

issue 13 Jan 24 – Feb 6 2009

powderlife

NISEKO ニセコ

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HIT THE LIGHTS

KUTCHAN'S LE COCHON
pigging out on french cuisine

HONG KONG AFFAIR
developers loving it here

ON THIN ICE
winter driving in niseko

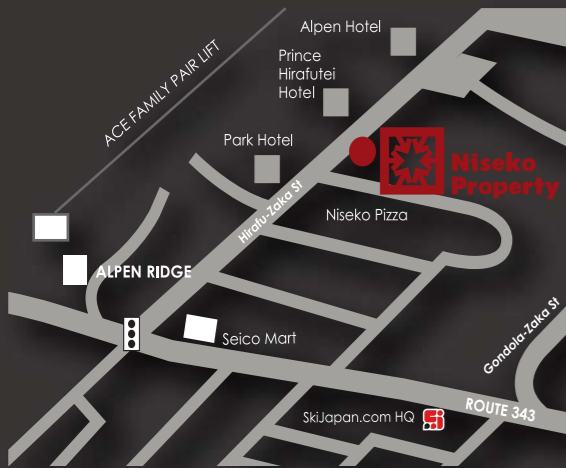
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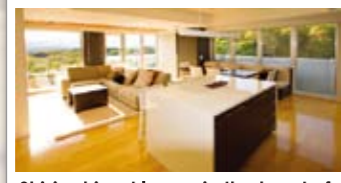
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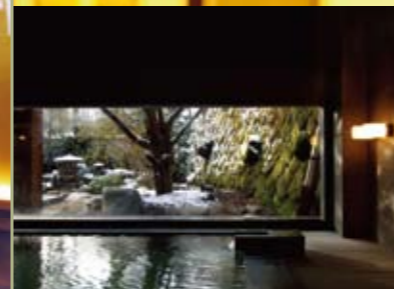
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編集長 **managing editor** Kristian Lund クリスチャン・ランド

副編集長 **associate editor** Matthew Thomas マッシュュー・トマス

デザイナー **designer** Geoffrey McRoberts ジェフ・マックロバーツ

投稿者 **contributors** Katherine Bont, Lorne Calhoun, Michael Davenport, Byron Dawson, Stirling Goldman, Nick Jackson, Sachiko Kageyama, Derek Kennewell, Sarah Lilburn, Chika Matsuda, Matthew Roy, Tess Stomski, Saoka Wakasugi, Kim Wejendorp

写真撮影 **photography** Glen Claydon Photography, Jahl Marshall, Niseko Photography, Mike Richards.

広告掲載に関するお問い合わせ **advertising inquiries**
ads@powderlife.com

予約購読/既刊 **subscriptions / past issues**
info@powderlife.com

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editor's note...

THE Chinese Year of the Ox is about to begin and this month Niseko welcomes thousands of visitors from Hong Kong, and hopefully some from mainland China, as they celebrate the most important holiday on their calendar. The big day falls on January 26 – the same day as Australia Day – which will also trigger festive celebrations among the Australian community in Niseko. It's an interesting coincidence given that this year is the first time Asian visitor numbers could almost match those of Australians over this period. It's long been predicted that Asian tourist numbers would increase to the point where they exceed the Australians – and it certainly seems to be becoming a reality.

In this issue of Powderlife we preview the second Niseko Utari Festival – a concert taking place in both Kutchan Town and Hirafu which is designed to bring together the two areas, as well as highlighting the importance of looking after the environment in this era of development in Niseko. Associate editor Matthew Thomas reports on the different international tourists who are starting to discover Niseko (be sure to check out our 'Snap' on-mountain social photos for an idea of the variety of nationalities holidaying here!). We also take you out on the slopes after dark... and you'll be surprised to find it's actually so bright up there many people prefer heading up when the sun goes down.

At this time of international celebration in Niseko, we would like to thank the local Japanese Niseko community for welcoming the rest of the world to experience this amazing place.

Happy Chinese New Year and happy sliding!!

Kristian Lund, Powderlife Managing Editor kris@powderlife.com

編集者の言葉...

丑年の今年、中国の正月がもうすぐ始まり、ニセコに沢山の香港や中国からの旅行者が一年でもっとも大切な祝日を祝いに来ます。その祝いの日が1月26日に、オーストラリアデーと同じ日にあたるのです。この週は、中国からの旅行者がオーストラリアからの旅行者の人数を超えるかもしれないという、とても偶然で面白い週になるのです。以前から予想されていたように、アジアからの旅行者がだんだん増え、いずれはオーストラリアからの旅行者の数を超える事が現実化されているようです。

この号のパウダーライフでは、2回目のウタリ祭りを取り上げます。倶知安とヒラフを近づける目的で開催されるコンサートとニセコの開発に関わる環境問題についての大切さの特集をします。編集者マシュー・トーマスが諸外国の人達へのインタビュー。(山の国際色豊かなスナップショットのページもお見逃しなく!) また日が落ちてからの、ゲレンデの紹介もあります。実際に多くの人達がナイターを好むのに驚きますよ。

この、国際週間を前に、海外からのお客さんにすばらしい経験を与えていただける日本人のローカルの皆さんに感謝します。

祝、中国正月 & 良い滑りを!

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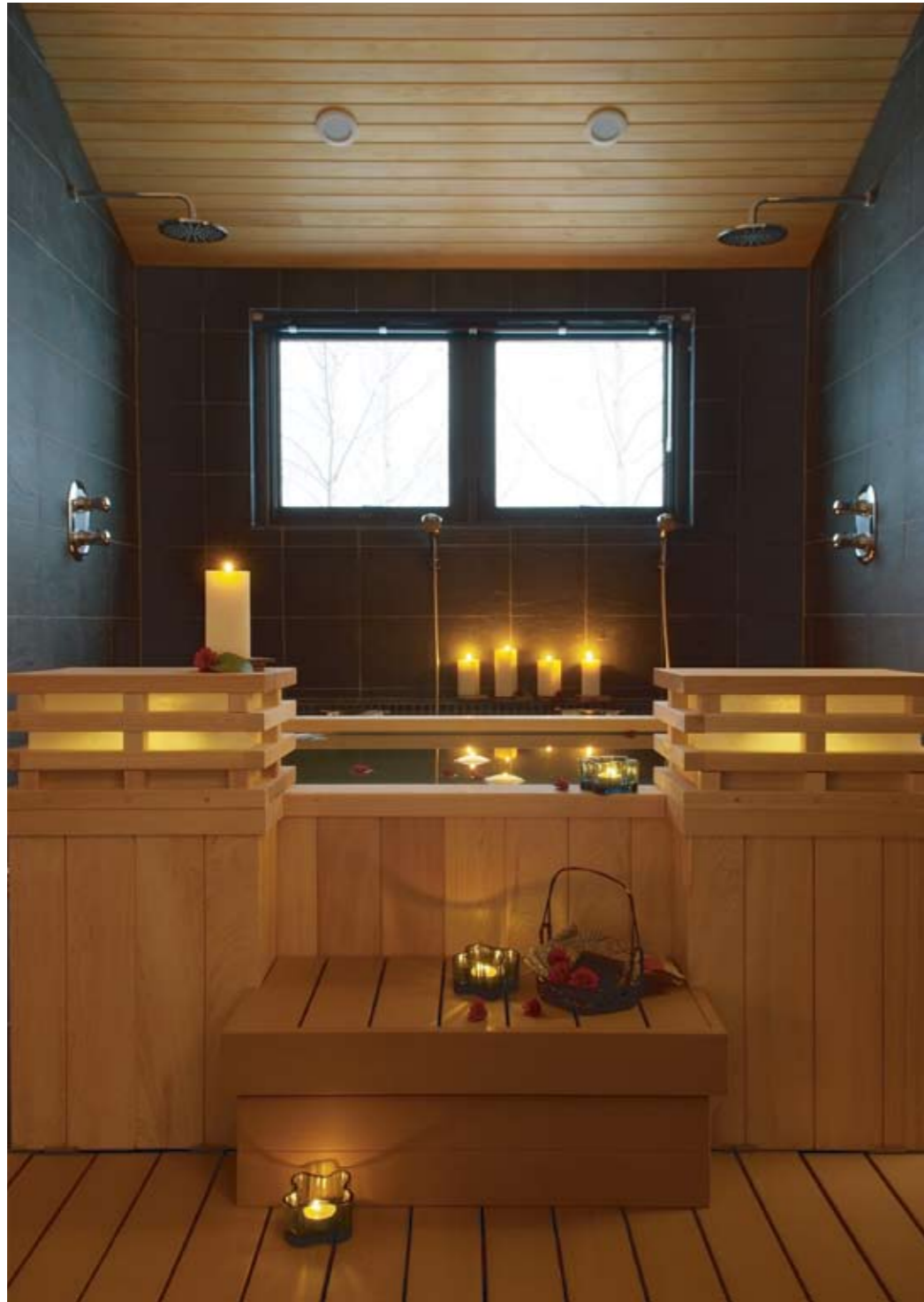
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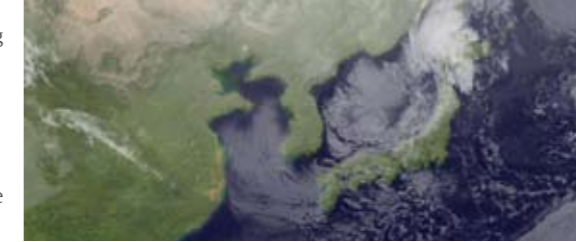
Niseko's micro-climate a weatherman's nightmare

NISEKO is a hard place to predict snowfall. We remember well a day in January, 2007 when we woke to a good 40cm overnight and it was still coming down hard. It looked like it was going to be one of the days of the season. Our crew decided to drive 45 minutes to Rusutsu Resort to try and escape the crowds, but two thirds of the way there, patches of blue sky were breaking out. We noticed there was no new snow on the side of the road, and by the time we got to the car park we realised they had only had a dusting. We drove straight back to Niseko where it was absolutely dumping again, although, of course, we had a very hard time trying to find anywhere that hadn't been tracked out yet!

There have been several occasions in the past few weeks when forecasts were telling us there would be big snowfalls that never eventuated. Fortunately, there were several others where nothing was predicted and we had

30cm overnight falls. Local meteorologist Brendon Eishold recently mused that Niseko seemed to have its own micro-climate, and says inaccurate forecasts are a fact of life. "Weather forecasting is an inexact science," he says. "A lot of our weather comes from east Asia, out in the middle of Siberia and northern China, where there are very few weather stations, so there isn't much data available."

Powderlife's hot tip: get to bed early every day, just in case



Hokkaido's most popular souvenir

IF you've been into a souvenir shop in Hokkaido you will no doubt have come across a wall full of Marimokkori souvenirs. Marimo are rare algae balls found in only several lakes in the world, one of which is Lake Akan in eastern Hokkaido. Mokkori is a slang term for an erection. Put the two together and you get Marimokkori, a little green guy with a bulge in his pants, and one of Hokkaido's most popular souvenirs!

Music festival is environmentally sound

THE Niseko Utari Festival - a concert event that combines Japanese music culture and environmental awareness - returns on February 1 for a party that spans between Hirafu and Kutchan over more than 12 hours. Returning for the second time, the hit festival boasts local artists, bands and DJs in genres such as hip-hop, house, dub, jazz, punk and reggae. Local Japanese performers playing on the night at both parties include Rovo, Cro-Magnon, Feeler, 3, Charaves, DJ 53 and DJ Kenta. The two-part party kicks off at the Northern Fox in Hirafu's Middle Village (opposite Hokkaido Tracks) at 3pm, and runs until 10pm. Then, the after party heads out to Kutchan and cranks until 4am. Organiser Mitsuaki Ota said the Niseko Utari Festival, run jointly by local Japanese and foreigners, promoted unity between Hirafu and Kutchan, as well as making Niseko better known for après ski activities and nightlife. Mitsuaki-san also stressed the importance of considering the local environment during Niseko's development boom, saying there would be, during the concerts, booths for environmental causes. "Niseko is a mecca for the outdoors and winter sports, and is surrounded by great nature and mountains," he said. "Now is the time to consider the environment for the future of Niseko, and people will be able to exchange their opinions and concerns for the environment at the festival." Tickets to the event are ¥3000 pre-sale, or ¥4000 on the day. For more information, email info@utarifestival.com.



ROCK 'N' ROLL... Utari Festival organiser Mitsuaki Ota.



Car Danchi comp

THE Powderlife office has been driven into a frenzy over the past few weeks after receiving great readers' pics of cars coated in snow for our Car Danchi competition. We put up for grabs a complete set of Hokkaido's Car Danchi snowboarding DVDs for the person who sent us the best photo. After wading through a pile of awesome entries, we had a heap of favourites. But at the end of the day, we had to go with Andreas Comninos' poor little snow-covered Suzuki Cultus. Covered in a giant mushroom of snow, this little buzz-box never stood a chance. Andreas found the car, similar to a Suzuki Swift, near the Ice Bar in Hirafu's Middle Village. It was covered in so much snow, the car barely looked like a car at all. "I had to dig it out and take about 14 multiple angles, just to prove that this was a car buried in the white good stuff," Andreas says. We also gave away six T-shirts as complimentary prizes, along with the major DVD prize. All winners have been contacted. Thanks to everyone for entering. To check out the best car pics that didn't make it into the mag, check www.powderlife.com/photo-gallery/car-danchi/.

Century-old wine top vintage

SEKKA Dining has something for someone who has everything – an ¥80,000 half-bottle of 1898 Puig Parahy. Manager Mick Nippard says that for those who can afford it, it's an experience not to be missed. "For someone who wants to have a once-in-a-lifetime experience of a bottle of wine of that age, this is a one-off," Mick says. "It's made from 100 per cent Grenache grapes with neutral spirit added to it – it's between a vintage port and a tawny port. It's an incredible flavour of cloves, cinnamon, nutmeg, spices, but it's as thick as treacle. Really intense, the most intense wine you would ever want to drink because it just stays on the tongue forever. Everyone who's had it just says 'amazing'."

Puig Parahy is a small producer in southern France. The wine was barreled in 1898 and bottled in 2001, and Mick says the reason it's survived is the spirit. He's carried the bottle for the past three seasons and says it's proven very popular. Mick reckons this bottle of wine may just put the finishing touches on a perfect day in Niseko. "If someone's here for the first time and thinking that was the perfect day powder skiing, they can have a perfect night with this wine and a bit of cheese," he says.



TOP DROP... Sekka's Mick Nippard with the 1898 Puig Parahy.

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Niseko welcomes the world

WHILE there has been a noticeable drop-off in Australian visitors this year – caused by a strong yen and weak Aussie dollar – a more diverse array of international holidaymakers are finding their way to Niseko.

Australians really found the current boom in Niseko, since they started arriving in large numbers over the past few years. However, local businesses and independent bodies are noting a shift in the tourism demographic. Australian visitor numbers have visibly decreased this season, deterred from returning to Niseko due to \$1 AUD buying only around ¥60 for the much of the season so far. Contrasting these figures to those of last season (2007-08), \$1 AUD bought ¥100 – or sometimes even more. However, balancing the drop in Australians this year is a rise in Hong Kong, Singaporean and other Asian and European tourists.

Fumio Sato is marketing and planning manager for Grand Hirafu, and media spokesman for the Free Passport Association (FPA), a body that encompasses all four resorts – Hirafu, Annupuri, Hanazono and Niseko Village. Sato-san said he had noticed a drop in overall visitor numbers this year, but said that more noticeable was holidaymakers' spending habits. "This year, people are more likely to use the kitchen in their condominium than go out to a restaurant," he said, adding that lift ticket sales for Hirafu in November and December this year were still quite similar to last season. Although Sato-san acknowledged decreased visitor numbers this year, he said he was positive about a busier middle season. He also said he noticed more international tourists, besides Australians, visiting Niseko than last season.

