

issue 06 Mar 01 - Mar 14 2008

# powderlife

NISEKO ニセコ



**LOCAL  
HEROES**  
PRIDE OF NISEKO



**burton, white**

Boarding's biggest hit town

**the freshest powder**

Back country guided tour

**stirling goldman**

Men Who Ride Mountains

www.powderlife.co.jp

Niseko's powder lifestyle magazine fresh every two weeks





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.

Niseko has been Japan's fastest growing property market for the last three years. Niseko is now also appearing on the horizon of European and Hong Kong investors. Join the many Australian and international investors who are a part of this exciting market.

Our website is updated weekly and features a wide variety of quality listings. A complete step by step guide to buying property in Niseko is available online. Our team will guide you through every step of your purchase. Our comprehensive listings give you the inside edge on the latest developments in Japan's most dynamic property market.

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We have many new listings for land in Hirafu and in outlying areas. Please visit our sales office for more information.

### Humming Bird

¥63,000,000



- 700 sqm (2000 sqft)
- Great middle village location
- Great development or investment potential
- Walking distance to shops and lifts
- Tremendous capital growth potential

### Outer Hirafu Land 37-1

¥47,110,000



- 6700 sqm (20000 sqft)
- Quiet locality area
- Level site suitable for subdivision
- Great development or investment potential

### Mokuro Land 447-11

¥30,000,000



- 8000 sqm (20000 sqft)
- Great investment
- Big house every day
- 3000 sqm (6000 sqft)

### Izumiyu 2 Land 83-109

¥38,000,000



- 2200 sqm (5000 sqft)
- Great development potential
- Magnificent view of forest
- 17000 sqm per lot

### Sakura Apartment

¥37,000,000



- New Development in low village
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- Great entry level apartment
- Quiet street, close to the shuttle

### Hanazono House

¥161,000,000



- Big bedrooms & 3 bathrooms
- Neatly built house in a quiet street
- Impeccable Western design
- Open plan living areas & High Ceilings

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...

Like moths to a light, Niseko has attracted many of Japan's best riders and skiers from all over the country and the world, as well as breeding several of its own. In this issue we take a look at the area's elite and find out what brought them here and how they add their personality to the area. We have received great response to our thousand words photographic special, and Jennie Milton's 'Into Yotei's Caldera' has been touted as the picture of the season. We have received a stack of entries for the Surfanic Stack of the Week - turn to page 39 to see the worthy winner. We've also added a new column - Stirling Goldman, Man Who Rides Mountains; turn to page 32 to meet him (you might feel like you've met him before). Keep the pics and emails coming! bevan@Powderlife.co.jp

虫達が光に集まって来るように、多くの一流スキーヤーやスノーボーダーがニセコに集まって来ました。もちろんニセコで生まれ育った一流ライダー達もたくさんいます。今号では彼らが何故ここに集まって来たのか、またこのエリアに彼らがどのような影響を与えてきたか等の特集しております。前号に掲載した“A THOUSAND WORDS”コーナーの写真にはすごい反響をいただきました。Jennie Miltonの“羊蹄山火口へ”の写真は今シーズン一番の写真だと言っています。"Surfanic Stack of the Week"コーナーにも多数の写真をお寄せいただいております。どの写真が選ばれたかはP39をチェックしてみてください。新しいコラムもp32に加わりましたので、是非お楽しみください。引き続き皆様の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

Memoirs of Higashiyama  
by Eriko Mentzou

Higashiyama Prince Hotel hosted two beautiful Maiko from the ancient capital of Japan, Kyoto, last month. A Maiko is an apprentice Geisha learning the various arts such as dancing, singing, music and light conversation, before she can become a Geisha.

## in the loop

what's on in niseko this week

### march 1 - march 14

#### Saturday March 1

**Wonderland Terrain Park, Higashiyama Opens**  
Wonderland Course by Wonderland chair (peak chair) in Higashiyama. free, March 1 ~ April 6.

#### 3月1日(土)

**ワンダーランド パーク オープン**  
ニセコ東山スキー場内、山頂直下のワンダーランドコースにテレインパークがオープンします。無料にて皆様に解放! 4月6日までオープン予定です。

#### Saturday March 1 and 8

**Hirafu March Weekends Fireworks**  
You can enjoy fireworks with your family and friends every Saturday in March starts at 9.30pm after the night skiing!

#### 3月1,8日(土)

**ウィークエンド花火 グランヒラフ**  
3月の毎週土曜日はヒラフゲレンデから花火が打ち上げられます! ご家族、お仲間と一緒に是非お楽しみください。ナイター後の9:30pm~

#### 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.

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

2月16日(土)23(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).

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~

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

Sunday March 16  
**Minami SKI & SNOWBOARD BATTLE in Niseko An-nupuri**  
Exciting Ski & Snowboard Cross. ¥3,500 for the entry, send a registration form with the fee to Minami Sports headquarters before March 14. For more information call 03-3294-3731.

3月16日(日)  
Minami SKI & SNOWBOARD BATTLE  
ニセコアンヌプリスキー場にて毎年恒例のミニミススポーツ主催、スキー/スノーボードクロスが行われます。参加希望者は申込書と参加料 ¥3,500を14日までにミニミススポーツ本店まで郵送してください。tel:03-3294-3731.



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**PROVIDED FREE IN ALL ACCOMMODATION MANAGED BY:**  
 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 Adler, Downtown Cafe, NAC, Nathan's, Jo Jo's, Yuki Bar, Fusion, 343, Apres Bar, The Northern Fox... and more  
**Higashiyama** Higashiyama Prince Hotel, Black Diamond Lodge  
**Annupuri** Annupuri Village, Nikko Hotel, Ikoinomura Hotel, The Nook Annupuri, Mokumokutei BBQ House **Moiwa** Hotel Kanronomori  
**Kutchan** Kutchan Tourist Information Centre, Loaf Lounge, Be, Blue Cielo, Nami Chan Chi, Fuji Confectionary, Shunsai **Sapporo** Sapporo Tourist Information Centre, Sapporo Clock Tower Information Centre  
**Tokyo** Paddy Foley's, Legend's, National Azabu International Supermarket, Nissin International Supermarket, Khaosan Asakusa Backpackers Hostel **Hakuba** Hakuba Real Estate, The Powderhouse

## powderlife

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the vale niseko



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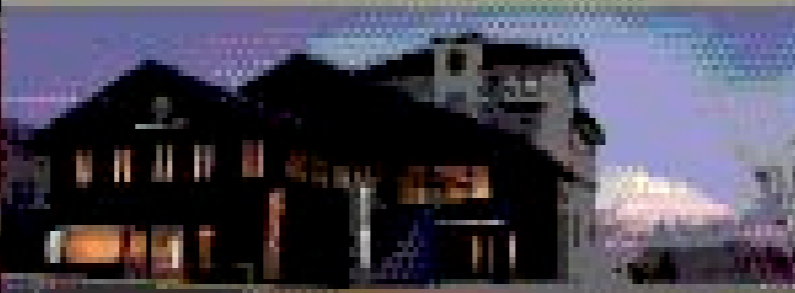
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SEKKA  
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by kristian lund and bevan colless

## 100 year storm hammers Hokkaido



Jennie Milton almost buried at Strawberry Fields

Not exactly, but the way it was being talked up beforehand it sounded like it was about to. They were calling it from a week off: "The dump of the season's coming Tuesday," the would-be meteorologists were declaring confidently. As keen watchers of the forecasts, the Powderlife team was optimistic but sceptical. The Tuesday in question came and while it was the first decent snow for almost a week, winds were typhoon-strength and most of the mountain was closed. It remained that way for the next few days but by Thursday evening the winds dropped just enough to open some key lifts and gondolas, and those who were onto it scored a classic Niseko 'nighter' session under lights. The next day the rest of Mt Annupuri was untouched and primed for perhaps the deepest and best powder riding of the season.

## Biggest names in snowboarding - Burton, White - in Niseko



Taylor Burton, Nate Matthews, Jake Burton and Jess Ripper

Burton is a name synonymous with snowboarding. Founder Jake Burton is one of the most influential people in the sport's evolution, and Burton Snowboards now controls about 40% of the market. Jake, his son Taylor and the Burton snowboarding team stayed with The Niseko Company and graciously gave Nate Matthews a quick interview. "Great! Terrific!" was Jake's overall evaluation. "The food was excellent and the snow was fantastic. The nature of the terrain around here is great. There are lots of pillows and deep powder – it's the kind of terrain they (the Burton team) really enjoy riding. I also thought that the lift lines moved quickly so I was able to get in lots of riding. I'll be back again!" Jake founded the company in 1977 working from a barn and initially adapting a Snurfer, a basic toy snowboard which featured a rope to allow the rider some basic control over the board. In 1979 he began selling his more advanced snowboards, made from bentwood laminate and featuring a rigid binding that held the board firmly to the wearer's boot.



Shaun White working the crowd at Wild Bills

The Red Bull snowboarding team winged its way into Niseko in spectacular fashion on February 21, headed by the sport's superstar Shaun White. For a man who stands at 5'8.5", the 21 year old Californian stands head and shoulders above the pack in snowboarding. White is to snowboarding what Kelly Slater is to surfing and Tiger Woods is to golf. Bursting on to the scene as a 12 year old, he's won almost everything in snowboarding including too many X-games to count, and a 2006 Olympic gold medal in the half pipe. He's just been named the 2008 Laureus World Action Sports-person of the Year. Not content with dominating snowboarding he is also one of the top skateboarders in the world. Shaun and pros including Heikki Sorsa, Pat Moore and Zach Leach, are on a Red Bull-sponsored trip they're calling Big in Japan. Fuel TV is filming a documentary about it while Snowboarder Magazine is going to do a feature article in an upcoming issue. They caused a stir at Wild Bill's on February 22 when they turned up for the Red Bull Snow Wiiiings Party.

## Yotei's magical water

The water flowing from taps in Niseko is officially among the purest in Japan. In 1985 the Ministry of Environment named the country's 100 purest water sources and thanks to Mt Yotei, Niseko made the list. Like a giant percolator, melted snow and rain are filtered through underground layers, combining with minerals before shooting out at the foot of Yotei-san 50 to 100 years later. An astonishing 530,000 tonnes of water gush out of springs surrounding the mountain's base every day. The largest and best known spring is on the northeast side in Kyogoku and the water is known as Yotei no Fukidashi-Yusui. The water temperature is naturally kept at 10C throughout the year. The spring water is classified as 'kanro' and is known to be very soft and slightly sweet. Although it doesn't need to be, the tap water is sterilized due to government regulations. To get it in its purest form, locals and tourists alike flock to Kyogoku and other springs to fill plastic bottles with the famous water.



