

issue 10 Dec 13 - 26 2008

# powderlife

NISEKO ニセコ

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

## FIRST TRACKS

**BACKCOUNTRY**  
how to stay safe out there

**HOKKAIDO**  
powder snow disneyland

**A THOUSAND WORDS**  
the first poster for your wall

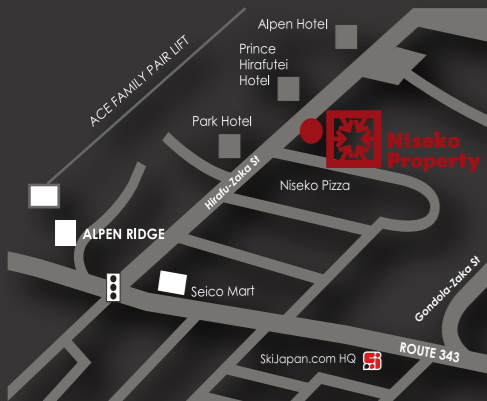
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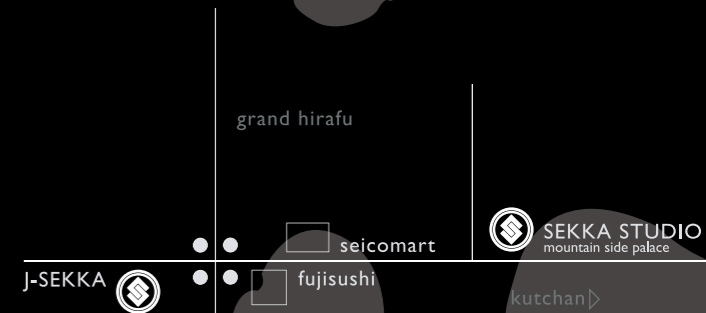


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cover Jumbo Course, minutes after opening for the first time this season **photographer** Mike Richards

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### editor's note...

WELCOME back to another season in Niseko, and thanks for picking up a *Powderlife* in this, our second year. We were so buoyed by the community support for the magazine last season that we vowed to return bigger and better for winter 2008-09. There are a lot of changes to the publication this season, and it's all being backed up and integrated with our all new website at [www.powderlife.com](http://www.powderlife.com). A big 'thank you' must go out to our sponsors and the many new contributors from across the community who are helping us with the magazine and website.

We're also very pleased to introduce three important new members to the *Powderlife* team. First and foremost, our new full-time designer, Geoff McRoberts, who is single-handedly responsible for the new look of the magazine this season, not to mention the website. Writing full-time for us this winter will be Matthew Thomas, a former News Limited newspaper journalist, who has already contributed a number of great articles to this issue, and brought a lot of valuable experience to the magazine and website. And finally the glue holding the operation together, Chika Matsuda. Chika looks after the Japanese side of the business, and so much more – we'd need another page to list everything she does. Be sure to let these guys know if you have anything you wish to contribute.

We are pleased to be able to bring you a much more comprehensive magazine this season, and as always, love to hear your feedback. We would like to start publishing readers' letters, so if you've got anything on your mind, have any ideas for the magazine or website, or just want to tell us what a fabulous place you think Niseko is, put it in an email to [ed@powderlife.com](mailto:ed@powderlife.com).

It's going to be another amazing winter in Niseko. See you on the slopes!!

**Kristian Lund, Powderlife Managing Editor** [kris@powderlife.com](mailto:kris@powderlife.com)

### 編集者注...

ニセコの新たなるシーズンへようこそ。そして今シーズンで2年目を迎えるパウダーライフマガジンをお手に取って頂きありがとうございます。雑誌を通し、ニセコのコミュニティサポートとして貢献できることを感謝し、パウダーライフマガジンは、更に規模も大きく、更に楽しいものになることを目標にこれからも頑張っていきます。今シーズンのパウダーライフマガジンには大きな変化をご覧いただけます。新たにホームページを開設もしました [www.powderlife.com](http://www.powderlife.com)。パウダーライフの雑誌、ホームページの作成にご協力して頂いた、地元の方々、スポンサーの方々に感謝致します。

ここで、パウダーライフマガジンの大切な新制作メンバーを3人ご紹介させて頂きたいと思えます。まずフルタイムで働いてくれているウェブデザイナーのジェフ マッククロバーツ。彼がパウダーライフマガジンのデザインに、とても大きな良い変化を与えてくれました。彼他他に、フルタイムで記者として働いてくれているマシュー トーマスがいいます。彼はオーストラリアのニュースリミテッド新聞社でジャーナリストとして活躍していました。最近来日したばかりのマシューですが、もうすでに雑誌の制作に大きな貢献をしてくれています。彼は経験豊かなジャーナリストなので、これからも素晴らしい記事を書いてくれる事に期待できそうです。そして、最後に紹介させて頂きたいのが、松田千佳さんです。千佳は日本語が必要となる取材担当や基本的ないろいろなことをまとめてくれる係です。

パウダーライフマガジンは、これからもお客様のご意見、ご要望等をお待ちしております。読者のお手紙を掲載するページも当雑誌で始めたいと思っておりますので、パウダーライフマガジンに対するアイデアや、ご意見、ニセコのお気に入りの場所をただ教えてくれるだけでもOKなので、[ed@powderlife.com](mailto:ed@powderlife.com) までお気軽にメールしてください。

ニセコの山でまた思いっきり滑る事を楽しみにしています。山の上でお会いしましょう!!

**パウダーライフマガジン 編集長 クリスチャン ランド** [kris@powderlife.com](mailto:kris@powderlife.com)

*Snow settles on majestic Mt Yotei for another season. Photo: Mike Richards*



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**All signs say big season ... maybe**



**THE** early signs were all there – moths were bigger than usual, kame-mushi (stink bugs) were everywhere. Locals were sure this time everything was pointing towards a big one. After two 'low' snowfall seasons, even the laws of probability were leaning in our favour. We got our first snowfall on Mt Yotei in late September, weeks earlier than usual. The first snowfall in the village was also a good two weeks, and several times a solid covering unexpectedly blanketed the village. The storm that came through around November 18 dumped so much snow the resort opened top to bottom as scheduled the 22nd. But despite the consistency of these dumps, in late November and early December a stable winter weather pattern hasn't set in and the snowfalls have been punctuated with periods of warmer weather and rain. But local meteorologist Brendon Eishold says the potential is still there for a great season. The guy who, from weeks out, correctly predicted the first snowfall on Yotei this season, says 2004/05 started off exactly the same way, before turning the tap on mid-December and letting it run unchecked until the end of March. "In November 2004 we had 38cm... this year we've had 80cm, although the average is about 120cm," he said. "Then in mid-December (2004) it switched on and we got 336cm that month. In January we got 448cm, February 332 and March 241 – it ended up being a huge season." Enough said... it looks like it's going to be huge season!

PRE-OPENING... Photo: Mike Richards



**Lacoste Niseko**

FOLLOWING in the footsteps of Mazda last year, another iconic brand label is set to jump on the Niseko band wagon. Lacoste has just announced a they will name a line of shoes to be released next spring after our favourite ski resort



**Domo arigato, Apres Roboto**

**THE** Apres Bar has just discovered what Japan has known all along – robots make great employees. This season Robocco 'Robbo' the Apres Bar Robot will be standing ready 24 hours a day, seven days a week to pour beer for thirsty skiers and snowboarders. Apres Bar co-owner Sam Jackson discovered Robbo in a little-known 24-hour second hand shop near Sapporo, ironically after a big night at the city's annual beer festival. After parting with ¥10,500 (just over \$US100) Sam had paid his star employee's lifetime wage in advance.

Having Robbo serve you up a Kirin or Asahi is just one reason to get along to the Apres Bar this season. Sam and co-owner Nestor Moreno have planned a huge season of parties and events, including a heap of on snow events including rail jams and big-air comps. They also asked us to give their new overnight secure ski storage a plug – drop your gear off and lock it up overnight, ready and waiting at the bottom of the slopes first thing the next morning. There you go, guys, you owe us a beer!

BEST FRIENDS... Sam, 'Robbo' and Nestor.

**Hirafu safe in Derek's hands**

**MISBEHAVING** tourists have been warned – Derek 'The Enforcer' Begley has just become the unofficial guardian of the peace in Hirafu. The big Canadian has been appointed community liaison officer and will be based out of the Safety Information Centre in the centre of Hirafu, right next door to the Seicomart. He's lived in Niseko on and off for about 10 years and his main role will be to help out foreign tourists in day-to-day situations. But there appears to be another reason he's been given the job.

"I'll be doing everything from finding lost wallets and helping people catch the bus, to the night time stuff when it's 'time to go home boys' and 'stop punching that person in the face'," says Derek.

"I guess my reputation precedes me – I think they wanted somebody with a little more experience in being able to handle these situations, someone who knew the area and had some presence."

As the number of partying tourists has boomed over the past few years there has been an increase in the number of unsavoury night-time incidents locals have had to start dealing with, from fights in the streets to drunk foreigners passing out in hotel and pension foyers. Like a cross between lethal Hollywood alien humanoid the Predator and comic book law enforcer Judge Dredd, Derek will be highly mobile and have the power to accost anyone disturbing the peace. And for the record, Derek, it wasn't me!

If you've lost your wallet or need a hand dealing with a situation, call Derek at the Safety Information Centre on 22 5878.

LAYING DOWN THE LAW... Hirafu's new guardian angel, Derek Begley.



Mind games

A Keio University professor has developed what is believed to be the world's first web-based **psychotherapy sessions available via mobile phone**.

Academy Award-winning anime director Hayao Miyazaki was quoted as saying that **Prime Minister Tarō Aso's publicly avowed love of manga** (Japanese cartoons) is 'embarrassing'.

The education ministry said it will distribute 80,000 copies of a manual that provides tips for teachers on **how to combat internet bullying**.

Reaching for the stars

A Japanese businessman who wanted to orbit the earth **dressed as the anime character Char Aznable** has sued a US-based space tourism company that disqualified him from becoming an astronaut due to his kidney stones.

Using data provided by the Akari infrared astronomy satellite, JAXA released a **celestial map showing 70,000 stars** clustered in the Milky Way.

To help reach its goal of offsetting carbon dioxide emissions by 56 tons a year, office supplies manufacturer Kokuyo opened a **'garden office' on the rooftop** of its headquarters in Shinagawa.

School Daze

A 55-year old teacher at Tokyo Metropolitan Adachi High School was **busted for stealing 22 pieces** of the school's sports equipment and attempting to auction them off online.

A survey by the schoolteachers' union Zenkoku Shikyoren found that **3,200 parents around the nation have not paid the tuition** at their children's private high schools due to their financial situation.

An elementary school in Fukuoka applied for entry to the Guinness World Records after 261 students and teachers

'succeeded in walking 50 meters in 57 seconds **with their legs tied to one another**'.

You don't say

Cops in Saitama investigating the murders of a former top health ministry official and his wife announced that they **'believe the knife used in the attacks was highly lethal'**.

A survey by the Hakuhodo Institute of



Life and Living found that Japanese husbands felt the most important thing was to **spend 'time as a couple'**. Wives, on the other hand, wanted 'private time'.

The JNTO reported that **overseas visitors declined** for the third straight month in October compared to 2007, the longest consecutive drop since April-July 2003

Metal men

The Danish Technological Institute will introduce a Japanese robot called Paro at some 40 nursing homes around the country after determining that people **'feel comfortable and show expressive faces' when the 'bot is around**.

A new play called Hataraku Watashi

('I, Worker') includes **two humanoid robots** among its cast. The work is being staged in Osaka and concerns a couple that owns two housekeeping robots, 'one of which suddenly loses its motivation to work'.

When it enters the Japan as a cellphone network operator next March, **Nokia is expected to offer** its premium line of Vertu keitai, which cost millions of yen each.

Two 'accessories shop' employees in their early 20s were **arrested for conducting body piercings** without a medical license, which is apparently needed to do that kind of work. The shop was called 'Pierce Studio Insanity'.

Here & There

Fourth-generation **Japanese-American Don Wakamatsu became the first Asian-American** manager in Major League Baseball history when he was named head coach of the Seattle Mariners.

A **lightning strike at a nuclear power plant** in Fukui caused two reactors to shut down and resulted in the leak of 'a small amount to nonradioactive steam'.

The **inaugural Anime Festival Asia**, celebrating 'the diversity of Japanese popular culture,' was held last month in Singapore.

It was reported that some 40 nishikigoi **carp valued at ¥6 million** were stolen from a breeding pond in Shiga Prefecture in central Japan.

Lin-Lin, **Japan's oldest lesser panda**, died at a zoological park in Kitakyushu at the age of 21.

The government said it was seeking new legislation to help the justice ministry find foreigners who have obtained **visas through bogus marriages** or fake vocational training.

STATS

**16**  
Purported age of a Senegalese basketball player who led Fukuoka Daiichi High School to national championships in 2004 and 2005

**22**  
Actual age of the player

**¥200 million**  
Amount that 70 first prize-winners will receive in Japan's year-end jumbo lottery

**1.81 million**  
Number of 'freeters' (jobless 15 to 34-year-olds) in Japan in 2007, according to a government study

**2.17 million**  
Number in 2003

Compiled from reports by Japan Today, The Japan Times, The International Herald Tribune/Asahi Shimbun, Mainichi Daily News, Time, AP, AFP and Kyodo

Hanazono 308 Snowsports Centre opens



NIHON Harmony Resorts KK (NHR) has opened the first building of its future master-planned development at Hanazono – the new Hanazono 308 Snowsports Centre.

NHR president Colin Hackworth said the 1400sqm Hanazono 308 Day Centre was inspired by the 1308m peak of Mount Niseko-Annupuri.

"The two sail-like structures forming the roof, or peak, of Hanazono 308 are intended to conjure up images of the mountains of Niseko," he said.

"The day centre is intentionally situated at 308m above sea level, or exactly 1000m below the peak of Mount Niseko-Annupuri. Developers have left exactly 1000 vertical metres of snow terrain from the top of Mount Niseko-Annupuri to the doorstep of Hanazono 308. It's said the lucky bells situated outside Hanazono 308 are mounted exactly 308m above sea level, and are to be rung for good luck."

Sure to be popular news among return visitors and locals, the day centre's 250-seat restaurant continues to dish up its famous Kani Ramen (crab noodle soup), along with other Japanese ski hill favourites.

Hackworth said the development of Hanazono 308 also heralded the introduction of a suite of new product initiatives and services for all levels of alpine sporting and snow enthusiasts.

The day centre has just installed two new 'magic carpet' conveyor belts on the snow for their kids. It has also opened the doors to an International Snowsports School, incorporating a state-of-the-art Kids Snowsports School facility, along with a new retail and snow sports equipment hire centre.

There will be plenty of activities at the Hanazono Adventure Park, where visitors can go sledding, tobogganing and snow-tubing, all on groomed and safe, dedicated areas. Hanazono also allows snowmobiling through the surrounding snowy landscape and forest, and for those who want to experience the area at a slower pace, guided snowshoeing nature walks with local experts.

Hanazono lifts will open early at 8.30am this season, and guests who start their skiing day at the centre should be guaranteed to get first tracks at the famous Strawberry Fields run.