The Niseko Company's general manager Steve McIntyre said his luxury property and rental management company's Australian market was down around 25-30 per cent, adding that key markets, including Singapore and Hong Kong, were up about 5-10 per cent. Occupancy rates were about the same in spite of the economic crisis, due to The Niseko Company increasing its number of properties this year, said Mr McIntyre. "The biggest rise for us this year has been Singapore, but we have got a few guests from Britain, France and Russia, and expats from Indonesia, Thailand, Korea and China," he said. He predicted an earlier slow down of the tourism year in 2009 due to the early Chinese New Year.

Mr McIntyre stressed the importance of Niseko



tapping into summer tourism potential. "In 2008, the number of people who stayed in our properties doubled when compared to the 2007 season," he said. "This is not just a winter playground, there is plenty more on offer in the warmer months."

Daniel Welk, general manager of the Hilton Niseko Village, said the statistics for this year noted a more diverse upmarket tourism crowd. For December 2008, he said occupancy was Japan (65%), Hong Kong (15%), Singapore (6%), Russia (4%), Australia (2%), and the remainder other parts of Asia. January bookings were similar to December, although fewer Singaporeans and slightly more Australians.

Brett from Wild Bill's, one of Hirafu's busiest bars, said that while business from cash-aware tourists had dwindled this year, locals and seasonal workers were still throwing cash over the bar. "Locals usually disappear from before Christmas until March, and that peak season is usually time for the tourists to party," he said. "But this year, it's been locals out partying all season – they are the main crowd." In spite of the current climate, Brett said he and Bill's 'weren't going anywhere', and were in 'it for the long haul'. "We're in a lull – everyone is in a lull," he said. "Did we get caught with our pants down? I think everyone did. It humbled us a little. But it won't stop snowing this century in Niseko, though, so people will still come for the powder, regardless of what the economy is doing."

Big airs, even bigger party

SKIERS and boarders from all around Hokkaido will converge on Niseko on January 25 for the Après Bar and Friends Air Jam '09 competition.

Held outside the Après Bar – in the same place as last month's Rail Jam, underneath the King Pair Lift 1 – about 100 amateur and professional competitors will get the biggest air they can over a 40-foot monster table top. Organisers are saying the jump will be 'the biggest in Hirafu'. Big spins, back flips and front flips will be judged by pros and sponsored riders from around the world.

Organiser Ross Monaghan says to 'clear your diaries for January 25'. "This is something you won't want to miss - a huge jump with even bigger tricks, followed by an even bigger party," he says. "Come hang at an event unrivalled this season. It's gonna go off!"

First jump is at 9am, and competition will end around 3pm.

Prizes are currently a surprise and to be announced.

Second Rail Jam and Big Air competitions are currently planned for February 15 and March 1 respectively.

To register, visit www.powderlife.com and fill in the online form. Alternately, forms will also be available at selected locations across Niseko.



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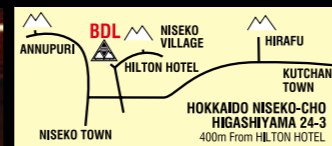


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Arts & letters

THE Kawasaki municipal government is said to be mulling the creation of a **museum to showcase the works of Doraemon** (Japanese cartoon character) creator Fujiko F. Fujio.

Actor Jeremy Priven (Entourage) was forced to **withdraw from the Broadway revival of David Mamet's Speed-the-Plow** due to mercury poisoning, which he is thought to have contracted from eating too much sushi. Mamet quipped that Priven, who eats sushi twice a day, is "leaving show business to pursue a career as a thermometer."

The Kyoto Museum for World Peace received **13 personal items of Nagasaki Mayor Itcho Ito**, who was assassinated in April 2007, including a jacket with two bullet holes in it.

Here & There

Speculation is rife where the **Inagawa-kai crime syndicate will relocate** now that its Roppongi headquarters are scheduled to go under the wrecking ball.

Sentence of the Week: Police have busted a **large-scale shoplifting ring** involving a Tokyo-based pharmaceutical wholesaler suspected of selling over-the-counter medicine pilfered by teenagers recruited over the internet, sources said. (The Asahi Shimbun)

Giichi Nomura, 94, who helped bring the plight of Japan's indigenous Ainu people to the world stage, **died of natural causes in Hokkaido**.

Breakthroughs

Scientists at Kyoto's Advanced Telecommunications Research Institute International discovered a way to **reproduce images of things people were looking at** by analyzing brain scans.

The 60,000-ton Auriga Leader, described as the "first large ship in the world to be **powered partly by solar**

generation," set sail from Kobe with 328 solar panels on its decks.

It is thought that the reported increase in sales at convenience stores is due in part to the **Taspo age-verification card**, which limits tobacco sales at vending machines.

A survey by a pharmaceutical group found that 67 percent of diners have had **"an unpleasant experience due to someone else's cigarette smoke,"** including 46.5 percent of respondents who identified themselves as smokers.



Equal rights

The Maritime Self-Defense Force gave the OK for **women to do tours of duty aboard destroyers**. Previously, the MSDF had assigned women to land-based duty.

The labour ministry announced that the number of temp workers **hit an all-time high of 3.84 million last year**, but that their average pay dropped by 10 percent, to a record low.

It was revealed that **McDonald's hired 1,000 "customers"** to wait in line for the Kansai debut of its Quarter Pounder hamburger in Osaka last month.

Got a second?

The Tokyo-based National Institute of Information and Communications

Technology **adjusted the nation's civil time** by adding a "leap second" at 8:59:59am on New Year's Day.

To prepare its **"speaking clock"** service for the change, NTT started 100 seconds early and prolonged the length of each time tone by a centisecond.

For its fiber-optic clock services, **NTT played the time tone for 9am twice**. A company official said this was "a rare opportunity for people to be able to listen to the leap second."

Police blotter

A knife-wielding man shouting "I lost my job" was apprehended in Roppongi Hills by cops after they fired a warning shot.

After a dramatic rise in the **theft of car navi devices in recent months**, the National Police Agency said drivers should take "suitable precautions, such as taking them home."

After handing suspended sentences to two 26-year-old Europeans for defacing subway cars in Osaka, a judge said that the pair **"came to Japan specifically to carry out graffiti."**

A 57-year-old primary school principal in Niigata was busted for **punching a high school student** on a train.

Your tax dollars at work

The LDP is said to be considering a "pet tax" whose **proceeds would be used to fund animal shelters** and raise awareness of the importance of using ID tags.

Japan Post announced that 84 percent of goods sent last year via a service intended for disabled groups was in fact **used fraudulently by companies**, accounting in losses of some ¥4.6 billion.

The National Institute of Population and Social Security Research said that 99.8 percent of municipalities across the country will see a **decline of children under 15** by the year 2035.

STATS

374,000
Abandoned pets taken off the streets by local governments as of the end of fiscal 2006

91
Percent of these animals that were euthanized

4,995
Teachers who took a leave of absence in the 2007 academic year because of "depression or other mental disorders," according to the education ministry

15
Consecutive years this number has increased

7.4 per cent
Increase in sales at convenience stores during the past year, according to the Japan Franchise Association

¥581.5
Average amount of purchase at konbini, according to the same survey

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

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| | Round trip | ¥93,500 |

*If you arrive at the airport around midnight or need to leave the hotel early morning, you might be charged extra ¥10,000 for driving without passengers depending on the time.



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SNAP



Francis from Singapore, Erdina from Indonesia and Weeks from Malaysia said number one on their list was the snow: "It's better quality than Vale (one of North America's premier resorts). The resort isn't so big, it's easy to get around and the people are so nice."



Colourful Minami, outnumbered by a posse of male friends from Sapporo - Yuta, Mikuo, Takuya, Hiroaki, Shohei - were very clear about why they liked Niseko - great powder and beautiful scenery. They also love drinking beer at their hotel at the end of the day!



Mountain style

EVEN when Taka's not riding, he prefers to sport colourful clothes. But when the snowboarder from Chiba - near Tokyo, one of Japan's most famous surf spots - goes for a session up the mountain, he prefers to wear...well...Sessions (jackets and pants). He even has plenty of Sessions stickers on his board, so it looks to us that he likes to promote the brand that works for him. Taka - a 'human rainbow' who usually rides at Yuzawa mountain, outside Tokyo - says he prefers this rainbow jacket in particular, because he likes to stand out. Attention to detail should be noted with the matching rainbow trim on his goggles, and rainbow stripes on the bottom of his Japan-made Gray board (which apparently has plenty of pop), and bright yellow and green Flux bindings. We say 'shine on', rainbow man.



Danny, Queenie, Frank and Rica from Hong Kong were having the time of their lives on their first day in Niseko, and they hadn't even been up the lifts yet. They liked that Niseko offered a cool change and there was plenty of beautiful white scenery to take in.



Russians Katerina, Yevgeny and Sasha love the international feel of Niseko: "It's a really multicultural resort and even though we're in Japan, it doesn't feel like it. There are a lot of people but it doesn't ever feel busy. Oh yeah, the food is good and the beer is great."



French pro skier Nicolas and girlfriend Kelly from Scotland said the best thing about Niseko is the peak is accessible by lift: "You only have a 15-minute walk to the peak, then you ski waist-deep powder to the lifts at the bottom... then you do it again! What else do you want?"



Maree and Wayne from Australia said Niseko had a unique feel like nowhere else in the world. "We thought that the first time we came here, it's just so unique. It's so peaceful and quiet up on the mountain, and everyone is so laid back."

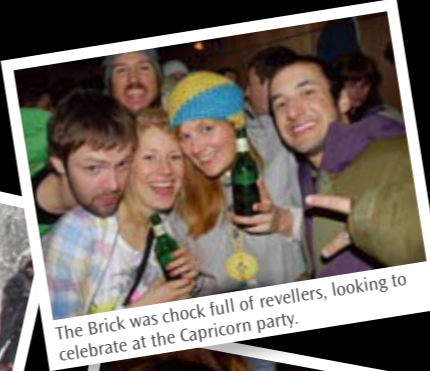


Takako and Yoshitaka from Fukushima, north of Tokyo, were here for the first time and love that they can access so much ungroomed backcountry safely. "They rope off the most dangerous areas but other than that you can ride everywhere!!!"

Powderlife asked skiers and boarders what they liked about Niseko... besides the powder

There were parties galore across Niseko and Powderlife snapped the best of them

FLASH



The Brick was chock full of revellers, looking to celebrate at the Capricorn party.



Gabby shines for the camera while Geoff has his mind on more important things



Andy's the clown of the party, hamming it up behind Tori and Tess



Ritsuko, Nana and Mika cuddled up, rugged up and all posed up for the Powderlife camera

Capricorn Party



Skiing couple Kelly and Nicolas show Kuri they still need to practice their peace sign to fit in.



Dirty Laundry

Onsen Twins



Above + Beyond developer and promoter Beckett Tucker hangs out with his star act DJ Dean Cherny from Dirty Laundry



Brother and sister Matt and Alannah catch over a quiet one



Yoko, Wazza, Keita and Maimai partied on until late at the Northern Fox's first big party for the season



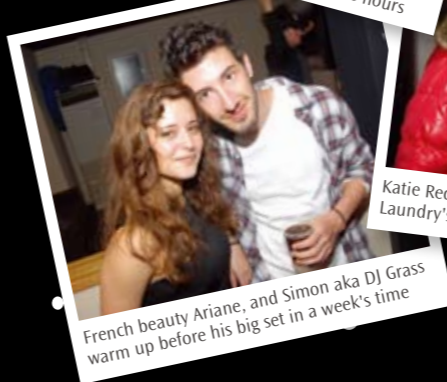
Lauren, Naho, Shogo and Nobu were the life of the party and stepped it up into the wee hours



Vanessa and her bro Joel enjoy some quality family time together



The Wild Bill's crew took some time out from pouring drinks for a team shot



French beauty Ariane, and Simon aka DJ Grass warm up before his big set in a week's time



Katie Red and Amy were all smiles after Dirty Laundry's clean dance music set



Lizzie, Kaii, Aiden, Michael and Siobhan like to party in numbers at Wild Bill's



Louis can't believe his luck as Lucy and Jemma get up close and personal

Sunday, January 25
 * **Half Note Jazz Live, 9pm**
 Welcoming jazz pianist Kuniko Kanno from Sapporo, accompanied by jazz vocalist Mami Motoi. Free entry.
 * **Java Bar Sunday Session, 9-11pm**
 Live acoustic session with Christian.

Monday, January 26
 * **Australia Day celebrations at Red Bar, 10pm**
 DJ mixing it up on the decks.
 * **Java Bar Australia Day Beach Party**
 All day, hottest 100, beach wear.
 * **Oz Day and Indian Independence Day, 6pm.**
 Blo Blo's annual cricket match will be played again, snow or shine, with an Aussie BBQ and outdoor DJ set.
 * **Paddy McGinty's Australia Day party**
 Celebrate with Australian music, movie and pie.
 * **Java Bar Ladies Night, 9pm**
 Half price drinks for the ladies from 9-11pm.

Tuesday, January 27
 * **Java Bar Mountain Staff Night, 8pm**
 Chillout night. ¥300 beer for resort staff 8-9pm.

Wednesday, January 28
 * **Chivas Me Timbers Pirates Party, 7pm-11pm**
 Fusion presents fancy dress silliness in support of all pirates at Après Bar. Pirate wear only.
 * **Paddy McGinty's Toss the Boss, 3pm-5pm**
 Flip a coin against the boss for half price drinks.

* **Java Bar Mid-Week Madness, 9pm**
 ¥2000 Nomihodai (all you can drink) beer and basic spirits from 9-11pm.

Friday, January 30
 * **Paddy Mc Ginty's Toss the Boss, 3pm-5pm**
 Flip a coin against the boss for discount drinks.
 * **Red Bar DJ Night, 10pm**
 Every Friday at Red Bar is DJ night. ¥1,000.
 * **Java Bar DJ Night, 10pm**
 House, dance, funk from 10pm. Free entry.

Saturday, January 31
 * **Half Note Jazz Live, 9pm**
 No cover charge, minimum two drinks.

Sunday, February 1
 * **Niseko Utari Festival, 3pm-10pm**
 @The Northern Fox. Advanced ticket ¥3,000, at the door ¥3,500. Details see 'Page Seven' (on page 11).
 * **Niseko Utari Festival After Party, 10pm-4am**
 @Be, Kutchan. Advanced ticket ¥3,000, at the door ¥3,500. More details see 'Page Seven' (on page 11).
 * **Half Note Jazz Live, 9pm**
 No cover charge, minimum two drinks.
 * **Java Bar Sunday Session, 9-11pm**
 Sunday session with Christian-Live music.

Monday, February 2
 * **Java Bar Ladies Night, 9pm**
 Half price drinks for the from 9-11pm.
 * **Paddy McGinty's Toss the Boss, 3pm-5pm**
 Flip a coin against the boss for half price drinks.

Tuesday, February 3
 * **Java Bar Mountain Staff Night, 8pm**
 Chillout night. ¥300 beer for resort staff 8-9pm.

Wednesday, February 4
 * **Java Bar Mid-Week Madness, 9pm**
 ¥2000 Nomihodai (all you can drink) beer and basic spirits from 9-11pm.
 * **Paddy McGinty's Toss the Boss, 3pm-5pm**
 Flip a coin against the boss for half price drinks.

Thursday, February 5
 * **Java Bar Djembe Night**
 Djembe drumming with Bontak, Yo, Toro and guests.

Friday, February 6
 * **Red Bar DJ Night, 10pm**
 Every Friday is DJ Night at Java. ¥1,000.
 * **Bob Marley's B'day + Waitangi Day, 6pm**
 Jamaican BBQ with a reggae DJ session from Shu at Splash, middle village.

