and wildlife to enjoy. This area sports some of the best onsen water in the district, leaving your skin feeling silky soft and smooth afterwards.

### Yuki Chichibu

Located deep in the national park behind Mt Annupuri is the Yuki Chichibu Onsen. The water is a different type of water altogether and leaves your skin feeling soft and revitalized. This would have to be one of the most beautifying onsens in the district - great for those who are interested in keeping up appearances. Access is not easy - charter a taxi or go on an onsen tour.



photo: niseko photography

photo: niseko photography



Enjoying the view... Higashiyama Prince Hotel's onsen spilling into

photo: niseko photography

## ONSEN USE AND ETIQUETTE

1. Enter the changing room through the appropriate door or curtain: 女 on a red curtain for women, 男 for men
2. Remove your clothes and put them in the basket or locker provided.
3. Take only the small wash towel and keeping your mid-section covered with the wash towel, enter the bathing area closing any door behind you.
4. Take a seat at the showers and wash your body thoroughly.
5. Rinse off and it's time to relax in the onsen.
6. After your bath you should wash yourself again under the showers.

There is an established code of etiquette for Onsen. Observing the following guidelines will result in a pleasurable experience for everyone:

- Do not wear a bathing suit unless the rules of the onsen require it.
- Never use soap or shampoo in the bath itself. Washing is done outside at the showers.
- Wash with soap or at least rinse well before entering the bath for the first time.
- Avoid making loud noises or rowdy behaviour. Onsen are places for quiet relaxation or conversation.
- I Avoid staring. Respect others privacy and modesty.



# ...A THOUSAND WORDS

powderlife  
NISEKO ニセコ



"into Yotei's Caldera" unidentified japanese skier

photographer: jemie millon



mick

photographer: randy weiman - hotshots



Unidentified local

photographer: aaron jamieson - niseko photography



marcus

photographer: randy weiman - hotshots



shaun

photographer: dave paull - hotshots



steve

photographer: dave paull - hotshots



josh

photographer: glen claydon



steve mayer

photographer: jemie millon





## Moiwa Wonderland

Imagine a skiing wonderland – only recently discovered by tourists with an abundance of fresh powder snow as far as the eye can see. Imagine Niseko Moiwā.

The Moiwā region has long been the best kept secret of Japanese locals. Niseko Moiwā is one of three smaller, more exclusive resorts located within 15 minutes drive from Hirafu.

Over the past few years, there has been a large amount of real estate investment in Niseko – mostly foreign led. As property prices rise in Hirafu, investors are discovering the regions key underdeveloped areas outside Hirafu – Moiwā and neighbouring Annupuri Resort in particular have been identified as the next areas for future expansion and growth.

While you may dream of owning a piece of this skiing perfection, you can now make it a reality. Niseko Moiwā is the first master-planned resort in Niseko, and represents an unmatched skiing and snowboarding experience in Japan. Connected to the Niseko United resorts by regular shuttle bus during winter and only 3 minutes from Annupuri resort, Moiwā offers uncrowded powder runs, and local Japanese culture and cuisine.

Stage One, the Niseko Moiwā Resort Towers, encompasses 100 strata-titled holiday apartments across two 11-storey towers, with uninterrupted forest and mountain views.

Niseko Moiwā has an exclusive future ski-in ski-out access to fresh powder runs and provides an authentic Japanese experience with a Western flavour.

This stage represents your only chance to secure a ground-level investment in the first master-planned resort in Niseko, and realise the growth potential of this burgeoning region.

The apartments feature large picture windows to maximise stunning mountain views, Western finishes and appliances, Japanese-style bath suites, traditional tatami rooms and lockable storage for owners and visitors. There is a rooftop restaurant and conference room with panoramic alpine views – one of the largest restaurants in Niseko, a Wellness Centre including indoor/outdoor hot mineral Onsen, and ground floor lobby bar. Niseko is designated a 'Special Heavy Snowfall Region' with average of 16 metres of powder snow each year.

- Uncrowded slopes promising an unrivalled ski experience
- Niseko's best powder
- One pair lift, one quad lift plus new ski in - ski out pair lift
- Over 15 ski runs
- Three-minute shuttle bus to Annupuri resort, with access to over 57 runs and 48km of groomed trails.

Niseko receives 6 metres more snow than Whistler in Canada.

The resort represents excellent value compared to international ski resorts like Vail and Aspen (new apartments selling from approximately US\$16,890/sqm – Niseko Moiwā is an emerging market and pricing for the Resort apartments start from approximately US\$4,100/sqm).

The fully refurbished and fully furnished Studio, 1, 2 and 3-bedrooms apartments across the two 11-storey towers are ready now for settlement and occupancy.

For those concerned about foreign ownership – 100% foreign ownership is allowed in Japan.

[www.nisekomoiwa.com](http://www.nisekomoiwa.com)

*Ski in - ski out access to the world's best powder*

*Four season income potential*

*Niseko's first master planned community*



Studio, 1 bedroom, 1 bedroom + tatami and 2 bedroom apartments with stunning mountain views and ski in - ski out access.