## Ski sales to begin

Everybody knows the best time to buy sporting equipment is at the end of a season. And nowhere is that more true than Japan. The Japanese love to buy and be seen with the latest gear and in the latest fashion. Which means at the end of winter everything that hasn't been sold is almost worthless. The best bargains go down in Tokyo's ski and snowboard hub Kanda, but even in Niseko you can pick up some bargains. Niseko 343 has just announced its ex-rentals sale offering 06/07 Apache Chiefs, Outlaws, Recons and more. Keep an eye out for Larry Adler's and Demo-Fusion's upcoming sales.

## Backcountry safety call

The Niseko United Ski Patrol is concerned about the number of people going out through the gates into the unpatrolled backcountry. They say they would like to see about half as many people venturing outside the resort boundaries. The Ski Patrol has asked Adam Streete, director of Shinsetsu Mountain Guides and former Australian ski patroller, to visit local companies and pass on their concerns. "Ski accidents are a number game and with the numbers going outside the Niseko boundary gates exploding, it's only a matter of time before things go wrong and this is a great concern for the ski patrol," he said. "I'm out there everyday and am amazed at what people are doing. They don't realise that if something does happen outside resort boundaries they aren't covered by travel insurance and it can take ski patrol up to three hours to get you back."



CHIVALRY IS DEAD

A Hokkaido Shimbun reporter who was arrested for molesting a female hotel employee admitted the allegations, saying, "I was drunk and don't clearly remember what I did, but I'm sure I committed the crime."

A Kyoto court ordered a 26-year-old man to pay ¥670,000 in damages to a woman he punched in the face after she repeatedly told him to remove his bag from an unoccupied bus seat so an elderly passenger could sit down.

A Nagano-to-Tokyo shinkansen was delayed for 37 minutes after an 80-year-old passenger traveling in the Green Car without a ticket punched a conductor in the jaw.

NEWS OF THE BIZARRE

Three family members were found dead in an apartment in Adachi-ku and a fourth, a 15-year-old-boy, was discovered with his arms cut off at the wrists.



A 22-year-old Tokyoite, apparently upset over an incident in which a Chinese national assaulted a Japanese man in Yasukuni Shrine, hurled a Molotov cocktail at the Foreign Ministry headquarters in Tokyo and then attempted to commit hara-kiri. He was only slightly injured.

The Tsukuba Medical Center Hospital in Ibaraki admitted that the 2002 death of a 73-year-old woman was likely due to a 30cm strip of gauze that was left inside her chest during surgery 12 years earlier.

TAX DOLLARS AT WORK

A 37-year-old member of the Tokyo metropolitan assembly resigned his post after drinking three or four glasses of a distilled spirit and crashing his car on a road in Itabashi-ku.

A bipartisan group of lawmakers opposed to capital punishment is set to introduce a bill that would allow judges to impose a sentence of life without the possibility of parole. Currently, all inmates serving life sentences in Japan become eligible for parole after 10 years.

A section chief at the TMG's Bureau of Sewerage was arrested for jabbing the head of another man with an umbrella at JR Minami-Koshigaya station while drunk.

IN SICKNESS AND HEALTH

A 58-year-old Osaka man received a ¥4.3 million settlement from a hair growth clinic he had patronized for four years without results.

It was reported that spinach from Thailand containing eight times the

standard levels of insecticide was served at university cafeterias throughout Japan.

Among the oddball sweets to hit Japanese shelves during the Valentine's Day season were garlic-flavored chocolate from a company called Takko Shoji in Aomori and vinegar-flavored chocolate from Minamoto Kitchoan in Okayama.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

In the wake of a court ruling against McDonald's Japan, in which an ex-employee was awarded ¥7.5 million in overtime pay, it was announced that Lawson, Family Mart and 7-Eleven have all agreed to start paying overtime wages to their managers.

A gang of 11 men are suspected of stealing 1,200 automobiles, worth a total of ¥1.85 billion, and exporting the parts overseas or selling them via online auctions.

A 44-year-old woman suspected of burning down her mother's villa in Wakayama Prefecture for ¥7 million in insurance money was found hanged in the prison cell where she was awaiting trial.

GOOD NEWS AND BAD

The Japan Printing Ink Makers Association found that of the 28 manufacturers certified as eco-friendly, half 'fail to live up to the requirements of certification.'

It was reported that workers dismantling the former Iraqi Embassy in Akasaka discovered automatic weapons and live ammunition in a ceiling above the kitchen.

STATS

256 Number of food recalls in 2006, according to the Food and Agricultural Materials Inspection Center

756 Number of recalls last year

57.9 Percent of Japanese who said they eat food from China prior to the recent illnesses blamed on Chinese-made gozo

21.6 Percent who say they eat food from China now

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)

Big Rusutsu land sale

A huge 58,000-tsubo (19.2 hectares) block of land at Rusutsu has been sold to a 'major' company.

Despite Rusutsu - about 45 minutes drive from Niseko - being considered another area that could experience a property boom, the market has never really taken off.

While the mountain is great for skiing there is no real village or infrastructural support close to the base. There is a hotel, a Seicomart and even an amusement park, but as yet it doesn't support the idea of self-contained accommodation.

Land prices have risen in Rusutsu over the past few years on the back

of Niseko, but there still doesn't seem to be much confidence that it will really take off.

This sale is interesting as it suggests a large scale organisation might be going in to get the ball rolling.

The other great white hope in Hokkaido is Furano, in the centre of the island, which has long been a year-round hotspot for the domestic tourist market, and more recently for Chinese visitors. There is also confidence among Tokyo expats - that Hakuba, on the mainland, is destined for bigger and better things.



CBA approves Yen loans

In an exciting development for the already thriving Niseko real estate market, Australia's Commonwealth Bank has received final approval from the highest level to provide yen loans secured against Niseko property.

As reported in Powderlife Issue 4, the initial offering will be a conservative 50/50 loan to valuation ratio.

The buzz on the stret is that the risk assessors gave the rubber stamp to the new loan business at a meeting in Australia last week, and the bank will likely begin lending as soon as April this year. Given the Commonwealth Bank have been the first to take the plunge other banks and lending bodies may well be ready to follow suit.

Construction set to boom

A record amount of construction is set go on in Niseko over the coming summer.

At least five major developments are set to get underway in the upper village - The Vale Niseko, Suiboku, Snow Crystal, Alpen Views and Yama Shizen II.

Niseko Alpine Development's (Nisade) president Kal Bragg said as soon as the snow melted the action would begin.

"It's never been busier than it is right now," he said. "It's really starting to fire up with five pretty decent size buildings going up in the upper village and a stack of new houses in the lower village."

Market white hot

The Niseko property market remains bullish in the wake of the US and European property market's slowdown.

Niseko Realty Sales president Ross Carty said properties are selling as soon as he puts them on his website.

"Buyers from Hong Kong and Singapore and Malaysia are keeping an eye on the websites and as soon as I put something up there, it sells," Carty said.

Niseko Property director Ruskin McLennan said the demand from Asia had lead to the company sending a team of salespeople to Hong Kong for a four-day sales trip.

McLennan said he expected this type of marketing to be 'the future' of Niseko real estate.

Theft, vandalism continues

As the season rolls on there is no end to drunken stupidity on the part of foreign visitors.

Petty theft and vandalism continue and among the latest casualties are business's roadside signs.

Sekka Deli's sign recently went AWOL while Nisade has had one of its signs stolen twice in the past two weeks. "Both times it's ended up in the lower village," said Nisade president Kal Bragg.

"It seems people walking home at night figure it might make a good toboggan. It's disappointing tourists don't respect the local people."

Anyone with ideas on how to try to educate irresponsible visitors on how to control themselves in Niseko are welcome to forward them to ed@powderlife.co.jp.

No lift ticket price rise

Tokyu Resort, owner of Grand Hirafu, has said there is unlikely to be any increase in lift ticket prices next season.

There was a small increase in the price of day passes this season, which means they are reluctant to raise prices any further next season.

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# SNAP

by eriko mentzos

## faces on the street

What will Niseko be like in five years??



Aloha! You don't come across too many Hawaiians in these parts but looks like half of Oahu is here with this group. They think Niseko is destined to get more crowded. If another group like this arrives, they might be right!



Belinda, Aaron and Steve from Sydney: "Crowded, bigger and more apartments. But hopefully they'll open up more terrain."



Mako-chan and Non-chan from Sapporo think there'll be more people, restaurants and shops!



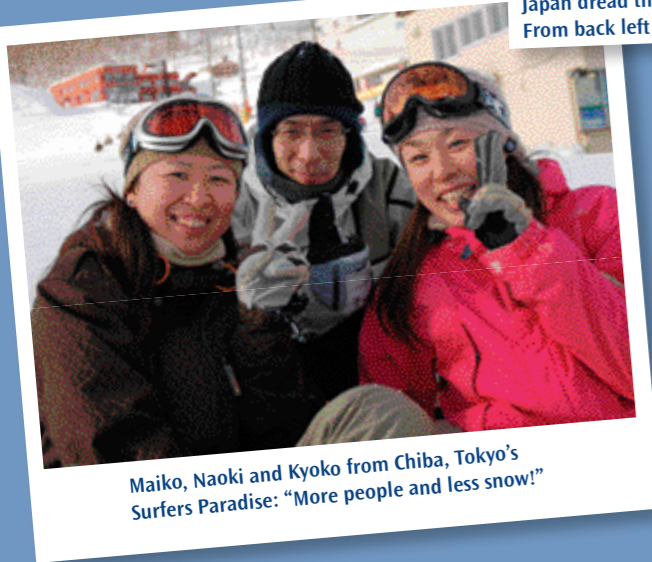
Alex and Jo from Sydney: "Packed. And even more developed. It's really going to take off I think."



Jeff and Kerriane of Cairns, Australia: "It looks like it's headed in the right direction. We're talking about coming again and we've only been here a day!"



This funky crew from Fukuoka at the opposite end of Japan dread that Niseko might become more expensive. From back left Satoko, Yumi, Tomo, Yoshiko and Aya.



Maiko, Naoki and Kyoko from Chiba, Tokyo's Surfers Paradise: "More people and less snow!"

### mountain style

Kermit the frog always said 'It's not easy being green,' but this season it has been a piece of cake for stylish Niseko riders. Teppai Okada proves it with these cool 241 green pants. 'Tepps' teamed them to perfection with a 241 jacket with perfectly matched green inserts. He knows that it's Mountain Style 101 to have the same brand jacket and pants. His green Flux bindings match, and even his K2 board's trim was green! It takes confidence to pull off a no-name hot pink beanie and we can see from his killer pose that he has it in spades. Give it up for Tepps! Fusion is giving it up for Tepps with a free Niseko fleece.