Got an event on between February 7 and February 20? Get it on this page in the next edition of Powderlife - input it in to the events page on our website by January 28.
 2月6日から20日の間にイベントを企画している方はいますか?パウダーライフの次刊に掲載を希望される場合には、二カ国語(英語・日本語)で1月28日までに私たちのホームページの"イベントページ"にご入力ください。



More events at www.powderlife.com/niseko/events/

Saturday, January 24
 * **Kamonohashi Show, 1pm**
 Fun and games @ Hanazono. See Kamonohashi's song and dance show. 1月24日(土) 花園では毎週火曜日と土曜日の午後1時よりカモノハシによる歌やダンスのショーが行われます。ご家族そろって見に来てください。

Sunday, January 25
 * **Taiko Drum Performance, 3.30-4pm**
 Free traditional Japanese drum performances. Every Sunday outside Hokkaido Tracks office (next to Seicomart). 1月25日(日) 太鼓演奏会 3:30pm-4pm場所はセイコーマートの横、北海道トラックス前にて地元太鼓グループによる演奏会があります。
 * **Après Bar Big Air, Noon-7.30pm**
 All riders welcome. Entry forms at the bar. For spectators, check out the thrills and spills from the comfort of the bar with a drink in hand. 1月25日(日) アプレバービッグエア大会12pm-7:30pmライダーなら誰でも大歓迎!エントリーはバーで受け付けています。参加しなくてもアプレバーからジャンプを見よう!

Monday, January 26
 * **Australia vs China Party, Noon-11pm**
 Après Bar's Big Australia Day and Chinese New Year Party with Triple J's Hottest 100 live, and cricket on the big screen. Hong Kong DJ Miles Wilson dropping tunes. Come and join in the celebrations! 1月26日(月)アプレバー オーストラリアV中国 パーティー 12pm-11pmトリプルJライブ、クリケット、香港のDJ マイルズ ウィルソンアプレバーでオーストラリアデーと中国のお正月をお祝いしよう!

Tuesday, January 27
 * **Kamonohashi Song and Dance Show**
 Tuesdays and Saturdays, 1pm @ Hanazono. 1月27日(火) 花園では毎週火曜日と土曜日の午後1時よりカモノハシによる歌やダンスのショーが行われます。ご家族そろって見に来てください。



in the loop

* **Australia Day at Grand Hirafu, 5-7pm**
 Come and celebrate Australia Day in front of the Alpen Hotel. Join the snow flag game to win a Grand Hirafu original iPod. Australian band playing music. Fireworks starts at 9.30pm. 1月26日(月) グランヒラフ オーストラリアデー 5pm-7pmアルペンホテルの前で、スノーフラッグゲームに参加してグランヒラフオリジナルi-podを当てよう。花火は9時半から始まります。

Tuesday January 27
 * **Kamonohashi Song and Dance Show**
 Tuesdays and Saturdays, 1pm @ Hanazono. 1月27日(火) 花園では毎週火曜日と土曜日の午後1時よりカモノハシによる歌やダンスのショーが行われます。ご家族そろって見に来てください。

Wednesday, January 28
 * **Chinese New Year Lantern Olympics, 1pm**

2月6日から20日の間にイベントを企画している方はいますか?パウダーライフの次刊に掲載を希望される場合には、二カ国語(英語・日本語)で1月28日までに私たちのホームページの"イベントページ"にご入力ください。
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| | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ |
|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|
| ホテル発 Hotel Dep | 19:00 | 20:30 | 21:30 | 23:00 | 0:00 | 1:40 |
| ヒラフ・カエルセンター Hirafu Welcome Center | 19:30 | 21:00 | 22:00 | 23:30 | 0:30 | 2:10 |
| ヒラフ交差点 Hirafu Crossing | 19:35 | 21:05 | 22:05 | 23:35 | 0:35 | 2:15 |
| ホテル着 Hotel Arr | 19:50 | 21:20 | 22:20 | 23:50 | 0:50 | 2:30 |

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Powder tools

Black Diamond Ascension Skins

THE Ascension skins have long been the gold standard in climbing skins. The new orange model (updated from the previous purple) now has a reversible tip-loop system, so they will fit on an even wider variety of tips. The tried and true ClipFix tail attachment remains the fastest and most secure on the market. Long-term backcountry skiers may have moved away from the Ascensions to try the latest things, but they always come back to these bad boys. The ClipFix system does not work for certain tails that are extremely rounded off or turned up, so be sure to check if it's right for your rig. If you're aiming for a sub four-hour Yotei ascent, clip these on and start the clock. As used by local legend Yutaka Takahashi. Available from Toyru. 0136-21-4055. 60mm-130mm waist. ¥15,750- ¥24,675.

Vector Glide Mastiff

UNKNOWN to all except those that are really clued-up, Vector Glide is boutique Japanese ski and snowboard manufacturer that only makes restricted numbers of outstanding gear. The Mastiff is their fattest ski and will float you through Niseko's pow like nothing you've ever experienced. They are extra light and have a 110mm waist with flex for the powder landings. Groomers are not what these are built for but they will do a reasonable job on them if you need them to. Expect the occasional nod of approval while you're in lift queues and walking to first lifts. Available from Toyru. 0136-21-4055. ¥126,000.

Black Diamond Bandit Avalung Backpack

FANCY hiking the peak, dropping Osawa (the back bowl) then hiking back up, dropping down to Goshiki and hiking Iwanopurri? If that sounds like a good day's riding to you, you'll want to be packing all the avy gear. For Niseko, a compact and solid daypack is a staple. The Black Diamond Bandit Avalung Pack does something that no other daypack will – it helps you breathe under the snow if you're caught in an avalanche. This pack has just enough room for a shovel, probe, lunch and you can even insert a hydration bladder. Perfect for Niseko's plethora of short backcountry tours. Of course, it carries your fat skis, powder board or snowshoes with ease. Outside Magazine was so impressed that it awarded the Bandit with its Gear of the Year award. Available from Toyru. 0136-21-4055. ¥8,400 (Avalung model currently on order only).



Gentemstick Speedmaster
THE Speedmaster is the best snowboard in the world. All right, all right, if you weigh over 80kg, live for riding powder through trees, and are not into riding switch, it's the best board in the world. If you live for the park, mount your bindings in the middle of your board, love rails, spinning and riding fakey then it's not for you (and neither is this resort). You guessed it, the Speedmaster is my main deck, and I love it so much I have been known to sleep with it. The 'double pin tail' design was first envisaged by Niseko local Taro Tamai some 20 years ago, and it suits Niseko to perfection. The 172cm length is perfect, and as 40cm of that is not effective edge, it can still turn on a ¥10 piece. Leave the sub160cm Fish riders in your wake as you fly through the flat powder sections. The tail bites into the snow so the tip always floats above the pow. It is so forgiving you'll often find yourself thinking you're about to wipe out, only to find the board surging ahead, urging you to stay upright and keep up with it. Don't be fooled into thinking it's only for the pow – you can ride the groomers like you're riding a wave. Like me, you'll probably find you never want to ride another board. Available from Gentemstick Retail store in St Moritz. Call 0136-22-5581. The best ¥169,050 you'll ever spend.

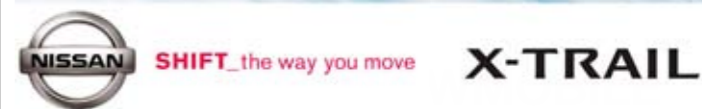


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GROOMER Akira



LIFTIE Maiko



PATROL Yuichi

name Akira Ichinose
age 32 **hometown** Shizuoka
time in Niseko 8 months
do you like powder? Love it
ski/board? Board
how long have you been skiing for? 14 years
why did you come to Niseko? To see the nature
what did you do in summer? Rafting guide
what languages do you speak? Japanese, and a little English
trips overseas? New Zealand, Canada
where do you want to go next? Nepal
 favourite
colour Red
brand Outdoor brands
food Ramen
restaurant Souan
bar Splash
onsen Koikawa
ski run Strawberry
where else do you want to go skiing overseas? Lake Louise, Canada
how long will you be in niseko? As long as I can
what does niseko need? Everything is here. Being imperfect is perfect
niseko secret? Winter rafting
what's your life philosophy? Time is more important than money!

名前 イチノセ アキラ
年齢 32 **出身地** 静岡県
ニセコに来てどのくらいですか? 8ヶ月
パウダースノーは好きですか? 大好き
スキーヤー?スノーボーダー? スノーボーダー
ボード歴 14年
なぜニセコに来たのですか? 自然を求めて
夏には何をしましたか? リバーガイド(ラフティング)
話す言語は? 日本語、多少英語
海外には行った事ありますか? ニュージーランド、カナダ
次はどこに行きたいですか? ネパール
好きな...色は? 赤
ブランドは? アウトアブランド全般
食べ物? ラーメン
レストランは? 創庵
バーは? スプラッシュ
温泉は? 鯉川温泉
コースは? ストロベリー
海外のスキー場で一度行ってみたいスキー場は? レイクルーズ、カナダ
ニセコにはどのくらいいる予定ですか? できる限り
ニセコに今無い物で、必要だと思うものは? そろっている。足りないくらいがちょうど良い。
ニセコの秘密は? 真冬のラフティングができる。
あなたの人生観は? お金より時間

name Maiko Nishizawa
age 21 **hometown** Kutchan
how long has your family lived here? Since great grandfather do you like powder?
Love it, but I'm not very good at skiing!
ski/board? Ski only
how long have you been skiing for? 18 years
what did you do in summer? Relax and rafting guide
what languages do you speak? Hokkaido dialect, no English
trips overseas? Not yet
where do you want to go next? New Zealand, Australia
 favourite
colour Black
brand Roxy
food Takoyaki (octopus balls)
restaurant 308, Hanayoshi
bar Valentine
onsen Popolo and Goshiki
ski run Super Course
where else do you want to go skiing overseas? Whistler in Canada
how long will you be in niseko? Forever
what does niseko need? Starbucks
niseko secret? Lots of chances to meet rabbits and foxes
what's your life philosophy? Keep trying!

名前 ニシザワ マイコ
年齢 21 **出身地** 倶知安町
ニセコに来てどのくらいですか? ひいおじいちゃんぐらから
パウダースノーは好きですか? 大好きです、ヘタですけど
スキーヤー?スノーボーダー? 一筋スキーヤー!!
スキー歴 18年
夏には何をしましたか? リラクゼーション通勤&ラフティングガイド
話す言語は? 北海道弁、英語は...
海外には行った事ありますか? ニュージーランド、オーストラリア
好きな...色は? 黒
ブランドは? ロキシ (ROXY)
食べ物? たこ焼き
レストランは? 308、花吉
バーは? バレンタイン
温泉は? ぼぼろの湯、五色温泉
コースは? スーパーコース
海外のスキー場で一度行ってみたいスキー場は? ウィスラー
ニセコにはどのくらいいる予定ですか? この先ずーっと☆
ニセコに今無い物で、必要だと思うものは? スタバ
ニセコの秘密は? 野ウサギ&キツネに遭遇できるかも...?
あなたの人生観は? 何事にも挑戦?!

name Yuichi Tagawa
age 29 **hometown** Sapporo
time in niseko 2 years
do you like powder? Hai!
ski/board? Ski
how long have you been skiing for? 25 years
why did you come to niseko? Heavy snow fall and lots of mountains
what do you do in summer? Forestry
what languages do you speak? Japanese
trips overseas? None
where do you want to go next? Don't know yet
 favourite
colour Yellow
brand Patagonia
food Something good with white rice
restaurant Hanazono 308
bar Haven't been to a Niseko bar yet
onsen Goshiki
ski run Hanazono courses are fun!
where else do you want to go skiing overseas? Nowhere
how long will you be in niseko? Not sure
what does niseko need? Fast food shop
niseko secret? Not sure
what's your life philosophy? Treat every day with importance

名前 タガワ ユウイチ
年齢 29 **出身地** 札幌
ニセコに来てどのくらいですか? 2年
パウダースノーは好きですか? 好きです
スキーヤー?スノーボーダー? スキーヤー
スキー歴 25年
なぜニセコに来たのですか? 豪雪地帯と山がたくさんあるから
夏には何をしましたか? 林業
話す言語は? 日本語
海外には行った事ありますか? ない
次はどこに行きたいですか? まだわからない
好きな...色は? 黄色
ブランドは? パタゴニア
食べ物? ご飯に合うおかずならなんでも
レストランは? 花園308
バーは? ニセコに来てバーに行けたことがなく、これからいけたらいいなと思う
温泉は? 五色温泉
コースは? 花園のコースは楽しいですよ!
海外のスキー場で一度行ってみたいスキー場は? なし
ニセコにはどのくらいいる予定ですか? 未定です
ニセコに今無い物で、必要だと思うものは? ファーストフード
ニセコの秘密は? わからない
あなたの人生観は? 一日一日を大切にできればよいなと思う

Powder Company
LEGENDARY local pro snowboarder Tomoki Takaku moved to Niseko from Tokyo 12 years ago after hearing word of the amazing powder snow. He started a mountain-guiding business 10 years ago, and three years ago launched Powder Company, a collection of different businesses all focussed on powder and Niseko's mountains. The main part of the business is his sales and rental showroom and test center for Gentemstick, the famous Niseko snowboard company he rides for. Rent one of these amazing beginner to powder boards from ¥2500 for the first day. Fancy being guided around Niseko by a local legend? Mountain guiding from ¥5500 for two hours. www.powcom.net. 0136 54 2820.

パウダーカンパニー
 ニセコ在住のプロスノーボーダーといったら、知らない人がいないくらい有名な高久智基さんは12年前にパウダーの良さを聞いて、ニセコに移り住んできました。10年前に山岳ガイドをはじめ、3年前に現在のパウダーカンパニーを設立しました。仕事は、ニセコの山の環境、またパウダー守るため、林業、環境保全事業にもかかわっています。お店ではスノーボード“玄天スティック”のショールームと、レンタルをしています。玄天スティックは、初心者からパウダーマニアまで幅広いお客様に対応できるたくさんの商品を取り揃えています。レンタルは1日目2500円です。ガイドは2時間5500円です。お店はアンヌプリスキー場にあります。お問い合わせはwww.powcom.net. 0136 54 2820.



Mañana Café and Bar
KUTCHAN'S thriving dining and entertainment scene has a new addition in cool new Mexican-influenced café and bar, Mañana, run by local snowboarding hero Hiromasa Ihara. Hiromasa-san has been a pro for seven years and is sponsored by US snowboard company Rome SDS. He's been in world cups, countless competitions, and starred on magazine covers. But he's always dreamed of having his own shop. Last month his dream came true when he opened Manana on Kutchan's main street, Eki Mae Dori (just up from the train station on the right). It will be open year-round and also serves Tex-Mex food. Mañana means 'tomorrow' or 'later' in Spanish, so customers can forget about today and recharge for a new day. Hiromasa-san snowboards during the day, so Manana is open 5pm-midnight. Closed Tuesdays.

マナーナカフェアンドバー
 またひとつ倶知安に新しいお店ができました。倶知安町出身のプロスノーボーダー、井原真公さんのメキシカンカフェバー、Mananaです。プロ7年目の真公さんの主なスポンサーはRome SDSです。ワールドカップを始め数多くの大会に出場した経験があり、雑誌の表紙を飾ることもあります。先月、倶知安駅前通りにオープンしたお店は1年中開いており、TEX-MEXの料理を食べることができます。店名である、Mananaは“明日は明日の風が吹く”ということわざの様に、“今日一日をリセットし、新しい気持ちで明日を迎えてほしい”という思いが込められています。くつろぎの空間に足を運んでみてはいかがでしょうか。営業時間午後5時～深夜12時。定休日曜日。0136-22-3735。



Half Note
HALF Note is one of Hirafu's great local bars. It was created by jazz fan and amateur player Shouichi Shimatani in 1982 as an addition to his pension, Full Note. These days it's great for the older crowd who are looking for a more relaxed bar experience, although full-blown parties have been known to break out among the younger crew. This season Half Note has new managers, jazz musicians Tadao and Mami Shigematsu. Originally from Kushiro in eastern Hokkaido, they came to Niseko in December last year after living and performing in the US for almost 15 years. Performing live at Half Note every Sunday at 9pm. Half Note at the is towards the bottom of Momiji-Zaka Street.