- Solid investment returns from year 1
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  - Expert onsite building operator to manage your investment!
- Ready for occupation now – buy now and ski this season!**

**Don't delay! To arrange an inspection email or call today.**  
 Sales office: Ground Floor, Mountside Palace Apartments (near Seicomart)  
 Email: [sales.niseko@nisekomoiwa.com](mailto:sales.niseko@nisekomoiwa.com)  
 or call +81 136 21 7722 or 0136 21 7722  
\*Conditions apply. Future ski in - ski out access from 08/09 season. Subject to change.



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School's out! Inside The Japanese Kitchen

## Japanese Kitchen bouken

by vanessa gibson

**A**re you with a group and finding it difficult to get into a restaurant? Or just want to try a taste of food presented in a traditional Japanese way? Why not head out of Hirafu to the junction of 343 and route 5 and try Japanese Kitchen, otherwise known as Bouken.

The Japanese Kitchen is housed in an old school that closed around 20 years ago and now operates as a family or group accommodation. The Japanese Kitchen's main attraction to international visitors is their themed restaurant that is open for a classical Japanese set lunch or dinner.

It is essential to book when having the dinner course, as you are required to decide on your set menu one day in advance. You can choose between whether you will have the chef's course, a selection of the freshest foods from market - ¥4,500, meat/sausage - ¥2,800, fish - ¥3,500, or vegetarian/hotpot ¥3,500).

Our group of 8 were picked up from our accommodation by the friendly owner Anan-san who helped us onto a large bus, which we piled into with the boys jostling for the back seat, setting the tone for the fun, school days theme of the evening. We were dropped off at the front steps of the school and greeted by Tomato, a docile and friendly 6 year old St Bernard dog whose likeness forms part of the Bouken logo and is somewhat synonymous with the restaurant. The walls of the entrance were still covered with the children's paintings, mostly of local birds, and the three pointed school motto "We love birds; we learn about birds; we protect birds!" written in beautiful kanji. My partner cheekily remarked he now understood why they didn't have a chicken course.

On wandering down the hallway looking for the restaurant we passed a hallway of classrooms, which are now guest rooms. We felt a little lost, bringing back some memories of our first day at school until we finally came to a door clearly labelled 'restaurant'. The room, also previously a classroom, had a peaceful ambience about it with a fire burning at the back wall.

Our places were perfectly set and waiting for us, on traditional Japanese wash paper and chopsticks wrapped with matching paper and a leaf. My chef's selection course was an array of interesting Japanese vegetable dishes presented on traditional Japanese plates. The set courses varied amongst our group but were always very tasty, traditional and interesting. The pick of the dishes were the grilled meats, an enticing selection of sashimi from the fish course, some fresh and extra crisp tempura, an individual hotpot from the vegetarian course that cooks to perfection in front of your eyes, and a traditional Japanese sweet cake and cream dessert. A night at the Japanese Kitchen will provide exactly what the name suggests: A sample of traditional Japanese food presented and cooked the way it is meant to be.

The evening set course ranges from ¥2,800 to ¥4,500. Advance bookings are essential. Open from 6.00pm-10.00pm. Tel 0136-22-3759. Remember to wear a light jacket to keep on through dinner as it is a little cold inside the restaurant.



### Curry Goya

Hokkaido is famous for its delicious soup curries and Niseko is lucky to have a fabulous soup curry restaurant of its own: Curry Goya. Located just past Izumikyō 2 on route 343, Curry Goya serves piping hot curry soup in chicken, pork, mushroom and potato croquette varieties. Each dish contains a selection of fresh vegetables and a small egg. Open only for lunches this quaint restaurant is a favourite with locals. The room has a great aroma, created by bunches of dried spices hanging throughout the restaurant. You can choose between 13 different degrees of spiciness, the hottest contains so many spices that they charge a little more!

Open 11.30am-4.00pm daily.  
Tel 23-3688.



### Niseko Genghis Khan

Genghis Khan dining is another Hokkaido specialty that involves grilling strips of lamb on a small coal-heated grill at your own table. Vegetable plates are also served to ensure the meal is not completely carnivorous. Raw free-range chicken strips from Shiretoko are available to add to the variety. Niseko Genghis Khan has been in the same location for many years, up from the traffic lights on the left, set back from the road. A small, lively, smoky haven, Niseko Genghis Khan is very popular with Japanese who often come straight in after night skiing, but international tourists are starting to catch on. Bookings strongly recommended.

11.00am-11.00pm.  
Tel 22-2138

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Imported by the award-winning Japanese, simply superb, infused with a hint of citrus, best in the business. The Dragon is a very light, fresh, refreshing wine. Made from the finest grapes in the world, it is a true gem. It is perfect for the hot weather and is a great choice for the summer months. Enjoy it with your favourite food. Enter it in the DRAGON.

