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issue 14 Feb 7 - 20 2009

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THE EDGE**

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a frozen natural wonder

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tips that could save your life

SAPPORO SNOW FESTIVAL
japan's biggest winter event

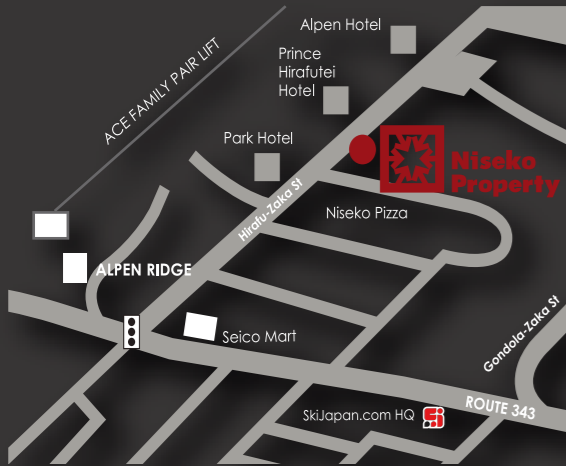
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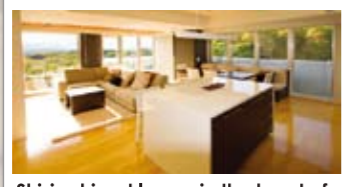
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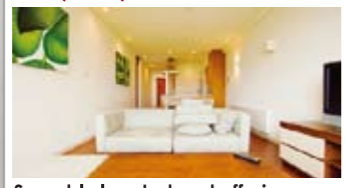
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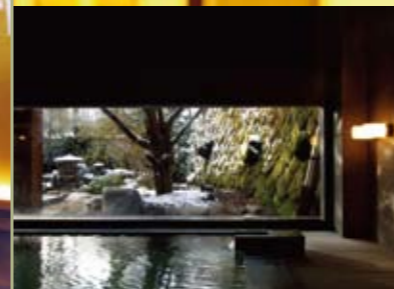
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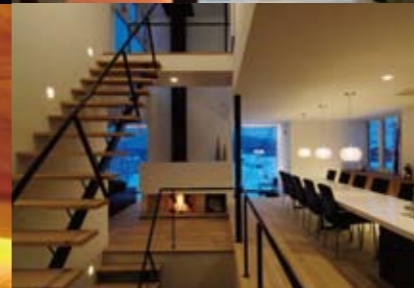
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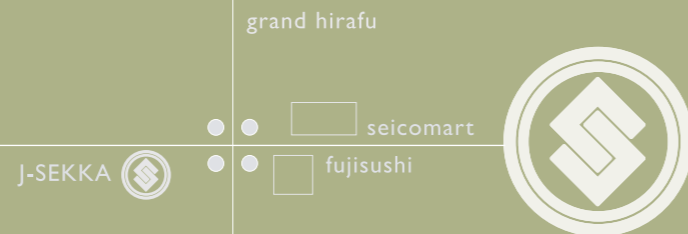
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editor's note...

AS we approach the middle of the season, it has become apparent that the shift towards growing numbers of Asian visitors to Niseko is a firm reality. Australians were the initial impetus for the globalisation of Niseko, but with the current weakness of the Australian dollar, Asian visitors are beginning to make their presence felt. As the Chinese, Hong Kong, Singaporean and Malaysian currencies have not decreased in value to the same extent as the Australian dollar, the Asian visitors have more spending muscle, and have been flexing it on the streets of Niseko. Restaurants are generally still very well patronised, and lift ticket sales are on par with previous years.

As most Asian visitors are beginners in the skiing stakes, more advanced level skiers and boarders have been enjoying fresh tracks in their favourite powder stashes for longer than in previous seasons. Stories are circulating around town about skiers and boarders still getting fresh tracks just off the piste at four in the afternoon – which is generally unheard of – harking back to a Niseko of old. Freshies at last light and later, where else in the world can you get that?

In this issue we take a look at a true Hokkaido highlight, the Shiretoko ice floes, an experience so awe-inspiring we felt it needed a full feature just to do it justice. We also offer an education into how to survive if you are lost in Niseko's backcountry, look forward to Sapporo's world-famous snow festival, and also Kutchan's own Yukitopia (snow festival). The increasingly popular Stirling Goldman has graced us with his presence again, and we've got another great selection of photos, plus all your favourite regulars.

We at *Powderlife* wish you yet another fortnight of long tracks and deep powder.