Also on offer will be the re-profiled Silver Dream beginner's course, which means Hanazono now has one of the most comprehensive beginner's and children's terrain and learning facilities in Niseko.

A new free shuttle service will operate between Hirafu and Hanazono all day, every day, approximately every 20 minutes or so. For the first time, a shuttle service will now operate in upper Hirafu Village as well as middle and lower Hirafu Village.



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# in the loop

What's on in Niseko

## Saturday to Sunday, December 13-14, 20-21

### Avalanche Safety Courses

Hokkaido Powder Guides is planning two AST courses over two full days in the field, with a classroom session on the first night. The course is recommended to anyone who enjoys skiing/riding the powder and intends to do some off-piste, side-country or backcountry over the course of the winter. Cost: ¥23,000 (two manuals included). www.hokkaidopowderguides.com/avalanche.html

12月13日~14、日20日~21日(土日) 雪崩講習会 北海道パウダーガイドが主催する2日間に渡り行われる雪崩講習会。講習第1日目の夜に室内講習、2日目に雪上講習があります。バックカントリーに関する知識を深めたいスキーヤー/スノーボーダーのため総合的なコースです。コース料金お一人 23,000円(コースマニュアル2冊を含む)。www.hokkaidopowderguides.net/avalanche.html

## Friday-Thursday, December 19-25

### Annupuri Snow Candle Display

Around the bottom of the quad chair lift from when it starts getting dark.

12月19日~25日(金~木) アンヌプリスキー場キャンドルナイト ナイターリフト乗り場付近でスノーキャンドルが点灯されクリスマスムードが演出される。

## Saturday-Thursday, December 20-25

### MSR Snow Shoe Test Day

1pm-3pm, outside NAC. Phone: 0136-23-2093

12月20~25日(土~木) MSR スノーシュー試乗会 13:00~15:00 NACの外 Tel:0136-23-2093

## Starting Sunday, December 21

### Taiko Drum Performances

Free traditional Japanese drum performances. Every Sunday outside Hokkaido Tracks office (next to Seicomart). Starts 3.30pm and goes for about 30 minutes.

12月21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。場所はセーコマート横北海道トラックス前にて。時間は15:00~ 30分間程の演奏

## Sunday, December 21

### World Snowboard Day Snowboarder Hunt

Niseko snowboard hide and seek – nominated snowboarders go up the mountain and hide. 20 minutes later the hunters head up the mountain to try and find them. The winner/s will elude capture until the mountain closes. Prizes to be announced. Snowboarders-only after-party at Après Bar (skiers discovered to have sneaked in will be removed from the premises). Meet at 7pm at Après Bar. Inquiries to Derek nisekofc@gmail.com .

12月21日(日) 世界スノーボードの日 スノーボーダーハント ニセコの山で繰り広げられる、スノーボーダーだけ参加が許される山の中でのかくれんぼ大会。参加するスノーボーダーは山に上がり隠れなければならぬ。20分後に、オニが参加者を見つけに山まで上がってくる。山が閉まる直前まで隠れ続けた者が優勝者になり、賞品がもらえる。スノーボーダー オンリーのアフターパーティーが大会後アプレバーである。この大会に参加したい方は7PMにアプレバーまで。お問い合わせはnisekofc@gmail.com 担当デレックさん。

## Monday to Tuesday, December 22-23

### JoJo's Café new DVD Premier.

From 7pm. Phone: 0136-23-2093.

12月22日~23日(月、火) JoJo's café 新作DVD上映会 19:00pm~ Phone: 0136-23-2093

## Monday to Wednesday, December 22-24

### Hirafu Christmas Candle Street Lighting

Take a stroll down Hirafu's candlelit street with candles set in to the walls of snow from the Kogen Hotel to the Alpen Hotel. From 6pm.

12月22日~24日(月~水) 比羅夫スキー場キャンドルナイト 高原ホテルからアルペンホテルまでの道のりのクリスマスキャンドルをチェックしに行こう!午後6時ごろのスタート

## Monday to Thursday, December 22-25

### NAC Outdoor Shop Xmas Sale

With the purchase of more than two items of backcountry gear you get 10 per cent off the original price. Also doing a clearing sale of last year's models, gear and outwear. Phone: 0136-23-2093

12月22日~25日(月~木) NAC アウトドアショップ クリスマスセール バックカントリーギア2品以上で10%オフ、旧モデル、ギア、ウェアのクリアランスセールなど。

## Tuesday to Thursday, December 23-25

### Annupuri Skiing Santa

Take the kids across to Annupuri to meet Santa and Niseko town's mascot Nikki handing out sweets on the mountain.

12月23日~25日(火~木) アンヌプリスキー場 クリスマスプレゼント お子様を是非この機会にスキーに連れて行きましょう!!サンタとニセコのマスコットニッキーがお菓子を配り歩いています。

## Wednesday, December 24

### Hirafu Christmas Eve Fireworks

Celebrate the night before Christmas with a bonanza fireworks display on the slopes from 9.30pm, on the slopes outside the Alpen Hotel.

12月24日 比羅夫スキー場 クリスマスイブセレモニー クリスマスイブはみんなで花火を見に行こう!場所はアルペンホテル前。時間は午後9:30から

## Wednesday, December 24

### Freedom Inn Christmas Dinner

Traditional Christmas Course Dinner with a Hokkaido touch. ¥5,000-¥7,000 person. Reservations required. Phone: 0136-22-3322, or email reservations@freedom-inn.jp.

12月24日(水) フリーダムイン クリスマスディナー 北海道の食材を使った伝統的なクリスマスディナーをフリーダムインで頂きます。料金は5000円から7000円。要予約。お電話は0136-22-3322. reservations@freedom-inn.jp.

## Wednesday to Thursday, December 24-25

### Sekka Dining Christmas Lunch/Dinner

Have a special Christmas lunch or dinner at Sekka. Starting with sparkling wine and flat bread with olive oil and house bread with dukkah, potato and fennel soup, cured hamachi, scallops with Otaru bacon, slow roast Rusutsu pork and fruit mince cassata at the end. ¥10,000 per person and booking is required. Phone: 0136-21-5022.

12月24日~25日(水木) Sekka Dining クリスマス ランチ/ディナー Sekka Diningでスパークリングワインで乾杯する特別なクリスマスランチ/ディナーを頂こう。コースメニューは、オーストラリアの腕利きシェフにより造られる、北海道の地元中心とした野菜、海の幸、お肉をふんだんに利用した豪華なクリスマス特別コースです。料金はお1人様10000円。お早めのご予約をお勧めします。Phone: 0136-21-5022

## Wednesday to Thursday, December 24-25

### JoJo's Café Christmas dinner

Enjoy great Xmas dinner at JoJo's. Choose from chicken leg cooked in red wine ¥2700 (limited to 40 people per day) or beef blueberry sauce ¥3500 (limited to 10 people per day). Course starts with appetizer, soup, main, desert and coffee or tea. From 5pm. Phone: 0136-23-2093

12月24日~25日(水木) JoJo's カフェ クリスマスディナー JoJo'sのクリスマス限定ディナー。メニューは二種類でチキンレッグ赤ワイン煮コース2700円(1日40セット)、牛ヒレブルーベリーソースコース3500円(1日10セット)。前菜から始まり、スープ、メイン、デザート、コーヒーor紅茶となります。17:00PM~ ご予約はPhone: 0136-23-2093まで。

## Wednesday to Thursday, December 24-25

### Dragon Christmas Dinner

Great Christmas dinner includes appetizer, pasta, risotto or soup, then main dish (fish or meat), followed by dessert and coffee. Price ¥6000-¥8000. For 6pm or 8.30pm bookings. Bookings essential. Phone: 0136-21-7700

12月24日~25日(水木) レストランドラゴン クリスマスディナー 前菜から始まり、パスタ、リゾットorスープ、メイン(魚or肉)クリスマスケーキのデザート、コーヒーで締めくくる豪華なクリスマスディナーがドラゴンで味わえます。料金は6000円から8000円。時間は18:00~or 20:30~のどちらかを選択。当日は大変込み合っているため予約が必要です。Phone: 0136-21-7700

## Thursday, December 25

### Paddy McGinty's Christmas Dinner

A glass of wine to get you started. A bowl of chicken and onion soup, side salad and another glass of wine. Then, turkey and ham for mains followed by dessert. All to be washed down with an Irish coffee. ¥4000 per person, strictly by reservation only. Last day for reservations is December 15. 10 per cent discount if you mention Powderlife when you book. Phone: 0136-55-8020

12月25日(木) パディーズ マッギンジー クリスマスディナー ワインで乾杯し、チキン&オニオンスープ、サラダ、ターキー、ハムのメインデッシュ、デザート、最後にはアイリッシュコーヒで締めくくるパディーズ マッギンジーのクリスマスディナーは4000円で楽しめます。このクリスマスディナーの予約は12月15日締め切り。パウダーライフを見たよ!と伝えると10%割引になります。Phone: 0136-55-8020.

# niss

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# demo

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Bookings and tickets available at:  
• NISS-Hirafu,  
• NISS-Hanazono, and  
• Fusion-Hirafu.

Phone (0136) 21 66 88 or [niss@harmonyresorts.com](mailto:niss@harmonyresorts.com)



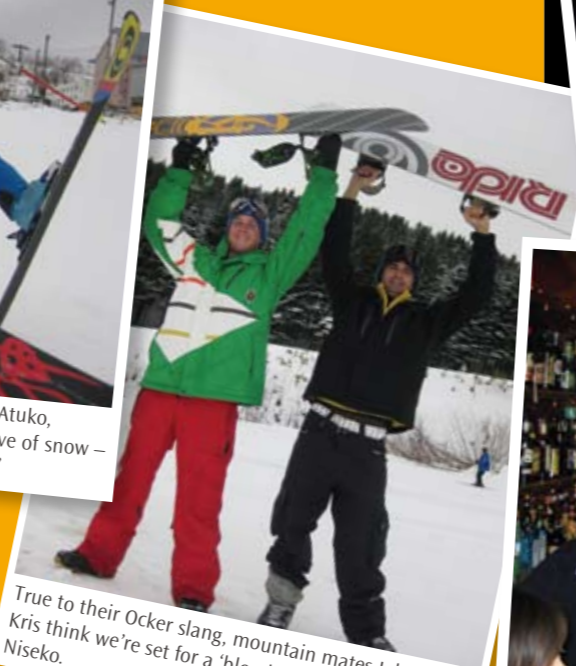
Powderlife asked visitors what they think the 08/09 season will be like in Niseko...



If playful Aussies Hayden, Matt and Amelia have any regrets about coming to Niseko, it's arriving before the real powder comes to town. The trio had an amazing time, but are 'absolutely spewing' they came too early.



There may be a lot of them, but ski school locals Kazu, Yuuji, Atuko, Makoto and Shigeru have one thing in common – besides a love of snow – a belief that Niseko is going to have 'an awesome 2008 season'



True to their Ocker slang, mountain mates Jake and Kris think we're set for a 'bloody ripper' of a season in Niseko.



Local American and English teacher, Bobby, hit the mountain with three local students Eiko, Miku and Miho, for Miku's twelfth birthday. Bobby believes this year's lack of stink bugs in the Fall means less snow, while Miho, son of Eiko, is wiser than his 12 years, worrying about the effects of global warming on the powder.



On a short but sweet Niseko holiday, Greek couple, Sonia and Alexander, summed up this season in three words: 'loaded with powder'. "We have to be extremely lucky in Europe to get this amount of snow – and even luckier to get it this early in the season."



The type of season doesn't matter to the Ishikawa family - Yuu, Leira and Schuchi - because the devoted dad will be up the mountain on his snowboard, juggling young Leira in his safe arms. "Holding a baby while snowboarding is very hard."



It's Haruna's first time in Niseko this year, and the stylish Nagano snowboarder has a glowing, positive outlook for the season to match her hot pink beanie.

## Mountain style

**SPORTING** a simple yet eye-catching black and white striped Quiksilver jacket, Hong Kong's Danny Chow rates his chances of camouflage as he hunts packs of zebra and white tiger. "If I went hunting zebra or white tiger, I would feel very comfortable," joked the 35-year-old boarder, snapped by Powderlife on his fourth powdery visit to Niseko. "I would become one with the zebra and tiger." If you don't get the chance to see Danny firing off some rounds on Niseko's mountains with his 'snowboard gun' during his short two-week holiday, fret not. He's coming back for more powder in February. But all jokes aside, the real reason for his jacket is simply, "it just looks good". Well put, Danny. Wacko Jacko put it best when he said, "...it doesn't matter if you're black or white."



Wild Bill's opening party



Après Bar opening party



# Powder tools

By Bevan Colless



## Patagonia Wool 3 Crew Long-Sleeve Shirt

Admit it. You don't wash your thermal layer after every day on the hill. Hiking the peak inevitably leads to perspiration, and unless you choose a natural fibre fleece, it's not going to be pleasant for those stuck in a gondola with you. The Wool 3 Crew Long-Sleeve fleece is made from natural wool, so it won't itch, but it will banish bad odours and keep you toasty. ¥14,700 from Niseko Toyru. Tel: 0136-21-4055

## K2 Apache Coomba Alpine Ski

K2 worked with Doug Coombs – the late, great extreme skier, ski mountaineer, and heli-guide – to create the Apache Coomba Alpine Ski. It has been awarded top honours from Powder and Free Skiers magazines. The 102mm waist and Torsion Box construction provide excellent flotation and easy handling for tackling deeps and steeps everywhere. Coombs gave his signature ski a new tip shape and balanced flex pattern for predictability in breakable crust and other less-than-ideal conditions. A progressive side cut ensures the Coomba still has enough power for the groomers or wind pack. Doug Coombs died in La Grave, France, doing what he loved – skiing steeps. K2 gives a percentage of all Apache Coomba sales to his wife and son, and will also donate to the Chad Vanderham Endowment, a non-profit group focused on improving guide education and safety. US\$649.95, from www.backcountry.com.



## Lib Technologies T. Rice Banana Hammock Snowboard

Have you ever felt that the powder was so deep you that a boat might be of more use than a board? A 50cm-plus dump sounds sexy, but sometimes it's just too deep – especially when you find yourself in some of Niseko's infamous pancake sections. This leads to long wading out, or just pointing it straight to get through – not really that much fun. Lib Tech gave the twin-tip Banana Hammock, a tip-to-tail banana rocker and wide Planshape that will float you like a boat. Killer pop, low spin weight, and double-sintered UHMW sidewalls make the Banana Hammock a powder board full of pleasing surprises. Only for the deep, deep days. ¥120,000 Victoria Sports, Tokyo. Web: www.victoria.co.jp, or Tel: 0120-77-6693.