ハーフノート
 ヒラフにあるバー、ハーフノートは、ジャズのファンでありアマチュアで演奏する島谷昭一さんによって1982年にペンションフルノートの一部として作られました。世代の高いお客様が居心地がよく音楽を楽しめるバーを探しているなら特にお勧めです。もちろん若い世代の方にもお勧めします。今シーズンからハーフノートのマネージャーを務めているのは、ジャズミュージシャン、重松忠雄さんとまみさんです。道東、釧路市出身の重松さんは、アメリカで仕事をされたあと、去年12月にニセコにやってきました。ハーフノートは毎週日曜日夜9時から生演奏をおこなっています。もみじ坂に面しています。



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On thin ice: A Niseko driver survivor

By Matthew Thomas

DRIVING in Niseko's snowy, icy, white-out conditions can be for many tourists like learning to drive again. When getting behind the wheel here, no matter your experience, it can feel a lot like being back on your L-plates. Most who have spent any time driving on these often very dangerous roads have their own stories of being completely out of control in their car when losing traction over some slippery 'black ice'. Or, all of a sudden not being able to see anything out of the windscreen besides white, after strong storm winds blew a flurry of snow across the road. Driving around, we are forever seeing

cars and trucks that have slid off the road and laid to rest on their sides or upside down, met with the business end of a snow bank. One of the scariest experiences can be sitting in a car and having no control over it whatsoever. Hokkaido's sometimes cruel weather conditions make for Niseko's world-class skiing and snowboarding conditions, but with good comes bad: extremely treacherous roads. Local police told Powderlife there were about 30 accidents of a relatively serious nature reported last winter in Niseko and Kutchan from November to March - 11 of which were a result of common local environmental dangers such as

white-outs, ice slips, and snow mounds on the road. While there is a comprehensive inter-resort public transport system between Hirafu, Annapuri, Hanazono and Niseko Village, and plenty of buses to and from Kutchan – which are by far the safest option – it is still sometimes a cheap and above all convenient option to buy a car. For the most part, many people just try and drive as safely as possible and hope for the best, because the most experienced snow driver, or even a local, can in a split second easily be at the mercy of the harsh winter elements of Niseko.

Driver survivor tips:

Powderlife spoke to the Japan Automobile Federation's (JAF) traffic economy manager Takao Yamasawa, who offered some helpful safety information for surviving on Niseko's roads during the winter. Some of these tips are just common sense, but should be employed at all times. Takao-san also says many of these tips aren't just for winter, and should be applied year-round...

- Know and adjust to the conditions of the road every time you get behind the wheel. Is it wet, icy, snowy, windy, or a combination of these? Remember, conditions can change over time, depending on weather, temperatures and the time of day.
- Drive slower in dangerous conditions. This means it will take you less time to stop quickly if required.
- Leave plenty of distance between cars – many seconds or car lengths in distance are needed to avoid collisions.
- Do not turn the wheel, accelerate or brake quickly. Do everything in slow, calculated movements.
- To minimise the need to speed, and stress on the roads, allow plenty of time to travel to your destination. If you have more time than you need, there is no need to speed.
- If you lose control of your vehicle, try not to panic. This may be difficult, but try to stay calm and collected.
- Always concentrate on the roads and never be distracted.
- Watch out for 'snow piles' that have accumulated on the side of the road after a blizzard.
- Beware of 'black ice'. It may look like a wet road, but it is camouflaged ice and very slippery.
- Check what functions your car has – traction control, snow settings and anti-braking system breaks, for example – and, more importantly, make sure they are all functioning properly.
- Be aware of safety signs and information about road conditions, such as red and white arrows, which indicate the location of snow banks at the side of the road. These can make winter driving a little easier in poor conditions.
- Consider taking a driving lesson from a local school that specialises in winter driving.

Most who have spent any time driving on these often **very dangerous roads** have their own stories of being **completely out of control** in their car when losing traction over some slippery **'black ice'**. Or, all of a sudden *not being able to see anything* out of the windscreen besides **white**...

What to do if you're in an accident:

It's bad enough being in a road accident at home, but a crash overseas in a non-English-speaking country can arguably be even more of a rattling experience. Okay, so unfortunately you're in an accident in Niseko. What should you do?

- Firstly, make sure that you and all involved parties are safe.
- Check if yourself, or others, are injured.
- If necessary, call an ambulance.
- Ensure that you are not going to cause another accident with approaching vehicles. If the cars can be moved from the scene of the accident safely, move them to a safe place.
- If the cars are not able to be moved, turn on the hazard lights and ignite the flare (all cars in Japan should be equipped with an emergency flare).
- Call the police and make a record of the accident.
- If you have a rental car, be sure to call your rental car company.
- For members of JAF, phone for a tow truck.
- If you don't have a mobile phone, or have no reception, safely try to wave down passing traffic or passers by and get them to send for help. The person involved must stay at the scene of the accident at all times.



Local emergency phone numbers:

We have compiled a short list of contacts to call in case of an emergency in Niseko.

- Police – 110
- Ambulance and fire – 119
- Emergency interpretation – 03-5285-8185
- Japan-English Helpline (nation-wide emergency assistance) – 0570-000-911
- Japan Automobile Federation's (JAF) - 011-857-7122, or visit www.jaf.or.jp



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Ms. Mandy Wong

Tel: +852 2846 5782 or +852 2846 5759

email: Mandy.Wong@ap.jll.com



NIGHTTIME PANORAMA... From left to right, Niseko United's Annupuri, Niseko Village and Grand Hirafu. Photo: Niseko Photography

Night riders: Niseko after dark



NOCTURNAL skiers and snowboarders are arguably treated to some of the best flood-lit night terrain in the world in Niseko.

After dark, three-of-four Niseko United resorts are still open for business – Hirafu, Niseko Village and Annupuri – with Hirafu the most popular and ample locale for night riding. True to Niseko's belief in opening up as much terrain as possible – as per its liberal, accessible back country policy – a vast amount of the mountain is well-lit and rideable by night, especially in Hirafu, where about 70ha of mountain is open, accessed by most lifts, except for the peak. Niseko is one of the few places in the world that is so well-lit at night, off-piste and tree runs are still there for the taking, as well as the groomers; it's a strange yet amazing experience being able to dash confidently between trees at night.

It should be said that the mountain is a completely different world in the hours of darkness, and well worth exploring. "With the way the mountains are lit up at night, it's like a 3D fantasy world up there when it's dark," says Annupuri's general manager, Toshio Fujisawa. "Skiing at night is part of Japan's snow

culture, because Japanese always try to maximise the amount of time they spend riding up on the mountain."

Although crowds are rarely a problem at the moment in Niseko, runs are often deserted at night time, meaning skiers and boarders can get open slather on the mountain, and don't usually have to deal with lift queues or crowded runs. It's mostly local riders, and not so much the tourists, who take advantage of the mountain once the sun has disappeared. Sliding downhill by night is popularly thought of as a pastime of the skilled; it's when the pros to come out and play after work, because most tourists are too preoccupied hitting the bars and restaurants. Having all this space to themselves, Niseko's skiers and boarders will often be seen riding much faster, and with wild abandon and an aura of invincibility. Although it's dark, night time is show time.

With fewer people on the mountain, it can usually make for a treat for riders, because the mountain and its precious powder doesn't get tracked out or smashed up anywhere near as fast. There can regularly be more powder out there at night than riders know what to do

with. The groomers, which, during the day, are tracked out almost instantly and resemble corduroy, have even been known to be knee-deep in powder by night, and nothing short amazing. Get up there at night after the lifts have been reopened from being closed all day due to high winds, and you'll often be treated to some of the best banked up powder on offer. If the snow's really coming down, much of the time your tracks will be filled in the time it takes to get to the bottom and catch the lift back up to the top. Niseko nights are usually when the sometimes harsh weather goes to bed – it can be calm and eerily still, and with temperatures lower, it frequently makes for lighter, fluffier, better quality powder.

Many would be surprised to hear that visibility at night is often crystal-clear – much better than during the day, when daytime white-outs frequently make things a little unclear. With a good pair of goggles, moments of clarity are a constant at night.

So, considering all this, the next time you want to call it a night, head to the pub, or hit the onsen, perhaps reconsider and go back up for a night ride. Then, when the sun eventually creeps back up over Mt Yotei, it's time for riding by day with the diurnals.

Niseko nights: the stats

NISEKO has offered night skiing at Grand Hirafu – the most popular night-time hotspot – since way back in February, 1967...believe it or not.


On average, currently about 900 individual skiers and boarders head up the mountain after dark, compared to around 4000 during the day. At Hirafu, 1287 metal halide lamps have been erected strategically around the resort, lighting a vast amount of accessible night terrain, including the Ace Family Pair lift for beginners, and plenty of intermediate and advanced courses and tree runs, both on and off-piste. Every day, it costs Hirafu around ¥100,000 to power its lights with 1100 kilowatts per hour until last lifts at around 9pm.

A smaller night spot is at Niseko Village, formerly known as Higashiyama, which has been operational at night for about 25 years. Niseko Village has two lifts operating – Banzai and the Community Chair – which give access to night runs such as Don't Blink, Pure

Magic, Cruiser, Next Stage, Shaky Knees and Final Fling. In the '06-'07 season, Niseko Village had almost 75,000 riders pass through the gates, and over 100,000 last season. It costs Niseko Village more than ¥5000 to light its runs each night, not including costs to power lifts. With 35 years of night-skiing, Annupuri is traditionally the only resort to groom its runs after the daytime skiers and boarders carve it up – before the night riding begins. Around 1800 people go through the turnstiles at Annupuri each evening (may include one rider going up multiple times), to access 14.7ha of terrain – the courses open at night time are Family, Junior and Dynamic runs. One busy night two years ago saw the gates at Annupuri tick over around 4500 times in one evening. It costs about ¥20,000 per night to power the lights at Annupuri, which run at 263 kilowatts per hour. With mostly flat terrain accessible at night, and lit by three different sorts of lights (214 in total) to give off a 'moody, 3D effect', Annupuri offers a good night spot for beginners or families keen to get out for a ride after dark.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT... Aaron Karis of Alaskan H2O Heli-Guides getting deep despite the lack of sunlight. Photo: Glen Claydon







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Hit the lights, and let the show begin

QUALITY TIME... two boarders heading up Grand Hirafu's Family Chair at night time. Photo: Niseko Photography

HIGH-SPEED straight-lining and aerial acrobatics are commonplace during Niseko nights.

GANGS of fearless snowboarders who only come out at night – especially local Japanese – take to the mountain in numbers and with a vengeance after dark, with many putting on a stunt show decked out in their evening best (Old West-style face warmers are the current craze for these gangsters). Often there's something about the lack of sunlight, and abundance of artificial light, that causes many boarders to throw caution and common sense into the wind. But the tricks pulled off – often conveniently beneath the lifts for all to see – can be quite the spectacle. Under the cover of darkness is when these hero boarders take the stage, taking full advantage of the bright lights, better quality softer snow and wide open, uncrowded spaces. Often the best time to negotiate tree runs at speed is, scarily, at night. Pushing each other to the limits, for these boarders turning is not an option much of the time – no matter the conditions. When hordes of locals head up for a night session, you know it's going to be on...and we mean really on!! While the tourists may hit the pub, eateries or onsens by night, the locals simply know best, as is usually the case. Niseko regular Taiki



THE GANG... These Tokyo bros are all about going fast and big once the sun goes down.

Nakamura has been night-boarding in Niseko for the past five seasons, and simply can't get enough of it. Taiki is normally a lone rider, but likes to track down his mates once up there. "It's awesome at night – heaps better than in the day," he says. "It's great because there are not as much people and it's not as crowded, so I can go as fast as I can – everyone goes super-fast! There are more locals riding at night, too, so it is kind of just for the good riders; I guess it could be pros only out there at night." Fellow local night bandit Koji 'The Ninja' Furuta, who works at Demo hire in Hirafu, likes to go 'ninja-boarding' at least a couple of nights a week with his mates, or

girlfriend, Teruko. "There are not too many people up there at night," Koji says. "I really like night sliding off-piste, and I also like how nice and clear it is up there. I have been night-boarding in Australia at Mount Buller, but it is totally different there, and nowhere near as good because there is only one course to ride. I love all the terrain that I can hit at Niseko at night." So, next time you're riding the lift at night, cast your eye downwards and see these bold, brave boarders cutting their swathes down the mountain without a care or fear in the world. If you can't see it, it can't hurt you, right? I guess that's one way of looking at it...

The **voice** of the **people**

Night riders have their say in Niseko

Powderlife took to the slopes to ask the public what they thought of night riding in Niseko...

Peter, Hong Kong

I don't have a particular preference between day and night. I like skiing night and day, but the best thing about night skiing is there are far fewer people.



Theo, Hong Kong

The light and the snow are both better at night. When I skied Whistler at night, only the bottom of the mountain was usually open. But in Niseko, most of the mountain is rideable.



Bruce, Australia

It's bloody awesome – you can actually see what's going on! I've had my best skiing here at night. The light and the way the shadows are cast on the

mountain look amazing.



Randall, Australia

There are fewer people up there at night, and we've got two young kids who settle down in front of the TV, so we can take turns skiing. It also helps you work

up a thirst for Japanese beer.

Shougo, Sapporo

It's easy to see all the bumps at night, and it's not too cold. I like both day and night skiing. I usually go night skiing about two or three times a month.



Yuka, Osaka (living in Niseko)

I go night skiing on my nights off, so about three or four times a week. If I'm not working, I go night riding, unless it's windy because it gets too cold. The snow is fluffier at night too.



“It's awesome at night – heaps better than in the day. It's great because there are not as much people and it's not as crowded, so I can go as fast as I can – everyone goes super-fast!”



In response to the rapidly changing world economy, resorts and hotels around the world have offered discounted rates.

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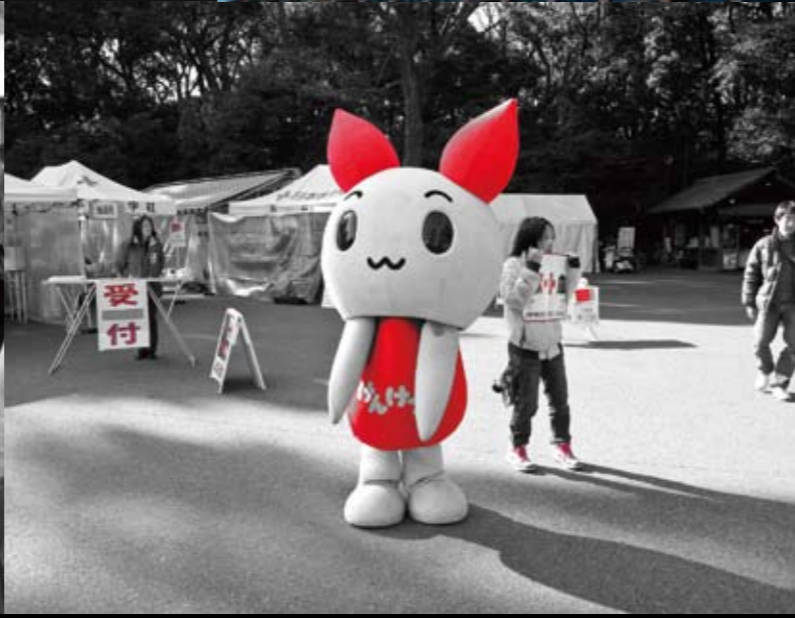
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POWDER POSTER

rider Cam McKay, Annupuri Peak photo Glen Claydon

A THOUSAND
WORDS...