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http://www.grand-hirafu.jp

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Restaurant Shikari  
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\* including : tax, breakfast, lift ticket.



by Eriko Mentzos



Kenji Kuramochi

**PowCom Cafe, Moiya**

If you're going to go for lunch after a hard morning's ski, you want to go where the chef knows what you need to eat. Mad keen snowboarder and PowCom café manager Kenji Kuramochi does – an extra big serving of hearty food, topped off with a beer. If you get the ¥1000 lunch pack, Kenji will throw in a beer for ¥100!! It's almost as if he wants you to have it because he knows how good it is to have a beer after a big ski/ride!! The menu is pretty basic but all tried, tested and proven to taste absolutely fantastic on an empty stomach – Genghis Khan lamb on rice, teriyaki chicken on rice, and an old Japanese ski hill favourite: omelette and curry rice. Of course, the servings are extra big because he knows how hungry you are! Originally from Tokyo, Kenji came to Niseko with a plan to stay three years. The three years is up and now he doesn't want to leave. He hopes to open a backpacker-style accommodation with a cafe attached, also in Moiya. These days he snowboards every-day until 11.15am... before opening for business at 11.30am! On the right just before you reach the carpark at Moiya.

**FanFun Leather Making**

Want a souvenir that will bring back memories of your time in Niseko every time you look at it? Tomoko Nakamura wants everybody to experience making something out of what she thinks is the most wonderful material – leather. She says if people make something out of it here, every time they feel and smell the leather it will remind them of Niseko. Tomoko loves everything about leather: the smell, the feel, its character – the way it can be brought back to life with a bit of a polish. Drop into the shop, on the main road out towards Annupuri, route 343, just past the Higashiyama turnoff on the left. She sells a lot of things she's made or you can spend half an hour or half a day making things yourself – keychains, bracelets, belts, or the Japanese favourite, a trinket to hang off your keitai (mobile phone). Tomoko's friendly little business is flat strap in summer, but she'd love to meet more foreigners here during winter!



Tomoko Nakamura

**Emi Pottery**

Although Emi Hirano is from Kyoto, Japan's cultural capital, she spends every winter in Niseko. Her family has a successful pottery business near one of Kyoto's most famous temples, Kiyomizudera. But after coming to Niseko to ski 15 years ago she was hooked. She made friends and now it's her second home. Visitors to Niseko are lucky Emi has brought her talents with her. She makes wonderful pieces of unique Japanese pottery - jewellery, plates, mugs, green tea cups, dolls, ornaments and much more - which she sells at various shops throughout the village including Cocoroya, B's Cafe, Omoshiro Box, Nac and the Kogen Hotel. But she actually prefers to meet people face to face and show them her wares. Her greatest joy comes from seeing people's reactions to her work. She often sets up exhibitions at different venues across town but is also happy to bring her work to people's apartment and show it to them there. If you want a truly beautiful and unique gift, keep an eye out for Emi's exhibition flyers or give her a call and arrange an appointment on 080 1428 2896.



Emi Hirano

**Izakaya Kakashi**

The food at Kakashi is amazing, but perhaps what makes this charming little izakaya even better is the warmth of its owners. Kenichi and Gyoko Ogi make every visitor feel like they're dining in a five star restaurant, which is somewhat contrary to what izakaya are all about. Izakaya are probably best described as casual Japanese-dining restaurants. Seating is informal, beer and sake is served and consumed liberally, and a constant stream of small Japanese dishes are brought to the table. At Kakashi, almost every dish seems to be their speciality, although we have to make special recommendation of their hokke! Kakashi opened 19 years ago and Kenichi says the main reason was because there was hardly anywhere to eat out in Hirafu. At the time there were only two other restaurants – Bang Bang and Fuji Sushi. While it's almost impossible to count how many restaurants there are in Hirafu now, Kakashi is still one of the best.



Gyoko and Kenichi Ogi

night life

by Kaori-chan

イベント情報をお寄せください!  
Tell us about your event!  
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**Saturday February 16**

**Java Bar DJ maco and MJ ELEMENT**  
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 February 17**

**Java Bar Sunday Sessions**  
Christian plays his mellow tunes.  
Apres Bar :Jan Ken Pon challenge 7pm  
Challenge the barman in papers scissors, rock for your drink

**Monday February 18**

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

**Tuesday February 19**

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

**Wednesday February 20**

**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 February 21**

**Java Bar Live Music: Micko & Christian**  
Two great local musos playing all your

favourite tunes in a relaxed environ.

**Friday February 22**

**Apres Bar 7pm to 9pm.**  
¥2,000 2 hours all you can drink.  
**Red Bar Dance Party from 10pm**  
¥1,000 including free drink.

**Java Bar Mystery music mix - DJ maco**

**Saturday February 23**

**Java Bar DJ maco and DJ Massah**

**Sunday February 24**

**Java Bar Sunday Sessions with Christian**

**Monday February 25**

**Java Bar Karaoke and Toss the Boss.**

**Tuesday February 26**

**BBQ night at Blo Blo**  
Niseko Darts Semifinals @ Wild Bills

**Wednesday February 27**

**POWDERLIFE KUTCHAN PUB CRAWL**  
¥1,000 leaves 7.30. Seicomart bus stop

**Thursday February 28**

**Java Bar: Live Music: Micko & Christian**

**Friday February 29**

**Apres Bar 7pm to 9pm.**  
¥2,000 2 hours all you can drink.  
**Java Bar Mystery music mix - DJ maco**

**Saturday March 1**

**Red Bar Dance Party from 10pm**  
¥1,000 including free drink, DJ maco



**Christopher Ernst plays the Java Bar**

Fresh from his gig at Australia's Big Day Out festival, up-and-coming blues and roots artist Christopher Ernst played an exclusive gig at the Java Bar on Sunday, February 10. Many punters were turned away but the lucky few who got in were treated to all his hits. Ernst has received extensive airplay on Triple J radio in Australia and he showed lucky guests why. He played a set of his original tunes and that had the crowd rocking (and singing) along. After dipping his toe into the Niseko's powder he plans to return next season with a series of gigs. Judging from the reaction of the crowd he will be welcomed back next season with open arms.