## Pieps DSP Smart Transmitter

Pieps are a small but innovative and high-end Austrian winter sports company. Sure, all beacons work, and you need to learn and practice with any beacon you use, but Pieps introduced the first all-digital, triple-antenna beacon, and it's easy to operate with gloves on. Digital technology in the DSP allows for quick, precise pinpointing of the strongest signal among multiple burials, and the triple antenna increases reliable detection range out to 60m, with direction indication starting at 50m. Once the first buried beacon is found and marked, a simple button press blocks the signal and moves to the next one, reducing the chances of interference and saving valuable minutes. Worth the investment. ¥65,100, from Niseko Toyru. Tel: 0136-21-4055



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**Hirafu** – 8.30am – 8.30pm  
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 (200m up the hill from the intersection)





LIFTIE Morimo-chan

**name** Seiji Morimoto  
**age** 30  
**hometown** Kutchan  
**how long has your family lived here** About 80 years  
**do you like powder?** Yep  
**ski/board?** Ski and snowscoot  
**how long have you been skiing/scooting?** 23 years/2 years  
**what languages do you speak?** Just Japanese  
**trips overseas?** None  
**where do you want to go next?** Not sure but somewhere I can relax  
**favourite...**  
**colour** Green  
**brand** Uniqlo  
**food** Fatty food  
**restaurant** Hiroka  
**bar** Don't go to bars  
**onsen** Yugokurotei  
**ski run** Bouyou Course  
**how long will you be in niseko?** Until I get sick of it  
**where else do you want to go skiing?** Chisennupuri and Red Mountain  
**what does niseko need?** A snowscoot shop  
**niseko secret?** The night view of Kutchan is beautiful  
**what's your life philosophy?** Be considerate of others



LIFT PASS OFFICE Kumikko

**name** Kumiko Ishii  
**age** 33  
**hometown** Tokyo  
**time in niseko** 3 years  
**do you like powder?** Yes!  
**ski/board?** Board  
**how long have you been skiing for?** 10 years  
**why did you come to niseko?** Because I wanted to live here  
**what languages do you speak?** Japanese  
**trips overseas?** New Zealand, Fiji, Singapore, Guam  
**where do you want to go next?** Prince Edward Island  
**favourite...**  
**colour** Green  
**brand** None  
**food** Curry  
**restaurant** Shokusai Hirafu  
**bar** Paddy McGinty's  
**onsen** Yusenkaku and Alpen Hotel  
**ski run** Strawberry Fields  
**how long will you be in niseko?** Forever :)  
**where else in the world do you want to go skiing?** Chisennupuri and Whistler  
**niseko secret?** Toyokuni in Rankoshi is beautiful  
**what's your life philosophy?** Be kind to others



SKI PATROL Yama

**name** Masaya Yamamoto  
**age** 33  
**hometown** Kyoto  
**time in niseko** 7 seasons  
**do you like powder?** Yes!  
**ski/board?** Skier  
**how long have you been skiing for?** 20 years  
**why did you come to niseko?** Because of the mountains  
**ski/board?** Ski  
**what languages do you speak?** Japanese and English  
**trips overseas?** US, UK, Canada, Thailand  
**where do you want to go next?** A tropical country  
**favourite...**  
**colour** Red  
**brand** Gentaro  
**food** Hiromatsu Genghis Kahn  
**restaurant** Ace Hill Restaurant  
**bar** Don't go to bars  
**onsen** Makkari and Yusenkaku  
**ski run** Super Course  
**how long will you be in niseko?** Forever!  
**what does niseko need?** A helicopter  
**niseko secret?** There are deer and bats here  
**what's your life philosophy?** To spread Kansai (Osaka area) dialect

Shogun Sushi

There are three reasons why Shogun Sushi in Kutchan is one of the Niseko's best sushi restaurants. One is the quality of the chef's expertly selected fish. The second is the secret way in which he prepares his rice. And the third is owners Katsuhiko and Kazuko Sodekawa. They take great interest in every customer and delight in meeting foreign visitors and introducing them to Japan's most famous cuisine. The restaurant is nearly 50 years old and the couple has been running it since 1983 when they took it over from Kazuko's parents. If you want to enjoy an authentic Japanese sushi meal and experience the warmest of Japanese hospitality, Shogun Sushi is a must. See www.powderlife.com/restaurants for directions.

すし將軍

すし將軍が大人気な理由は3つある。理由1、寿司のネタが新鮮でおいしい事。理由2、寿司のシャリにこだわっていること。新潟の最もグレードの高いお米を使用しており、水加減、酢加減などにもこだわりがある。理由3、オーナーの袖川勝彦さんと和子の素敵な人柄。袖川さん夫婦は、入ってくるお客様一人一人を温かく迎えてくれる。袖川さんは30年以上寿司を握っている板前さんで、多くの外国人旅行者に日本食の素晴らしさを伝え続けている。おいしい寿司を食べて頂くならぜひ一度倶知安にある、すし將軍に行ってみてほしい。袖川さん夫婦が温かくあなたを迎え入れ素晴らしいお寿司を提供してくれる事でしょう。www.powderlife.com/restaurants ご予約は0136-23-2898まで。



Pension Grandpapa

When Kazuhiro and Yoko Nikahara built Pension Grandpapa they used European ski resorts as inspiration. They called the European mountain lodge-style building Grandpapa so people would imagine they were visiting their grandfather in the mountains. Yoko-san was a British Airways stewardess and the family moved to Niseko to be close to nature and live in the international ski resort atmosphere. Son Kouhei is now a semi-professional skier and is on one of Niseko United's promotional posters this year. Yoko has created a place she can now welcome international visitors to her country. For those not staying at Grandpapa, the pension houses a cheese fondue restaurant and it also offers cultural activity classes. www.niseko-grandpapa.com.

グランパ

ペンショングランパのオーナー、二川原和博さん、洋子さんは23年前に比羅夫に移住し、ヨーロッパアンティークの素敵なペンションを建築した。「グランパ」というネーミングは山のおじいちゃんの家に気軽に遊びに来てと言う願いを込め付けられた。オーナーの洋子さんは元英国航空のステewardessで、過去には世界中を旅行していた。「自分が体験した、旅を通じ出会う地元の人との出会いや文化の楽しさを伝えていきたい」と語る洋子さんは、現在ペンションで外国人旅行者を中心に習字や日本料理などを教えている。息子の康平さんは、海外の大会でも実績を残すスキーヤーで、現在Niseko United'sのポスターの表紙を飾っている。比羅夫とスイスのサンモリッツ市が姉妹都市ということもあり始められた、グランパだけで食べることができるこだわりのチーズフォンデュは大人気である。ご予約は0136-23-2244まで。www.niseko-grandpapa.com

Tsubara Tsubara

Last winter a demountable building popped up on the outskirts of Hirafu, and not long afterwards signage declaring it soup curry restaurant Tsubara Tsubara. Keiji Sakai's family ran the recently demolished Ryokan (lodge) Sakae on Hirafu's main street, and he found the soup curry he had been making for guests was a hit. So he decided to start his own dedicated soup curry restaurant. Unlike regular thick Japanese curry, the base of soup curry is thin, bringing out the flavours of the many spices in the soup stock and complementing the variety of ingredients such as vegetables, potatoes and meat. Tsubara Tsubara (meaning 'relax') has quickly become a favourite among locals. See www.powderlife.com/restaurants for directions.

つばらつばら

去年の冬にオープンした、コンテナを改造して作られたスープカレーのお店、つばらつばらが比羅夫の外れにある。外から見たコンテナ姿と店内のハイセンスな内装のギャップが面白い。「つばらつばら」とは万葉集に出てくる句でしみじみと、心ゆくまでに。という意味合いで、オーナーの阪井啓司さんが、お客様に店内でくつろいで頂きたいと気持ちをこめて名前が付けられた。阪井さんご家族で以前「さかえ旅館」という旅館を営んでいた。長期滞在のお客様のランチにスープカレーを出したところ好評で、これがスープカレー店を出すきっかけになった。味わいの深いスープと地元の野菜を使ったスープカレーを作るつばらつばらにはリピーターが多い。www.tsubaratsubara.com 0136-23-1116



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# Back to basics: safety in Niseko's backcountry

By Matthew Thomas

**NISEKO** is renowned for its liberal, open-minded and lightly policed stance when it comes to off-piste, or the backcountry – a viewpoint that is generally uncharacteristic of Japan. This sense of autonomy has no doubt put the village on the map as both an international ski resort, and also a major domestic drawcard for Japanese snow lovers. But as the old adage goes, 'with freedom comes responsibility'. All of Niseko's snow – and there is bucket loads of it (as much as 15m a season) - may look soft and friendly, but it is as deadly and dangerous as it is dry and fluffy. For those living beneath a rock, Niseko's unique geographical positioning is the catalyst for these epic snow conditions. Winds howl across the Sea of Japan from Siberia, syphoning up moisture then relentlessly dumping it on Hokkaido, in what are recognised as some of the world's heaviest precipitations of snow (house roofs and sheds have collapsed beneath the sheer weight of the white stuff). It's been a few years since anyone died in Niseko, but within a snowball's throw of the resort there have been several deaths and serious injuries in neighbouring ranges. Access to Niseko's backcountry is very lightly policed, and is easy as pie to get to. In doing so, one must take some responsibility for their own actions, rather than relying upon someone else. The dangers of Niseko's massive and varied expanse of backcountry are balanced by safety information that is readily available, and in abundance. However, in truth, the responsibility lies in the hands of skiers, snowboarders or hikers themselves to ensure their own well-being.

Scott Bowman and Nick Gutry run Niseko Snowmobiling Adventures, and have more than two decades of experience in the wilds of the local area alone.

Nick says one of the biggest dangers facing those who wander out of bounds is the false belief that they know it all, along with a complete disregard for local knowledge. Not respecting and regarding the sheer volume of snow and avalanche dangers in Niseko is a common mistake that Aussies, Kiwis and many other foreigners make, they believe. "I see a major problem for some holidaymakers here not respecting the Japanese and their understanding of the area," he says. "The locals have experience, authority and training, but because these tourists think they know everything, a lot of foreigners will say, 'stuff it, what the hell to these guys know?'" Scott chimes in: "The locals understand the situation on this mountain, and have been working here for so long. They understand

the threats, how specific aspects of these mountains will have reacted after storms. Take notice, it's not a joke on this mountain."

While many tourists have the incorrect perception that mountain staff are 'policing' or 'hindering' skiers and boarders, it is actually the opposite, says Nick. "They are actually encouraging you to explore all the wonderful terrain on offer, but just want to make sure you go to the right areas, and take the necessary precautions," he says. "It's good for people to get into the mindset that these people are not imposing or policing or shutting things down. Look at it from the other point of view, they are allowing people to ride so much more terrain than anywhere else. A lot of people get upset about the no-go areas, which could make up to 10 per cent of the mountain, forgetting what rare freedom they actually do have here in Niseko. We're in a great situation here, because they have already opened up so much of this mountain. Whereas, elsewhere in Japan, it's not uncommon for them to just say, 'right, no backcountry, and if you go

out there we will find you in the car park, call the police and they will take you away and charge you with trespassing'. These people are not the police, they are here to help. They could just put a fence up and if anyone crossed it they would get arrested - it's that simple. But they don't." "We have even heard word of opening up even more terrain," whispers Scott. "But that won't happen overnight." Moving on, it's not all planning, stats and danger. The positives that have people coming back to the backcountry for more and more far outweigh the negatives. Scott and Nick have for years gladly ridden boards, skis, snowcats, sleds and snowmobiles in the far reaches of Niseko and beyond - areas of which most could only dream. "For me, it's getting away from the noise and the crowds," says Scott, immediately glowing and grinning at the prospect.



SAFETY FIRST... Nick Gutry and Scott Bowman



BACKCOUNTRY... Tatsumi Kouno. Photo: Niseko Photography.

Nick adds: "And I suppose, in some ways, it's the lack of rules; once you've made the decision that it is a reasonably safe environment out there, suddenly the rules that govern what you can do are boundless."

**After speaking with experienced locals, Powderlife has compiled a comprehensive list of backcountry safety tips for you to tick off before venturing into Niseko's great white unknown. It all comes down to common sense, really...**

- Thoroughly plan your trip. Preparedness is everything. Don't go into the backcountry 'umming and ahing' - that is a problem straight away. Not being prepared in the backcountry is like going back home and crossing a major highway with a blindfold, or driving through the desert in a campervan and not taking any water.
- Read and understand weather reports, including the very trusted and informative avalanche reports posted in Japanese and English at entries and exits to the backcountry. Alternately, check <http://niseko.nadare.info/>, a site compiled by long-time Niseko backcountry gatekeeper Akio Shinya and his 'boys in the know'.
- Let someone reliable know where you plan to go, your destination and what time you plan to be home.
- Explore the backcountry with reliable people. The least experienced person in the group should still know what to do in case of emergency.
- If you are travelling in the backcountry with a crew, make sure you are familiar with all of them, and their abilities. Ensure you know each other's strengths and weaknesses.
- Make sure everyone is familiar with equipment, which should include a shovel, beacon, probes, phone, first aid kit, transceiver and studied maps. Having all of the gear in the world is useless until you know how to use it. Beacons should be taken with you,

but are a last-ditch effort; they are the equivalent of a pilot wearing a parachute. Most people found by a beacon by rescuers are already dead.

• Know where the ski patrol is located. Being self sufficient is great, but once an incident gets to a certain level, know where to go and who to contact for help.

• If the back country's closed, it's for a reason.

• There are no-go areas that should not be entered in any case. They are well sign-posted and marked on maps that can be picked up everywhere in Niseko.

• If you don't have the knowledge or experience for going off-piste, hire a reputable guide. Watch out for cowboys operating with little experience.

• And there is, of course, one more piece of vital safety information that we all should remember: Don't eat the yellow snow!



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# Hokkaido: Powder Snow Disneyland

NIRVANA... one Hokkaido's great panoramas, taking in Lake Toya and Mt Yotei from the peak of Rusutsu. Photo: Niseko Photography

By Kristian Lund and Clayton Kernaghan

ON its own, Niseko is an amazing place to go skiing. So much so that since it has been 'discovered' by the outside world in the past 10 years or so, it has gone from sleepy, locals' ski hill to world-renowned international ski resort. The four interlinked resorts provide enough terrain to keep many locals from ever wanting to leave their own backyard.

But it's interesting to think what might happen when the skiing world starts to realise there are more than 100 ski resorts across the length and breadth of this wild, volcanic island. Some of these resorts are nothing more than 100m-high hills on the outskirts of small rural towns with single chair lifts servicing one or two tame runs. Others are vast resorts with massive amounts of terrain and sophisticated networks of ski lifts, and very often surprisingly few customers! Some are completely isolated and lost in the rugged mountain ranges of central Hokkaido, serviced by single cable cars ferrying carriage-loads of hardcore backcountry skiers and boarders at half-hour intervals. For frothing powder junkies, Hokkaido really is like the Disneyland of powder skiing.

The variety of terrain on offer is staggering, and there is quite literally something to suit everyone. Families will have no trouble finding a range of

resorts across the island that are specially designed with kids in mind. Plenty of these will have some pretty challenging backcountry for mums and dads who want to get some powder time while the kids are at ski school. Intermediate skiers and once-a-year warriors could spend an entire winter going from resort to resort and still wouldn't experience everything Hokkaido has to offer. For the hardcore backcountry skier, the central Hokkaido resorts off the Daisetsuzan (Big Snow) Mountain Range boast the highest and most rugged peaks on the island, averaging about 2000m with a variety of alpine and tree skiing.