# FLASH

## niseko social scene

by jimmy edwards

### Red Bull Snow Wiiiings Party

The Red Bull snowboarding team rolled into Niseko and after tearing the mountain to shreds headed straight to Wild Bills for a few drinks and a lot of attention from hundreds of excited fans.



It's good to be the king! Shaun White with the ladies; Salina, Belinda, Shaun, Yurika and Michiko hanging in the VIP at Wild Bills, while his fans squeezed in below.



From left back T-Roy, Aldo, Lachlan, Chewy and Lauren...yeeaaah!



Simon, Sarah, Trent and Rebecca from Sydney are snapped celebrity-spotting in 'Bills.



Georgia from Melbourne and Sacha from Brisbane caught the lens's eye.

### Xi Zen Opening

Half of Hirafu rolled out to Higashiyama for the opening of new all you can eat and drink crab restaurant Xi Zen. Photos Niseko Photography.



Ridgerunner's Michiko had catered for a foreigners' all-you-can-eat-and-drink before: "Another truck load of crab and no more gaijin!"



Powderlife's resident foodie Vanessa Gibson wouldn't miss the opening of a can, let alone a new crab restaurant!



Niseko Photography's Mat and Nisade's Ai were speechless about the food at Xi Zen, but managed to spit out: "Thenthational!"



Jay and Ai, what's going on back there? "Maybe if we hide behind this copy of Powderlife it will draw the attention away from us?"





# Powder tools

by bevan colless



## Prior Swallowtail Splitboard

Are you tired of skiers boasting about how they skinned up Yotei in two hours, Iwanopuri in 20 minutes and back from the golf course in five? Then ditch the snow shoes and get one of these bad boys. Prior snowboards are Whistler's version of Niseko's Gentemstick - a boutique company hand-making some of the best boards money can buy. Splitboards have taken over from snowshoes as the backcountry mode of transport for riders in North America, once you've got one there's no difference between where skiers and boarders can go. Split apart and attach adhesive skins to the board halves to ascend into the backcountry. At the summit it quickly connects back together into a snowboard and performance is reported to be comparable to a normal board. It comes complete with a custom insert pack, Voile hardware and climbing skins. Attach regular snowboard bindings and the board is ready to go. ¥145,488, plus postage from www.priorsnowboards.com. You can even choose your own top sheet and base design.

## Marmot Women's Warmest Mitt

Marmot make some of the best outdoor adventure gear there is and you can now get them right here in Niseko thanks to Larry Adler Ski and Outdoor. Made for the ladies only, these toasty numbers have a unique Exol leather that can be machined washed and tumble dried without becoming brittle. To ensure you never suffer from frozen phalanges they have a water repellent primaloft one material that is breathable and dries faster than down. They even have a pocket to insert your hand warmers sachets in. Why only for the ladies? Some unkind soul suggested it's because they complain more but in reality it's because Marmot know how to treat a lady right. ¥17,995 from Larry Adler.



## Armada ARV

If you were only ever to use one ski for Niseko it should be the Armada ARV Alpine Skis. They are as tough as park boards, as stable as big-mountain sticks, and far cheaper than buying two pairs of skis. With a little added strength for stability at high speeds, the ARV tears it up anywhere on the mountain. The magical ride is brought to you courtesy of hefty dimensions, extra-thick, heat-treated edges, and super-tough base material. Get spinnny in the backcountry, and know that the ARV's full twintip tail has your back. Higher-density wood reinforcements along the core's edges make it stiffer than last year's model. Once you're in the untouched chute of glory, the progressive tip shape will help the ARV float to the top, while the solid flex begs to accelerate. The graphics are even inspired by Japan, so they'll be right at home here! ¥84,000 from Niseko 343 or Rhythm and Beats.



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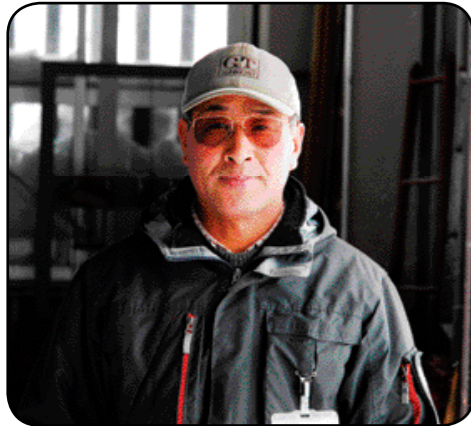
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by Eriko Mentzos



**LIFTIE Odagiri-san**

**name** Hiroshi Odagiri **age** 58  
**hometown** Niseko **what do you do in summer?** Farming. A lot of students from all over Japan come to my farm and try farming every year. I grow melons, corn, potatoes **do you like powder?** Yes **ski/board?** Ski **when did you start?** 30 years ago **what languages do you speak?** Japanese only **trips overseas?** Never **where do you want to go next?** Nowhere! **favourite...** colour Purple **brand** None **food** Sushi **restaurant** Otaru Waraku and Hanayoshi **bar** Snack Lupinus **onsen** Niseko Grand Hotel outdoor onsen. It's big and nice **run** Giant course at Moiwa **where else in the world do you want to go skiing?** Kiroro (near Sapporo) **how long will you be in niseko for?** 1000 more years!! **what does niseko need?** A place that people can enjoy snow activities other than skiing, and people who can teach them **niseko secret?** Imo-dango (sticky potato cake) from Oomichi farm is delicious! **what's a must have item for niseko?** Kanjiki (snowshoe for walking in the snow or clearing the snow on the roof, etc) **what's your life philosophy?** Enjoy work and play!!



**SKI PATROL Gingaman**

**name** Hiroshi Suzuki **age** 36  
**hometown** Niigata **time in niseko** This is my seventh season **do you like powder?** Hai! **ski/board?** ski & telemark **when did you start?** skiing 30 years ago, telemark 4 years ago **why did you move to niseko?** I wanted to do ski patrol in Niseko **what languages do you speak?** Japanese (Toyama dialect) **trips overseas?** None **where do you want to go next?** Italy **favourite...** colour Gingaman red **brand** Dolce & Gabana **food** Italian restaurant Hiro-matsu **bar** Eddy in Kutchan **onsen** Niimi mixed onsen **run** Jimoto Kobo and powder course **where else in the world do you want to go skiing?** Tateyama **how long will you be in niseko for?** I don't know what will happen tomorrow **what does niseko need?** A real Bistro **niseko secret?** Tachikama's oden is delicious! **what's a must have item for niseko?** A house and wife **What's your life philosophy?** Everything that exists in this world is my master...



**TICKET BOOTH Megu**

**name** Megumi Kawabata **age** 30  
**hometown** Iwanai, Hokkaido **time in niseko** Three seasons **what do you do in summer?** Work at a golf links here **do you like powder?** Yes! **ski/board?** Alpen ski **when did you start?** Three years ago **why did you move to niseko?** Niseko is close to my hometown, Iwanai! **what languages do you speak?** Just Japanese **trips overseas?** NZ **where do you want to go next?** Asia **favourite...** colour Red **brand** UNIQLO **food** Vegetables **restaurant** Hanazono **bar** I can't drink, so I don't know any bars here **onsen** Makkari Onsen **run** Stairway to Heaven **where else in the world do you want to go skiing?** Chisenupuri (near Niseko!) **how long will you be in niseko for?** Forever! **what does niseko need?** A money exchange shop **niseko secret?** Niseko's summer is great too! **what's a must have item for niseko?** Gumboots **what's your life philosophy?** Always have fun!

**backcountry touring**

by bevan colless

Once you step into Black Diamond lodge you soon realise you're being attended to by genuine mountain men. All six male staff are Canadian, and just as most people assume all Australians know their beaches, you get the feeling that Canadians know their mountains. There's something about the laid back drawl and casual use of terms like 'vert' that gives you confidence you're in good hands. Andrew Spragg from Calgary has spent the past three seasons in Niseko guiding with the Black Diamond Lodge, taking care of their growing Black Diamond Tours business. A certified Canadian Avalanche Association operations level 1 guide, Spragg has been involved in the alpine business for almost his entire career. He was based in Whistler for some time but the ability to ski powder for more than a few hours after a snowfall has seen him relocate to Hokkaido.

Niseko has plenty of fantastic terrain that can be accessed easily enough through the gates, but unless you really know your backcountry safety, it's well worth hiring a guide to show you the best Niseko has to offer. Our backcountry tour began with a meeting at Higashiyama's Black Diamond Lodge where we received our avalanche beacons, shovels and probes and an extensive run down on how to respect the risks that the mountain can offer. We kitted up and headed straight for the peak of Mt Annupuri. Our first descent was through the back bowl to Annupuri. Dropping into the back bowl is possibly the steepest terrain in Niseko, but with the steepness comes the risk of avalanche. It's reassuring to have an avalanche expert by your side, particularly if you're yet to earn your own avalanche stripes. On this day we were lucky enough to have a blue-bird with relatively low avalanche risk, but it was great to have Spragg on hand to show us the best entry point into the bowl and take us to some special pockets of powder that were quite unique. Unfortunately for our readers, I was made to sign a non-disclosure agreement about how to get there.

After that we were straight back to the peak, from where we traversed around in preparation to descend the north face to Goshiki Onsen. The run down began with an icy patch similar to riding down a tilted ice skating rink with a thousand craters in it. As Andrew explained, the north face and back bowl are somewhat diametrically opposed - often when one side is 'on', the other side is not. After we slid down below 1000m we hit some completely untouched terrain, and at times it felt like we could have been dropped off by helicopter. Once you reach the bottom of your descent you end up on route 58, a road by summer but a deep powder pack in winter. A 15-minute walk along the deeply buried road back to Goshiki makes you enjoy the awaiting onsen even more. If you're lucky you can see some extreme riders pulling some huge air off the booters that are built down there. A Black Diamond staff member (a Canuck of course) came down to return us for more runs, thus avoiding the ¥10,000 cab ride.

If you feel you've done the Niseko thing to death, in addition to their Niseko tours, Black Diamond Tours also offer a range of tours for those wanting to experience the lesser known resorts dotted around Hokkaido.