Kristian Lund, *Powderlife* Managing Editor kris@powderlife.com

編集者の言葉...

シーズンも半ばを過ぎると、ニセコへのアジア人旅行者が圧倒的に増えていることがよく分かります。今までは、オーストラリア人がニセコのグローバル化を刺激、触媒してきましたが、豪ドルの弱さのため、アジアからの旅行者の存在が目だってきているのです。中国、香港、シンガポール、マレーシアの通貨が豪ドルに比べて、そこまで弱くなっていないという事実もあり、ニセコの町中の所々で彼らはお金を使っています。レストランは客で賑わい、リフトチケットの売り上げも前年と変わらず良いようです。

ほとんどのアジアからの旅行者はスキーがビギナーなので、上級レベルの人達が先シーズンよりも大好きなパウダー滑りを楽しんでいます。スキーヤーとスノーボーダーが午後4時でも、コースから少し離れば、パウダーを滑れるという話です。今までは聞いたことがない、遠い昔のニセコの話のようです。最終リフトとその後までもパウダーが残っている... こんな良い事が他のどこで出来るでしょうか？

この号のパウダーライフでは、本当の北海道のハイライト、知床の流氷の特集をします。実際にこの目で見てきた、すばらしい体験を皆様にお伝えする義務があります。また、バックカントリーで遭難した時に生き残る方法や、世界的に有名な札幌の雪祭り(雪トピア)も、もうすぐ始まります。人気絶好調のスターリン ゴールドマンが戻ってきて私達を魅了してくれます。他に、たくさんの写真といつものページもあります。

私達パウダーライフより次の号が出版される2週間の間、皆様が長くディープな滑りが出来ますように!

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Niseko back on top

WHILE the boom in international visitors taking skiing trips to Japan shows no sign of abating, the 08/09 season has seen many visitors venture beyond Niseko for their Japanese ski experience. Many, however, will have been reminded that in terms of snowfall, there is only one Niseko. It's a little ironic that the past two seasons have seen Niseko experience unprecedented growth in its economy and international visitor numbers, while at the same time the snowfall has been well below the annual average. Deep Powder Tours were the first foreign tour operator to bring large volumes of international tourists to Niseko, run tours all over Japan, so they keep a close eye on snowfalls across the country. They rounded up some statistics and found that at the time of going to print, the stats don't lie, Niseko was head and shoulders above the rest of the country. Niseko's peak base was 315cm, compared to Hokkaido's other main resorts Rusutsu (145cm), Furano (105cm), and Tomamu (100cm). Honshu's resorts were a mixed bag, with perennial favourite Hakuba leading the way with a 205cm base, followed by Nozawa Onsen (195cm), Shiga Kogen (165cm), and Myoko Kogen (140cm). DPT co-founder Glenn Goulding gave us his run-down on Niseko's snowfall. "We have had more snow here than anywhere else this season, which is a return to the norm," he says. "We've had two below



DEEP TURN... Matthew Thomas discovered first-hand why Niseko is No.1 for powder in Hokkaido. Photo: Jahl Marshall.

average years here; normally it just snows and snows. Although more international visitors are venturing to other resorts, Niseko is still my favourite – the snow is the best and you've got the village, the best après ski in Japan and a good mountain where you can do backcountry as well." So, is Glenn worried about the future of international visitors to Japan's ski resorts? "Apart from the strength of the Japanese yen at the moment, the future of Japanese skiing is great, it's starting to become really popular all over the world."

A board for each foot: the ultimate powder tool



BUILT FOR POW... Toki-san with his custom skis

TOKI-SAN from local retailer and hire shop Niseko 343 was the coach of a national ski team, and has been in Niseko for a long time – so you can imagine he knows a thing or two about how to ski powder well. He's watched snowboarders float over the white stuff while he was sinking into it for years, so one day he decided, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. So Toki-san fashioned a pair of skis out of two snowboards to get him gliding over the powder with even more float than the boarders. He tried a few different methods of fitting the ski bindings to the board, and this season settled on the perfect system. "I've used the K2 Pontoon (one of the fattest skis on the market), but these give me 10 times the flotation of those," he says. "They give your inner thighs a real workout on the groomed runs, but on a powder day these are unbelievable. I've never felt flotation like it. I've used them 10 times so far this season, and been down from the peak three times." Does he get some strange looks while wearing them? "Yes, people are always stopping me to take photos and asking me what they are like," he says. And what if someone wanted to have a try of them for themselves? "I wouldn't want to hire them out, I think they'd probably do themselves an injury," he says. Okay, Toki-san, we'll leave it to you.