Apart from Niseko, virtually every resort in Hokkaido has two things in common: one is that they are virtually unknown to the world outside Japan. The other is that they are the beneficiary of massive amounts of some of the driest, Siberian powder snow, which is perhaps the main reason Hokkaido is such a unique and wonderful place to ski and snowboard.

We've compiled a list of just a handful of the better-known powder resorts across Hokkaido. It would take the average tourist weeks to thoroughly explore just these resorts alone. But if you're still hungry for more, grab a map, jump in a car and discover your own powder nirvana.

## Rusutsu

Even after months of skiing Niseko, a day trip to Rusutsu sets another benchmark of how good the region's skiing is. Heaps of off-piste and long, wide runs make Rusutsu a must if you visit the Niseko area for a few days. Only 45 minutes by car from Niseko, it's a huge, well-run area consisting of several gondolas and covered quads, which access endless tree runs and natural kickers. This is one resort where a guided tour is highly recommended, as you can quite easily get lost and/or stuck in the deep powder.

Wild Bill's owner/manager Brett 'Miami' Brian is crazy about Rusutsu. After every big dump, Brett rounds up a crew and heads for the 'Zu'. What's so good about it? "No people. Literally – there's nobody there, I mean it," Brett says. "It's got the best terrain and they let you ride wherever you want to go. If you want to ride out of bounds and get lost they'll let you. I don't feel like I'm at a day-care centre at Rusutsu, and I don't have to ride on-piste... ever! Every time I go is my best time ever 'cos I only go when it dumps. My best ever day was probably last year – one of those Thursday mornings when the whole posse went over there. It was probably an 80cm day, easy. That was a good day."

## Sapporo Kokusai

Despite the bad rap this resort sometimes cops, this little gem is pretty sweet, especially in the early season. Kokusai is 'the place to be seen', and a lot of local rippers call this their home mountain. It has a well-maintained terrain park, and gets dumped on with as much snow as Niseko, believe it or not. Great powder lines can be tracked down directly under the gondolas, and if you're into hiking, there are some fun backcountry runs to be found that will satisfy the most discerning boarder or skier.

It's local ski instructor Mike Richards' favourite resort. "Like the ski area itself that's tucked away in the folds of a mountain road linking the coastal city of Otaru with Jyozankei Hot Springs resort, some of the best that Kokusai has to offer is hidden from view," says Mike. "There are great turns and photo opportunities to be had underneath the gondola, but my favourite part of the mountain is to the right of the Downhill Course. Picture the ridge above Super Course in Grand Hirafu with the same powder conditions, but steeper, longer and even less crowded. Step off the gondola, admire the views of the ocean, click in, ski untracked powder, click out, get back on the gondola. Repeat until done." >>



KAMUI... central Hokkaido powder haven.  
Photo: Mike Richards



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\*Continued from page 25

### Teine

This resort has reportedly kept snow lovers in the resort for many, many years, and loads of people are convinced it's the best. The positives: the resort has a very homely feel to it, the locals are friendly and it's only 40 minutes from downtown Sapporo. If you're a beginner or intermediate skier, you might get bored due to the limited amount of runs. But if you're fit and good enough to handle the traverses and the intensity of what's known as the 'Teine Hustle', it'll blow your mind how much gnarly terrain one lift can access. The two terrain parks are definitely worth mentioning as well. In summary, big hits, beautiful backdrops and excellently maintained.

Former Sapporo, now Niseko local, Derek Kennewell, rates Teine as his favourite resort. "The small number of (powder-hungry) foreigners means

there's always plenty of great powder lines to be had," says Derek. "Unlike Niseko, where the good powder stashes are really spread out, at Teine all the untracked spots are in the one place. They're all grouped together, but spread out at the same time, and there are plenty of options for tree runs. It's blissfully silent when you go off between the trees, but you're never far from anything. One thing about the powder there is you have to have a bit of local knowledge to get out at the end of a run which stops some people – it's all cat tracks out so if you don't know the cat tracks you can get lost. Local knowledge helps. But the groomers are fun as well. It spreads the skiers and boarders out across the whole mountain, so it's not crowded, even though it's so close to Sapporo city. And the night riding is greeeeeat!"

### Kurodake

This ain't no resort, it's a mountain, and as such it needs to be respected. All this Daisetsuzan National Park resort consists of is a formidable beast of a 101-passenger tram, and a relatively flat double chair. Basically, there are two beginner runs, and you can hit the mother load as far as backcountry options go. There is no ski patrol to either help or hinder you, so you need to be prepared. This is a resort that is best tackled with a mountain guide, and a good set of lungs, because for the pick of the runs, there's an hour-and-a-half hike to the peak involved.

Black Diamond Lodge's Clayton Kernaghan likes Kurodake so much he's just bought another lodge there with fellow Canadian, Dale Riva. It wasn't until Clayton took a group of pro snowboarders from Spain there that he realised just how good it was.

"These guys coming from Spain were saying 'My god, this place is amazing,'" Clayton said. "It's the most vertical ski resort in Hokkaido and every single person I have taken there who has gotten it on a clear day says it's been their best day ever in Hokkaido. There are only two main runs down to the bottom but they're hardcore. I was just there yesterday (December 3) and it was a classic day. A busy day is 10 people – yesterday there were six people. It's like having your own private ski resort, and a really challenging private ski resort. But it's still good for intermediates if you go with a guide. They've got a 180cm base already and the good thing is the conditions stay cold enough to the bottom to be powder all the way down. It hasn't snowed for a week but there's still great powder right to the bottom of the cable car."

RUGGED... all alone at Kurodake  
Photo: Glen Claydon



RUSUTSU... a powder palace  
Photo: Niseko Photography



WAIST DEEP AGAIN...  
somewhere in Hokkaido.  
Photo: Niseko Photography

### Asahidake

Just around the corner, but quite a few hours drive away from Kurodake, is Asahidake. This live volcano is Hokkaido's highest peak, and for that reason is often the first mountain outside of Niseko that foreigners aim to conquer. There's just a single cable car which runs a handful of riders up to just below the peak of the mountain every 20 minutes. At the top of the lift you look up at the peak, several hundred metres above, which spews out steam from several vents. The hardcore can hike up, powder hounds can check their maps and explore a massive amount of isolated backcountry, and the mellow can simply cruise straight down the main section before mucking around with their friends on the long cat tracks out.

For Niseko pension owner Liam Bartley, Asahidake is the place to be. "There are no crowds and there's actually some pretty gnarly terrain there as well. If you hike up there's heaps there, and there are all these really cool drops you can do as well. From the top of the cable car you can hike out both directions left and right, or just straight up. It tends to cop less weather than Kurodake, which closes for a lot of the winter because there's too much snow. But at Asahidake, you get a lot of similar snow – the quality of the snow is awesome – it's dry, it's cold and it's deep and because the quality is so good and because there are so few people, even if it doesn't snow it'll stay good for days. It's also got fantastic lodging – there's a really little youth hostel for the lower end travellers, and if you're willing to spend a little more there's a great pension where you'll get the typical great Japanese hospitality experience and fantastic food all grown in the local area and cooked by guys who love to cook."

### Furano

Furano feels like the resorts found in interior British Columbia in Canada. There are great steep trees and open sections and more than a few kickers to spin off. If it weren't for the 'nazi' ski patrol, which Furano oddly seems to pride itself on, it would have to be a pick spot in Hokkaido. With that said, if you know how to work the resort (hint: circuit style and quick like a ninja), you'll stay one step ahead of the fuzz and be waist deep in the pow pow all day. But make no mistake about it - they're serious about keeping people from ducking ropes and putting themselves in harm's way and will confiscate your lift pass if they catch you out of bounds.

Luke Hurford, general manager of Niseko Village, can't go past Niseko when it comes to designating one favourite Hokkaido ski resort, but if he had to name somewhere else it would be his former stomping ground, Furano. "I love the town at the base of the hill and just the whole, well-organized resort feel of the place. It's one resort and it's well managed and there's great fall-line groomer skiing. It's a shame about the out-of-bounds policy but they're working on changing that. It may take time because, like here (Niseko Village) it depends on government (whether previously closed backcountry areas can be opened. But another great thing about Furano is you've also got access to Asahidake and Kamui ski links an hour drive away, so you can be based out of here and get the best everything Furano has to offer, but still enjoy your powder. Having access to all that area is pretty neat."

Thanks to Clayton Kernaghan from Black Diamond Lodge for sharing his detailed knowledge of Hokkaido resorts for this article.



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## Kame, the Secret Restaurant

The Hidden Kitchen has moved, and become the Secret Restaurant

Most visitors returning to Niseko each winter have more on their minds than just snow. Great food also looms large as a drawcard for those in the know - and those in the know have always made a beeline for Kame, the Hidden Kitchen. Tucked away behind NAC on the fringes of the upper village, it often took a while to find, and with only limited seating, bookings several days in advance were the only way to guarantee the chance to savour Chef Tomohisa Harada's fabulous fusion delicacies.

But this year, the search will have to start all over again - the Hidden Kitchen has moved, and morphed into the Secret Restaurant. And in true Harada san style, it is now in an even more out of the way location just off the main road between Hirafu and Higashiyama. It is probably too far to think about walking, but whatever the transport, it is even more worth a visit than it ever has been.

'Escaping the confines of Hirafu', as Harada san puts it, has given him the opportunity to upscale to 45 seats, with space for a piano and even perhaps a musical trio for dinner accompaniment. It also puts him back into the open spaces and feeling of freedom that brought him to Niseko 14 years ago and convinced him there was nowhere better to live in Japan. And all in a brand new building that is almost as fusion as his food, with unmistakable traditional Japanese timber elements blending perfectly into a warm Spanish hacienda style.

The same trademark open kitchen is there, and many of the old Kame signature dishes still appear on the menu. Like the garlic chicken, the asari (shellfish) pilaff and a wonderful selection of original pastas, all ranging from around 1100 yen up to a very reasonable maximum of 1600 yen a dish. The pastas are probably the real treats at Kame. Done to 'al dente' perfection, they are cooked in more of a Japanese soba (buckwheat noodle) style than their European counterparts.




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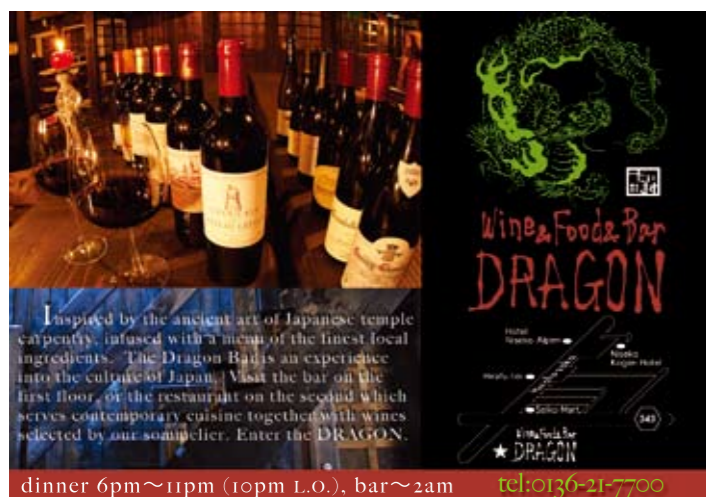


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It is important to say though, that the best way to enjoy Kame is to use the menu only at lunchtime. In the evening, far better to just give Harada san his head, and let him serve you up the multi-course meal he knows is best because of the ingredients he has to work with on the day. All courses are light, flavoursome and well balanced, and invariably end with a 'pasta of the day', and if you are really lucky on the night you are there, it will be garlic or chilli!! All you need to say is 'Chef o-makase' (I'll leave it to the chef) and the evening's magic will all unfold at a nice, steady pace.

In his long years in Niseko, Harada san has built up an extensive network of suppliers of only the best of local produce. He says Niseko is ideally located, with the freshest of seafood only a stone's throw away in the fishing ports of Iwanai and Shakotan, and surrounded by an array of the most exotic vegetables Japan offers - some of what he uses is grown to order especially for him.

There is a good selection of reasonably priced wine, and the one that stands out as the perfect accompaniment is Sienna, an excellent Romanian red, which is great value at 4500 yen.

Niseko is indeed very fortunate that Harada san declined an invitation to cook at the Queen Alice, one of Tokyo's leading restaurants all those years ago, and backpacked his way to Niseko instead. And despite the challenges of his new address, he is looking forward to welcoming back old friends from seasons gone by.




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CARVING...Paul Malandain on opening day, December 22, 2008. Photo: Glen Claydon



FRESH TRACKS... Mike Richards takes advantage of the early falls. Photo: Glen Claydon



Photo: Mike Richards



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Photo: Niseko Photography



Photo: Mike Richards



Photo: Glen Claydon



Photo: Niseko Photography



# NIKUJAGA (beef and potato stew)

Jerod McCann of EN In-house fine dining shares his Nikujaga recipe...

**THERE** is a category of cooking in almost every cuisine, 'mother's cooking'. It means something that's simple, homely, filling, and invokes strong feelings of nostalgia. In Japanese this is called 'ofukuro no aji' (mother's flavour). Nikujaga, or stewed potatoes with meat, is one of the mainstays of Japanese-style mother's cooking.

Nikujaga literally means 'meat (niku) potatoes (jaga)', and to most Japanese (as well as this Gaijin) it's comfort food. It's a simple dish of thinly sliced beef stewed in sweetened soy sauce with potatoes, shirataki noodles (also known as konnyaku noodles; a low carb, non-wheat noodle), carrots and onions.



### Ingredients

- \* 1 lb. russet potatoes, peeled and cut into 4 to 5 pieces each
- \* 1/3 lb. beef, thinly sliced
- \* 2/3 lb. yellow onions, sliced (about 1/3 inch wide)
- \* 2/3 lb. carrots, roughly chopped
- \* 1 pack shirataki noodles (also known as konnyaku noodles) optional
- \* 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- \* 400 cc water (about 1 1/2 cups)
- \* 3 tablespoons or more soy sauce (to taste)
- \* 3 tablespoons or more brown sugar (to taste)
- \* 2 tablespoons sake or white wine

### Method

1. Prepare vegetables as described above. (Cutting vegetables for Japanese dishes requires little skill as they believe the more cuts the vegetable has, the more likely flavours will be absorbed).
2. Heat a deep pot or pan until smoking hot and add the oil and beef. (Sautéing in hot oil adds deep flavours that will leach out in the cooking liquids; giving rustic colour and flavour).
3. Sauté for a couple of minutes then add your onion, potato, carrot and shirataki noodles. Continue sautéing for 5 minutes. (Personally, I like to sauté a bit longer, giving nice brown caramelisation on the vegetables).
4. Add water, soy sauce, brown sugar, and sake or wine. Bring to a simmer half covered. Give a quick taste. It should be a mild sweet/salty flavour. As the cooking liquid reduces, flavours will intensify.
5. Skim off any foam and cook for about 20 to 30 minutes until potatoes are done. For a naturally thick stew, remove half the cooked potatoes and set aside. Continue simmering until the remaining potatoes break apart and thicken the stew. Make sure not to over cook the other vegetables. Add remaining potatoes and serve immediately.
6. Keeps well in the fridge for three days.

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Billiard competition from 9pm. Winner will get prize.