*Powderlife was guest on a Black Diamond backcountry tour.*



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# LOCAL HEROES

## Pride of Niseko

by Eriko Mentzos, Aaron Jamieson and Bevan Colless

Although the international community is only just beginning to discover Niseko, among Japanese it's been well known for a long time that Niseko is the best resort in the country. It's no surprise that many of the nation's best winter sports athletes have been attracted to the area to refine their skills. Although you may not be aware of it, the skier you watch from the gondola, bouncing through moguls as if they weren't there, may be a Japan National Team member. Or the rider you see pulling somersaults in the half pipe may have been top 5 in his field at the Olympics. We've been scouting Niseko to weed out and introduce you to the area's best and brightest winter athletes... Niseko's local heroes.



akio endo

photo: kage

Every resort has its crew who call it home. A finite posse whose skiing and riding style reflects that of their home mountain, be it the big mountain alpine styles of the Canadian Rockies or the freestyle fellowships from France and Europe. Japan is also emerging as a breeding ground for many new skiers and boarders and it may only be a matter of time before many more names are added to the list of people that choose Japan and Niseko as their home for honing their skills.

Possibly the biggest name skier in Niseko is Grand Hirafu's famous pony-tailed telemarker **Yutaka Takanashi**. Takanashi-san came to Niseko in 1992 as a fresh-faced 20-year-old who had just spent a year in Rusutsu, and got hooked on Niseko's size after visiting for a day. Takanashi-san wasn't improving on skis as fast as he'd like and switched to snowboarding. He loved the feel of riding through powder but felt the urge to be different and realised no one was telemarking here. He took to it like a fish to water and kept improving to the point where he entered World Cup events in 1998 and 99 and has featured in more films, magazines and photo shoots than he can remember. Yutaka now runs his own ski store Toyru in Hirafu, has sponsors including (deep breath) Vector Glide, Patagonia, Scarpa, Black Diamond, Osprey, Giro, and Vitoria Sped. If that isn't enough, Takanashi-san also designs skis for prominent Japanese maker Vector Glide.

Of the boarders there is a growing group of old-school riders who are known and respected throughout the community. Gentem founder **Taro Tamai** is renowned across Japan as one of the best powder snowboarders in the country. Tamai-san has left as big a mark on Niseko's snow as he has on the local community through his boards and restaurant. Another Gentem rider, **Tomoki Takaku**, is also one of Gentem's top pros who has been featured in magazines and video shoots for over 10 years.

While he might be getting long in the tooth, 43-year-old **Akio Endo** is still as passionate as ever about his snow surfing and has a collection of sponsors that would make any 20-year-old park rat envious. He got into snowboarding in a big way in 1985 and was third in the National Downhill Snowboarding Championships in 1986, and fourth in National Snowboard Moguls in 1987 (you read correctly, this is old school!). He moved to Niseko in 1993 after working as the half pipe maker at Rusutsu for a couple of years, even shaping the pipe for the 1992 World Cup. Endo-san moved to Niseko in 1993 and hasn't looked back. He's been sponsored by Burton since 1996 and appeared on a top rating Japanese snowboard show in 1997. He's been guiding in Niseko since 1995 and has taken many of the top riders around, and even guided Shaun White and the Red Bull team while they were here this season.

Thirty two-year-old **Yo Amagai**, co-owner of Kutchan's legendary skatepark bar Loaf Lounge has a cult following among snowboard-philas across Japan. Yo did a season in Hakuba after graduating from high school, but relocated to Niseko soon after hearing about its powder from friends. A native of Saitama (near Tokyo), Amagai shot to prominence in 2000 after coming from nowhere to win the Japan Cross Game Masters series. Previously unknown, he decided snowboarding for him was about riding with friends, not competing, but if he was going to compete he wanted to win as much money as he could. He chose events with the biggest purse and trained to win. Yo's extroverted nature, good looks, and obvious natural talent saw him garner a huge national following, especially among the hordes of young female fans. These days he's



photo: eriko mentzos

yutaka takanashi



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akio endo



Above and left: ryunosuke okoshi



yo amagai



taka nakai with dale riva

happily married with a beautiful child but still loves the feeling of standing in the backcountry holding his board, looking out over the mountain, feeling like he's in the depths of Hokkaido's wilderness. He's an all-rounder, borrowing elements of both skateboarding and surfing styles.

A couple of young-gun local skiers have been selected in the National Team recently. **Ryunosuke Okoshi**, 19, is an up and coming young slalom and grand slalom skier who moved to Niseko from Sapporo when he was two. Okoshi has won the All Japan Junior Slalom and grand slalom two years running, the first time anyone has won both events in consecutive years in recent history. Okoshi skied Hirafu's Alpen Course every day after school, preferring the thrill of speed on the hard-packed over the rush of the famed powder. These days Okoshi spends most of his time touring the world. He's currently in Switzerland competing and will be in Europe most of the winter. He returns to Niseko for a week or two over New Years.

**Sora Yoshikawa** is a Hirafu-born, 18-year-old champion mogul skier. His parents own and manage the Yubokumin pension in the lower village. Sora started skiing when he was two, skiing in front of their pension when there weren't many buildings in the area. He was

never into alpine skiing but **Atsushi Itou**, the famous Japanese mogul skier and now co-owner of Niseko 343 ski shop, initiated a mogul team out of young people in Hirafu and Sora decided to join. Sora's dad said he was lucky because he had a great coach and a great mountain to train on, especially the Ni-kabe course, between Onsenzawa and the Hirafu gondola. The steep run's moguls are perfect for mogul practice. Big things are expected in the future since Yoshikawa won a gold medal at the Junior Olympics when he was 15. Grand Hirafu give him a free mountain pass to train with. Sora has recently joined the National Team, beginning at the bottom but now working his way up. He needs to be in the top three to make the next Olympics and he's aiming at being in the Olympic team for the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. The Japan National Team coach, Janne Latela from Finland, believes Sora has great potential and is taking him to the next World Cup in Europe. Sora's father feels his son is very lucky – he's got a great coach, a great run to practice on, and a lot of natural ability which has allowed him to become a great mogul skier. He's also looking for sponsors now to support him because he's currently using his own funds to send him to race.

23-year-old **Takahara Nakai** is a Kutchan-born-and-raised young gun who is quite possibly the hottest young Japanese snowboarder around. 'Taka' is a highly successful half-pipe rider who came fifth in the Torino Olympics in 2006 and fourteenth in Salt Lake City as an 18 year old. Taka is known for his huge airs and tricks and is one of the new generation of young riders taking those skills to the backcountry and filming. At the same time, he's gained the respect of fellow riders and been invited to many events including the X-Games, the Burton Abominable, and the event he is presently attending – the invite-only Terje Haakonsen-produced Oakley Arctic Challenge in Norway. In Japan, Taka rides with his local crew – Seven Samurai - filming all over Hokkaido, emulating the legendary Car Danchi team in some ways but adding a bit of technicality to their straight powder-smashing ways.

Apart from these young guns, Niseko is home to a plethora of ex-elite athletes, too numerous to name here. At several stores around Niseko you're likely to be sold a fleece by someone whose been to three Olympics. One thing is for sure, from the ex-champions to those in the making, they share the same love and passion as the rest of us – the pure joy of sliding down a snow-covered Mt Annapuri.





photo: tsukasa

yo amagai



photo: niseko photography

local



photo: niseko photography

lorne



photo: mark tsukasov - hotshots

andy



photo: mark tsukasov - hotshots

rhyss



photographer: dave paull - hotshots

cam... mono-ski



photo: niseko photography

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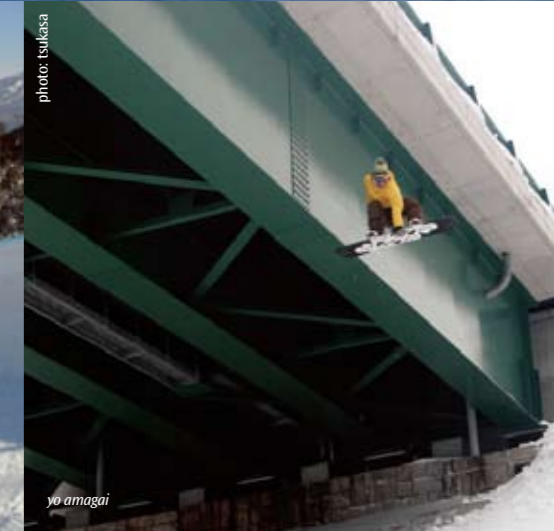


photo: tsukasa

yo amagai





## 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 Moiwa.

The Moiwa region has long been the best kept secret of Japanese locals. Niseko Moiwa 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 – Moiwa 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 Moiwa 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, Moiwa offers uncrowded powder runs, and local Japanese culture and cuisine.

Stage One, the Niseko Moiwa Resort Towers, encompasses 108 strata-titled holiday apartments across two 11-storey towers, with uninterrupted forest and mountain views.

Niseko Moiwa 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
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- 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\$16,800/sqm – Niseko Moiwa 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-bedroom 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.nisekorealestate.com/profile/260](http://www.nisekorealestate.com/profile/260)

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## niseko cuisine at your place

by vanessa gibson

With so many beautiful self-contained apartments and houses in Niseko now, if you're lucky enough to be staying in one it's a pity to go out to eat every night of your holiday. We decided that we're so far into the season that we are getting lazy and would like to have the restaurant come to us this time. What a dream to have an expert chef turn up to your pad, prepare a gourmet dinner perfectly matched with a selection of wine, have them do all the tidying up and leave you to wallow in the glow of the meal on your own comfy lounge. Niseko Cuisine's managing director Tess Stomski has had years of experience and worked at a similar catering service at a French ski resort before setting up Niseko Cuisine earlier this season. Tess and her assistant Anna Coussens arrived at our friend's beautifully appointed house, armed with everything needed to prepare, serve and consume the meal. Tess quickly set about preparing the canapés, while Anna made sure everyone was well equipped with a glass of Kir Royal made with Australian bubbly.

The canapés included a delicious combination of edamame, mizuna, chicken and walnut served in delicate home-made mini parmesan baskets and some delightful smoked salmon-topped polenta & caper muffins. Once we were seated, the entrée was some beautiful medallions of Hokkaido crab salad with gazpacho and avocado quenelles, perfectly matched with a crisp Leeuwin Estate Art Series Sauvignon Blanc. Divine. We were well and truly prepared for the main and they didn't disappoint with a pork loin wrapped in pancetta with red onion and prune marmalade served on a sweet potato puree, green leaf salad and green beans in miso and sesame. Their choice of a D'arenberg Derelict Grenache was a perfect accompaniment. If I was English I might say pucker, but instead I'll just say yum yum! Dessert was a green tea panacotta served in original Japanese porcelain, and everyone's bowl was different. A selection of fresh truffles, French and Hokkaido cheeses, homemade chocolate and Mt Horrocks Cordon Cut Riesling dropped us off right at contentment station. They then cleared up the kitchen, all the crockery and utensils, leaving us with a beautifully clean house and our own wine glasses (which they cleverly encouraged us to use) so we could continue to enjoy the remainder of our wine after they left.