100% fresh local ingredients  
come alone or bring your friends everyone can enjoy their time here!  
**Happy Hour 5pm~7pm**  
All drinks ¥100 off  
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Check daily events in Niseko Powderlife Gig Guide  
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Ads below correspond to the map in order from 1-6 from top to bottom.

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Top local Japanese chef, seasonal Hokkaido ingredients, Western flavour... the ultimate fusion. Pick up service available if you book the dinner course (from ¥3000).

**FUJIE Confectionary Store**

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Since its establishment in 2006, the smiling LOAF LOUNGE has quickly established itself as a local favorite. Come and enjoy the good food, and a wide selection of cocktails. The lounge opens at 4:30. Big stage with the right lighting attracts around the bar. Please drink the drinks for drinks of musical events, and don't forget to try out some of the games. A hotspot that should not miss. <http://loaf.lounge.net/loaf.html>

**Be. Cafe**

Hours: 12:00-22:00  
closed on Mondays  
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- Spiced salmon tomato stew ¥1,000
- Karumaru ¥1,000
- Makkari Chicken ¥1,000
- Curry ¥1,000
- Curry ¥1,000
- Curry ¥1,000

\*No Room Available

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Bring a friend or bring a party. Spend a night in Kutchan at Be. 1F of Oowaki Bldg

\*No Cover Charge



Fun for everyone at Kutchan's winter festival

## finding yukitopia in kutchan

by magnus alexander

The Japanese love a good festival. Festivals the length and breadth of the country mark all sorts of occasions, most often to celebrate the seasons. Perhaps the biggest celebrations happen across the country at the start of spring when the cherry blossoms come into season. But in snowbound Kutchan, the biggest festival of the year celebrates the depth of winter - Yukitopia.

One weekend in mid February each year the town grinds to a halt to enjoy the festivities - stalls, games, rides, slides, competitions and demonstrations. The highlight is the skiing across a pool of icy water competition. For a great cultural experience and a whole lot of fun, get the family down to K-town for Yukitopia!

### Saturday, February 16

All day from 10.30 Stalls, giant snowman, kids slides, igloo, snow figures

11.45am - 12.45pm Parent-child bobsled race

1 - 2pm Rice-cake making.

1 - 5pm Snow camping demo

2 - 3.40pm Ningen Bamba race - five people drag a person and weight 70m

4 - 5pm Bakushou (burst into laughter) Skiing Over Water Competition

4.30 - 6pm Nabe (Japanese hotpot) making competition. ¥50,000 prize

5.30 - 6.15pm Ningen Bamba final

### Sunday, February 17

All day from 10.30am Stalls, kids slides, etc - same as Saturday.

10am - 2pm Snowmobile trial ride

10 - 10.30am / 1.30 - 2pm Kamen Rider Kiba (kids' hero) stage show

12.15 - 1pm Treasure hunt in the snow

1 - 1.15pm Rice cake throwing ceremony

2 - 3.30pm Gekisou!! Skiing Over Water Final. Make it to the other side or get a high score for your performance to win the money or the prize. Last year just four skiers and one snowboarder made it across... Good luck!

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.



Photos: ideapark

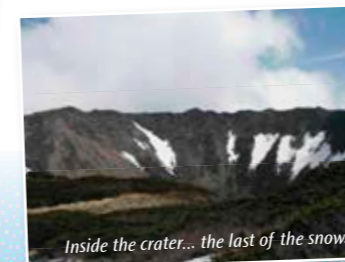
## want to conquer yotei-san?

do it in summer... or spring, or autumn  
By caitlin mitchell

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'.



Caitlin (left) and crew enroute.



Inside the crater... the last of the snow.



Enjoying the reward.

Photo: Niseko Photography

Yotei... Stunning all year-round.

Many a skier or snowboarder has gazed longingly at the peak of Mt Yotei and dreamed of climbing to the summit, with the reward of enjoying a half hour descent through untracked powder. The reality is it's a treacherous, six-hour plus hike demanding a high level of fitness, a lot of expensive climbing and safety equipment, and an extensive knowledge of mountaineering and local weather conditions. In summer however, as Deep Powder Tours operations manager Caitlin Mitchell found out, you can climb it in thongs (the rubber footwear that is). There's no skiing down, but as Caitlin writes, you'll still feel on you'll still feel on top of the world.

Kutchan, Kyogoku and Makkari, three areas at the base of Mt Yotei, are the starting points of the trails leading to the top of the volcano. The Makkari trail, despite being the longest, is the easiest side to start hiking from. It has a smoother incline as it follows a ridge along the side of the volcano and isn't as steep in comparison to the Kutchan and Kyogoku trails. This is where we started.

Sometime in late May we - a group of four gaijin (foreigners) and five nihonjin (Japanese) - started our hike at 8am. Hiking with the Japanese can be a little daunting at first as they tend to deck themselves out with the newest high-tech hiking equipment. Throughout the day though, I found this a little unnecessary, although I would recommend a proper pair of hiking shoes if you care for your feet!