Après Bar  
Fusion presents "Rubix Cube" fancy dress party. Travis Rice's That's It, That's All on the big screen. ¥300 Raffle Tickets - snowboard giveaway, Quiksilver DVDs, runners up prizes. Local DJs - Homac Hustler and Mosburger special set, 7pm til late.

## Friday, December 19

Après Bar ¥2000 - all you can drink 8pm til 10pm  
Après Bar's usual Friday all you can drink extravaganza with ¥500 mini-pizzas, Playstation on the big screen and a couple of guest DJs dropping in - get amongst it!

## Saturday, December 20

Java Opening Party. DJ & Cocktail specials From 8pm.

## Wednesday, December 24

Wild Bill's Booty Night  
DJ Sebastian from Sapporo nightclub Booty will be mixing it up on the decks.

## Friday, December 26

Après Bar ¥2000 - Nomi Hodai  
8pm til 10pm  
Après Bar's usual Friday all you can drink extravaganza with ¥500 mini-pizzas, Playstation on the big screen and a couple of guest DJs dropping in - get amongst it!

## Sunday, December 28

Night Rail Jam - presented in conjunction with Rhythm & Beats, Powderlife and Niseko Photography.  
6pm til 9pm in front of Après Bar. All welcome. ¥1000 entry fee.

## Wednesday, December 31

Après Bar NYE Masquerade Party  
DJs Lippo and Somatik (Good Vibrations Festival, The Loft)  
Ticket includes free drink, masquerade mask, entertainment and best view on the mountain of the fireworks. Tickets available from the bar. Capacity is 225 only for this night, so buy early - they always sell out!



Tell us about your event!  
[www.powderlife.com](http://www.powderlife.com)

# powder tracks

By Nick Jackson

## Ashley Nicholls

*Powderlife* caught up with Ashley Nicholls, director of new local property management company Holiday Niseko, to find out a little about the man and the tunes he likes to ride to.



**Name** Ashley Nicholls  
**Born** 2/10/72  
**Stance** Goofy / 59cm / Front 24° / Back -21°  
**Setup** Lib Tech TR5, Burton mission bindings  
**Favourite terrain** Back country, powder, natural terrain  
**Favourite move** Ducking ropes  
**Time in Niseko** Three years (seven years at Teine Highland, Sapporo)  
**Time riding?** 21 years (old school)



### Ashley's iPod Top 10

"Every one of these songs has been on a snowboard video at sometime or another. And for good reason as they're all amping songs." - Ashley

- 1 *Mountain Song*, by Jane's Addiction
- 2 *Malachi Crunch*, by NOFX
- 3 *Run to the Hills*, by Iron Maiden
- 4 *Don't Cry Out*, by Shiny Toy Guns
- 5 *Crosses*, by ASG
- 6 *Superstar*, by Pegboy
- 7 *Uplifted*, by BWF
- 8 *Tomorrow*, by Pennywise
- 9 *Living in America*, by The Sounds
- 10 *Deceptacon*, by Le Tigre

## Album reviews

### Lil Wayne, *Tha Carter III*, 2008

WHAT do you get if you cross Tracy Chapman and Stephen Hawking? This guy. This could be one of the most eccentric, unusual albums to come from mainstream rap. Despite this, it isn't the alternative album anticipated, filled with mainstream lyrics and beats overlapped with very bad vocal synth. You can't say he didn't try, poor guy. 2.5 Tattooed Tracy Chapman's out of 5. Songs to listen for: *Mrs Officer*, *Dr Carter*, *Tie My Hands*.



### Kings of Leon, *Only By The Night*, 2008

THIS is the fourth album from Kings of Leon, and it didn't click as much as the previous three. This seems to have lost its small town 'hick-ness', and become a band trying for stadium-filling anthems, as opposed to its quirky, southern-US dirty rock that made the band what it is. Don't get me wrong, it's still a great album, but maybe KOL has lost its unique sound. 3 Whiskey Shots Too Many out of 5. Songs to listen for: *Sex on Fire*, *Be Somebody*, *Crawl*.



### MGMT, *Oracular Spectacular*, 2008

I FEEL like I've been wrapped in a warm blanket and given some cocoa after a long day on the slopes, an album of psychedelic happiness and witty satire. At first listen the album doesn't seem to show its brilliance, but after a few listens to the songs you realise the intricacies and the fine details in the music that make this album an unrealised great. 4.5 Underweight Shirtless Man-Children out of 5. Songs to listen for: *Kids*, *Time to Pretend*, *Electric Feel*, *Weekend Wars*, *Of Moons*, *Birds and Monsters*.



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|  | ①     | ②     | ③     | ④     | ⑤     | ⑥     | ⑦     | ⑧     | ⑨     | ⑩    | ⑪    |
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| ホテル発<br>Hotel Dep                      | 10:20 | 12:20 | 14:30 | 16:30 | 17:30 | 19:00 | 20:30 | 21:30 | 23:00 | 0:00 | 1:40 |
| JRニセコ駅<br>Niseko Stn. Dep              | ↓     | ↓     | ↓     | 17:00 | ↓     | ↓     | ↓     | ↓     | ↓     | ↓    | ↓    |
| JR倶知安駅<br>Kutchan Stn. Dep             | 11:00 | 13:00 | 15:05 | ↓     | 18:10 | ↓     | ↓     | ↓     | ↓     | ↓    | ↓    |
| ヒラフ・ウェルカムセンター<br>Hirafu Welcome Center | ↓     | ↓     | ↓     | ↓     | 18:30 | 19:30 | 21:00 | 22:00 | 23:30 | 0:30 | 2:10 |
| ヒラフ交差点<br>Hirafu Crossing              | ↓     | ↓     | ↓     | ↓     | 18:35 | 19:35 | 21:05 | 22:05 | 23:35 | 0:35 | 2:15 |
| ホテル着<br>Hotel Arr                      | 11:25 | 13:25 | 15:30 | 17:10 | 18:50 | 19:50 | 21:20 | 22:20 | 23:50 | 0:50 | 2:30 |

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## Japanese for powder people

By studio tdes

### Lesson 1: Top 10 Japanese words for beginners

So you heard about Niseko's legendary powder, booked the flights, threw the skis/board in a bag, and now you're here ... wishing you had taken a few Japanese lessons so you could say something to the person sitting next to you in the chairlift. Niseko may seem like a suburb of Australia at times, but the official language is still Japanese. Of course, you're not expected to learn an entire language for a 10-day holiday – and it's not something you can accomplish by flicking through a phrasebook on the flight over – but a few words can go a long way, especially if you pick the right words. If you only have time to learn ten words, these are the words we recommend.

#### 1. Sumimasen すみません I'm sorry, excuse me, thank you

This magic word brings forgiveness and beer! Use it when you accidentally bump into someone in the queue for the lifts or inadvertently ski in front of them. It works well with a nod of the head and a guilty look on your face. Note: this word alone doesn't quite cover sins such as losing control and causing a major pile up or making someone spill their entire drink – then you'll need to add a 'gomennasai' for starters.



'Sumimasen' is also used to get someone's attention and can be used to get another round of drinks at an izakaya. Here's how... raise your hand, look in the direction of the waiter and yell, 'sumimasen!'. When eye contact has been established, pick up glass in one hand and hold up the number of fingers for the number of drinks you need in the other. Smile and nod head. Bingo! 'Sumimasen' can also be used to thank someone. If you drop your glove and someone picks it up for you, smile and say, 'sumimasen'.

#### 2. Doumo どうも thank you, hi

There are many ways to express gratitude in Japanese – doumo' is the simplest, with only two syllables, so why not start with that? When they hand over your goods at Seicomart or Lawson, smile, nod and say, 'doumo'. They'll say, 'arigatou gozaimasu' to you - but you don't need to say it back, because you're a customer. The next step up from 'doumo' is 'arigatou' or 'doumo arigatou'. If someone has really gone out of their way for you – made you something that wasn't on the menu or spent time giving you detailed directions – then 'doumo' isn't really enough. Try 'doumo arigatou gozaimasu' and turn the nod into a bow. 'Doumo' can also be used to mean hi. When the person you chatted to in the gondola yesterday waves to you on the mountain, wave back and say: 'Ah, doumo!'

#### 3. Douzo どうぞ here you are, go ahead

When you're handing your new friend the drink you've just bought them or motioning them to start eating the eda mame that's just been delivered to your table, say, 'douzo'. If you arrive at the ticket gates at the same time as someone else, motion for them to go first and say, 'douzo'. If someone does this for you, go ahead and say, 'doumo'. The person who wipes the snow off the chairlift and then motions you to move ahead usually says, 'douzo'. You can reply, 'doumo'.



#### 4. Ohayou おはよう good morning

Use 'ohayou' to greet people before noon. Say it to the hotel staff, the bus driver, the ticket staff... and random strangers in the gondola queue if you're feeling friendly.

It's good form to say it loudly and full of energy! Adding 'gozaimasu' makes it a bit more formal. Say, 'ohayou gozaimasu' if you run into your boss going for a morning ski.

#### 5. Hai はい yes

Useful for answering easy questions and confirming orders. Are you Australian? 'Hai'. Snowboarder? 'Hai'. Table for two? 'Hai'. 'Hai' is rather formal, try using 'un' when talking with friends – but stick to 'hai' if a police officer is asking you questions.

#### 6. Onegaishimasu お願いします please

Use this when ordering or requesting something. 'Biru onegaishimasu' means beer please. If you go to a restaurant and can't read the menu, try pointing at things that look tasty and saying, 'kore onegaishimasu' (this please). 'Kudasai' also means please, but is a little bit less polite.

#### 7. Kanpai かんぱい cheers!

You deserve a drink after a hard day on the slopes! Before you start drinking raise your glass and say, 'kanpai!'. Before eating, press your hands together in front of you and say, 'itadakimasu'.



#### 8. Oishii おいしい delicious, yummy, tasty

After you've said 'itadakimasu' and started eating, the next think you'll probably want to say is 'oishii!'. This is the most common word for describing food. Boys can also use 'umai'.

#### 9. Kawaii かわいい cute, nice, pretty

If you're a female in a shop you can use this word to describe almost everything that you like. If you're a young girl with your parents, try pointing at everything you want, and shrieking, 'kawaii!', followed by, 'katte' (buy it). Repeat until they cave in. Mwahaha.

'Kawaii' is also the perfect word to use to compliment people on anything from their hairstyle to their boots. Not to be confused with 'kawai' which means scary. Warning: guys can say this word to girls, but a guy saying it to another guy is a bit weird.



#### 10. Saikou さいこう great, awesome, wicked

How was the powder snow this morning? 'Saikou!' Do you like Niseko? 'Niseko Saikou!'

Since this magazine can't talk, your best bet is to find a Japanese person and ask them to say the words and repeat after them. Then buy them a beer :)

#### Need more practice?

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# Pilgrimage to Kurodake

The heavens open for Derek Begley and his fellow powder worshippers



Photo: Glen Claydon

Kamikawa National Park, in central north Hokkaido, is known in the local Ainu dialect as 'the playground of the gods'.

In early November, some of the strongest disciples of the Holy Church of Hokkaido Powder converged on a lodge at the base of a heaven-ascending gorge in the heart of the region, willingly offering their bodies, livers, boards and souls in pursuit of winter nirvana.

Like all religious movements, the pursuit of Hokkaido powder involves sacrifices and commitment that question the body and test the mind. Fortunately, this congregation included some of the longest serving, deeply committed followers, with decades of experience in the pursuit under their tunics. These high priests and priestesses are well versed in the tenements and psalms of the movement, encapsulated in the Trinity of Holy Vows.

## Vow #1 Patience is a virtue

After a typical Niseko summer – overstuffing on barbecue, going over the handlebars on the mountain bike and sneaking onto hotel tennis courts – the converted had become restless. A call went out for a four hour trip into the blustery north for a chance to ride Japan's first lift-accessed powder of the season, before christening a bar/nightclub that had sat empty (yet fully stocked) for the past four years. The call to Mecca went out via excited emails, Facebook pages and cell phone texts, and soon pilgrims were packing their bags with gear and cars with passengers to split the tolls and kilometres that lay ahead.

Our particular caravan consisted of three Canadian locals and a lone Australian in the advance posse, Rich. Four hours later, as the caravan inched along the windblown side roads, and the merits of various Toronto Maple Leaf versus Montreal Canadiens goalies were debated for the umpteenth time while the Tragically Hip blasted from the radio, the first signs of the commitment being asked of us showed itself in Rich's pained, unblinking eyes. Finally, deep into the night, bloated on unidentified rest-stop meats and canned coffees, the glorious 'Gorge of the Clouds' revealed its majestic cliffs, steep faces, bottomless powder, and... completely shut down gondola due to high winds.

The crew groaned, standing at the base of such a magnificent temple, yet cast away and forced to persevere. As more pilgrims arrived at the lodge, distractions such as snow-skate rail sessions, poker games and snowboard movies only served to fuel the fires burning inside. As morning turned to day and fellow believers continued to pour in from across the island, the congregation became pregnant with anticipation and unreleased energy, leading to...

## Vow #2 The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom

What happens when 40 skiers and boarders, holed up Alaskan-style at the base of an inaccessible mountain, are unleashed upon an abandoned bar full of free alcohol of indeterminate age and quality, a pumping sound system and décor straight out of Boogie Nights? Mayhem.

"Walking into the 1984 bar was like stepping right back in time," said party goer Kevin Keith. "People had uncovered ski suits and gear from decades ago. Bottles of liquor left on the shelf when the place went under five years ago were consumed with semi-catastrophic results. Beer helmets appeared, a replica Stanley Cup was drunk from, the dance floor kicked off and people were cutting up the retro carpet in the bar. Everyone was having a wicked time – even the cops did when they showed up at 3am. At five, I dragged myself to bed, being careful to not step on the passed out bodies, passionately wiggling sleeping bags and vomit. What a night."

## "Buying this place... we're... we're... the smartest people in the world!"

- Clayton Kernaghan to Black Mountain Lodge co-owner Dale Riva.

## Vow #3 Passion and belief are the basis of all enlightenment

7 am the morning after. At times like these, the faith of the young, the weak, and the crippled is sometimes tested, as last night's dreams of fresh tracks and bottomless turns are replaced by the realities of warm blankets, soft pillows and headaches the size of Alaska.

Happily, the high priests are well versed in battling these demons. 30 minutes later, Pennywise and Iron Maiden still ringing in their ears and black coffee coursing through their veins, the masses congregated at the top of the lifts to bear witness to the greatness that is Kurodake. What they saw before them was 120cm of light, fluffy pow on a solid base, blue skies peeping through the cloud cover and riders from the Car Danchi video crew and Japan Burton team throwing first run back flips over tree gaps. It was on.

Quickly the powder zealots broke into exploration parties, and the congregation began to exult in their religious rapture, hooting and whooping in, around and over the mana from heaven. Souls drank deeply with each silken turn and landed jump, spirits filled and bliss restored. Each of this congregation's members has lives and jobs and things to do, but every Niseko business owner, every Sapporo shop clerk, every English teacher stuck in crappy fishing towns throughout northern Hokkaido is here for moments exactly like these. Moments that justify the lives we have chosen and the paths followed. Moments that make living on the other side of the world away from loved ones, plausible, even logical.