JUMPING YÖTEI... anonymous boarder gets high alongside Niseko's icon on a rare Niseko bluebird. Photo: Jahl Marshall



IN THE SHADE... a Niseko boarder taking cover from the morning sunshine. Photo: Niseko Photography.



Photo: Jahl Marshall



Photo: Niseko Photography



Photo: Niseko Photography



Photo: Niseko Photography



Photo: Jahl Marshall



Photo: CJ Zimmerman

Dale Riva

BETWEEN winning Stanley Cups, sipping on Captain Morgans and manning The Niseko Company accounts, Dale can be found road-tripping around Hokkaido, searching for pow all season long which he does with his Prior Khyber Splitboard for backcountry touring and Forum Walsh for the resort mountains...



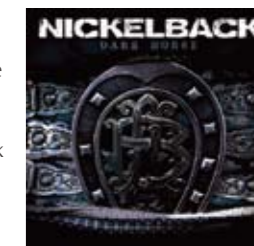
| | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Name | Dale "The Coach" Riva |
| Born | January 25, 1972 |
| Stance | Regular 56cm / +15 degrees front, -12 degrees back |
| Setup | Prior Khyber 156 Split / Forum 157 Walsh with Burton P1 Bindings |
| Favourite terrain | Backcountry bowls, golf courses, hockey arenas |
| Favourite move | Cab 5 into mellow pow, Roast-beef grabs |
| Time in Niseko | 3 years (11 in Hokkaido) |
| Time riding | 20 years |

1. *Heaven is a Halfpipe* – OPM
2. *Knowledge* – Operation Ivy
3. *We're only Gonna Die* – Bad Religion/ Sublime
4. *Chalkdust Torture* – PHISH
5. *Bang Bang* – Trevor Andrew
6. *Perfect People* – Pennywise
7. *Freeride* – Dirty Spaniard
8. *Paranoid* – Black Sabbath
9. *Arms Aloft* – Joe Strummer and the Mescalero's
10. *Rock Superstar* – Cypress Hill



Nickelback, *Dark Horse*, 2008

I would like to say, from the first day I heard this group, I have been baffled how on earth it could be popular music. It's tacky and their actual musical talent is limited (very limited). The first track is about a girl who sucks her thumb: "You always look cuter with something in your mouth...". Does anyone hear those alarm bells? There is no word that describes the level of terrible that this album oozes. To the lead singer: you, sir, are an idiot and I fear for the well-being of not only your family, but the world as a whole. **-1023343 I Can't Snap This CD Into Small Enough Pieces out of 5.**



Franz Ferdinand, *Tonight: Franz Ferdinand*, 2009

Franz Ferdinand are the kings of consistency. Another very solid album due in stores January 26 from the Glaswegians. They have kept true to a formula that works for them – rhythms that change counters mid-way through songs and that jug-band sound seems to vomit out of every pore. I can really see the potential of there being some pretty big alternative chart-toppers coming from this album. I really like it. **4.5 Glasgow Kisses out of 5.**



Guns 'n' Roses, *Chinese Democracy*, 2008

I went in to review this album thinking that it was going to be one of the worst I have heard. Taking 13 years and something like 14 different record labels, it was really looking like a disaster. But you know what? It doesn't suck so bad after all, granted guitar legend Slash has been replaced by five guitarists, one of whom wears a KFC bucket on his head. And they have all aged terribly. Axl Rose still has that high falsetto scream that made it good in the '90s. **3 I'm Sorry But I Am Really Going To Sit On The Fence For This Ones out of 5.**



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Le Cochon: pigging out on fine French cuisine

By Katherine Bont and Kim Wejendorp, Sekka Dining chefs

ROUGHLY 9325 kilometres. That's the distance between Kutchan and Nice, France, but step out of the snow and into cute little 12-seat bistro, Le Cochon ('the pig') and you could be in either. French wall hangings, water served out of Ricard bottles, beautifully hand-written menus and food that's timeless classic and at the same time, Japanese modern. It's all thanks to former auto mechanic Kazuhiko Kojima, who decided one day car maintenance wasn't quite for him. He put down his wrench, picked up a knife and hasn't looked back since. After working extensively in Tokyo, he also travelled to Nice where despite being unable to speak French,

he was taught a lot of the classic skills he now so deftly puts to use. We first wandered in for lunch, which is an amazing value ¥900 for the pasta set or ¥1000 for the main set. Both come with a starter, bread and tea or coffee. We started off with a generous slice of pork terrine with nicely dressed and seasoned mixed leaves. We then moved on to the pasta, which changes daily depending on ingredients and whim. Today's was a fantastic spaghetti with braised lamb ragout, a rich tomato lamb sauce clinging to the perfectly cooked pasta – very hard to share. We then shifted our attention to the

main from the other set – a very clever tongue-in-cheek dish of braised pork cheek and tongue. With the cheek just falling apart at the approach of our fork and the tongue's offal flavour cooked away, the addition of a few textbook vegetables made this a superb, witty dish.

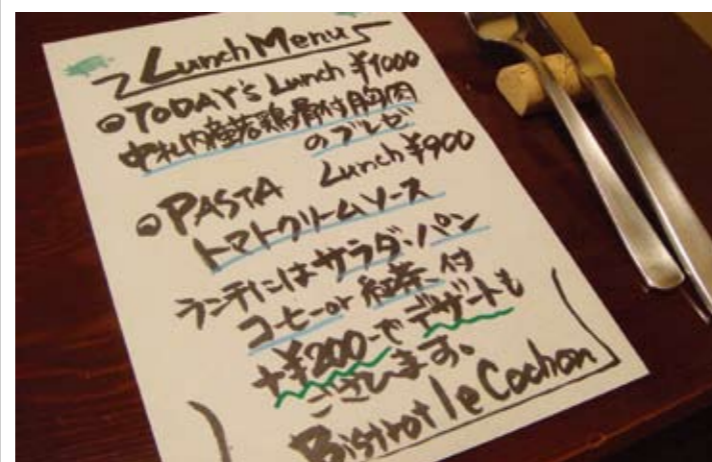
After such a great meal we want just a smidgen of something sweet to round it off, and asking about dessert, we are rewarded with a blancmange with champagne sauce. Wow, again the classic style shows in a perfectly cooked and set pudding sweetened just so with the sauce. All this and a couple of drinks for under ¥4000 for two people – amazing! So amazing in fact we returned for dinner that very night, only to find the place full. With only twelve seats we shouldn't have been surprised.

Another night we shall return, we said, and have many times since. Dinner is a mere ¥2800 for three courses. Recently we've had pate – rich, smooth and creamy with a rich prune jelly and pickled local vegetables. Fromage de tete – pigs head terrine, rustic and full of flavour. Pan roasted organic pork – sweet and juicy, and slow braised beef cheeks with a rich red wine sauce. The desserts alone make you want to revisit. Banana frangipani tart, dense, rich chocolate cake, mountain grape tart and a wildily flavoursome lavender and honey ice cream.

With food this good, and polished serviced delivered by Kazuhiko's wife, Tomoko, is it any wonder we can't stay away? Just a note, you need to book early – have we mentioned that there are only 12 seats? Bon appétit!

Bistrot le Cochon, just off Miyako St. in the heart of Kutchan. Lunch and dinner, closed Tuesdays.

For more great reviews and a whole lot more about food, check out Kat and Kim's blog @ www.bigfoodsmallworld.blogspot.com



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Teriyaki Chicken

Tess Stomski and Sachiko Kageyama from Niseko Gourmet share their teriyaki chicken recipe.

YAKI, griddling or pan frying, is a technique of cooking used widely in Japanese cuisine. Teriyaki, sukiyaki and yakitori are foods that fall under the yakimono or 'grilled things' category. What separates teriyaki is the sauce. Teri, translated as gloss, describes the sheen of the sauce made from the basic Japanese ingredients of soy, sake and mirin which is added to the dish in the final stages of cooking. Teriyaki chicken is a popular dish on Japanese restaurant menu's around the world, however in Japanese homes the sauce is also added to meat and fish.

Teriyaki Chicken is one of the dishes you can test your skills at in Niseko Gourmet's Japanese cooking workshops held on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 11am to 2pm. For reservations contact Tess on 080 5584 1313.



Photos: Niseko Photography



Ingredients (serves 4 people)

- 4 Chicken Thighs
- 2 tablespoons Japanese cooking sake
- Vegetable oil
- Salt and Pepper
- 1 to 2 tablespoons sugar
- Teriyaki Marinade
- 2 garlic cloves minced
- 2 tablespoons shredded ginger
- 4 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons Japanese cooking sake
- 1 tablespoon mirin
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 teaspoon bonito fish stock powder

Method

1. With a fork, puncture the skin of the chicken thigh, making plenty of holes. Pour the sake on top of the chicken and leave to rest.
2. To make the marinade sauce place all marinade ingredients into a large bowl and mix well. Once the marinade is ready add the chicken thighs and leave to marinate for 10 to 15 minutes.
3. Heat a little vegetable oil in a fry pan on medium heat. Place the chicken thighs in the pan with the skin side down first and season with salt and pepper to add flavour while it cooks. Reserve the marinade.
4. Once the skin starts to golden, turn the chicken over and continue to cook over low to medium heat.
5. Once the chicken is cooked through, remove it from the fry pan and set aside.
6. In the same fry pan, on a medium to high heat add the remaining marinade sauce. The sauce will start to simmer quickly so add the sugar immediately and stir until dissolved.
7. Finally return the chicken to the pan with the simmering marinade sauce. Coat the chicken well and continue to cook for another 30 seconds to one minute.
8. Slice the chicken and serve with steamed rice and a green salad.

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Lesson 4: Shopping

SOME mornings you jump out of bed, get fully dressed, stretched and waxed – only to find the gondola isn't moving and most of the lifts are closed. It's way too early for pre-dinner drinks... what to do? How about checking out some of the shops! While you're at it, you can pick up some *omiyage* (souvenirs) to take back to your friends and family at home. And why not drag your aunty along and try convincing her to replace her fluro ski suit from the 80s? Study these words and phrases before you set out on your winter holiday shopping spree in Niseko.

1. 買い物 Kaimono shopping

Your friendly lodge manager asks you if you're going skiing/boarding today: *kyo suberi ni ikimasu ka?* You're taking the day off to give your body a rest and answer: *kyou wa kaimono ni ikimasu* (today I'm going shopping).

2. 帽子ありますか? Boushi arimasu ka? Do you sell beanies/hats?

If you want to save yourself the hassle of walking around the shop – and practice some Japanese at the same time – try asking the shop if they have what you're looking for. *Boots arimasu ka?* is a simple way of asking if they sell boots. If they do, they might say: *arimasu*. If they don't: *arimasen*.



3. いくら? Ikura? How much?

If something doesn't have a price on it, ask how much it is with this verb *ikura* (how much). *Kore ikura desu ka?* (how much is this?). Also, find out how much things usually cost: *takushi de Kutchan made ikura desu ka?* (how much does a taxi to Kutchan usually cost?).

4. 高い Takai expensive

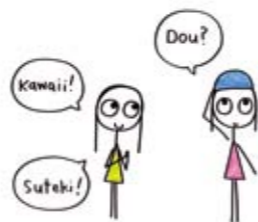
Depending on where you're from and the current exchange rate, things in Japan may seem *takai* (expensive), or *yasui* (cheap). If you want to express your surprise or shock at the *nedan* (price) add one of the following words which mean very: *sugoku*, *mechcha*.

5. 試着いいですか? Shichaku ii desu ka? Is it OK if I try this on?

It's polite to ask before you try clothes on in a shop: *shichaku ii desu ka?* If you forget the word for try on – *shichaku* – just hold up the clothes and motion towards the changing rooms and say: *ii desu ka?* (is it OK if ...?).

6. すてき! Suteki! cool

If your girlfriend/boyfriend/friend is trying on clothes, you might need to give them some feedback. *Kawaii* and *suteki* both mean cute/cool and are usually used by girls talking to each other, or by guys talking to girls. If you're a heterosexual guy and your male friend is trying on a jacket, say *ii jyan* (not bad, bro) or *ii kanji* (it looks good). If it looks like crap, laugh loudly and say: *dasai!* (awful!).



7. お願いします Onegai shimasu. I'll take this please.

If you're buying something at a *conbini* (convenience store), you don't need to say anything, just put it on the counter and start taking money out of your wallet. If you're in a quiet shop, when you put the stuff on the counter, smile and say: *onegai shimasu* (I'll take this please). If you've just tried on a mountain of clothes and want to buy some of them and can't be bothered putting the other stuff back, try this: put two piles on the counter, point to the pile you want to buy and say: *kocchi ni surun de* (I'll take these) then point to the pile you don't want and say: *kocchi wa modoshite kudasai* (I'll leave these, thank you). If that's too complicated, point to the yes pile and say: *kaimasu* (I'll buy them) and to the no pile and say: *kaimasen* (I won't buy them).



8. カード使えますか? Kaado tsukaemasu ka? Do you take credit cards?

Many small restaurants and shops – and sometimes supermarkets and convenience stores – don't take *crejitto caado* or *caado* (credit cards). Ask before you hand the card over: *caado tsukaemasu ka?* If they don't, they might say: *sumimasen, genkin dake desu* (sorry, we only accept cash). If you don't have enough cash, say: *ima genkin ga nai node, sugu modotte kimasu* (I don't have enough cash on me, so I'll come back).

9. 袋いいです。Fukuro ii desu. I don't need a bag, thanks.

Conbini staff will put almost everything in a bag unless you stop them: *fukuro ii desu*. Something you often hear at the counter at a *conbini* or *suupaa* (supermarket) is: *pointo caado omochi desu ka?* (do you have a point card?). If you hear a long sentence that sounds like a question, it's a safe bet that they're asking you if you have some kind of loyalty card, so shake your head and say: *ie* (no) (and hope the cute girl/guy behind the counter didn't just ask for your number).

10. 財布を落としました。Saifu o otoshimashita. I lost my wallet.

If you have the misfortune of losing your wallet and someone asks what you're crying about, say: *saifu o otoshimashita*. They might ask you if there was money in it: *okane haitemashita?* Don't worry, if you give the details to the police, or hotel/resort staff, there's a good chance a nice person will hand it in to the local *koban* (police box) and you'll get it back!



Pronunciation guide: 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.

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Introducing Kutchan

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. 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

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|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
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Kutchan Downtown

Restaurant and Bar District

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

Dining out in Kutchan: A guide to food in 'K-Town'

By Bevan Colless

IF you thought Hirafu had a great selection of charming and affordable restaurants then wait until you head into K-town. As the typical Japanese house is not suited to entertaining the tradition is to meet out in restaurants when catching up with friends. Tokyo, New York and London are roughly the same population but compared to NY and London's 10,000 eating and drinking establishments, Tokyo boasts 50,000. For a rural town of 10,000 Kutchan has enough wining and dining options to keep you going every night for a year without a repeat visit.

Part of the fun of a visit to Japan is experimenting with the local delicacies, so I dare you to get the ¥100 'Night Go' bus into Kutchan, wander into the bustling restaurant district under the arch from Eki Mae dori, somewhere with a red lantern out the front and plop yourself down for a meal. Eschew the English menu and communicate with your host into their recommendations and away you go.

Kutchan has a great range of restaurants and as the area is by and large working class; most places are fabulous value, even if you're spending Australian or English pesos. Most visitors to Hokkaido will know that this island is as much about the food as it is the snow and Kutchan is a true reflection of this. You can enjoy some of the finest seafood you can imagine for a fraction of the cost that you will pay for the same quality in Tokyo.