Niseko Cuisine also offers children's meals, where the kids get in the kitchen and make their own pizzas from scratch - messy but fun! Breakfast and brunch are proving very popular, with the girls taking care of many visiting celebrities this season. If you've got a group of six or more, are staying in a nice place and feel like indulging, having Niseko Cuisine come over for all of your breakfasts and a dinner or two adds a luxurious touch to a holiday.

Niseko Cuisine: [www.nisekocuisine.com](http://www.nisekocuisine.com) 080 5584 1313 or 0136 55 6885.

Hailing from the extreme terrain of Mt Baw Baw in Australia, Stirling Goldman was bred on waist-deep, man-made powder and extra steep chutes. Stirling has conquered the most beastly mountains across the world, and recently arrived in Niseko. Stirling soon sensed that both local and international punters needed to be taught a thing or two and luckily for us, has decided to settle here for good. Stirling Goldman: a man who rides mountains.

Having ridden over 153 official ski resorts in over 31 countries, not to mention ridiculous amounts of back country, Stirling came to Niseko this season to see what all the fuss was about. Needless to say I have been impressed, but probably not as impressed as Niseko has been with me.

My first Niseko experience took me to the Hirafu peak. My physical prowess and previous hill sprint training on Everest meant it was a light canter up the hill in which Stirling barely broke into a sweat. By the time I was there the mountain was virtually chanting my name.

Stirling had a look around to see what needed some new lines put into it (ie, where should I sign my name). Most punters were dropping off towards Hanazono, but punter is not a word Stirling associates with. The backbowl looked ready for me. I traversed across the ridge and came to a drop-in point. The large cornice was screaming for a 360 corkscrew off it to get things rolling, and clearly that's what the crowd wanted. But as the ladies know, a bit of foreplay before the main course is key. Stirling likes to keep a few tricks up his sleeve.

I stand at the top, with a Japanese skier to the right of me, and an Aussie boarder to the left. I look from side to side. The Japanese skier murmurs, 'Doozo'; the Aussie says, 'You go first mate.' Clearly these boys

recognize class when they see it. I mean how could they not in my red with yellow stripes all-in-one ski suit, rear entry single buckle Nordica boots and 210cm straight edge Blizzards. Stirling is all over 'class' like white on rice. I reply back, 'Thank you gentlemen. Prepare to be impressed.'

I adjust my Carrera goggles. Although I have no mirror, I know I look sharp. I drop in. I take off. The crowd looking from the peak pauses. 'He's good... he's really good' is what they are thinking. The ladies are lustful. The men want to be me. It's a common theme.

I ski down, carving out some glorious turns. Even with 210cm Blizzards there is nothing Stirling can't ski. While the pitch is nothing compared to the mountains I've ridden switch on in Alaska, I'm gaining speed and the snow is brilliant. The FSF (face shot factor) is high - probably about six in only a 30 second run. The 'tache is glistening in powder. I feel alive! I now see what all the fuss is about.

I look back up the hill at the perfect 'S' shaped line I've left. It's screaming for the Japanese or Aussie guy to complement it for a perfect powder 8. Stirling wishes they would. Stirling knows they can't. The crowd at the peak is cheering. They are in awe. They have seen a man who rides mountains.

Q: 'Stirling, I'm having some trouble carving on the groomers. I'm tending to slide my turns a bit. Have you any advice?' Russell, Brisbane. Aus

A: Sorry Russell, took me a while to answer this one. That's because I had to work out what a groomer was. Russ, the last time Stirling rode a groomer I was 4 years old in France in -40 degrees wearing only a T-shirt. I was instructing adults at the time. Russ, you're a muppet, buddy. Niseko is all about the powder and

I am a man who rides mountains - not groomers.

Q: 'Stirling, how do you go about getting girls in a ski town. Things seem a little outnumbered if you get my drift.' Steve, Perth. Aus.

A: Well Steve, actually Stirling doesn't get your drift, but unlike you I don't have a head like a deep sea prawn. I've never really had an issue but let's be honest: Stirls gets the girls. Stirling was in a bar the other night and there were 77 males and 11 females. Stirling had a look around. Three girls behind the bar giving me free drinks, and low and behold eight females in a group around me. Steve here are a few tips:

1. Find out where I am - it will be the most crowded bar, because I'm there;
2. Hang out near me - not with me;
3. If, and only if Stirling gives you the nod, you can have my spares;
4. Remember always outnumbered, never outgunned.

Q: 'Stirling, I'm a huge fan and have been since you were on the 1976 cover of Powderholes - the official magazine of Mt Baw Baw. I was wondering how I would go about doing some runs with you?' Chuck, Vancouver. BC.

A: Ah, finally a question from someone with taste. Yes, Chuck that wasn't a bad cover was it. Not to mention the hundred or so other covers I've appeared on. Chuck, do you actually know what it takes to be a man that rides mountains? Probably not. Anyway, although I appreciate you're a fan, Stirling doesn't like a nose in his ass. To ride with me is invite only Chucky boy. RSVP essential.

Got a question for a man who knows? Fire it to [stirling@powderlife.co.jp](mailto:stirling@powderlife.co.jp).



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by Eriko Mentzos



Naotoshi Takiguchi

**Boom Snowboards, Kutchan**

Boom is a fairly appropriate word for what has happened in Niseko over the past five years. But it was almost 10 years ago that the owner of Kutchan's Boom snowboard shop came up with the name. In 1996 Naohisa Takiguchi decided snowboarding had gained enough mainstream popularity that there would be enough business to start selling snowboard gear in Kutchan. He opened a snowboard section on the third floor of his brother's ski and sporting goods shop across the road - Takiguchi Sports. Within three years he was doing well enough to move out on his own and moved into a small space across the road. Takiguchi had been to Kutchan's sister city St Moritz in Switzerland several times and decided to name his shop after its snowboard shop, Boom. These days its run by his son Naotoshi who has been working in the business since he was 15. Naotoshi is a mad-keen snowboarder but unfortunately these days he's actually too busy to get out on the mountain very often. He travels Japan going to about 10 snowboard shows a year and they stock more than 20 different brands.

**Hamakko Restaurant, Kutchan**

If you hitch a free ride down to K-town on the Kutchan Night Go Bus that leaves from outside Seicomart, you owe it to Takashi Nakayama to dine at his delicious izakaya restaurant Hamakko - it was Nakayama-san's idea that the Kutchan Council should offer the free service to get people staying in Hirafu down to its quirky little service town at night to experience the wonderful array of restaurants, pubs and other entertainment venues it boasts. Hamakko started about 20 years ago, in the peak of the infamous Japanese economic boom, and the restaurant was packed every night with businessmen living large on company expense accounts. Their speciality is seafood, sourced from Hokkaido's seafood hotspots wherever they might be each season. Be sure to get your polaroid taken and pinned to the wall for posterity, and to be boasted about to the friends you take there next time.



Takashi Nakayama with staff member Yoko

**Hurry Slowly**

One of the most amusing things for foreigners visiting Niseko is the quirky names of the small pension accomodation houses around the village. Among Popcorn, Carrot, Snowman Memory and Hang Loose, one of the best is Hurry Slowly. Masayuki and Noriko Abe opened Hurry Slowly 13 years ago after moving from nearby Otaru. They used to come to Niseko and stay at Pension Full Note and envied the lifestyle of its owner who worked hard all winter and relaxed all summer. Masayuki came up with the name based on a famous Japanese proverb which says: "If you want to get to your goal quickly, sometimes it can pay to go the long way around". With an entrepreneurial zest, Masayuki also started a traditional Japanese restaurant, Yo, and built a row of condominium townhouses. Despite moving to Niseko to enjoy the slow life, Masayuki has actually found he's too busy and although he was a keen skier, has actually only managed to get out on the mountain a handful of times since he arrived. If you're not staying at Hurry Slowly, be sure to experience restaurant Yo.



Noriko and Masayuki Abe

**Yawaraya**

If you hadn't noticed already, the Japanese take dining out very seriously. But one of the more relaxed forms of dining is the izakaya pub restaurant. Best described as casual Japanese dining, an izakaya serves lots of small dishes of meat, seafood and vegetables in an array of styles. The founders of Yawaraya, Shintaro Hagiwara and wife Maki, are very fond of the traditional izakaya culture and have worked hard to ensure diners at their establishment experience the true izakaya experience - tatami mat (woven straw) floors, a relaxed atmosphere, a setting where friends can sit for a long time and enjoy drink and conversation. Shintaro says many Hirafu izakaya now forego the offering of an otoushi - a small, unordered dish provided upon arrival. But wanting to keep the tradition alive, they continue to do so and it's often one of the tastiest dishes of the night. Be sure to try their succulent wagyu beef and their special shouchu - sake-like wine.



Shintaro Hagiwara

night life

by Kaori-chan

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Tell us about your event!  
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- Saturday March 1**  
Java Bar DJ maco and MJ ELEMENT  
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- Sunday March 2**  
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 March 3**  
Java Bar Karaoke and Toss the Boss  
Toss Tracey for every drink - call it right & your drink is free + Karaoke with a twist.
- Tuesday March 4**  
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 March 5**  
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 March 6**  
Java Bar Live Music: Micko & Christian  
Two great local musos playing all your
- Friday March 7**  
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 March 8**  
Java Bar DJ maco and DJ Massah
- Sunday March 9**  
Java Bar Sunday Sessions with Christian
- Monday March 10**  
Java Bar Karaoke and Toss the Boss.
- Tuesday March 11**  
BBQ night at Blo Blo  
Niseko Darts Semifinals @ Wild Bills
- Wednesday March 12**  
POWDERLIFE KUTCHAN PUB CRAWL  
¥1,000 leaves 7.30. Seicomart bus stop
- Thursday March 13**  
Java Bar: Live Music: Micko & Christian
- Friday March 14**  
Apres Bar 7pm to 9pm.  
¥2,000 2 hours all you can drink.  
Java Bar Mystery music mix - DJ maco

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Best Cocktails & Espresso in Niseko!  
Sakura St. Mid Hirafu Village, Shuttle Stop 4. t: 0136 23 0788



**Shaun White rocks Wild Bills**  
While Shaun White is in Niseko to experience the world's best powder he's not shy to let his hair down and party with the locals. At the Red Bull-sponsored Snow Wings party Shaun and his crew turned the restaurant at Wild Bills into a VIP only enclave with vodka Red Bulls flowing freely. Shaun was interviewed and declared that the snow in Japan was the sickest in the world. Shaun and crew returned the next night to party with the locals before barman Brett encouraged Shaun to get behind the bar and take the helm as DJ. He let loose with a string of Guns N' Roses tracks. Celebrity spotting is becoming an increasingly popular addition to a holiday as Niseko continues to feature on the radar of the stars.