In the words of Erica, an English teacher in Sapporo, spoken moments after slashing through an untouched gully that seemed endless in its perfection: "I love snowboarding because it makes me feel sane, like I'm not crazy for doing this, that everyone else is crazy for not. It simplifies life." Erica then bursts into laughter and does her little snow dance, and we all revel in the presence of someone so happy with what they are doing, so stoked, on such a simple pleasure that it stokes us out as well. We smile, hike up through the waist-deep powder (which, truth be told, nearly did make me see God, but in a stopped heart, ambulance trip to the hospital kind of way) and get back on the lift to praise the gods in our own way again.

If you want to see paradise for yourself, talk to Clayton at Black Diamond Lodge in Higashiyama. Kurodake is not for everyone, but those who like it, like it a lot.



# Men who ride mountains

By Stirling Goldman



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 moved to 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.

So, here we are! Stirling always knows when another Niseko season is approaching, as his phone starts to run hot, and his email and Facebook sites go into overdrive. I mean, Facebook had to upsize my account, as I had too many friends for the program. But Stirling gets that. Just like he gets the ladies. Let's face it, it may be a year on, but not a lot has changed in the world of Stirls. Still looking as fit as ever, still skiing harder than anyone on the hill and still the last man standing in the bar at night. Yes, ladies, Stirls is back for 2008-09, and is here to stay. And gents, you are permitted to keep aspiring. Oh, it is good to be the king!

So, the wannabes from Powderlife have asked me to write a spiel on what I did in the off season, but let's not kid ourselves, everyone wants to know. This season, after moving on from Niseko in May, 2008, I headed home to Baw Baw for a quick photo shoot as representative for the mountain. I then tended to some modelling for my CK Goldman fragrance, Blizzard Ski contract and Nordica rear entry boots contract. I then headed over to the US for a few weeks at the Playboy Mansion to fulfil a personal instructing contract that my old mate, Heff, had commissioned me to perform. Poor ol' Hughy was feeling a bit sloppy with his seduction techniques and wanted some help from the master. I understand he's back in top form now. This was followed by the last three months kicking back in Hawaii for some rays and a little more lady time, if you know what I mean. But let's be true to ourselves here, there is no off season with that pastime.

So, I'm sure you are all asking how I stay looking so good in the off season when I am not carving the white? Well, I do a few weeks in Baw Baw – but that's backwards on one ski. I find it really helps with the leg definition. I then head down to the local car yard and bench press a few small trucks – four sets of eight reps of about one-tonne weight is pretty typical for Stirls. This is followed by some anaerobic training – six hills

sprints up Mt. Yotei with a 30-second recovery. Now, I'm pretty sure the majority of you are feeling tired just reading this. Well, you should try doing it. Of course it is all done with my shirt off for the ladies, but I never sign autographs or pose for photos when I'm training. I'm focused during these times, for the body of Stirls is not achieved overnight – PLENTY of other things, however, are achieved by Stirls overnight, though. Anyway, I look forward to seeing you all throughout the season. And yes, ladies, it is all real. And yes, gents, if you do buy me drinks, you may sit within a five-metre radius of me.

## Q: Stirling, there is a season-opener fancy dress party, and I was wondering if I could go as you? Dino, Australia.

A: Dino, let's be honest, champ. You could try, but you won't come close. I really do tire of people trying to be me. It's like when people dress up as Elvis or Jesus at a party. No one ever matches up, and even when they are close, they still lack 'the sixth sense'. Do yourself a favour, Dino, and go as your purple namesake from The Flintstones, and you may have a chance of pulling that one off.

## Q: Stirls, I think you are such a cutie! Any chance of a date this season? Julia, UK.

A: I'll give you points for trying, Julia, but Stirling doesn't date – he gets dated, and it is certainly not via some crappy mag like Powderlife. Look, I'll be honest, I did try and date back in the mid-'80s, but I was booked out every night for five years, so the ladies were only disappointed. Heck, Julia, I had married women booking ahead in the anticipation they would be divorced by that stage. It just wasn't cool. Stirls likes to roll with the punches and keep it real. Julia, if you are a

good sort and at the bar after midnight, there is a fair chance you will be 'dated' this season, After all, Stirls gets the girls.

## Q: Stirling, any chance of an autobiography one day? Fritz, Austria.

A: Fritz, this is a question I'm regularly asked, but let's cut to the chase. Given the extraordinary capacity I have to ski every minute of the day and socialise every minute of the night, there is very little time to sleep, let alone jot down the memoirs. Stirling's life is not a book, nor is it a movie or a real-life documentary. The only way to be part of Stirling's life is to jump on-board as a lady, and just observe and try to be as much like me as you can as a male. Besides, Fritz, you chump, who has time to read when it's winter time in Niseko?

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



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While Niseko becomes a thriving modern international ski resort in winter, just a 10-minute bus ride away is an authentic little rural Japanese town, Kutchan - affectionately known by foreigners as K-town. It's the closest 'big' town to Niseko with a population of about 15,000 people. Kutchan is the service town for surrounding rural villages in the region, including Niseko, but in years gone by it has been quite a thriving little entertainment district on the back of past ski booms in Niseko. Kutchan's nightlife these days is pretty tame compared to what most foreigner visitors would be used to, but therein lies its charm. For the younger crowd at least one night exploring the back alleys of Kutchan for a quirky little bar or karaoke joint is a must - it could well be one of the best experiences of your trip. For those not after a party, there are countless - possibly a hundred or more - unique little restaurants to choose from. For ideas about where to head check out [www.powderlife.com/magazine/kutchan](http://www.powderlife.com/magazine/kutchan)

Kutchan Night-Go Bus ¥100 for an unlimited pass

| 9              | 11                              | 5       | 1                        |
|----------------|---------------------------------|---------|--------------------------|
| Welcome Center | Seicomart (Hirafu Intersection) | MaxValu | Kutchan JR Train Station |
| 17:00          | 17:03                           | 17:14   | 17:20                    |
| 18:30          | 18:33                           | 18:44   | 18:50                    |
| 19:30          | 19:33                           | 19:44   | 19:50                    |
| 20:15          | 20:18                           | 20:29   | 20:35                    |
| 21:15          | 21:18                           | 21:29   | 21:35                    |
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| 23:20          | 23:23                           | 23:34   | 23:40                    |

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| Kutchan JR Train Station | Lerch Memorial Park | Welcome Center |
| 18:10                    | 18:16               | 18:28          |
| 19:00                    | 19:06               | 19:18          |
| 19:55                    | 20:01               | 20:13          |
| 20:55                    | 21:01               | 21:13          |
| 22:00                    | 22:06               | 22:18          |
| 23:00                    | 23:06               | 23:18          |



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is bus stop of Kutchan Night Bus which connects Kutchan downtown and Hirafu village.

Having a ball in Kutchan

By Matthew Thomas



WALKING into one of Kutchan's many pachinko parlours is a feast for the senses to say the least. Pachinko has a gigantic cult following in Japan and is all about being over the top. Tasteless design, a haze of smoke hanging in the air, blaring techno music, the incessant bleep of machines, echoing announcements shouted over the speakers by workers, and, of course, the sound of hundreds of thousands of metal ball bearings whizzing through the seemingly infinite fluorescent displays.

Best described as a cross between poker and pinball machines, pachinko is a Japanese gaming device with the ultimate goal of winning prizes and providing general amusement - which it offers in spades.

A dummy's guide to pachinko

It may seem non-sensical, but there is a method to the madness...

- Players buy metal balls by inserting either cash, a pre-paid card, or a member card directly into the machine. For assistance, ask a worker.
- The pachinko machine has a digital slot machine on a large screen in the centre of its layout. Similar to slot or poker machines, the objective is to get three numbers or symbols in a row for a jackpot.
- Balls are shot into the machine from a ball tray with the purpose of attempting to win more balls, which act as currency. It's a simple as that, so good luck!



Play by the rules

Player beware, the Japanese are serious about their pachinko!

- In Japan, there are many unwritten rules of pachinko conduct. All participating are expected to conform or leave. Some law-breakers have even arrested!
- Staff members are not supposed to tell a player where they can exchange their tokens for cash, due to 'legality issues' (privatised gambling is technically illegal in Japan), so players are expected to find out this information themselves.
- It is extremely taboo to touch another player's balls. In-parlour fights have broken out because one player was accused of stealing another player's balls, or accidentally knocking buckets over. A rule of thumb: best never touch anyone's balls at all.
- Lastly, if a situation arises where you hit a jackpot but have no more balls to use in payout mode, you can ask a fellow player to borrow a handful of balls, but only if you return to him or her about twice the amount of balls you borrowed.

Adults only

Hire a babysitter because kids aren't allowed.

- Children are technically not allowed inside pachinko parlours, mainly because of alcohol and smoking. Believe it or not, a blind eye is sometimes turned towards children playing pachinko, so long as they don't win much!

Pachinko and the law

Technically pachinko is illegal... and run by the Yakuza!

- In Japan, gambling within the private industry is illegal, but pachinko parlours are tolerated by the Japanese authorities as 'semi-gambling', and are not considered as centres of illegal activity.
- Attitudes towards pachinko vary in Japan, from being considered a way to make a living, to being stigmatized.
- In Japan, due to its bordering on illegal gambling, the pachinko industry has a close relationship with the police force. Currently, however, due to growing public and political pressure, Japanese police are more active in regulating parlours and they often send retired officers to become board members of pachinko companies.



So, there you go. Don't just limit your Japanese cultural experience to the deep pow pow of Niseko and head a few minutes down the road to Kutchan, a local haven for pachinko parlours. Just look for the biggest, brightest buildings in town and you've found pachinko.

Photos: Niseko Photography

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## Malaysian mega-company launches in Hirafu

**MALAYSIAN** development giant Asia Pacific Land Berhad, popularly known as AP Land, is making moves into the Japanese lifestyle market, and is using Niseko as its launching pad. "Lifestyle projects are in vogue in Japan to cater to the well-heeled and savvy travellers," said AP Land's joint managing director Low Su Ming. "We are also exploring opportunities in Osaka and Tokyo." AP Land is one of the largest property groups in Malaysia, and the company behind the new 3082sqm Shiki development on Route 5 in the upper Hirafu village. The DBI architects-designed Shiki is an estimated ¥4.9 billion (US\$52 million) project, and will contain more than 40 two and three-bedroom units. A second large, prime multi-million-dollar development lot in the upper village (pictured) has sold to another Malaysian development company. However, the plans for this block are not yet known.



## Moiwa ski resort sold... again

**MORIA** Mountain Holding GK has just been announced as the new owner of the Moiwa ski fields, located just west of Niseko United. This purchase means Moria will assume control of all the lifts, restaurant, ski rental and related amenities, along with the developable land that came with the resort. It does not, however, own or control the two residential towers, or related parking. Moria is keen to improve the facilities and services, enhance the image of the resort and put it on the all-mountain pass. The new owner wishes to work cooperatively with the local community in order to provide visitors with a greater range of choices and more reasons to come to Niseko. The mountain, under the new ownership, will open as scheduled this season on Saturday, December 6.

## Canada in Niseko

**DEVELOPMENT** Shizen no Mon, translated to 'Gate to Nature', is the latest project by local developer North 42, a development arm of West Canada Homes. The new community consists of six houses designed in the classic West Canada style. Each of the four-bedroom houses will have an interior space of about 300 sqm, and are currently valued at around ¥2.8 billion (US\$30 million). Construction for the development is due to be completed before winter in 2010. "With one sold going into the winter, we feel positive about the success of the project," said project manager John Barton. Located five minutes from the Hirafu gondola, on the road between Hirafu and Hanazono, it is the first time an exclusive private community has been created in the area. Mr Barton said the houses would create value as views could not be built out, and other buildings would not infringe on the site. Lead designer is Someya-san, of Atelier Alkumu, based in Sapporo.

## Don't bank on getting a loan

**THE** National Australia Bank (NAB) has decided to postpone its loans in the Niseko region until further notice. The loans that were available to residents of Australia, Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore will be suspended until the bank conducts another review of the market, scheduled to take place in three months. Worldwide declines in property markets, and the potential effect of the exchange rate change between the Japanese Yen and the Australian dollar may have on tourists this season, are said to be some of NAB's primary concerns. The Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA) is continuing its loans in Niseko, and has extended its coverage to include other areas of Japan.

## Asia takes a greater share of the cheesecake

By Matthew Roy  
Hokkaido real estate journalist

**ON** a recent trip to Hong Kong taking in the bright lights, I was bombarded by the sights and sounds of Hokkaido. Japanese restaurants serving Hokkaido cuisine, shops selling Hokkaido chocolate, cheesecakes, crabs... and people who seemed to know the place at least as well as I did.

"Hokkaido is very beautiful and natural without the pollution and high-rise buildings you get in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tokyo," said Peggy Lam, a Hong Kong business professional. "People there are very down-to-earth, genuine and friendly. Every season is distinct and has its own beauty; you can see snow in the winter and lavender in the summer."

This enthusiasm in Hong Kong, and nearby countries, for Hokkaido, has meant business people in Niseko have long believed that some day in the future, Asians would overtake Australians as the largest group of visitors and investors on the ski-fields.

While the most obvious evidence of this in the past two years has been big investments by Hong Kong and now Malaysian companies, local operators confirm that the recent crash in the Australian dollar and the growing popularity of the island means Asian tourism is now surging.

According to national tourism statistics, visits from Australia fell 10 per cent in October, but visits from Hong Kong rose by 42 per cent, Singapore by 10 per cent and Thailand by 10 per cent, compared to the previous year. The yen skyrocketed 39 per cent against the Australian dollar from July to the end of November but only rose 19, 15 and 10 per cent against the Singapore dollar, Thai baht and Hong Kong dollar, respectively.

Chris Chan, sales manager at the Niseko condominium developer Nisade, confirms that bookings from Asia have leapt in recent months: "Hong Kong is number one, followed closely by



LOVING IT... Hong Kong holiday makers play in the powder.

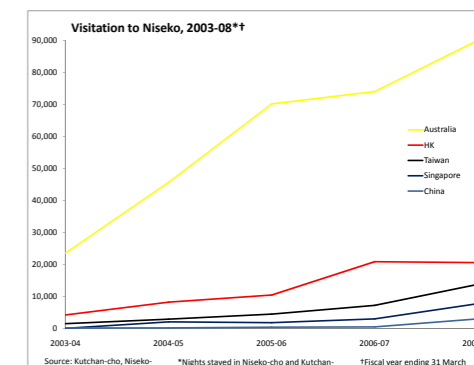
Photo: Niseko Photography

Singapore and Malaysia quickly on its heels. Visits from the Chinese seaboard are also growing quickly and it's an enormous potential market for the future."

Julian Bailey, who works in Asia sales at travel and development group Hokkaido Tracks, confirms this will lead to a greater share of property sales in Asia. "Before the crisis hit there was a 50-50 split between Australian and Asian investors," says Julian. "That has changed dramatically to favour Asian investors."

But Australians will still be buying despite the crunch, says Chris at Nisade: "People coming to Niseko are better-healed than your average visitor to Japan as a whole. Although they've been hit hard by the strong yen, they won't have been hit as hard as many others. I was expecting a much more negative impact, but lot of Australian visitors are coming and many still intend to purchase this year."