The trail was divided into 10 sections with nine resting spots, the 10th stop being the summit! Although the temperature was not all that high, everyone was soaked with sweat from the amount of energy exerted by the time we were at the third rest stop. As we neared the top, there were still vast amounts of snow scattered around, which I found a little unsettling as it made the track very slippery and hard to walk across. Stopping at each resting place (which I found VERY necessary), it took us 4 hours to conquer Mt Yotei's summit.

Upon reaching the top we found there was still a fair amount of snow in the crater and we decided that it would be a good idea (although a fairly dangerous one) to slide down on our feet. Some found it easier on their bottoms, even if it wasn't necessarily voluntary! Despite the very slippery 40-minute hike back up to the ridge, the slide down was the highlight of my hike up Mt Yotei!

Unfortunately for us, our views of the mountainsides surrounding Mt Yotei were blocked by clouds, which conveniently decided to settle in just as we reached the top. We didn't luck out completely though, receiving some fantastic views across Niseko Town when we were about three quarters of the way up.

We spent 1.5 to 2 hours walking around the crater. It was here I learnt a new Japanese word: 'abunai yo!' meaning, dangerous! It was a circle of unstable, jagged, rocky terrain. Quite unnerving at times!

By the time it came to hiking back down to Makkari, we were all very exhausted, but on a mission. It took us only two hours (albeit a very long 2 hours) with no breaks to get back to the base.

Although I would recommend aspiring Mt Yotei hikers to have a fairly high level of fitness, we did meet a Japanese man in thongs walking his dog along our journey around the crater... it can't be all that hard!

### Caitlin's tips for conquering Yotei:

- Take proper hiking shoes
- Take at least 2liters of water
- Take lots of snacks: chocolates and onigiri (rice balls) are perfect snacks
- If there is still some snow - take a probe or collapsible stock and a warm jacket
- Wearing long sleeves is always a good idea no matter how hot the day seems: temperature at the top can be a little unpredictable
- Take a camera!
- Go for an onsen after your hike - great for sore muscles! (Recommendation: Kyogoku Onsen)
- Choose your day carefully, make sure the weather is fine (don't want any surprise storms!)
- Start hiking early, you will need an entire day (or at least 8 hours)



in focus  
simon robinson



There have been a number of Australians who have made a major impact on Niseko, beginning with adventure sports trio Ross Carty, Ross Findlay and Scott Walker, and then the inbound tour operators. Following them and also making an important contribution to the early days of the resort's international expansion was Niseko's first foreign developer, Simon Robinson. We find out his story and get some pearls for his top three tips on things to do in Niseko.

When did you first come to Niseko?

January 2002. A business partner had been trying to get me to come for years but I saw the altitude of 300-1300m and I never believed that it could be good here. But I relented and two weeks before we left we got in with Snow Wave (now Ski Japan) and I had the best skiing experience of my life.

I understand that you used to run a successful restaurant in Canberra with your wife. Tell us a bit more about that.

We had two locations, a restaurant Red Belly Black and The Observatory Function Centre. We had 35 fulltime staff and won numerous awards. In the 2003 Canberra bush fires our house and the function centre burnt down, which was 75% of our turnover. Two weeks later we were booked to come to Niseko again on holidays. Because we had just lost everything, it changed our perspective and we realised everyone had huge smiles on their faces and we thought it was as good as the heli-skiing that we had done previously. Most international tourists had the same complaint - they didn't like the accommodation. So we started buying land. Tell us about the difference in selling your first development compared to a recent development.

I used to have to drag people over to look at apartments – ski in, ski out \$AU340,000, but there were lots of questions. I managed to sell it to friends. Now demand outstrips supply. Buyers want more and more these days, the product quality is higher and the price is higher. Buyers are now coming from all over Asia, not just Australia. Maybe the latest breakdown is 40% Australians, 60% Asians.

What do you think Hirafu needs that it doesn't have?

Town Planning. It needs a master plan. There is a great eclectic mix of buildings in Hirafu that I love, but there is no zoning for where you put commercial, residential etc. There is definitely a need for more services and commercial property.

What do you think Niseko will be like in 10 years?

I think it will be the jewel in Japan's tourism growth agenda. I think Hokkaido is going to become one of the soft adventure meccas. So many people have never been to Japan, because of the image of it being crowded and expensive, but in reality it is neither.

How many days a season do you ski?

About 80-100 days. About 2 full days a week and 3-5 half days.

Where could we usually find you on the mountain?

Out of resort most of the time. The east face from the peak and in the Annupuri bowls and over to Moiwa and back to Annupuri.

What are the three top tips that you would recommend all visitors to Niseko do?

- 1 Hike the peak at least once and try to do it when the visibility is OK.
- 2 Go into Kutchan – walk into a restaurant with a flag or a lantern and try to find dress-up Karaoke.
- 3 Go to an onsen that is outside the main resort area. Yukichichibu Onsen is my personal favourite.

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# niseko's booming property market

IS IT A BUBBLE?

by graeme glen

It is said that the carrion stench of a burst property bubble attracts the foulest of vermin. Is Niseko, a booming market still very much in its infancy, headed for that most tragic of fates?