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\*No Cover Charge



Be owner Toshikazu Akita and manager Jun Gomisawa

## let it be in Kutchan

by magnus alexander

It's a well known fact that Japan's population is ageing at a rapid rate, and nowhere else is it more apparent than rural Hokkaido. Young people in areas like Kutchan not keen on taking over their family's farms or small businesses are heading for the city. If not Sapporo, Tokyo and other major metropolitan centres where work is plentiful and the benefits of modern life are close at hand.

Conscious of this fact, lounge bar Be's owner Toshikazu Akita wanted to create a space where young people could come in and communicate the old fashioned way. When he says old fashioned, he means just 10 years ago before the age of the 'keitai' (mobile phone) and internet.

"These days there are a lot of young people who never socialise away from work or home," he says. "Some people at my work I never see outside. People can communicate by mobile phone and computer so there's no need to go outside."

The Kutchan local got a job as a 'salary man' with a building maintenance company for a few years before getting a job with the Kutchan post office. After a few years doing the rounds of his local neighbourhood he came across an opportunity to take over a small Kutchan bar. Recognising most Kutchan bars were either izakayas (casual Japanese dining pubs) or karaoke bars, he set out to do something a little bit different.

With the help of manager Jun-kun they brought in a pool table, a darts board and set out a few lounges and tables. With a small budget and creative flare they've brilliantly decorated the place with retro paraphernalia.

One of the deciding factors in Toshikazu-kun's decision to take over the pub was his love of music. He installed a set of decks and brought along his music collection. Adorning the walls are CDs left behind from visiting DJs and stacked behind the stage is a solid collection of vinyl records. Adding to the already spacious, relaxed space there's always some unique and cruisy hip hop, RnB, jazz or blues tunes playing.

The meaning behind the name Be is that it's a pub not specialising in anything. Toshikazu-kun didn't want it to be associated with any particular image. It's not a karaoke bar, it's not a pool bar or a darts bar, it's not a nightclub. It's just a place where people can roll on in, relax and... be.

If you're looking for a night out, outside of the well-known Hirafu haunts and experience somewhere with a bit of real local Japanese character, Be is a great option.

The back streets of Kutchan can be a bit disorientating but to find Be head up Eki Mae Dori from the train station until you find the Kutchan Tourist Information centre on a street corner on the left, about half way up the street. Be is two blocks down in a building on the left. A vertical light box sign on the side of the building advertises all the tenants. Be is on the ground floor, just near Bagus Bar.

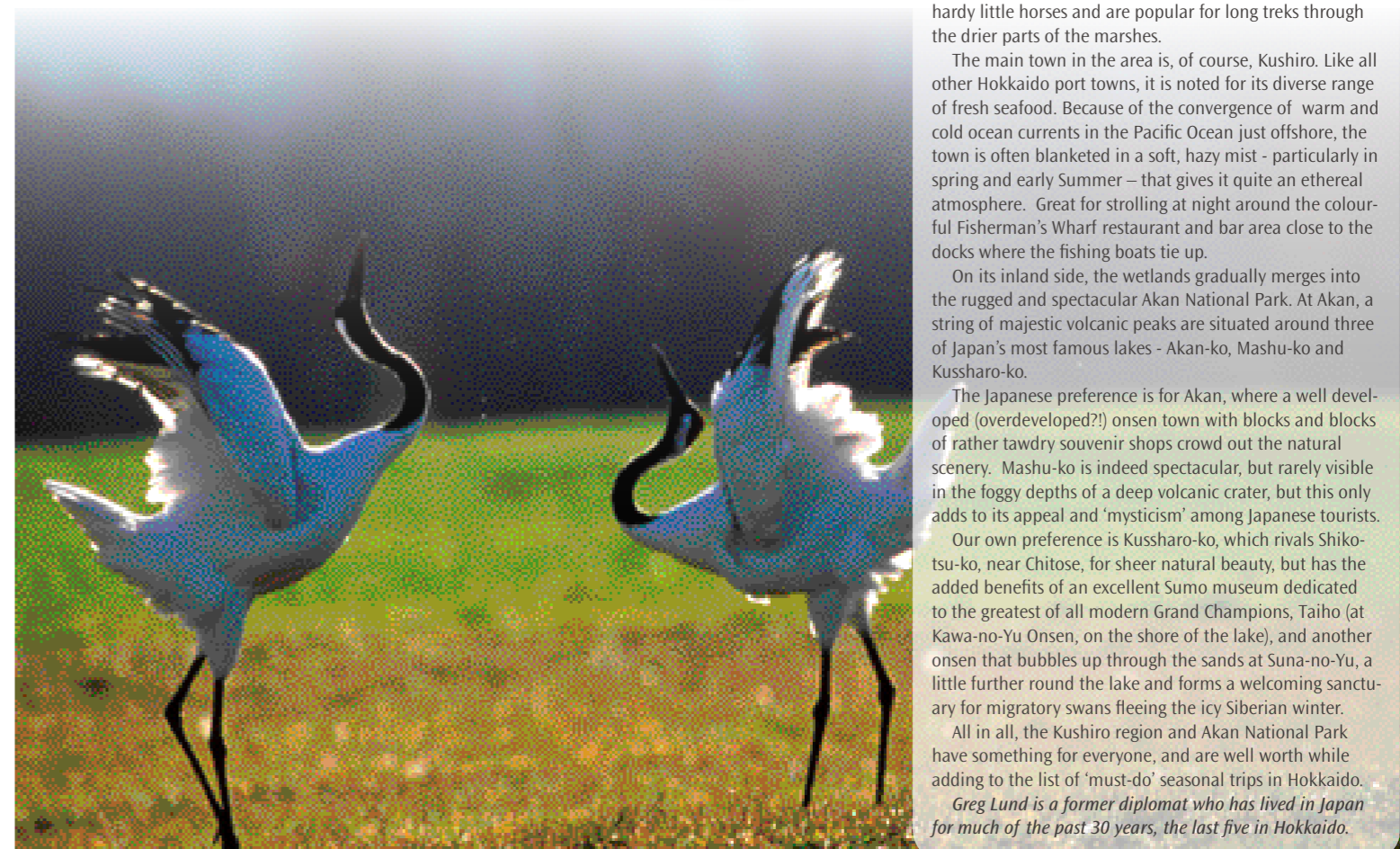
If you've got a group of five or more they'll do a deal for all you can drink for two hours for ¥3000 (negotiable)... ie, if you can drink more than five or six drinks in two hours it's paid for itself.

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.

## the Kushiro Wetlands

and Japan's national symbol  
By greg lund

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



In Japan's nature-worshipping Shinto religion, the crane has traditionally been a revered bird.

Among other things, it denotes longevity, and is commonly used symbolically in Japanese baptism and wedding ceremonies. An ancient legend promises that anyone who folds a thousand origami (Japanese paper art) cranes will be granted a wish by a crane, such as long life or recovery from illness or injury.

In the hierarchy of Japanese cranes, one stands out from all the rest, and - like all good things in this country - it lives in Hokkaido.

It is the Red Crested Crane, or tanchozuru - which has been designated officially as a living Japanese monument. Until very recently it was adopted by Japan Airlines as its company logo, appearing in stylised form on the tail fin of JAL commercial planes and perhaps providing comfort to nervous Japanese air travellers.

Snowy white, with black tipped wings and throat and a bright red cap, it is a magnificent creature, growing to a height of 1.5 metres, with a wingspan of 2.5 metres. Like the Australian brulga, it dances - bobbing, weaving and leaping spectacularly in courtship and other communication rituals.

Unfortunately, it is also extremely endangered, and its last real remaining habitat is in the Kushiro Wetlands National Park, a wide expanse of beautiful, but boggy, marshes just north of the pretty port town of Kushiro, on the south-east coast of Hokkaido.

A Government-sponsored artificial breeding program to try to ensure the preservation of the cranes has resulted in at least 20 of them now living all year round in the Wetlands Park, in addition to the truly wild ones that migrate seasonally back and forth between Hokkaido and South East Asia.

A well developed boardwalk system covers a large part of the marshes and offers close-up viewing of the cranes, and a nearby (very hot!) onsen, or hot spring, provides wonderful relaxation after a good walk. Abutting the park is an interesting horse ranch, where Dosanko, the chunky native Hokkaido ponies are bred and reared for riding. They are hardy horses and are popular for long treks through the drier parts of the marshes.

The main town in the area is, of course, Kushiro. Like all other Hokkaido port towns, it is noted for its diverse range of fresh seafood. Because of the convergence of warm and cold ocean currents in the Pacific Ocean just offshore, the town is often blanketed in a soft, hazy mist - particularly in spring and early Summer - that gives it quite an ethereal atmosphere. Great for strolling at night around the colourful Fisherman's Wharf restaurant and bar area close to the docks where the fishing boats tie up.

On its inland side, the wetlands gradually merges into the rugged and spectacular Akan National Park. At Akan, a string of majestic volcanic peaks are situated around three of Japan's most famous lakes - Akan-ko, Mashu-ko and Kussharo-ko.

The Japanese preference is for Akan, where a well developed (overdeveloped?!) onsen town with blocks and blocks of rather tawdry souvenir shops crowd out the natural scenery. Mashu-ko is indeed spectacular, but rarely visible in the foggy depths of a deep volcanic crater, but this only adds to its appeal and 'mysticism' among Japanese tourists.

Our own preference is Kussharo-ko, which rivals Shikotsu-ko, near Chitose, for sheer natural beauty, but has the added benefits of an excellent Sumo museum dedicated to the greatest of all modern Grand Champions, Taiho (at Kawa-no-Yu Onsen, on the shore of the lake), and another onsen that bubbles up through the sands at Suna-no-Yu, a little further round the lake and forms a welcoming sanctuary for migratory swans fleeing the icy Siberian winter.

All in all, the Kushiro region and Akan National Park have something for everyone, and are well worth while adding to the list of 'must-do' seasonal trips in Hokkaido.

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



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NISEKO ADVENTURE CENTRE abuta-gun hokkaido JAPAN

in focus  
**ross findlay**



Niseko has an amazing variety of adventure sports activities - there's something for everyone to enjoy all year-round. However until a group of Australians established adventure sports companies in the area in the mid 90's, Niseko's only attraction was skiing. Ross Findlay, founder of Niseko Adventure Centre (NAC), was one of the pioneers and the first to begin summer adventure sports. Ross is one foreigner who has earned the utmost respect from the Japanese and expatriate community alike. We learn a bit more about this Niseko trailblazer and get three more great tips on some must-do activities.