Back in Hong Kong, Peggy asked me, "So when do you think the best season is to visit if you are



planning to buy a house?"  
"I think summer is the best", I replied, "because you can see what the island looks like underneath the snow. Oh, and by the way, where can I find that Hokkaido cheese cake once I'm back in Japan?"

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# Q & A with Riccardo Tossani

Interview by Lorne Calhoun



Architect Riccardo Tossani has a broad education in architectural design from schools in the United States, Italy and Australia, and two decades of international design and design management experience. *Powderlife* had a chance to catch up with him and get his thoughts on the Escarpment Estate, the future of the Niseko area and his new office in Hirafu.

## What words would you use to describe your current project?

Meandering through a lush Silver Birch forest, Hirafu Escarpment is a private estate that nestles premium quality, custom designed residences against the picturesque Hirafu hillside. Through careful planning and house design we have ensured outstanding views of Mt. Yotei, as well as glimpses of rice paddies through lush Silver Birch forests to the dramatic Niseko Mountains beyond. Hirafu Escarpment is a beautiful master-planned resort community that inspires a sense of belonging. It is as place where nature and the unspoiled character of Hirafu's forested landscape will always dominate.

## How do you feel about this project?

This project holds enormous potential as a model for controlled, high-quality architecture and planning, organised to integrate responsibly with the natural environment, employing principles of sustainability and enhancing Hirafu's scenic beauty. This project also contributes recreational and cultural amenities back to the community, such as pocket parks,

sculpture and even a public piazza at the heart of this new village precinct. The opportunity to create an ideal world where planning and architecture are woven into a seamless, cultivated whole is rare. I am thrilled to be a part of this vision, and am confident that the Escarpment Estate will lead the way for further high-quality development in Niseko and the region.

What separates this project from others out there? As an architect and master planner, I have the privilege of designing the residences, as well as the environment in which they are placed. Each residence is a unique interpretation of Japanese alpine traditions brought forward to the 21st century. They are a contemporary architecture tailored to fit each individual site, preserving views and embellishing the natural ecology through careful landscape design and extensive tree replanting. Power lines are underground, and infrastructure including storm water drains, kerosene and gas tanks are concealed from view. This attention to detail and investment in quality is the first of its kind in the region.

## Where did you get the inspiration from for these designs?

Watching development trends in Niseko over the years, I could not help but notice the slow erosion of scenic beauty and architectural integrity in the mad rush to build. The region lacks a clear indigenous architectural style, and the invention of new paradigms has been exciting to watch but not always successful. Having designed and visited resort communities all over the world, it became abundantly clear that simple principles are the ones that add the most value to buildings and communities. These include a thoughtful consideration of architectural traditions and cultural history, a responsible relationship with the indigenous natural environment, view protection, community identity and strategic integration with neighbouring communities so as to share amenities without losing identity. These principles are seemingly obvious, but rarely adhered to. Hirafu's unique natural and built environment, its visual relationship with Mt. Yotei, the vibrant nature of the village in winter and even the roar of the Shiribeshi River, audible from parts of the estate, combined like a lantern of inspiration to show the way forwards for the design of the Escarpment community.



## What other projects have you been involved with in the Niseko region?

Our first commission was as master architects and planners for the Hanazono Village project for Harmony Resorts. We have recently completed Forest Estate - five luxury residences clustered on the edge of a hill in Hirafu Middle Village, and have just received the building permit for a large and architecturally significant private residence at the foot of Mt Yotei, which will be completed in 2009. This residence exploits sustainable design principles and employs geothermal heating and photo-voltaic power generation. We are master planning a new 18ha resort in Rusutsu, and have been asked to master plan the Niseko Moiwai ski resort by its new owner. We are also about to commence the Hirafu Upper Village master plan for the NPB (Niseko Promotion Board) starting with the main street. We are the architects for Shibisey, an exciting new condominium project in Furano for Hokkaido Tracks, and have recently completed the concept design for a very large mixed-use managed condominium and retail project in upper Hirafu Village. Obviously we have built up a considerable knowledge base in the region over the years, and have worked for many of the area's pioneers, providing them with services ranging from due diligence studies of land parcels to full blown architecture and master planning.

## How long do you plan on keeping the office in Niseko?

Niseko is an all-season resort destination with world-class potential. While current financial conditions are troubling, my profession must also responsibly take a long-term view. Buildings might take only one or two years to construct, but towns and resort communities take decades to build. Niseko is only part way there, and now more than ever the stakeholders around the mountain need to pull together to empower the area with a synchronicity of common purpose - to make this place the most desirable destination in the region. One needs to think well ahead, which is the

definition of visionary. We must all look beyond our individual ambitions, and recognise that by working together to define and create opportunities, by providing visitors with an ever-expanding range of choices, we prop each other up and benefit ourselves in the process.

I see Niseko as an embryonic Aspen of Asia. As a place-maker and habitat creator, I hope to play a proactive role in this evolution. To that end I have built a home in Hirafu and opened an office in the village, which will provide my clients and staff with real-time support. We are on the cusp of something grand, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make a difference, and all of us can participate.



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the dirt on real estate



How to beat the currency crisis

By Kristian Lund

THE world economy has taken a battering and real estate has been one of the biggest casualties. However, the Niseko property market has weathered the storm front well. For a long time now, perhaps largely driven by the local Japanese pessimism founded on their past experience, there has been a view that the Niseko boom was an unsustainable bubble. But despite the recent troubles, the Niseko market is still alive and well, and if anything, this hiccup has created a few interesting opportunities that will keep driving the market.

Most of these opportunities will arise from international currency fluctuations and buyers from different regions may be able to capitalise for different reasons. While the latest Niseko boom has been largely funded by Australian investors, the Australian dollar has nearly halved in value over the past three months. This will be the catalyst for a lot of the action that's taking place.

"There's a lot of stock on the market because Aussies are looking to capitalise on exchange rates," says Niseko Property director Ruskin McLennan.

"Anyone who bought in the past three years can sell at the price they paid and make a profit. No one has regretted their investment in Niseko in the past three years because the yen is so strong.

"It's very much a price-driven market and in the past 12 months it's gone from a sellers' market to a buyers' market.

"We'll find the strength in the value of the Malaysian ringgit and the Hong Kong dollar will mean that there's an incredible opportunity for investors from those countries to pick up some bargain basement assets.

"The big opportunity is for the Asian investors to come in and dilute the Australian holdings. They love a bargain and this winter will be a real opportunity for the Asian buyers. There will be people who can't resist a bargain. If you're prepared to pay cash for something you can expect a good discount. It's a fantastic buying opportunity."

Niseko Consulting managing director Michael Davenport agrees the weak Aussie dollar will see a change in the market, but there will be buyers swooping in to capitalise.

"The main investor demographic is moving from Australia to mainland Asia and this is being further fuelled by the current exchange rates," says Davenport.

"As soon as the final pieces of fallout from the current financial crisis hit the ground, Niseko will be poised to continue with a new mix of international investors."

He says the remarkable capital growth opportunities of recent years may have come to an end but long term, a Niseko investment is still a solid proposition.

"The explosive capital gains growth will be less prominent as Niseko matures beyond its infancy and land values stabilise," he says.

"Despite this, there are still some excellent pieces of property available in Niseko and there will be some amazing bargains as Australian investors cash in on the current exchange rates.

"One of the fundamental rules of smart real estate investment is that genuinely great real estate is exactly that – and will remain attractive in a slower market. Properties that tick the boxes of views, location and quality will still see good capital gains growth.

"The individual investor base in Niseko is slowly being replaced by corporate investors and developers. Some large sales in the Upper Village have been reported since the global crisis which is a strong sign for the future of Niseko. Despite the trend moving this way, there are still lots of opportunities for private investors around Niseko."

And what about the poor old Australian buyer? Are there still any opportunities available for them despite their currency woes? McLennan thinks there is.

"There are ways that Aussies can still get into the market," he says. "Land is still a good investment here – you can still buy a block of land in St Moritz (alongside Hirafu) for ¥5 million (US\$50,000).

"The other way is through a Commonwealth Bank loan – you can get 100 per cent finance using your Niseko asset and your asset in Australia. You're only paying 3 per cent interest, if the property is returning more than 3 per cent, it's cash flow positive from day one. And there's a lot of good, well-located properties that will return more than 3 per cent."

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# Niseko finds its identity

By Kal Bragg,  
joint president of Niseko  
Alpine Developments  
[Nisade].



EVERY township has certain characteristics that make its buildscape unique. From Whistler, with its alpine stone and log structures, to Tyrol's contrasting brown and white facades, each area is defined by building design and amenities. Niseko is in the middle of finding its own identity right now. Being a very late riser as an international alpine destination, it lacks its own building style, public areas and landmark structures that make an area so instantly recognisable.

against the newer buildings. The dynamism of building design in the past year has been incredible. Developers are spending much more on the design phase as competition grows and named architects become the norm, not the exception.

So, what does the future hold? Boundaries are being pushed on design right now. We just don't have named architects working on buildings; Niseko has some of Japan's top-tier designers from Nikken Sekkei to Tadao Ando and Klein Dytham, all working on buildings within the confines of the village. Mix the design with the high standard of developers having already bought into the area and Niseko's future looks extremely bright.

The world has experienced the five-star beach resort boom, yet five-star ski resorts are just now taking off in comparison. For example, we are seeing the low-lying European regions switching from a pure ski outlook to mountain spa retreats in the aid of a retreating snowline. In Niseko, rumours are flying about luxury resort

*"Boundaries are being pushed on design right now"*

- Kal Bragg on the future of Niseko.

companies Aman and Banyan Tree, with already high-scale resorts in the middle of planning at Kabayama (Above and Beyond Resorts), Higashiyama (Citigroup), Annupuri (Cappella) and Hanazono (Nihon Harmony). This is the direction of Niseko's outer lying areas. Everyone of these developments produces leading edge design and off-snow amenities, from ice rinks to huge outdoor thermal bathing areas. Paralleling this resort-style accommodation is a raise in the bar of Niseko's CSB (central skiing district), Hirafu properties. These range from Nisade's Vale Niseko, with its personal onsens and ski-in-ski-out location, to the forever views of Hokkaido Tracks' Escarpment development, producing

some of most exclusive houses seen in Niseko yet. Niseko's future design incorporates use of ground heating (via drilling and heat exchanging), a boosting of non-ski, in-house building amenities for wider market appeal, shopping and retail (which are going into all new large Hirafu developments), and a much higher grade of building interiors and facades.

Niseko has had to mature extraordinary quickly to keep up with market demand. It will not be long until Niseko - in particular, Hirafu - will be seen as an ultra-modern ski destination with instantly recognisable landmark buildings. We will more than likely even surpass the older-style characteristics of established world ski areas.



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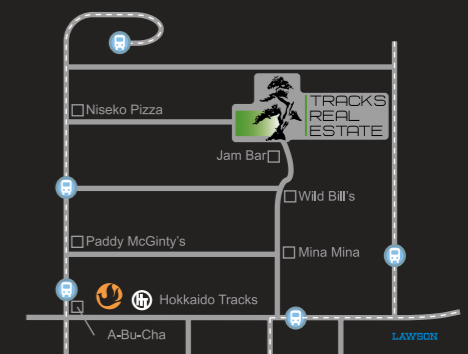
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Mt. Niseko An'nupuri Altitude 1,308m  
The peak area is uncontrolled

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

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

**KNOW THE CODE: IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY**



### ATTENTION

Those who wish to ski outside of the controlled areas must follow the Niseko Rules.  
Those who wish to employ a ski guide are advised to employ a member of the Niseko Winter Guide Association.

\*Office of Niseko Winter Guide Association  
Phone: (0136)21-4055  
[www.nisekoguide.jp/](http://www.nisekoguide.jp/)



### Ski area shuttle bus Niseko Free Passport Bus

The 'Niseko Free Passport Bus' conveniently linking each of the ski slopes is free to holders of the Niseko All Mountain Pass.

- \*The bus timetable is on 'Niseko Resort Map' at lift ticket counters etc.
- \*Holders of the Niseko All Mountain Pass must present pass on boarding the bus. (12-point ticket holders forfeit 1 point).
- \*Those without the All Mountain Pass can ride the bus for the regular fare.

|                     |  |                  |
|---------------------|--|------------------|
| Lift ticket counter | Ski patrol                                       | Un-groomed Slope |
| Rest room           | AED  | Easiest          |
| Phone               | Light  | More Difficult   |
| Kid's room          | Gate to uncontrolled area                        | Most Difficult   |
| Restaurants         | <b>Name of Slope</b>                             |                  |
| Café                | Maximum Gradient / Average Gradient / Run Length |                  |
| Shop                |  |                  |
| Information         | <b>Number of seats</b>                           |                  |
| Rentals             | <b>Name of Lift</b>                              |                  |
| Ski school          | Length · Time required                           |                  |
| Onsen (Hot Spring)  | · Number of lift ticket points                   |                  |
| Shuttle bus stop    |  |                  |
| Parking lot         |  |                  |

\*Lift operating times and courses are subject to change due to weather, snow and light conditions etc.

### Strictly off limits

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

### Niseko Rules

The Niseko Rules are Niseko's official regulations created for the safety and freedom of everyone using the ski resort and riding beyond the ski area boundary.

#### 1. CERTAIN CLOSED AREAS WITHIN NISEKO ARE STRICTLY OFF LIMIT AND ARE NOT TO BE ENTERED AT ANY TIME

Yu no Sawa (Gully between Annupuri and Niseko Village area), Mizuno no Sawa (underneath Niseko Gondola) and Haru no Taki (cliff area west of Hirafu) are "STRICTLY off limits areas" as stated by the Niseko Rules. Those riding these areas WILL have their lift pass confiscated.

#### 2. DUCKING ROPES IS PROHIBITED

Ducking the boundary ropes is prohibited. If you do, your lift pass will be confiscated. Use designated gates to access out of bound areas. These gates access the dangerous back country.

#### 3. NO SAFETY CONTROL BEYOND RESORT BOUNDARY

The area outside the mountain resort boundaries (back country, including the peak) are National forests and parks, and are not controlled or supervised by the resort or the Ski Patrol. Niseko Rules proclaims that hiking and riding these areas is dangerous and if you choose to, you do it AT YOUR OWN RISK.

#### 4. BACK COUNTRY SKIING/RIDING IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED WHEN GATES ARE CLOSED

During extremely hazardous conditions, the gates will be closed and out of bound riding will be strictly prohibited.

#### 5. AVALANCHE CONDITION INFORMATION

The "Niseko Avalanche Information" is the official information posted by "Niseko Avalanche Institute". This information can be found at lift stations, access gates and on the Internet.

#### 6. BACK COUNTRY RESCUE FEE

YOU are responsible for the cost of your rescue from back country areas.