Niseko has seen some of the highest land price increases in Japan for two years running. On the surface this would certainly indicate the danger of a bubble, but Niseko has some unique features working to prevent this from happening. Namely, no direct bank financing, a fledgling market and a small band of spunky ex-pats carving a place for themselves in Japan's frozen north.

Rental return-driven growth results in a self-correcting market: In the land of common sense a boom becomes a bubble when return on investment drops below zero. To put it another way, when investing no longer makes any sense, you have entered the bubble. A major cause of the crisis in Western property markets is that institutional lenders and mortgage brokers do not live in the land of common sense, they live in a land where commission-based decisions rule over all. The bigger the loan a bank makes, the bigger the profit to the bank. The higher the book value of said property goes, the greater the asset value to the bank. So you can see that banks love a bubble. At least in the short term.

In a perverse twist, it is thanks to this absence of bank finance that private investors still largely fund

investment in Niseko. As such, property prices in Niseko are based on investors expecting to get a return. The majority of people wealthy enough to be in a position to invest in a ski resort rental property are, generally speaking, financially savvy enough to realize that the financial commitment required must provide a suitable return. If it does not, they are probably not going to commit the money. Thus prices in Niseko remain comfortably within the bounds of common sense.

An example of commissions-fuelled loan practices and their blatant disregard for common sense would be a relative of mine from London who recently sold her small three-bedroom townhouse. This property, which could be charitably described as a "fixer upper" in a crack dealer infested neighbourhood sold for an astonishing \$US1.1 million. If the buyer were planning to rent it out for a return, he or she would be a very disappointed landlord (dealing crack just doesn't pay what it used to). Nobody seems to consider how the young professional couple that took out the mortgage will survive the crushing loan payments if one of them were to be so foolish as to stop work to raise a family. It is just assumed that they can sell it for \$2.2 million in a few years time and retire to Spain. Provided this couple bail in time, they might just survive. You might say that the London property market is just a thinly disguised Ponzi scheme. In the short term and the long term, that sort of bubble just does not make any sense at all, and therefore cannot be sustainable. Incidentally, my cousin now lives in Spain.

Currently investors in Niseko are getting a return of 3~4% on a mature rental property. This return is realized on what amounts to a short ski season of about 100 days. There is room for tremendous growth in terms of rental opportunities in this fledgling market. Summer tourism is developing. The arrival of Hilton Hotels and the rumored Four Seasons cements Niseko as an international destination. Skiing has become the sport of choice for upwardly mobile Chinese, yet China has little to offer in terms of quality skiing. Niseko being four



Buildings continue to go up in Niseko

Photo: niseko photography

hours from 40% of the world's population has much to offer and has really only just begun to market itself to the world.

A further feature contributing to Niseko's continued success and development is the band of local ex-pats who have invested heavily in Niseko's future. These are people who have settled down, started families and committed themselves, intentionally or not, to the wellbeing of Niseko. For these people, Niseko's success and future growth is tied to their own. So you can be assured that they are taking the long-term view on the development and stewardship of the mountain.

Graeme Glen is sales manager for West Canada Properties.



Laying the foundations.

Photo: niseko photography

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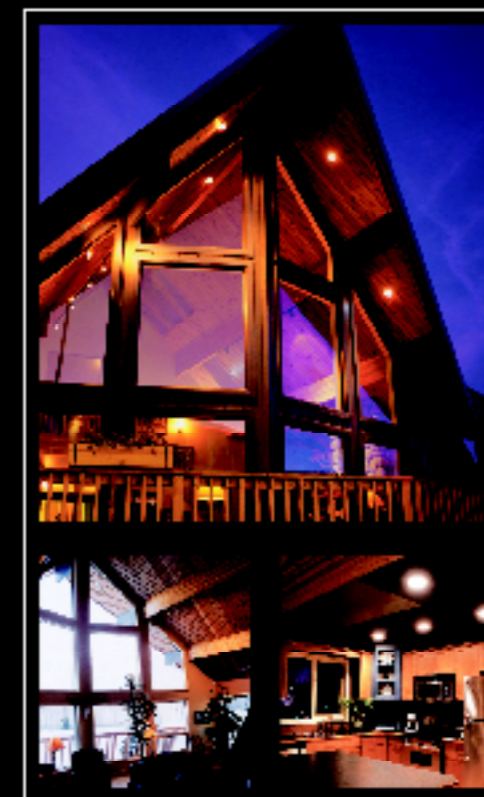
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### INFORMATION AND SALES

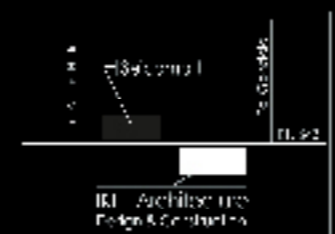
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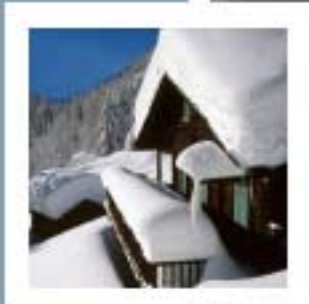
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- Five bedrooms or four bedrooms and a study
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**Information MAP**  
Local guide chart