Here is a selection of Powderlife's favourite Kutchan restaurants:

Shunsai
The course menu in Shunsai is breathtaking. For ¥4,000 you'll be begging for mercy as one terrific dish after another is laid in front of you. The deer steak is something to behold. 0136-23-1882 North 1, West 3.

Shogun Sushi
Shogun Sushi is a low-profile sushi restaurant that serves arguably the best quality sashimi in the whole area. Sushi and Sashimi is their staple, so be warned they need advanced warning if you want something apart from fish. Extra friendly hosts with group seating upstairs. 5-11pm Tel. 0136 23 2898 North 2, West 1

Torimatsu
A favourite of both foreign and Japanese locals; some of whom have been going 3 to 5 nights a week for the past seven years. Affordable and great quality food – yakitori (chicken sticks) is their speciality. Getting a seat at the counter is difficult, they also have tatami-style and western seating. Near the 7-11 just along from the Co-op. Closed Sundays 5-11.30pm. 0136-23-2893. North 3, West 1.

Café La Chicon
A charming French restaurant with great prices. See the restaurant review on page 36

Café Kaku
This is the kind of place with such a laid back vibe you'll feel like staying for half the day. Shukin opened Café Kaku seven years ago and he's still serving some of the best coffee in all of Japan. The wholemeal pizzas and foccacias are a specialty and there is an excellent selection of cakes and smoothies. See listing on this page for details.

Kongow
A yaki-niku (BBQ meat) restaurant run by a 'senior' mother-daughter team who provide excellent quality beef that you grill yourself at your own table. Kongow is the closest thing to teppanyaki in the Niseko area. On the corner directly across from Shogun Sushi. 11.30-2pm and 4 – 10.30. 0136 22 0298 North 1, West 1



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Hong Kong developers come for powder, stay to build

By Matthew Roy

IN literal terms, Niseko's developments may be built on concrete slabs. But metaphorically speaking, they're sitting atop powder, passion and a unique ski lifestyle enjoyed by Hong Kong entrepreneurs.

With little fanfare, Hong Kong-based entrepreneurs have come to enjoy a prominent place among the developers working in Niseko. Their projects and nationalities are as varied as Hong Kong's cosmopolitan melting pot. "We became developers in Niseko by accident and by passion," says Bjorn Fjelddahl, a Hong Kong brand agency owner. "We first came in 2001 for a boy's trip of hardcore skiing and boarding – it was fantastic. Since then, we've been coming back with our families once or twice a year. We bought several plots of land to build a house for ourselves, and also started our development project." Fjelddahl's Odin Project is Swedish-French team of two brothers and one brother-in-law, building eco-friendly, luxury homes.

At the other end of the scale, Pacific Century Premium Developments, a prominent developer on Hong Kong's waterfront, is working on an entire resort village in Hanazono and Capella Niseko, led by Hong Kong developer Harry Pang, who has assembled a dream team featuring big-name architect Tadano Ando, and international hotelier Horst Schulze. Their road to Niseko may have begun with Cathay Pacific Airways' launch of direct services to Sapporo's New Chitose Airport back in 2001. "The pilots were among the earliest to start getting the word out," Tim Murphy explains, as the English managing director of Hong Kong property investment group IP Global, who is working on the Country Resort chalets, near Hirafu Station. "There were some Aussie pilots based in Hong Kong working for Cathay Pacific who flew regularly to Sapporo, skied in Niseko and came back raving about the powder."

Like the Australians who have built, Hong Kong



PROJECT ODIN... an artist's impression of one of the planned developments.

| Development | Developer | Scale | Location |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------|
| Above+Beyond | Above+Beyond | 102 condominium rooms, 22 residential chalets | Kabayama |
| Capella Niseko | Annupuri Land | 80-room hotel and up to 150 residences | Annupuri |
| Country Resort | Chi Guillemette and IP Global Ltd | 45 chalets | Kabayama |
| Ebisu | Zekkei Properties | 2 houses | Hirafu |
| Hanazono | Pacific Century Premium Developments | Hotel and residences | Hanazono |
| Project Odin | Great North Pacific | 2 houses | Hirafu |
| Tancho Lodge | Tancho Investments | Mixed use residential & commercial | Izumikyo |

Source: Whiteheaven Real Estate

developers' romance with Niseko has a deep, powdery base. Many gained a taste for skiing the pistes of Europe or North America, which led them to look for somewhere to ski closer to Hong Kong. "We first went to Niseko years ago in 2002," Chi Guillemette says, speaking from the standpoint of a Vietnamese-Australian living in Hong Kong, a leader of the Country Resort project. "The snow was fantastic but the facilities were pretty basic. Looking at property prices, they were so cheap, so we thought 'let's buy'." "We really had to do our research to find Niseko back then," Harry Pang adds. Pang is the owner of the Annupuri Land company that is bringing Capella to Niseko. "There are almost no mountain resorts in Asia, compared to the US or Europe, instead you get hundreds of beach resorts,"

"We became developers in Niseko by accident, and by passion"

Hong Kong brand agency owner Bjorn Fjelddahl

he says. "I got to Niseko and thought, 'this is the place to build a luxury resort in the mountains'."

The golden sands and azure surf of Thailand's Phuket resort also played its role. "Phuket was the first place in Asia that Hong Kong people bought property, before they had focused on the US and Europe," Pang says. "In Thailand, as well as Malaysia, Vietnam and Indonesia, foreigners can't buy property freehold. But Japanese property law gives foreigners freehold rights in Japan, which makes it much more attractive. This property law is only starting to become known overseas."

Pacific Century Premium Development's road to Niseko came through the realisation that the buyers of residences in Bel-Air, a luxury waterfront project in Hong Kong's Cyberport precinct, might also want holiday homes. "Working on Bel-Air, we realised that many of our affluent customers were also interested in buying homes in luxury resorts overseas," executive director at Pacific Century Premium Development Wendy Gan says. "These customers are not only interested in holidays, but also in investing. We discovered Hanazono in Niseko was a wonderful ski-resort, and realised that it could also be transformed into an all-seasons destination with golf in the summer."



PREMIUM PROPERTY... the new 308 building at Pacific Century Premium Development's Hanazono Resort.



A PASSION FOR POWDER... Project Odin's Nicolas Gontard and Bjorn Fjelddahl.

Hokkaido's fresh natural food, which is famous in Hong Kong, has also been vital to luring development to Niseko, Pang explains. "Hokkaido has the fresh foods that people in Asian cities want," he says. "When Asians travel, 50 to 60 per cent of their choice of destination is based on the food quality. In Switzerland, food quality is always a complaint."

Hong Kong developers are also catering to city dwellers who welcome Hokkaido's cooler, less humid summers and the safe environment for families. "It's a fantastic place for families, perhaps

the safest holiday destination in Asia," Guillemette says.

The increasing numbers of tour groups from Hong Kong will encourage more developers, says Mae Young, a Hong Kong real estate agent who is selling Niseko property. "People are surprised at how cheap it is to go to Hokkaido. It's totally different to Tokyo, where everything is so expensive, especially the food. People arrive here on tours and come back as independent travelers once they discover how easy it is to get around. Pretty soon they're thinking about buying a place."

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Living on the edge

Luxury lifestyle on Hirafu's outskirts

Interview by Kristian Lund



PICTURESQUE... the view from the Hanazono property.

THE designer behind the Sekka brand, Shouya Grigg (pictured below), has built a dream home at Hanazono, between Hirafu and Kutchan Town. Powderlife spoke to Shouya about how the new home embodied his ideals of a luxury lifestyle, and why he believed more people would be interested in building outside the villages on larger blocks of land.

Can you tell us about some of the designs and specifics of this new project?

The house is 500sqm, so it's a decent size. There are a lot of very high ceilings, it's quite an extravagant use of space – not cramming everything into 500sqm. The house is only five bedrooms. It's got a lot of outdoor inner zones, where there are water features and undercover outdoor terraces. The exterior is coated in corten steel, and there is a lot of use of glass, bringing in the surrounding nature.

Paint us a picture of what sort of environment exists on your block of land.

You can glance outside and look at the nature and see how that harmonises with the house. All the power lines are buried so you don't see any wires – all you see around you is pine trees, birch trees, green fields, mountains and blue skies, and that's important. It even has an 85m bore well with pristine mountain spring water that doesn't need to be filtered.

How big is the block, and where is it?

The size of that actual property is 15,000 tsubo – about 50,000sqm, or 5ha – so it's quite a big block. It overlooks the Hanazono Bokujou (farm). I think the Hanazono side is much more pristine than this side of the mountain, because it's much less developed, and the average block size is much larger. The whole Hanazono master plan looks interesting, but even without that it's just a beautiful area. It's also very convenient being so close to Kutchan – you can drive straight to Kutchan without going through a traffic light. When the Shinkansen bullet train comes through you will be able to drive to the Kutchan Shinkansen Station, park your car and be in Tokyo in a few hours, or Sapporo in 20 minutes.

What sort of lifestyle can be enjoyed on this property?

I wouldn't normally call this a typical home, but it would suit me and my lifestyle in that it's a place I could live with my family, but at the same time it's a work space. It's a place you could wander through and look at art that's on the walls, and antiques and statues and sculptures. But also the home is specifically a gallery/studio/office, it's also a work space so being in amongst that type of surrounding, you could think and come up with interesting new ideas and concepts. It's a home but it's also a gallery – the type of home you can show art and antiques.

Will this house be a model home for similar developments?

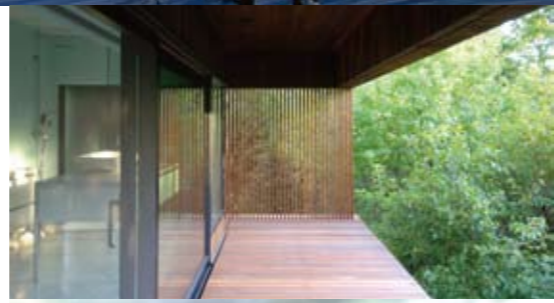
Obviously the home will be a showpiece for the quality and styling I can produce as part of the Sekka brand. In a sense it's what I would do anyway – I'm fortunate I'm in this area and I can utilise it as a showpiece. What's happened in Whistler, and other big international ski resorts is you have the epicentre next to the lifts, and some people want ski in-ski out, but usually you have the hotels and lodges and the commercial businesses around that. Maybe for some people who are very wealthy they want a house in amongst that, but what I gather is that many really wealthy people want a home, and they often have something that's five or 10 minutes outside the epicentre with a multi-million dollar home on that with a couple of cars. And they don't just go in winter, they go in the green season too.

What is good about living outside the main villages?

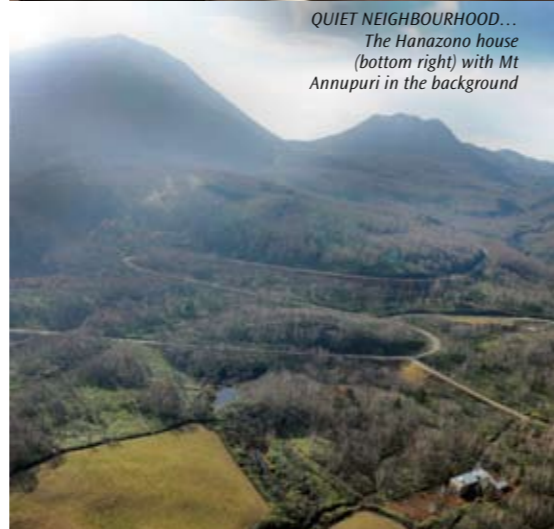
The village has a purpose and it's got a certain buzz, but there's a certain lifestyle you cannot achieve by living in this. When you build an apartment in the village it's somewhere you spend a week or two in the winter and a week or two in the summer, but building a big house outside the village is more of a lifestyle choice, somewhere you can spend more time.

Do you think the Niseko property market is maturing to this level?

I really do believe the market is evolving and maturing and there are people who want to have a nice home on a nice property that's a bit larger, whether that means half an acre to an acre, or up to five to 10 acres. There's still a lot of beautiful land around Hirafu. I believe it will mature to the stage where people from Hong Kong and China and these closer regions will want to have a home within five to 10 minutes drive from the ski fields. But maybe people will start to want to have a home on the coast, so they come here in winter, they get up and drive to Niseko or drive to Kiroro to ski during the day, then drive back. I really think it will get to that stage.



QUIET NEIGHBOURHOOD...
The Hanazono house (bottom right) with Mt Annupuri in the background



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Q & A with Nicolas Gontard

Interview by Lorne Calhoun

Powderlife had a chat with **Odin Project director Nicolas Gontard**



What was your focus before Niseko?

I started a telecommunication products company, where I designed and manufactured bluetooth headsets for telephones. I built this company into a global brand, with sales all around the world, and then sold the business to a listed European group in 2007.

Bjorn and Chris Fjelddahl, who are my partners in the projects, operate a brand consultancy and brand publishing companies, with four offices across China. Their clients are multi-national brands like Apple, Starbucks and Virgin.

Why has your focus now shifted to Niseko?

Chris Fjelddahl first discovered the place, thanks to his Japanese wife, in 1997. Then the three partners started going regularly, firstly because we are all hooked on the snow. But we also started going there during the summers as well and have fallen in love with the pristine nature. We have always done a lot of outdoor sports together. We have done multi-day adventure races in the wild in Thailand, China, Philippines, in the Himalayas, hiking, mountain biking, kayaking and river rafting. We love nature and Niseko satisfies all of those appetites.

What are your plans in Niseko?

Our plans are to create one of the most thoughtful luxury brands in Niseko. We don't believe in ostentatious, flashy luxury. We can see how wealthy people worldwide are going to be huge drivers of the 'green movement'.

There are currently three projects under way. The *Odin Residences* are two large residences of close to 500sqm each. They both carry an architectural signature, which is a huge, floating roof under large bay windows oriented towards Yotei-zan. The first residence is breaking ground in March or April this year.

We also have *Yasuragi* by *Odin* - five apartments of 90 to 170sqm each, built with an spa/onsen-style bath area at the heart of each flat. The building itself keeps the signature floating roof concept. All apartments have the same great views on Yotei-zan.

Finally, *Kimamaya* by *Odin* is a boutique hotel concept with serviced hotel suites of 80-90sqm each. All are rentable as one or two-key flats. The hotel offers a lounge, bar and restaurant.

How has interest been in the projects?

We have had great interest, despite the tighter worldwide economy, in the first market where we are currently marketing - Hong Kong. Because we service a

high-end market segment, these sales are usually quite private and often require personalised tailoring of the product itself. We will gradually start marketing to high net worth individuals around key markets in Singapore, China and Macau as well.

We believe Niseko is a great alternative to Whistler or Aspen for wealthy Asians who are not prepared to travel as far and lose two days of skiing to jetlag. Hence our marketing is centered on southeast Asia.

The first *Odin* residence was sold to a renowned Fortune 500 businessman last year, after it was introduced on the market at record-beating ¥350,000,000 (almost US \$4 million).

How do you feel about the future of development here considering the current market state?

One would clearly be very unwise to take the slowdown lightly. As in any downturn, despite the challenges, there are some silver linings. It kicks out the speculators, and usually heralds a return to quality. That's where we see *Odin* will benefit. We're in it for the long run, and we're sweating the product quality really, really hard. We've been at it for the last two years already, and have involved some of the most talented designers, architects, interior designers and construction engineers.