Ice bar a 'cool experience'

MANY drinkers refer to good bars as 'cool', but few watering holes can be described as such in literal terms. About 300 tonnes of Niseko's powdery snow was melted, refrozen and carved by skilled hands into an assortment of different shapes to build Hirafu's Ice Experience, a novelty bar located in the Middle Village on Momiji-Zaka Street. "The main ingredients are an abundance of snow and cold weather, which Niseko has in abundance," ice builder Kendo Hamaguchi says. Made entirely from local snow in a fashion revealed only as 'a business trade secret developed through the years', the Ice Experience is all ice – even down to the glasses, bar, seats, tables and other sculptures. It begs the question, though, how are the dishes washed? Thankfully, the toilet isn't made from ice – there simply isn't one. "The Ice Experience has a magical affect on people regardless of age and sex," Kendo-san says. "It gives off a fairytale experience and is one of the most photographed places in Niseko during the winter." Kendo-san says the Ice Experience is also an 'eco and green concept'. "All of the construction materials of ice and snow melt back into the grounds in the spring, waiting to be used again for next year's Ice Experience," he says. Kendo-san says to keep an eye out in Niseko in future seasons for an Ice Experience Resort, featuring an Ice Hotel and Ice Chapel.

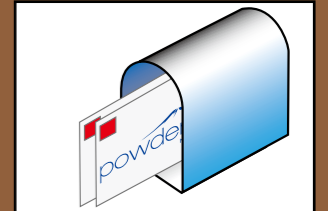


FROZEN FUN... enjoying a cool drink at the Ice Experience



Sanpachi Ramen

AMONG many other dishes, Hokkaido is famous for its ramen – big hearty bowls of noodles topped with vegetables and pork, and served in a thick flavoursome soup. For most, a bowl of ramen is likely to leave you feeling like you don't need to eat anything for a day. For those who can't get enough, Sanpachi Ramen, on Route 5 in Kutchan, currently offers "Mega-Ramen" – three times the noodles and twice the soup, veges and pork. The owner says many people finish it, even some women!



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POWDERLIFE is now offering an email edition of every new issue delivered to subscribers for free as soon as each edition is published. So, no matter where you are in the world you'll always have your finger on Niseko's pulse. Go to the Powderlife.com homepage to subscribe. Meanwhile, while you're visiting our site, have your say! Last year, Powderlife started the Best of Niseko Awards, recognising the businesses that consistently performed at the top of their fields throughout the 07/08 season. This year, we're calling on you to vote and let us know who your favourite is. Winners will be announced in Issue 17, publishing on March 23. Have your voice heard – log on to vote at www.powderlife.com

Last year's winners:
Best restaurant – Kamimura
Best izakaya – Kakashi
Best bar – Wild Bill's
Best onsen – Yugokurotei (Annupuri Onsen)
Best café – Graubunden
Best convenience store – Seicomart
Best souvenir shop – Omoshiroi Box
Best resort – Annupuri
Best snowmobiling – Niseko Snowmobile Adventures

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Public still hungry for restaurants

ALTHOUGH visitor numbers in Niseko are visibly down this year, walking in off the street and getting a table at a restaurant without a booking can still be a near-impossible task.

Niseko is almost as well-known for its East meets West eateries as it is plentiful powder. The village's bustling and varied food scene – in a diverse array of styles such as izakaya (Japanese tapas style), degustation, bars, cafes, yakitori, up market fusion, pizza, curry and more – have, for many businesses, been as busy as ever. This is all the more reason to book – sometimes weeks or months in advance – particularly if you're trying to get a big group in. While things may have slowed down for many this month, some restaurants were booked out every day of January. *Powderlife* interviewed several restaurateurs, and 'ups and downs' in customer numbers seem to be a recurring theme this year.

Winner of *Powderlife's* Best Niseko Restaurant for last season, Kamimura, experienced a 'steady' start to the season in December, booked out with a waiting list until early January. After that, business dropped off a little with quiet and busy nights, but the fine-dining degustation restaurant in Hirafu's Upper Village was once again booked out from late January through to early February. "Numbers wise, December this season was better than last season," restaurant manager Michael Phipps said. "January wasn't as busy as last

year, but the Chinese New Year bookings in late January saw us finish somewhere near the same numbers as last January." The 2008-09 winter has seen a major shift in clientele demographic for Kamimura. "Last season, when the Aussie dollar was strong against the yen, we had mostly Australian guests. This season, we have had many more guests from Asia, such as Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia, who come in large numbers with their families."