**Block Map**  
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view of Mt. Yotei

**Property Overview**

- Location: 114-12 Aza Higashiyama Niseko-cho Abuta-gun Hokkaido
- Access: 12 min. from JR Niseko station by car ● Parking: covered/400
- Total floor area: 1100㎡ ● Block area: 1000㎡ ~ 1500㎡ ● Per lot: 100㎡
- Electricity and telephone facilities: land manager/200,000 yen ~ 400,000 yen (one-time fee)
- Type of lot: (1) 100㎡ (2) 100㎡ (3) 100㎡ (4) 100㎡ (5) 100㎡ (6) 100㎡ (7) 100㎡ (8) 100㎡ (9) 100㎡ (10) 100㎡ (11) 100㎡ (12) 100㎡ (13) 100㎡ (14) 100㎡ (15) 100㎡
- Planning: Home design/public management service
- Utility: Hokkaido Electric Power Corp., Telephone: NTT, gas: Hokkaido Gas, water: Niseko Water Supply Co., Sewerage: Niseko Sewerage Co.

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## AIRPORT

New Chitose Airport 0123 23 0111  
[www.new-chitose-airport.jp/language/english](http://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](http://www.whitelinerbuses.com).....011-242-2040

### Chuo Buses

[www.chuo-bus.co.jp/kikan/ski](http://www.chuo-bus.co.jp/kikan/ski).....011-231-0500

### Donan buses

[www.donanbus.co.jp/ski](http://www.donanbus.co.jp/ski).....0123-46-5701

### Hokkaido Resort Liner

[www.access-n.jp/ski\\_info.html](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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

Police .....110  
 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 (arrigato) 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. Kampai 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](http://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](http://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.



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**NEW TIME INPUT**

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## on piste and off

We are now well into the peak of the season and after our 'White January' we have a very substantial base on the mountain. We had a few sunny days early in February when the snow deteriorated a little, but at the time of going to print a massive dump was about to hit.

Remember that the most dangerous time for avalanches is during and just after a storm. Do not travel along the gully line as this is where the snow will collect in the event of a slide. Do not cut across under a cornice and always obey the local rules. There are no completely safe places in valleys and leeward slopes during midwinter. Avoid traversing steep slopes or riding the same steep slope at the same time as someone else. Always double check there is nobody at the bottom of a face before you commence your descent. The freedom to ride out of bounds is protected by the fact that the rules are respected.

### Resorts consider mandatory safety gear

While avalanches in Niseko are relatively rare, there are several areas that are high risk. The increase in popularity in off-piste skiing and boarding in Niseko has seen many inexperienced riders and skiers access the back country. Local safety figures are believed to be concerned with this increase and are continuing discussions on how to discourage people ill-equipped with the riding skill, mountain knowledge or equipment to deal with the many risks the backcountry can present. One possible solution is to have ski patrol or avalanche safety crew check that all skiers passing through the gates have a beacon, transceiver, probe and shovel. For now it appears that this issue remains in the balance for now and will be considered further over the summer.

### Surfanic Stack of the Week



Carl Stanfield from Sydney is this week's stack of the week winner. Extra brownie points were awarded to Carl for sustaining a shoulder injury during this stack, that saw him pay a visit to Niseko Physio later that day. Carl's mate Andy Brough was the photographer who was well placed on the Jumbo course to miss the first few slick turns but capture Carl's impersonation of a rag doll being thrown down stairs perfectly and he even got a blue sky to boot! Thanks Andy, and thanks Carl! To be in the running to win a super tough Surfanic jacket submit your best stack pic to: [ed@powderlife.co.jp](mailto:ed@powderlife.co.jp)

**Now on all Mountain Passes**

Pass	Start	End	Time
1	08:00	18:00	10:00
2	08:00	18:00	10:00
3	08:00	18:00	10:00
4	08:00	18:00	10:00
5	08:00	18:00	10:00
6	08:00	18:00	10:00
7	08:00	18:00	10:00
8	08:00	18:00	10:00
9	08:00	18:00	10:00
10	08:00	18:00	10:00
11	08:00	18:00	10:00
12	08:00	18:00	10:00
13	08:00	18:00	10:00
14	08:00	18:00	10:00
15	08:00	18:00	10:00
16	08:00	18:00	10:00
17	08:00	18:00	10:00
18	08:00	18:00	10:00
19	08:00	18:00	10:00
20	08:00	18:00	10:00

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**Police** TEL: 0155-84-1111  
**Fire** TEL: 0155-84-2101

**Medical Clinic** TEL: 0155-84-2101

**Medical Clinic** TEL: 0155-84-2101

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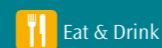
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Map ref: C 2  
www.CaptainHirafu.com T. 0 136 22 60 28



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The Australian snowsports club with its own Niseko lodge. The lodge has eight western style guest rooms (with ensembles), 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



### Java Bar & Java Massage



The Java Bar has some of the best coffee & cocktails in Hirafu. A relaxing lounge bar that is perfect for 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



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



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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

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



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



### Niseko Hirafu Ski & Snowboard School



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www.grand-hirafu.jp/en/mountain/school.html  
T. 0136-22-0921



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# the last word...