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Upper Hirafu

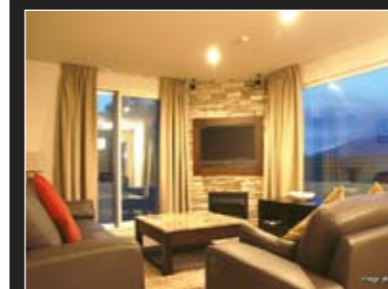


3
¥74,000,000

Steal my vendor's brand-new property! This premium apartment is very close to purchase price. Built by Hokkaido Tracks it boasts superior materials and furnishings. It enjoys panoramic Mt Yotei and ski field views - and a superb central location.

Freshwater 403

Upper Hirafu



2
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Hirafu House 7

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Building in Niseko

By Michael Davenport, director of Niseko Consulting

WITH many of the real estate purchases in Niseko being land, there are lots of investors holding plots perfectly suited for new construction. However, the prospect of building in Japan can be a daunting one. Here is a rough outline of the basic steps in construction to show how simple it can be.

1. Scale and budget

The first step is to consider the scale of project and most importantly, the budget. It is a good idea to think about the design, building size and levels of finish prior to approaching a builder. The more information you supply a builder with, the less chance there is for miscommunication and time wasted on inappropriate planning. Always work within your budget, aiming to complete things for 10% less than the total budget to make up for inevitable variations later.

2. Builders and contractors

The next step is to find a builder and/or architect to create plans, discuss details, examine the site and receive a quote for work. In Japan, many construction firms have in-house architects that can do the necessary design work although most firms do not offer English support. If you need to deal in English, you will need to employ a translator or use an English-speaking contractor/project manager (a contractor will also research builders and architects to match your project). If you reside outside of Japan, finding a trustworthy contractor with excellent communication skills is vital to ensure that everything is going to plan.

3. Finishes and specifications

As a basic rule, western finishes are more expensive than standard Japanese finishes and you will need to balance this to your budget. As standard fixtures and fittings differ in Japan, there are some items that you may need to spend more time specifying. Door height, window size, stair pitch, carpet quality, kitchen workspace, bench and sink height are a few important items that differ. Kitchens and bathrooms in Japan are usually off-the-rack "system" or "unit" assemblies which, although standard, are well-priced. Tiled bathrooms and order-made kitchens are often very expensive. Japanese builders excel in wallpapering, woodwork and general framework. However, painting and tiling require careful monitoring.

4. Fees and contracting

All fees are negotiable and if you are not dealing directly with a builder, it should be the job of the contractor to negotiate the builder's cost. As the contractor/project manager will be responsible for the entire project it is wise to ensure that they are receiving an appropriate remuneration; reducing the cost in the right places whilst keeping everyone happy is an important aspect to completing a building successfully. When you are satisfied with the design, finishes, time schedule, quotes and fees, it is time to contract. Payment is usually staggered across the project and payable in parts at completion of contract, foundations, roof, internals and handover. Fees for delays should also be in place. A keen awareness of the construction and payment schedule is important.

5. Approval and construction

After contracting, the architect creates the working drawings and the construction firm applies for building approval from the local town office. In Kutchan, this can take up to three months. The construction department of the town office ensures that the building complies to Japanese building standards, local laws, regulations and guidelines. Construction commences after the approval has been received. The actual construction should be straightforward provided everything goes to plan. At this stage, the contractor/project manager ensures that everything is progressing smoothly, provides regular feedback and provides options and solutions to unforeseen issues. The construction is often the most exciting stage of a project.

6. Completion

After the property is completed, the construction firm officially hands the building over following an inspection by the owner. Any problems should be clearly solved before signing any documentation. After everything is finished it is time to buy furniture, arrange utilities, pay taxes and move in. If the property is for rent, or you plan to be away for long periods at a time, finding a property management company is the final step.

Michael Davenport is director of Niseko Consulting and North Star Projects and has been directly involved with real estate and building since he came to Niseko in 2006. North Star Projects offer advice, contracting and project management services for all levels of construction. info@ns-projects.com

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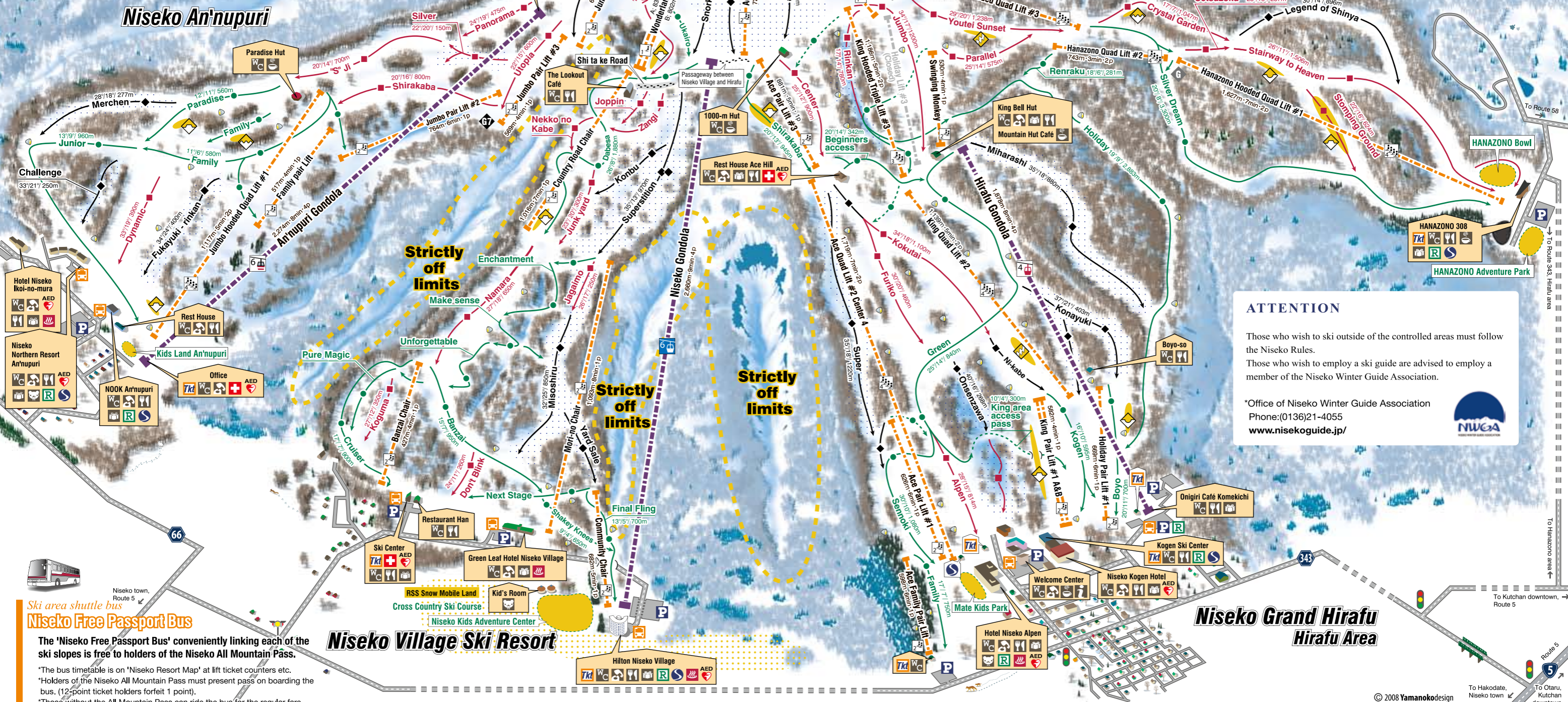
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5. When entering a trail, a run or starting downhill, look uphill and give way to others.
6. Always use chairlift restraining devices where provided and always use proper devices to prevent runaway equipment. Ensure equipment is in good condition.
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.


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Those who wish to ski outside of the controlled areas must follow the Niseko Rules.
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 - Onsen(Hot Spring)
 - Shuttle bus stop
 - Parking lot
 - Ski patrol
 - AED
 - Light
 - Gate to uncontrolled area
 - Slalom run
 - Mogul run
 - Wave
 - Half Pipe
 - Park(Kicker, jib, etc.)
 - Un-groomed Slope
 - Easiest
 - More Difficult
 - Most Difficult
 - Name of Slope**
Maximum Gradient / Average Gradient / Run Length
 - Number of seats**
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Strictly off limits

◆Entry into areas marked "Strictly Off Limits" is prohibited even to experts with special equipment (e.g., avalanche beacon, shovel, radio).

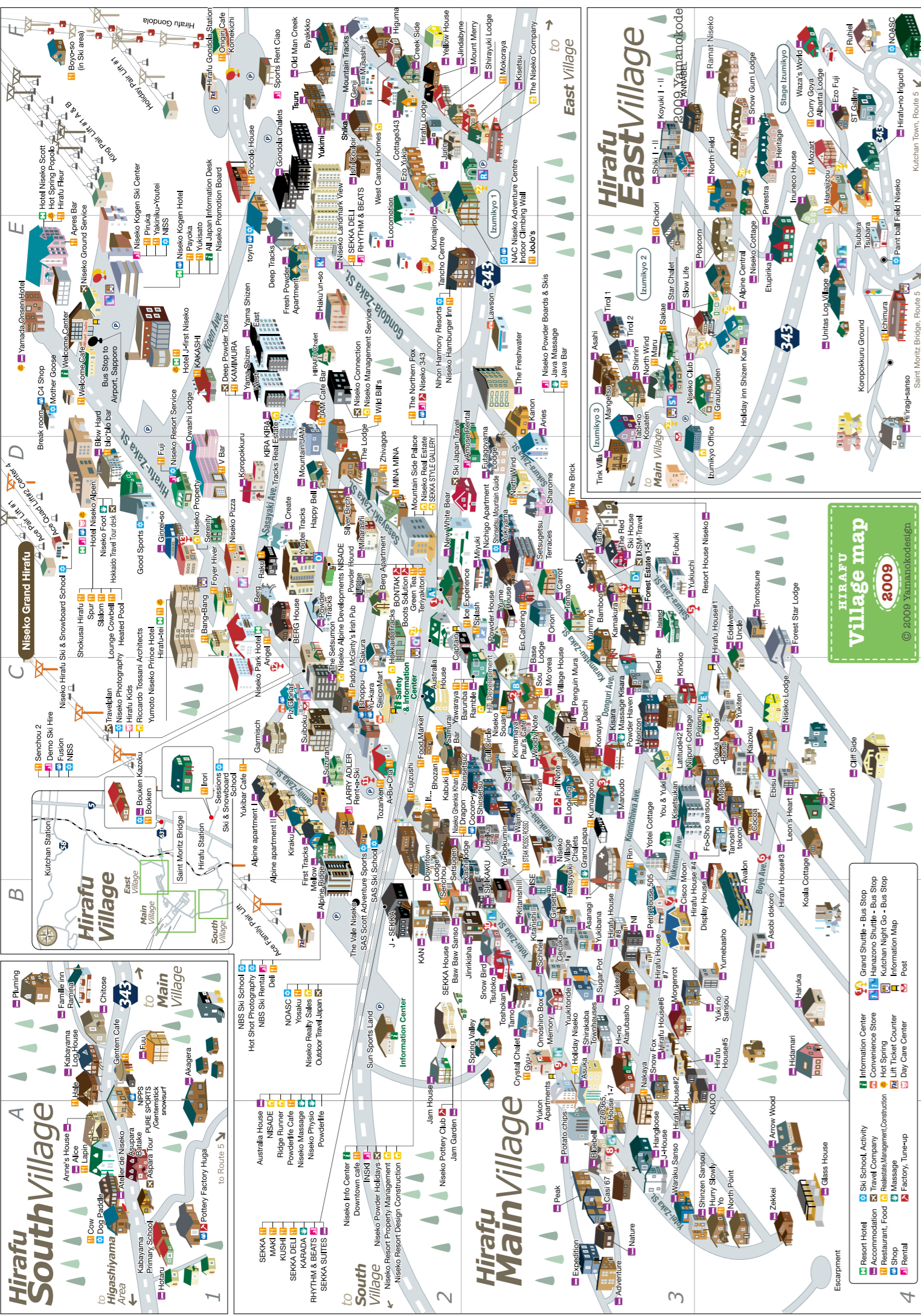
◆Those who wish to enter an uncontrolled area are required to comply with Niseko An'nupuri rules posted at designated gates and lift bases.

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.



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]
- Barunba
バルンバ
090 8907 9399 [MAP B2]
- Blo Blo Bar
フロー フロー 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]
- 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
0136 23 2244 [MAP B3]
- Graubunden
グラウブュンデン
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 27.
- Bang Bang
バンバン
22 4292 [MAP C1]
Owner Masai Saito chooses the best ingredients in Japan. One of Hirafu's most popular izakayas.
- Jam Café Bar
ジャム(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]
- Jyuu Okonomiyaki
じゅう
44 2336 [Higashiyama]
- Kakashi
かかし
23 2622 [MAP D2]
- Kame
亀
22 0339 [MAP E3]
- 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]
- Landmark Deli
くまごろう
23 4285 [MAP E2]
- Mina Mina
ミナミナ
23 4471 [MAP D2]
- Ichimura Soba
蕎麦屋 いちむら
23 0603 [MAP F3]
- if... Café
カフェ イフ
22 4770 [MAP B3]
- 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
ニセコグルメ
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]
- 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]
- Rosso Rosso
ロッシェッソ
21 7100 [MAP B3]
Casual steak house with a contemporary flavour. Juicy, tender wagyu and Kobe beef, variety of imported wines.
- Hiraflu 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
ジャム(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]
- Jyuu Okonomiyaki
じゅう
44 2336 [Higashiyama]
- Kakashi
かかし
23 2622 [MAP D2]
- Kame
亀
22 0339 [MAP E3]
- 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]
- Landmark Deli
くまごろう
23 4285 [MAP E2]

Specialties
Buta don ¥850
Tempura Set ¥1350
Sashimi ¥1350
Tendon ¥950

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
ニセコグルメ
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 and Bar
ポールスカフェ&アンドバー
090 9083 6764 [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]

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

Sekka Deli Cafe
セッカデリカフェ
22 3088 [MAP B2]
House-made produce using local ingredients, cheeses, meats, wines. Breakfast to dinner, dine in or take away.

Sekka Dining
セッカダイニング
22 5022 [MAP B2]
Experience the taste of Hokkaido in style at Sekka Dining. International fusion cuisine using Hokkaido ingredients.

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]

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]

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."

Kamimura
カミムラ
21 2288 [MAP D2]
Niseko's premier dining experience. A mix of Japanese seasonal cuisine, blended with classic French technique.