**When did you first come to Japan?**

In 1989, I started working as a ski instructor at Teine highland in Sapporo

**When did you come to Niseko?**

After 2 seasons at Teine I moved to Niseko in 1991. I opened NAC in 1995 and we moved into our current location in 1998.

**What did you do in Australia before moving to Japan?**

I'm from Sydney, but went to university to study Sports Science at Canberra, at that time it wasn't available in Sydney. I then worked a few sports related jobs including coordinating handicapped sports and I managed a gym for some time.

**What drew you to Japan in the first place?**

I'd been to Europe and America working as a ski instructor. A friend who had been here before showed me some photos, it looked beautiful and I just wanted to come and experience it myself.

**Is it busier for NAC in summer or winter?**

Definitely summer. We have core activities such as rafting, ducking, canyoning. Then one-off trips to unique locations for canoeing or the like, and we also run an adventure- sports race series. During winter we have a ski school and back country tours. Most Australians don't like to walk and prefer lifts, so our backcountry tours are 90% Japanese; the ski school is 90% Australians. We do some snow shoeing tours also.

**How many days a season do you ski?**

I ski every day and I also still teach. I'm one of these rare folks that is as happy standing on a beginner slope teaching as I am going out in the powder and back-country.

**Where could we usually find you on the mountain?**

At the moment because everyone is off in the powder early in the morning; I've been spending more time on the course. You can really put the speed down and let fly for about an hour first thing on the groomers. After that it gets a bit crowded to go fast. I just take the lift from the Alpen and do the Super course. I just love the carving skis, they allow you to do things I've always wanted to do on skis so carving on-piste with them is great fun.

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

1 I think everyone should go into Kutchan and walk into one of those restaurants that look curious and you don't know what's inside so you might be a bit timid. Go inside and have a chat and order something off the Japanese menu. They are the sort of things that really make a holiday. One of the nicer things you can do here, to experience a bit of real Japan.

2 Definitely experience the powder. There is always powder out there. If you're new to Niseko and an intermediate level skier, get someone who can show you around. There are lots of spots around that are not so scary without many trees so you can go down quite safely a few times before you pick up a bit of courage.

3 Try to go out at night and ski off the edge of the course through the powder with just the shadows of light coming through the trees, especially if you can do it with a full moon. Full moon night skiing through powder is something else. That is quite a unique experience. Not many people are fortunate enough to get the chance to ski powder at night.



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

Contact JASON KING for further information

Mobile: 080 5687 5052

Email: jason@hokkaidorealestate.com

Web: www.hokkaidorealestate.com





## Keeping the best of niseko

Sustainable development

by Nathaniel Matthews

Niseko's future is looking very bright. This year has seen the area's customer base broadening. Increasing numbers of visitors from Asia and Europe coupled with record numbers of Australians has further cemented Niseko's position as a world class ski resort. In the domestic market, the construction of the Shinkansen (bullet train) extension from Tokyo to Sapporo via Kutchan, which is slated to be completed by 2015, will further augment year-round visitors and facilitate travel to the region.

As the fame and popularity of Niseko settles more comfortably with its residents, both locals and visitors look to a promising future full of exciting developments, improving infrastructure, and fantastic powder. Increasingly, within the expanding development of Niseko there have been subtle changes taking place to preserve the area's natural beauty for future generations. These changes include investors requesting developments that are not only

profitable, but aesthetically pleasing and in balance with Niseko's natural environment. A quick survey of Hirafu will see a number of beautifully designed homes that compliment Niseko's many qualities while being exceedingly popular in the growing rental market.

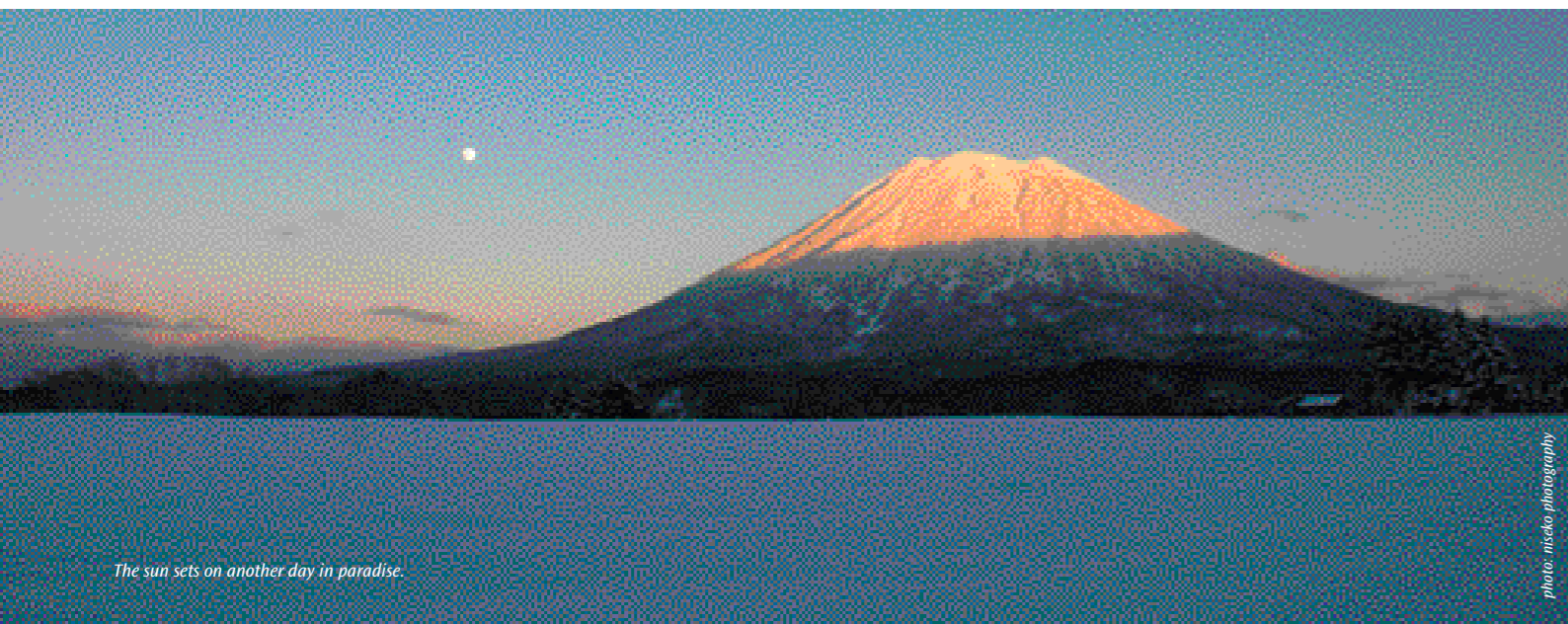
On February 8th 2008, in conjunction with this desire to protect Niseko's natural beauty, the Kutchan Quasi-Urban Planning Scenic Districts Zoning (<http://www.town.kutchan.hokkaido.jp/town/juutakutoshi/toukei/tokei/toshikeikaku.jsp>) came into effect. These new construction regulations are designed to ensure that the area grows tastefully and sustainably. Although these new regulations do not represent any major obstacles to development they aim to preserve Niseko's character such as protecting neighboring views of Yotei and preserve the pastoral landscape.

Other signs of maturity in the town are reflected in increasing harmony amongst competing companies. There is a growing realization that working together

and communicating ideas provides a win-win situation for all. The creation of The Niseko Promotion Board is another solid step for the resort's future. The Niseko promotion Board is a group of both local companies and local and federal government interests that aspires to promote Niseko as a year round holiday destination. The board has already begun to contribute towards strengthening the relationships among companies and the community and this in turn has helped promote Niseko to the world, creating growth in real-estate and many spin-off markets throughout the region.

As Niseko develops and grows it will benefit everyone if the area preserves the qualities that attracted the first visitors to this beautiful corner of the world.

*Nathaniel (Nate) Matthews works for The Niseko Company and has been living in Hokkaido for 7 years. His first trip to Niseko was in the winter of 2000/1 and he's been coming back ever since.*



The sun sets on another day in paradise.

photo: niseko photography

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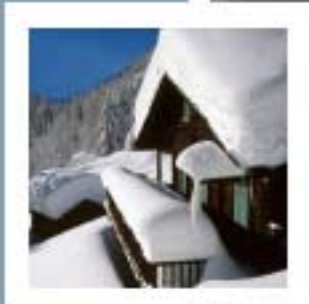
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# SUNLIGHT YOUTEI II

The town of sunshine filtering through foliage

Information MAP Local guide chart

**Block Map**  
All blocks with amazing view of Mt. Yotei

**Property Overview**

- Lot size: 114-112 are 1,177.17sqm (117.17m<sup>2</sup>) to 1,189.10sqm (118.91m<sup>2</sup>)
- Access: 7.2 min. from JR Hirafu station by car
- Building coverage: 40%
- Total floor area: 1,100m<sup>2</sup> - 1,100m<sup>2</sup> (110,000 sqm) - 1,100,000 sqm (110,000 sqm)
- Electricity and telephone facilities: 2,000,000 yen - 2,000,000 yen (200,000 yen)
- Water supply: 200,000 yen - 200,000 yen (20,000 yen)
- Public works: 200,000 yen - 200,000 yen (20,000 yen)
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email yuihome@extra.ocn.ne.jp phone: (0136) 22-2711



## AIRPORT

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

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

### Getting From New Chitose To Niseko

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

## BUS

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

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

### Whiteliner Buses

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

### Chuo Buses

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

### Donan buses

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

### Hokkaido Resort Liner

www.access-n.jp/ski\_info.html.011-219-4411

## CAR RENTAL

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

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

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

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

## TAXI

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

## TRAIN

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

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

## INTER-RESORT TRANSPORT

A shuttle bus connects the Grand Hirafu, Hi-

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

### Kutchan Night Bus

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

### Taxis

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

## AIRLINES

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

## BANKING

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

## CREDIT CARDS

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

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

## CURRENCY

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

## DRIVING

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

## ELECTRICITY

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

## EARTHQUAKES

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

## EMERGENCIES

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 Telephone 0136 22 0399.