## on health: ski injuries

by Bevan Colless



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

Fortunately for us here at Niseko Physio, skiing and snowboarding are relatively dangerous activities. Recently, lower leg injuries have been on the rise with increased risk-taking behavior being cited as the major reason. If you are unfortunate enough to sustain an injury on the slopes (or on the street!), remember the RICED and

the beginner to intermediate levels due to an overly wide snowplough stance, skis crossing or a fall. In advanced skiers it is likely to be "catching an edge".

### ACL

The anterior cruciate ligament accounts for about 10-15% of knee ligament injuries and intensive American research identified the main causes as trying to recover from a fall, or overbalancing to the rear when landing from a jump.

### Meniscus

This shock-absorber sits deep inside the knee and is often injured in combination with one of the previous two.

To prevent these knee injuries, ensure you do pre-conditioning exercises, regularly adjust your bindings, avoid wide snowplough stances, don't fully straighten your legs when falling and don't try and get up when falling – wait until you stop.

### The Wrist

25% of all snowboarding injuries occur in the wrist. A whopping 70% of all wrist injuries are fractures – so please by-pass Niseko Physio and head straight into Kutchan Hospital if you sustain a painful wrist injury.

A massive 42% of wrist fractures occur in people snowboarding for the first time. Wrist guards have been proven in various studies to be effective in reducing wrist injuries. In general, longer wrist guards are better than short and look for a degree of flexibility in the guard.

### Head Injuries

These account for 15% of ski injuries, and are the most dangerous of all. Most fatal injuries occur in people skiing at high speeds, out of control and hitting a solid, fixed object. To avoid head injuries wear a helmet, ski in control, match your speed to the conditions and always look where you're going.

### The Shoulder

Shoulder injuries include dislocation, AC joint injuries and clavicle fractures and are approximately equal between boarders and skiers at 10-15% of injuries.



Another one bites the dust: Skiing Injuries on the rise

### Skier's Thumb

This ranks second to knee injuries in skiers and occurs when the thumb is driven into the snow and driven away from the palm. The more severe cases require an operation to reattach the thumb ligament. Ouch! It's best not to wear straps on your stocks.

### Spinal Injuries

These are quite rare but have devastating consequences. They are most common in young men and follow a pattern of excess speed, losing control and a bad landing from a jump.

### Collisions

Contrary to popular belief skiers are more likely to collide with and injure fellow skiers than snowboarders. We poor boarders tend to bite the dust much sooner when we lose control!

### To sum up

Whichever way you get down the mountain try to remember these hints:

- Don't borrow gear from your friends. This increases your chance of injury a massive 800%!
- Recognize when you need a break.
- Most injuries occur after lunch when tiredness sets in. "I was going down my last run of the day...."
- Is a common beginning to a patient history at Niseko Physio.
- Hard though it may be, avoid being persuaded to try slopes and jumps that are beyond your level of ability. You're more likely to be injured trying to keep up with more experienced friends.
- Wear a helmet! And wrist guards for boarders.

HARM rules for the first 24-48 hours after an acute injury, or longer for more severe cases:

**Rest** from aggravating conditions;

**Ice** for about 10-20 minutes several times daily;

**Compression** using an elastic bandage or tubi-grip;

**Elevation** above the heart is a good rule-of-thumb;

**Diagnosis** get it diagnosed ASAP.

The H.A.R.M factors are the ones that you want to avoid (hence the clever acronym).

**Heat** sorry, to be a party pooper, but the onsen is not good for a fresh ligament tear;

**Alcohol** avoid the booze, it's a vaso-dilator (increasing blood flow) and will increase swelling and inflammation, particularly for a lower limb injury;

**Running** stay away from exercise in the short term;

**Massage** no deep massage in the early stages.

For those interested in what types of injuries are commonly walking through the door of an on-mountain medical centre, read on for a list of the major injuries and some tips on what to do if you're unfortunate enough to experience one of them.

### Knee injuries

These account for about 35% of skiing injuries and about 20% of snowboarding injuries.

### MCL

The most common knee injury is the medial co-lateral ligament, the ligament that runs down the inside of the knee. This is a common injury in



Niseko Physio was established as a branch office of Tokyo Physio, to provide quality physiotherapy care for the English speaking residents and visitors to Niseko. We are committed to providing a standard of care that is up with the best in the world. Our Australian trained physiotherapists specialise in winter sports injuries, and are experienced in accelerated rehabilitation techniques to get you back on the slopes as soon as possible. We also stock a large range of braces to further assist your recovery.

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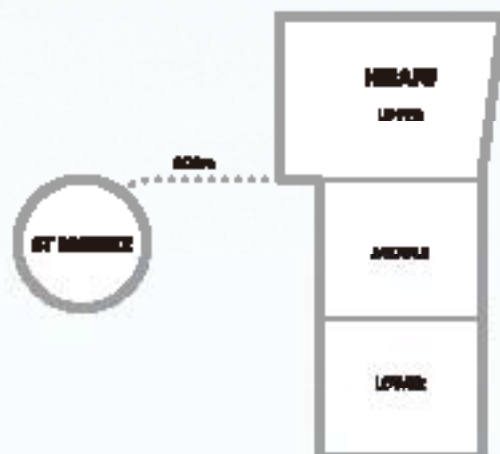


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