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

Bars

- Angel Karaoke Bar
エンジェルカラオケバー
23 1281 [MAP D2]
- Après Bar
アプレバー
23 2311 [MAP E1]
- Bar Lair
バー・レイアー
22 0588 [MAP D1]
- Barunba
バウンバ
090 8907 9399 [MAP C3]
- Be.
ビー
556 905
- Blo Blo Bar
フロフロ・バー
22 1269 [MAP D1]
- Dragon Wine and Food Bar
ドラゴン ワイン&フードバー
21 7700 [MAP B2]
- Fridge Door Bar (Gyu +)
ギョウタスパー
23 1432 [MAP B3]
- Jam Café Bar
ジャムカフェバー
23 0700 [MAP D2]
- Java Bar and Café
ジャババー & カフェ
090 2871 6781 [MAP D3]
- Maki Lounge Bar @ J-SEKKA
マキラウンジバー@ジェイセッカ
21 3080 [MAP C2]
- Masukotto
マスコット
23 1101 [MAP C2]
- Paddy McGintys
パディーマッキンティーズ
55 8020 [MAP C2]
- Paul's Cafe and Bar
ポールズカフェ&アンドバー
090 9083 6764 [MAP C3]
- Red Bar
レッドバー
22 6687 [MAP C3]
- Splash
スプラッシュ
23 1688 [MAP C3]
- The Brick
ブリック
22 3444 [MAP D3]
- Wild Bill's
ワイルドビルズ
22 5652 [MAP D2]
- Yuki Bar and Café
ユキカフェ
22 0234 [MAP B2]
- SAS Scott Adventure Sports
SASスコットアドベンチャースポーツ
21 3333 [MAP B2]
- Sun Sports Land
サン スポーツ ランド
23 3220 [MAP A3]

Tours, activities

- **Black Diamond Tours**
ブラックダイヤモンド ツアー
090-2054-8687
Let us privately guide you through Hokkaido's best powder stashes and out of the way places.
- Deep Powder Tours
ディープ パウダー ツアー
0136 21 5827 [MAP D2]
- Good Sports
グッドスポーツ
23 4560 [MAP C1]
- Fuga Pottery Factory
陶工房風雅
22 1731
- IXSM Travel
イクシム トラベル
21 5855 [MAP D4]
- Karada Massage @ J-SEKKA
体マッサージ@ジェイセッカ
21 3088 [MAP B2]
- Niseko Massage
ニセコマサージ
22 0399 [MAP B2]
Professional Sports and Relaxation Massage in Five Star Luxury. Highly qualified massage therapists
- Niseko Pottery Club
ニセコ陶芸クラブ
23 4844 [MAP A3]
- Niseko Snowmobile Adventures
ニセコスノーモービルアドベンチャー
21 5001
- NOASC
ノアスク
23 1688 [MAP C3]
- Paint Ball Field Niseko
ペイントボールフィールドニセコ
23 2111 [MAP E4]

Real estate

- Hokkaido Tracks Development
北海道トラックス 開発
21 7202 [MAP C2]
- Hokkaido Real Estate
北海道リアルエステート
080 5587 5052 [MAP C2]
- NISADE
ニセード
22 0038 [MAP C2]
- Niseko Life Plan
ニセコ ライフ プラン
44 3584 [Higashiyama]
- Niseko Property
ニセコ プロパティ
21 5060 [MAP D2]
- NRE Niseko Real Estate
ニセコ リアルエステート
21 7722 [MAP D2]
- Niseko Realty Sales
ニセコ リアルティール セールズ
23 2221 [MAP C2]
- Niseko RDC
ニセコ R D C
23 4844 [MAP B2]
- Ridgerunner
リッジランナー
21 6220 [MAP C2]
- Sekka Style Gallery
セッカ スタイル ギャラリー
21 7755 [MAP E2]
- Tracks Real Estate
トラックスリアルエステート
226 977 [MAP E2]
- West Canada Homes
ウエストカナダホームズ
21 7500 [MAP E2]
- Lawson Hirafu
ローソン
23-1230 [MAP C2]
- M-Pocket Kutchan
M-ポケット
22-1070 [MAP Kutchan F7]
- Niseko Wine Supply
ニセコワインサプライ090
6875 5931 [MAP XX]
- Seicomart Hirafu
セイコマート
23-3271 [MAP C2]
- Sekka Deli
セッカデリ
21 3088 [MAP B2]
- Sekka Landmark Deli
セッカランドマーク
23 4285 [MAP E2]
- Sekka Teca Wine Shop
セッカテカワインショップ
21 3088 [MAP B2]
- Yamada Onsen Hotel
山田温泉ホテル
22 0476 [MAP E1]

Ski schools

- NAC Niseko Adventure Centre
N A C アドベンチャー センター
23 2093 [MAP E3]
- Niseko Hirafu Ski and Snowboard School
ニセコヒラフスキー&スノーボードスクール
22 0921 [MAP D1]
- NISS Niseko International Snowsports School
ニセコインタナショナルスノースポーツスクール
21 6688 [MAP F1]
- NBS Niseko Base Sports
NBS ニセコ ベース スポーツ
21 5050 [MAP B2]
- Niseko Sessions
ニセコ セッション
080 6070 2780 [MAP B2]
- SAS Scott Adventure Sports
スコットアドベンチャースポーツ
21 3333 [MAP B2]
- J-Sekka Suites
ジェイセッカスイート
21 6133 or 21 7788 [MAP B2]
- NISADE
ニセード
22 0038 [MAP C2]
- Niseko Ground Service
ニセコグランドサービス
21 2503 [MAP C2]
- Niseko Management Service
ニセコマネジメントサービス
21 5020 [MAP D3]
- Niseko Powder Connection
ニセコパウダーコネクション
21 2500 [MAP D2]
- Outdoor Travel Japan
アウトドア トラベル ジャパン
21 2171 [MAP C3]
- Ski Japan
スキージャパン
22 4611 [MAP D3]
- The Niseko Company
ザ ニセコ カンパニー
21-7272 [MAP F2]
- Deep powder tours
ディープパウダーツアーズ
21 5827 [MAP D2]
- Hokkaido Tracks
北海道トラックス
23 3503 [MAP C2]
- Hokkaido Travel
北海道トラベル
233 327 [MAP C2]
- Holiday Niseko
ホリデー ニセコ
21 6221 [MAP A3]
- Izumikyo
泉郷
23 3301 [MAP D4]
- Hotel J-First Niseko
ホテルJファーストニセコ
22 2350 [MAP E1]
- Hotel Niseko Alpen
ホテルニセコアルペン
22 1105 [MAP D1]
- Hotel Niseko Scot
ホテルニセコスコット
23 2311 [MAP E1]
- J-Sekka
ジェイセッカ
21 6133 [MAP B2]
- Niseko Kogen Hotel
ニセコ高原ホテル
22 0117 [MAP E1]
- Niseko Park Hotel
ニセコパークホテル
22 2122 [MAP C2]
- Niseko Prince Hotel Hirafu-tei
ニセコプリンスホテルひらふ亭
23 2239 [MAP C1]
- Demo
デモ
21 66 77 [MAP C2]
- NBS Niseko Base Sports
ニセコ ベース スポーツ
21 5050 [MAP B2]
- Grand Hirafu Ski Hire
グランドヒラフスキーハイヤー
0136 22 0109 [MAP D1]
- Niseko Powder Boards
ニセコパウダーボード
0901 384 5772 [MAP D3]
- Niseko 343
ニセコ 3 4 3
23 0343 [MAP C3]
- Rhythm & Beats
リズム&ビート
22-0165 [MAP E2]
- SAS Scott Adventure Sports
スコットアドベンチャースポーツ
21 3333 [MAP B2]
- Sports Rent Ciao
スポーツ レンタル チャオ
22 5178 [MAP F2]



The Australian snowsports club with its own Niseko lodge

Australian Alpine Club Niseko
オーストラリアンアルパインクラブニセコ
223 006 [MAP E4]
The lodge has eight western style guest rooms Membership is available for A\$6,500 www.aacniseko.com

■ J-Sekka Suites
ジェイセッカスイート
21 6133 or 21 7788 [MAP B2]

■ NISADE
ニセード
22 0038 [MAP C2]

■ Niseko Ground Service
ニセコグランドサービス
21 2503 [MAP C2]

■ Niseko Management Service
ニセコマネジメントサービス
21 5020 [MAP D3]

■ Niseko Powder Connection
ニセコパウダーコネクション
21 2500 [MAP D2]

■ Outdoor Travel Japan
アウトドア トラベル ジャパン
21 2171 [MAP C3]

■ Ski Japan
スキージャパン
22 4611 [MAP D3]

■ The Niseko Company
ザ ニセコ カンパニー
21-7272 [MAP F2]

Rental

short / long term leasing export / import / moving assistance 7 pass 4wd from 45,000yen/wk

Niseko Auto Rentals and Sales
ニセコオートセールズ&ドレナタル
090-2055-6074 [Higashiyama]
Niseko Auto can assist you with local sales and export. Licensed auction dealer – 4WD and sports vehicles.

AIRPORT

New Chitose Airport 0123 23 0111
www.new-chitose-airport.jp/language/english
New Chitose was opened in 1991 and became Japan's first 24-hour airport in 1994. It services Sapporo and Niseko with direct international flights from various Asian cities and Australia. The Tokyo to Chitose route is the busiest domestic route in the world. It is the largest airport in Japan by land mass.

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

BUS

The bus is the most convenient and commonly used form of transport from the airport. Buses depart about every 30 minutes from the airport to Niseko. They take about three hours, including a rest stop halfway and a dropoff at Rusutsu. ¥2,300 – one way and ¥3,850 for a round trip. The buses disembark at six designated bus stops within the greater Niseko United Resort. You will find two different points to get off at each of the main ski areas.

Whiteline Buses
www.whitelinebuses.com.....011-242-2040
Chuo Buses
www.chuo-bus.co.jp/kikan/ski...011-231-0500
Donan buses
www.donanbus.co.jp/ski.....0123-46-5701
Hokkaido Resort Liner
www.access-n.jp/ski_info.html..011-219-4411

CAR RENTAL

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

Mazda Rent a Car : Chitose airport 0123-45-8756, Niseko 011-231-0118 (drop off and pick up in Niseko only available on weekdays)
Nippon Rent a Car : Chitose airport 0123-26-0919, Niseko 0136-43-2929
Orix Rent a Car : Chitose airport 0123-22-0543, Izumikyo (Hirafu) 0134-25-0543, Black Diamond Lodge : 0136-44-1144

TAXI

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

TRAIN

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

The train schedules are subject to change so it is best to call the numbers below or visit: www.japanrail.com.

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

INTER-RESORT TRANSPORT

A shuttle bus connects the Grand Hirafu, Higashiyama and Annupuri ski areas. There is a private company bus which costs ¥500 and a free shuttle bus which is included in your all mountain

pass. See the timetable on the course map for more information. If you have a 12-point ticket, one point per trip is needed. Others need ¥500 for adult and ¥300 for child per ride.

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

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

AIRLINES

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

BANKING

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

CREDIT CARDS

Japan is still a predominantly cash society. Most small bars and restaurants in Niseko do not accept credit cards, but larger hotels, restaurants and hotels often do.
MasterCard.....0120 020 120
MasterCard.....03 5728 5200
Visa Card.....00531 44 0022

CURRENCY

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

DRIVING

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

ELECTRICITY

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

EARTHQUAKES

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

EMERGENCIES

Police.....110
Ambulance and Fire.....119
Emergency Interpretation.....03-5285-8185
Japan English Helpline (nationwide emergency assistance).....0570-000-911

ETIQUETTE

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

EATING

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

DRINKING

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

TIPPING

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

GARBAGE

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

ONSEN (HOT SPRING BATH)

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

MEDICAL SERVICES

At present there is no doctor in Hirafu and Niseko Physio is the only medical service available in walking distance of the slopes. For fractures or non musculo-skeletal cases you will need to go into Kutchan. If you can't speak Japanese you will need to bring a translator

Niseko Physio

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

Kutchan Kousei Hospital

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

Ueda Orthopedic Clinic

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

INTERNET

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

MOBILE PHONES

3G phones only will work in Japan. You can hire a phone from IXSM travel 0136 21 5855 or Go Mobile 03 4496 4344. For longer term stays the three big carriers have stores in Kutchan: au.....0136-21-5616
Soft Bank.....0136-21-2588
NTT DoCoMo.....0136-21-6868

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

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

Directory Assistance

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

International Calls

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

Calling Cards

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

Kazak

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

POST OFFICES

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

TOURIST INFORMATION

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

The Niseko Grand Hirafu Welcome Centre

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

WALKING ON ICY ROADS

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

If the shoe doesn't fit...

By Byron Dawson

A professional boot fitter's guide to warm, comfortable feet



Byron Dawson
Byron is a certified master boot-fitter with seven seasons of experience, currently working at Hirafu's Boot Solutions.

MANY people assume that cold, sore feet are just fact of life when it comes to spending time on the mountain. Although that may have been true 30 years ago, modern boots and boot-fitting techniques ensure that nearly everyone can have warm and comfortable feet all day long. Whether you are due to purchase a new pair of boots, or your existing boots are giving you grief, working with an educated and experienced

boot-fitting professional is the only way to guarantee comfort on the mountain.

As a boot fitter, I am often asked by friends and customers which boot they should buy; my answer is always the same: "The one that fits your foot." This may sound very simplistic, but far too often people get hung up on the aesthetics of the boot, and forget they have to wear it all day in the freezing cold. The simplest analogy is to compare a boot to a vice, a vice that must apply even pressure around your entire foot, ankle, and lower leg. It is, therefore, imperative that said vice must anatomically match your feet.

Before even considering which boots, a good fitter will have a frank chat to understand what sort of a skier or snowboarder you are, and what you are expecting from the boots. A brief but concise biomechanical assessment of your feet and ankles should follow. A ski boot is generally designed for an 'ideal' foot, so even anatomical abnormalities can be problematic when skiing. The good news is that many issues can be accommodated, for so long as they are made known to the fitter. It is therefore important to speak up if you have any medical conditions or chronic pain in your feet.

A shell check, looking at how much larger the shell is than your foot, should be performed for every boot you try on, as the length of the shell will not change, but the thickness of the foam in the liner will compress substantially.

When you first put your foot in the boot it will likely feel very snug, but is important to take the advice of your boot-fitter, as he has already checked the length of the shell and knows that this is the correct size. This is as tight as the boot will ever feel, as steps that are made down the road will provide more space throughout the boot. It should feel like your foot is encapsulated by the foam of the boot with little or no movement inside.

Once you agree on the ideal boot, adaptations will be made to accept any oddities in your feet which were established during the earlier assessment. For most people, the addition of a custom-made supportive footbed greatly improves the comfort and performance of any ski or snowboard boot. A properly made footbed positions the subtalar joint close to its neutral position, which is its most balanced and powerful position for the foot to be for snowsports. A footbed supports the entire base of the foot, which can shorten the foot up to one whole size, which in conjunction with a deep heel cup greatly increases the comfort of any boot.

The final step of the fit process is to custom mold the boots' liner, which, when heated, expands and becomes very pliable. When the foot is placed in the warmed liner, the foam compresses in areas of tightness and to a lesser degree fills in voids. After the molding process is complete, you will be encouraged to ski for a few days which will further settle in the liner, if soreness occurs after this go back to the shop for further adaptations to be made.

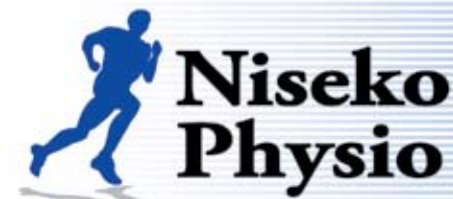
Special adaptations often need to be made to women's boots, as their feet present a variety of challenges. Wearing high heels is not good for your skiing, as they tend to reduce the length of the Achilles tendon. A shortened Achilles reduces the range of flexion of the foot

upwards, which is detrimental to skiing and boarding. Changing the ramp angle of the boot reduces the affect of this limited flexion. Women's calf muscles tend to sit lower than men's, which can cause soreness in the back of the leg when a boot is clamped around it. Many manufacturers offer boots with lower cuffs to allow for this, otherwise material can be removed to allow for larger calves. Women's extremities are inherently colder than men and appreciate electronic heaters added to the foot beds which maintain a steady temperature throughout the foot.

Even if your boots were never customised for you, adaptations can be made to your boots to make them work better for you. The first step is to add a custom foot bed, as the advantages described above will apply to any boot. If you were fitted into a boot which is too big, extra panels of foam can be glued onto the liner to snug up the fit. When specific points of pressure occur in ski boots, the shells can be heated and stretched to provide more room to relieve the pressure. In snowboard boots, and in some places on ski boots, pieces of foam and plastic can be cut out of the liners to give more space in a problematic area.



Boot Solutions is located opposite Yotei Tracks, down the road from Wild Bill's in Hirafu's Upper Village. They can be contacted on 0136-221-025.



Niseko Physio was established as a branch office of Tokyo Physio, to provide quality physiotherapy care for the English speaking residents and visitors to Niseko. We are committed to providing a standard of care that is up with the best in the world.

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