Moving onto Italian fusion and fine wines, with a local Japanese flavour, the classy J-Sekka in Hirafu's Middle Village has also been experiencing 'ups and downs', said food and beverage manager, Mick Nippard.

"We've had really busy nights where we have done resets, which means we clear a table and set it again for a second sitting," he said. "We have even been taking bookings from overseas when they call before they arrive in Japan." Mick said other nights, in comparison, had been unusually quiet. "I think what's happening is people are having one special night out a week," he said.

While Niseko's big-name Japanese dining icon A-Bu-Cha has still been quite busy this season, business has dropped slightly compared to last year. "Usually we are all booked out until mid-February, but this season we only have a few bookings in February," said manager Tsukasa Otani.

A-Bu-Cha opened its second restaurant, A-Bu-Cha II,



YUMMY... Japanese girls enjoy a feed at A-Bu-Cha

in the Suiboku building at the start of this month. The new A-Bu-Cha is designed in a similar forest style, and offers the same sort of food as the original. However, the newcomer will boast a bigger sake, cocktails and liqueur menu, said Otani-san.

Masanobu Saito, owner of Bang Bang, one of Hirafu's busiest izakaya restaurants, said there wasn't much difference in business this year, when compared to last season. Business was still booming for Bang Bang, he said. "We already had bookings before the '08-'09 season even started," said Masanobu-san. "January was basically fully booked out and tables were all full." He said we already have plenty of bookings for February. "So far business has been great and the current economy hasn't affected us at all," said Masanobu-san.

Niseko's parks reach new heights

NOW that winter has kicked in, Hanazono's park, the Stomping Ground, has been able to reach close to its full potential.

Designed with beginner and advanced riders in mind, the park started out little by little at the beginning of the season – and is by no means finished (when is a park ever 'finished?') – but recent heavier snowfalls mean things have really started to go ahead. There are even a few new additions to the park this season, including a selection of straight and curved boxes, and a wall ride. A rainbow-shaped rail is also proving challenging for this year's park riders.

Proof that the kids still love going big, the jump lines are a favourite this season. Hanazono has put on big and small jump sequences, boasting smooth flows between jumps, a variety of styles, and gaps that range

between tiny (3m) to monstrous (15m). Keep in mind, the more snow Niseko gets, the bigger the jumps will get, too.

The half-pipe will be better and longer this year; it is being built and used for the Hokkaido Half-Pipe Championships (Feb 7-8) and the Kissmark Cup (Feb 6-7), and will officially open to the public after that.

The iconic bus also returns this year, with park rats once again able to jump on and off the vehicle, and perform spins, carves and more from the roof.

Hanazono's park is open until the end of the season. A big thanks needs to go out to all park builders at the resort, the Hanazono grooming team, and NISS instructors for teaming up and putting this year's park together.

Hirafu also has a smaller park this year, with jumps and a half-pipe located on either side of the gondola.

Niseko skier in World Cup

HOT young Niseko skier Ryuunosuke Okoshi (pictured) has just participated in the 2009 World Cup Men's slalom race in Croatia.



The 20-year old son of the family who runs Pension Locomotion placed 41st in his first run and didn't qualify for the second, but the Hokkaido Shimbus Press described his 'tenacious skiing as an expectation of a long-awaited new star'.

Okoshi has previously won the All Japan Junior Slalom two years running and grew up training on Hirafu's Alpen Course, preferring the thrill of speed on hard-packed snow over Niseko's famous powder.

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• Fusion-Hirafu.

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niss@harmonyresorts.com

Demo Equipment Hire has a modern fleet of adults and kids – skis, boots & poles, snowboards & boots, helmets and snowshoes.

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Thanks for the heads-up

The Japan Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery released a statement urging consumers not to **inject themselves with hyaluronic acid**.

As part of its effort to **combat greenhouse gasses** while safeguarding Japan, the SDF announced that it will introduce hybrid fighting vehicles.

A Cabinet Office panel has determined that **meat from cloned cows and pigs** is safe to eat, which means that consumers may be seeing cloned beef and pork on supermarket shelves in the next couple of years.

The Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Ministry reported that produce and **seafood products falsely labeled** as being of Japanese origin were "rampant" in Taiwan.

It was reported that a group of 2,200 middle managers at Toyota have agreed to **buy cars from their employer** in an effort to boost flagging sales.