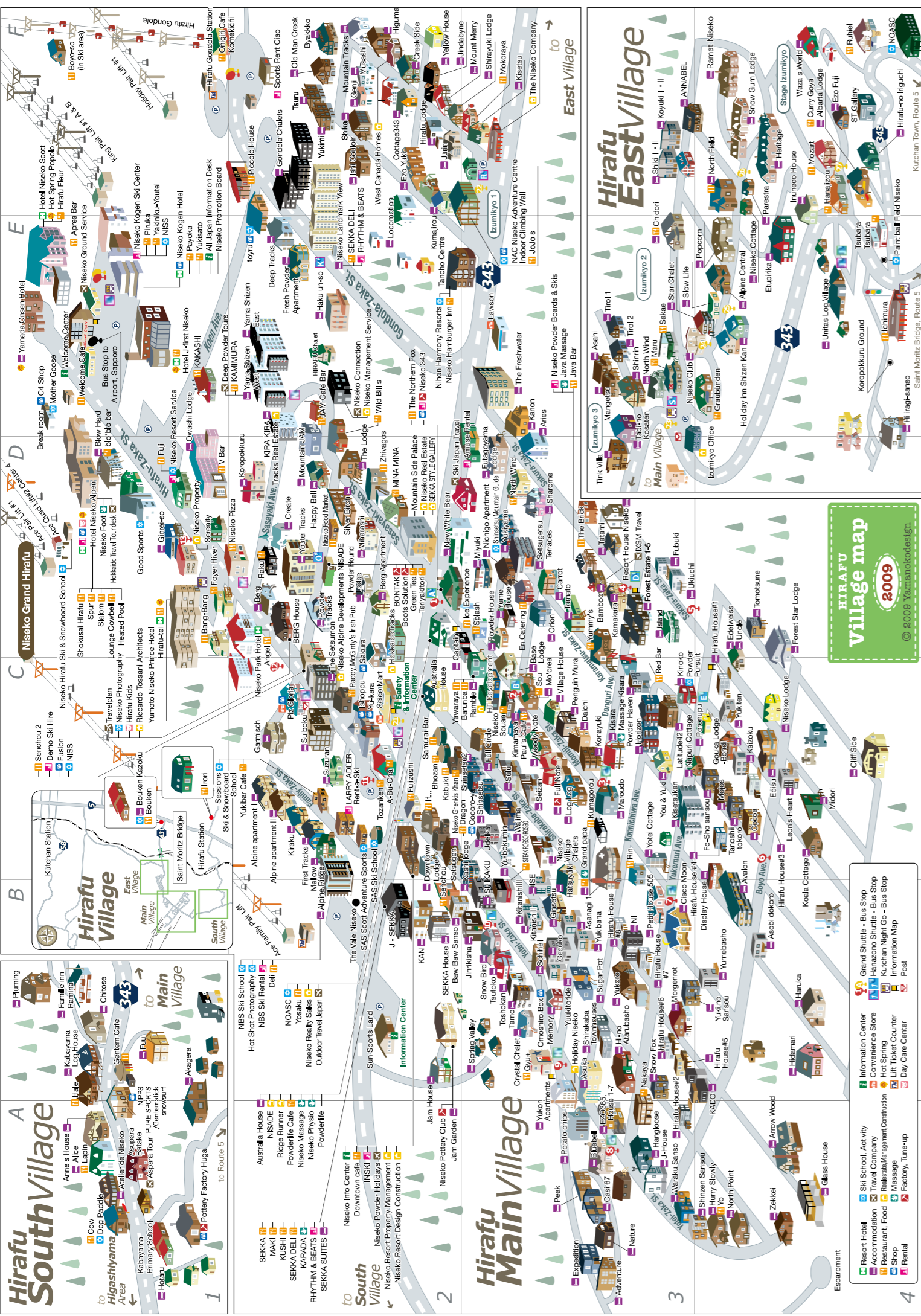
#### 7. SKI AND MOUNTAIN PATROL INSTRUCTIONS MUST BE OBEYED

Niseko Rules insists that all resort users respect and obey the instructions of the Ski Patrol and the Shiribeshi Mountain Patrol.

#### 8. RESPECT EACH OTHER

Niseko's ski resorts and the locals respect the freedom of the visitors, but are concerned about their safety, and expect visitors to respect the Niseko Rules.

Niseko Rules are official regulations, established by the Niseko Annupuri Avalanche Prevention Committee, the Niseko Mountain Resort Safety committee, the Niseko Free Passport Committee and the Hokkaido Shiribeshi Alpine Accident Prevention Committee.



Hotels

- Hotel J-First Niseko アプレバー 22 2350 [MAP E1]
- Hotel Niseko Alpen アプレバー 22 1105 [MAP D1]
- Hotel Niseko Scot アプレバー 23 2311 [MAP E1]
- Niseko Kogen Hotel アプレバー 22 0117 [MAP E1]
- Niseko Park Hotel アプレバー 22 2122 [MAP C2]
- Niseko Prince Hotel Hirafu-tei アプレバー 23 2239 [MAP C1]
- Yamada Onsen Hotel アプレバー 22 0476 [MAP E1]

Restaurants, cafes and eateries

- A-Bu-Cha 阿武茶 22 5620 [MAP C2]
- B's Café and Bar ビーズ カフェ&バー 22 1480 [MAP D1]
- Bang Bang バンクバンク 22 4292 [MAP C1] Owner Masai Saito chooses the best ingredients in Japan. One of Hirafu's most popular izakayas.
- Barunba バルンバ 090 8907 9399 [MAP B2]
- Blo Blo Bar ブロー ブロー バー 22-12-69 [MAP D1]
- Bouken Kazoku 冒険家族 22 3759
- Chidori 千鳥 23 2831 [MAP F4]
- Curry Goya カレー小屋 23 3688 [MAP F4]
- Downtown ダウンタウン 23 3354 [MAP B3]

**Dragon Wine and Food Bar**  
ドラゴン ワイン&バー  
21 7700 [MAP B2]

**EN in-house fine dining**  
宴 インハウス ファイン ダイニング  
55 8100 [MAP D3]  
Relax while our in-house chef does all the work. Your fine dining solutions."

- Fujizushi Sushi ふじ鮨 23 2661 [MAP B3]
- Gentem Café 玄天カフェ 23 3154 [MAP B1]
- Grandpapa グランパパ 0136 23 2244 [MAP B3]
- Graubunden グラクブュンデン 23 3371 [MAP E4]

**Hana Jizoh Bakery**  
花地蔵  
23 0331 [MAP F4]  
Amazing sweet and savoury breads and pastries. Must try! Get the free village shuttle to bus stop G.

- Hirafu Fleur 創作料理ヒラフル 23 3306 [MAP E1]
- Ichimura Soba 蕎麦屋 いちむら 23 0603 [MAP F3]
- if... Café カフェ イフ 22 4770 [MAP B3]
- Jam Café Bar ジャマ カフェ&バー 23 0700 [MAP D2]
- Japanese Kitchen Bouken 冒険家族 22 3759
- Java Bar and Café ジャバ バー&カフェ 090 2871 6781 [MAP D3]

**Black Diamond Lodge Restaurant**  
ブラックダイヤモンドロッジレストラン  
0136 44 1144 [Higashiyama]  
Just 300m ski or bus from the Hilton Niseko Village. Check out or great Western and Japanese menu.

**Jojo's Café and Bar**  
ジョジョズ(カフェ&バー)  
23 2093 [MAP E3]  
A 13 cm Original Burger, potato gnocchi and fries from local potatoes. Generous portions of food

- Jyuu Okonomiyaki じゅう 44 2336 [Higashiyama]
- Kakashi かかし 23 2622 [MAP D2]
- Kame 亀 22 0339 [MAP E3]

**Kamimura**  
カミムラ  
21 2288 [MAP D2]  
Just 300m ski or bus from the Hilton Niseko Village. Check out or great Western and Japanese menu.

- Kila 姫羅 070 6646 4715 [MAP C2]
- Komekichi Onigiri Café 米吉(おにぎりかふえ) 22 1105 [MAP F1]
- Kumagoro くまごろう 23 3381 [MAP B3]
- Loaf Lounge ローフラウンジ 22 1022 [Kutchan]

**Maru**  
まる  
22 5020 [MAP E3]  
Traditional Japanese 'donburi' restaurant. 11:30am-2pm/5-11pm. Pick up available. Reservation required

- Mina Mina ミナミナ 23 4471 [MAP D2]
- Mokoraya もこらや 090 8279 0598 [MAP F3]
- Mozart モーツァルト 090 2699 6387 [MAP E4]
- Nami Chan Chi 波ちゃん家 21 2258 [Kutchan]
- Nathan's Hotdogs ネイサンズ ホットドッグ 21 3121 [MAP E3]
- Niseko Gourmet ニセコ ゴメイ 080 5584 1313
- Niseko Pizza ニセコ ピザ 21 6888 [MAP D2]
- Paddy McGintys パディーマッキンティーズ 55 8020 [MAP C2]

**Paul's Cafe Niseko**  
ポールズカフェ  
090 9524 4968 [MAP C3]  
Specialising in Belgian beer and rotisserie chicken. More than 30 beers on tap or in bottles. Belgian Waffles.

- Payoka パヨカ 22 0117 [MAP E1]
- Piccolo House ピッコロハウス(カフェ&バー) 23 0311 [MAP E2]

- Raku Izakaya 楽 居酒屋 22 6638 [MAP C3]
- Rin Izakaya りん 居酒屋 22 1444 [MAP B3]
- Senchou 1 Izakaya 船長(居酒屋) 22 2001 [MAP B3]
- Senchou 2 Seafood Izakaya 海山屋(海鮮居酒屋) 22 5454 [MAP C2]

**Rosso Rosso**  
ロッソロッソ  
21 7100 [MAP B3]  
Casual steak house with a contemporary flavour. Juicy, tender wagyu and Kobe beef, variety of imported wines.

- Shokusai Hirafu 食彩 比羅夫 22 1105 [MAP C1]
- Shunsai 旬彩 23 1882 [Kutchan]
- Slalom スラローム 22 1105 [MAP C1]
- Spur Chinese Restaurant シュプール(中華レストラン) 22 1105 [MAP C1]
- Tsubara Tsubara つばらつばら 23 1116 [MAP E4]

**Wild Bill's**  
ワイルドビルズ  
22 5652 [MAP D2]  
Come for dinner, stay for drinks. Hirafu's most popular bar and Tex-Mex cuisine restaurant. See you there!

- Yawaraya やわらや 23 3810 [MAP C3]
- Youtei Yakiniku 焼肉ようてい 22 0109 [MAP E1]
- Yuki Bar and Café 雪場カフェ 22 0234 [MAP D2]
- Yummy's ヤミーズ 21 2239 [MAP C3]



## Over protection

By Bevan Colless



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

There are so many things that can spoil your skiing experience and that is why when everything is perfect it makes it that much more special. Right up there with frozen digits, fogged goggles and lack of new snow is pain. A sore knee or dodgy lower back will often cause you to ski below your full potential, hit the onsen early or even in chronic cases, give up the sport completely. However having

some pain in a joint does not have to be permanent and the solution might be easier than you think. As a winter sports physiotherapist you become quite familiar with diagnosing the typical acute injuries and pain suffered on the hill. However for those people that are carrying injuries for long periods (chronic injuries) the diagnosis and treatment often involves more of a psychological component as our minds have become hard wired to protect the body part.

Most people assume the classic interaction between a physiotherapist and a patient entails the patient desperately appealing to be allowed to return to their sport, while the therapist struggles against their will for them to rest. Occasionally this is accurate, especially at the elite level. However a more frequent scenario sees the physio trying to get the patient to trust their injured body more than they do and actually put it through more stress, so the body part becomes stronger and hence more biomechanically efficient. This is most common when dealing with long term knee problems and most types of lower back pain. Once a body part is injured our minds become aware that the appendage is less than perfect and we often modify our behaviour to take all the stress away from the body part. Without realising it many people will take most of their weight through their 'good' leg through the thousands of movements they do throughout the day – standing, getting out of a chair, walking up or down stairs; and this becomes

self-fulfilling – the 'bad' leg gets even weaker and more biomechanically inefficient decreased function and inevitably, more pain.

One knee surgeon who we work with regularly has been known to encourage some of his patients to 'thrash' their knee – with the goal being to re-wire the mind to trust the knee again and strengthen the knee. However there are not many general doctors who would be prepared to give this type of advice as often their understanding of the true cause of the condition is not adequate. Patients can tend to lead health professionals into telling them what they want to hear with statements like "I just don't stretch enough before I play, that's the problem isn't it" or "I just need to rest it more and stop playing for a while don't I". It takes a confident and knowledgeable health professional to disagree with these types of statements.

Of course it is not appropriate to advise all people suffering from knee conditions to work them harder and some cases do indeed require the patient to decrease their activities or have complete rest. An arthritic knee where the cartilage and or meniscus is worn out or long distance runners clocking 200kms a week are different cases. Some body parts – such as rotator cuff injuries in the shoulder, many neck problems and others don't respond well to this type of management. So of course you should see the correct health professional to get your condition diagnosed before setting out on a 'thrashing' program. Often the level of stress that the body part is put through needs to be carefully graded so the condition that is causing the pain is not exacerbated by the program, so it is better to go through the rehabilitation program with occasional visits to a physiotherapist to check on your progress.

In the past two years of working at Niseko Physio I have termed a new condition I call 'Powder Snowboarder's Knee'. As most readers would know when in deep powder, riders need to lean back and put about 75% of their weight on their back leg to keep the nose from sinking down in the powder. This is even more important for snowboarders who are riding non-powder specific boards regularly in powder. When this is done for days, weeks and sometimes months on end it results in the front leg becoming much weaker than the back and often dysfunctional, injured and finally, painful. Patella tendinopathy and patella mal-tracking are the most

common ailments that are the end result of 'Powder Snowboarder's Knee'. Once pain is present, the overprotection cycle begins and the problem becomes difficult to shake. It then becomes the therapist's job to get the person to put the knee through more stress and make it as strong as the other leg again.

The lower back is another area that is often overprotected. Traditional management for bad backs was bed rest, and many general doctors still recommend this quite readily. The latest research suggests that backs respond faster when people are encouraged to continue on with their normal activity as much as possible. As in the knee, there tends to be a 'fear factor' that needs to be overcome for normal movement and function to return. Treat it normal and it will become normal, can often be a good motto.

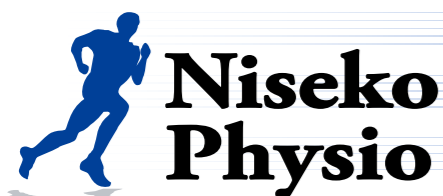
### How to know if you are an over-protector?

Try standing on one leg and doing one leg mini-squats until you are exhausted. Repeat on the other side. If there is a large difference in the maximum number that you can do, you need to strengthen the weak leg.

While doing your one leg squats, if you find your balance is particularly poor or your hip is 'kinking' out to the side as you lower your weight down on one side it is also a sign that the leg is somewhat dysfunctional.

Use a tape measure and check the circumference of your thigh 20cm above your knee on both sides – anything greater than a 1.5cm difference is significant.

While in long sitting flex your thigh muscles while looking at them and you may be able to see a difference – tapping on the muscle while it is flexed may reveal a difference in the density of the muscle.



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 world standard. Our Australian trained physiotherapists specialise in winter sports injuries. We have therapist from Australia's No.1 sports & knee clinic, North Sydney Orthopaedic & Sports Medicine. We 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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