### Ueda Orthopedic Clinic

A privately run orthopaedic clinic providing

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

## INTERNET

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

## MOBILE PHONES

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

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

## TELECOMMUNICATIONS

### Domestic Calls

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

### Directory Assistance

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

### International Calls

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

### Calling Cards

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

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

## POST OFFICES

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

## TOURIST INFORMATION

### Kutchan Tourism Information Centre

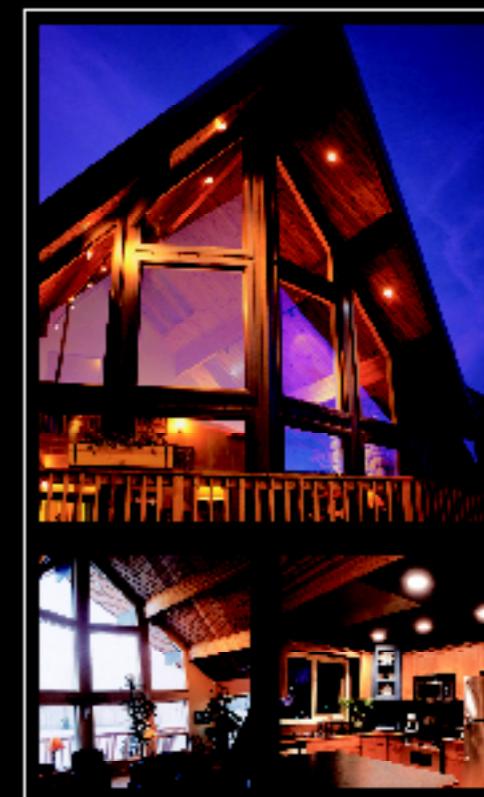
Located on Eki-mae Dori opposite Best Denki, the newly opened tourist information centre provides an excellent English speaking service for visitors. They dispense brochures and can help you book accommodation. 0136 22 1121

### The Niseko Grand Hirafu Welcome Centre

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

## WALKING ON ICY ROADS

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



## Nature Inspired Niseko Living

## INFORMATION AND SALES

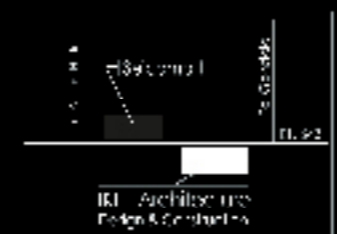
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FAX: 81 (0)136 21 2 034

EMAIL:  
info@nisekolinwoodvillage.com

WEB: [www.nisekolinwoodvillage.com](http://www.nisekolinwoodvillage.com)





### on piste and off

We now have a massive base building up and it's best to assume that the avalanche danger will be high. Avalanches are not the only risk that the backcountry serves up and many cracks and holes are forming on steep surfaces. Use extreme caution passing from Moiwa to Annupuri as there are several big cracks on the steep faces. The cracks are indicative that the slope was about to slide but held, so we can be somewhat thankful for them, but you don't want to find yourself in one and they are often not visible from above. Always descend one by one in the backcountry.

#### Local riders' DVDs for sale

In these early days of Niseko's rise to prominence there are still very few films available showcasing the area and the rest of Japan. One crew of hardcore local Japanese riders produce an independent film under their SELFilms label every year. This year's flick documenting last season doesn't have too much powder action but has a heap of rad moves from riders all over Japan. Niseko's own Tatsumi 'Tats' Konou makes a cameo performing his signature back flip. To buy a copy from Tats email [ed@powderlife.co.jp](mailto:ed@powderlife.co.jp) or drop into our office on the second floor of Australia House, across the road from Seicomart. The ¥3500 will be well spent considering it will keep this hardcore crew of rippers riding and creating great films in the best spots across Hokkaido and Japan.



#### Surfanic Stack of the Week



The Surfanic Stack of the Week is getting more competitive by the week. We're not sure if it's because Powderlife is becoming more popular or the riding is getting worse, but we're happy either way – keep 'em coming! Phillip Crumpler from Melbourne is this week's Surfanic Stack of the Week Winner for this killer snap of fellow NISS instructor Michael Crawford. Face plants are so 1990's. With Niseko's powder we're after head plants and Micky shows us the way. The next time you're sliding down a steep drop to a flat powdery run out remember to *bend ze knees* or this might happen to you too! Submit your stack of the week pic to [ed@powderlife.co.jp](mailto:ed@powderlife.co.jp).

View all Mountain Passes

Pass Name	Start	End	Price
...	...	...	...

Information regarding ski passes, including details on how to purchase and use them. It includes sections for 'Ski Passes' and 'Ski School'.

**Deposit for**  
Kawada  
Information regarding the deposit for Kawada, including details on the amount and terms.

**+** In Case of Emergency  
Emergency contact information for Niseko, including phone numbers for medical services and other emergency contacts.

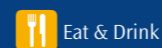
Additional information and notices, possibly related to the ski resort's policies or current conditions.

Further information and notices, continuing the details provided in the previous sections.





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



### Australian Alpine Club Niseko



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



### Paul's Café Niseko



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



### Bang Bang



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

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



### Ichimura Soba



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

11.00-15.00, 18.00-20.00 Closed Tuesdays  
Map ref: E 4  
www.Niseko-Ichimura.com T. 0136-23-0603



### SAS Snowsports



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

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



### Grand Hirafu Ski Hire



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

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



### Niseko Hirafu Ski & Snowboard School



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

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



### Black Diamond Tours



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

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www.blackdiamondtours.com T. 0902054TOUR(8687)



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

### Bonbori Souvenirs & Foot Massage



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Map ref: B 2  
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Map ref: C 2  
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the last word...

## on health: KNEES

by dave garrick



**Dave Garrick**  
Is a physiotherapist working at Niseko Physio. Outside of winter, he is based at North Sydney Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Centre. He is currently studying his Masters in Sports Physiotherapy.

While more often than not, knee pain suffered here in Niseko is a torn ligament resulting from a fall, one of the most common forms of knee pain also occurs in winter sports: patella-femoral pain. This form of knee pain is usually of a more gradual onset, often as a result of overuse. Also known variously as patella mal-tracking, chondromalacia patellae or anterior

knee pain, patellofemoral knee pain is common in people who are skiing or snowboarding regularly.

Patellofemoral pain refers to pain in and around the kneecap (patella), caused by irritation of structures in and around the patellofemoral joint as the patella glides on the thigh bone (femur) below. When the knee straightens and bends, the patella glides up and down a groove in the femur called the trochlea. The underside of the knee-cap is shaped perfectly to match this groove but if it moves too far to the side, problems can begin. The knee-cap has structures pulling it towards the outside (lateral) and the inside (medial), - a virtual tug-of-war, with the knee-cap as the rope! The medial movement of the kneecap is controlled by part of the quadriceps muscle called the VMO (vastus medialis oblique or 'teardrop' muscle in bodybuilding circles), and the lateral movement largely by another part of the quadriceps called the VL (vastus lateralis) and the infamous Iliotibial band (ITB).

Unfortunately for the poor old VMO, its nemesis the VL and its buddy the ITB often team up and take delight in beating up the VMO and yanking the kneecap too far to the side. This is particularly relevant in activities where the contact force of the back of the kneecap and the groove are increased. Normal walk-

ing increases these forces by 0.5 times body weight, whereas stair climbing can increase it by 7-8 times body weight. So it is easy to see why people with this condition often complain of pain using stairs (usually down is worse than up). More so, if you consider that when you are skiing it is in a semi squat position, it is understandable that pain can occur. And that's not even taking into account the powder or bumps, which are both harder on the knees! Sometimes patellofemoral pain is called "moviegoers" knee, as pain is often noted with prolonged sitting upon watching a movie with the knees bent. Perhaps in the alpine environment it is better known as "chairlift goers" knee.

There are several factors that can contribute to the development of patellofemoral pain. As mentioned, overuse or an increase in the amount of an activity is one reason. This can be particularly relevant in skiing or snowboarding, whether it is the office worker on their ten day ski holiday that goes from zero to hero; or the endless winter workers who in some cases can spend more than 200 days per year on the hill!

There are also factors relating to the structure of the individual that can predispose to patellofemoral pain. These include:

- Weakness and/or wasting of the VMO muscle which lead to the kneecap not being pulled inwardly as the knee bends. Important to note is that the VMO muscle switches off when knee pain or swelling is present, and therefore an important aspect of rehab is to improve the activation of this muscle.
- Weakness of the pelvic stabilisers which are part of your 'core'. If you are sloppy at the hips and around your centre, there will be increased forces acting on the knee.
- Inwardly rotated thigh bones, rotated shin bones, or 'knocked' knees which all alter the joint congruency and loads going through the patellofemoral joint.
- Inadequate flexibility of the lower limb, as tight muscles can lead to altered motions of the knee

joint. The hamstrings, calves and ITB are particularly important.

- Pronating feet (feet that roll too far inwards when you walk), lead to more load on the patellofemoral joint.

- Patella position. Some people have a kneecap that sits too high, too low, or most commonly, too far to the outside.

So how is it treated you ask? The best advice is to see your local physiotherapist or sports physician who can offer a program catered to your needs. This program will revolve around correction of any of the predisposing factors as mentioned above. Activity modification may be required for a short period which may mean some relative rest and avoidance of aggravating factors. Rather than time off the hill, it may mean just changing some of your terrain selection, or increasing your breaks. VMO strengthening is crucial in order to help with the kneecap tracking. In addition to this, patellofemoral taping or bracing can yield an excellent reduction of pain, which may be key on a ski holiday to keep you out there. The tape or brace acts to help with the tracking of the kneecap and provide constant feedback to your 'muscle memory' as to where it should sit. ITB massage (ouch - they don't call us physio-terrorists for nothing!) and lower limb stretching can really help. Pelvic and core stability work may be indicated. Foot bedding or orthotics in boots is useful for those who over-pronate. Reduction of acute pain and inflammation can be achieved with ice particularly after you ski, and anti-inflammatories as per your pharmacy advice.

Patellofemoral pain can be frustrating, but it is generally an easily treatable condition, and an appropriate treatment programme should see most symptoms resolved within 6 weeks. Surgery is generally not indicated. So, regardless of your ability, don't let patellofemoral pain stop you snowploughing the family run or carving the white at the peak.

Happy skiing!



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**Niseko Physio**

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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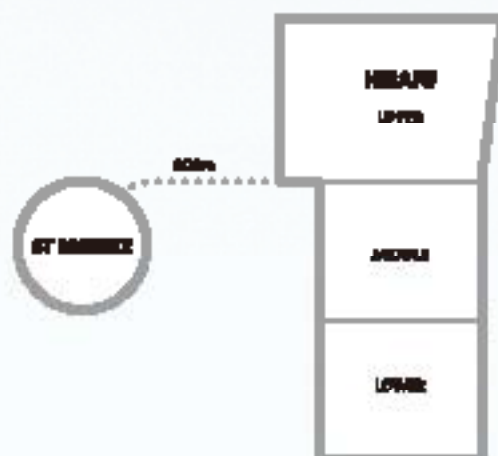


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