Good luck with that

At a summit meeting in Seoul, Prime Minister Taro Aso and South Korean president Lee Myung Bak vowed to "**set aside their historical and territorial rows**."

Irish prime minister Brian Cowen and representatives of 70 Irish companies visited Tokyo on a trade mission, no doubt in response to the **18 percent drop in Japanese imports of goods** from Ireland in 2008.

Local residents massed in protest after the **Inagawa-kai crime syndicate set up its new headquarters** in a building in Akasaka-about 250 meters from the HQ of a rival gang.

Japan's Fair Trade Commission ordered ANA, JR East and three other companies to **stop marketing a leather wallet as "Made in Japan"** when in fact it was manufactured in China.

Official business

Kanagawa governor Shigefumi Matsuzawa agreed to **exempt pachinko parlors from the prefecture's new smoking ban** "after receiving strong opposition from the private sector."

Matsuzawa had previously **excused small restaurants from the ban**-even though such establishments make up some 70 percent of eateries in Kanagawa.

It was reported that the government is planning to **restore the jukambo (small cells) which housed Hansen's Disease sufferers** at a World War II-era sanatorium in Gunma Prefecture. The cells measure 4.5 tatami mats and were unheated despite the fact that wintertime temperatures in the area would drop to minus 20C.

Officials in Tochigi announced plans to **preserve a 400-year-old cedar-lined roadway** by banning cars and turning it into a pedestrian walkway. At 37km, the thoroughfare in Nikko is the world's longest tree-lined avenue.

A group of **103 Japanese atom bomb survivors** arrived in Tokyo Port after an around-the-world cruise during which they visited 20 countries.



Here and there

An explosion at a construction site on the Okinawan island of Itoman is believed to have been **caused by a World War II-era bomb**. Although the blast shattered windows at a nearby retirement home, no one was seriously injured.

In other Itoman news, a 68-year-old company president and marathoner from Chiba arrived on the island after a **3,280km road-running odyssey** that began in Nihonbashi in April 2006.

Police say a fire that **burned down the home of a 71-year-old woman** was caused by a candle the occupant lit because her electricity had been shut off due to her failure to pay utility bills.

It was reported that 46 survivors of the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake **died alone last year in public housing** complexes built in the quake's aftermath.

A suicide prevention hotline serving Japan's largest Brazilian community in Hamamatsu, Shizuoka, is in **danger of folding** due to the "economic downturn affecting Portuguese-speaking volunteers."

Approximately **20 Japanese macaques hailing from the Shimokita Peninsula** in Aomori were relocated to Ueno Zoo to prevent them from being euthanized. The primates are considered a National Treasure but had been damaging crops in Aomori.

Headline of the week (via the Daily Yomiuri): Photograph of Crab Eggs Ends 60-year Dispute

Dumping grounds

A survey of 517 coastal areas in Okinawa revealed that **1.7 million pieces of garbage** have washed ashore during the past ten years.

Just 4 percent of the trash was Japanese, while **24 percent came from other countries**. The origin of the rest was unknown.

Eighty percent of the garbage was plastic and "therefore not subject to rapid decomposition."

It was revealed that a TV Asahi quiz show which posed questions about trivia found on the web got its "information" from **blogs written by the show's staff**.

STATS

1,500
Tons of buried "mines, rockets and other explosives" that have been removed from the Okinawan islands since the end of World War II

2,500
Tons of materiel believed to still be buried on the islands

700
Number of banned items confiscated daily from passengers boarding aircraft at Haneda Airport

108 million
Letters sent out by the Social Insurance Agency in October to alert people about possible errors in their pension records

2.78 million
Number of these letters returned as undeliverable

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

where it's at



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HIRAFU RESORT

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SNAP



DAD Jonathan, mum Miyuki, and the snow princess Maya are up from Tokyo. "This is my tenth time skiing," Maya says as she shares her skiing story, upon returning from their favourite run, the Super Ridge.

Powderlife asked skiers and boarders what was their favourite run and why.



PAUL from the UK, and Clint from Australia, take time out from their dangerous jobs – clearing bombs and landmines from the Vietnam War. Their pick of the runs is Strawberry Fields, which they like because it offers 'something for everybody'.



Inski's Stack of the Week

THE Powderlife 'Stack of the Week' competition is back by popular demand. We've been receiving a flood of emails about why the competition hasn't returned this season – so here it is again. The inaugural entrant is Matty Sterling, whose 'yard sale' was snapped by mate and photographer, Jahl Marshall. Matty's epic stack happened in Hanazono's Blueberry Fields. You can't see his face for all the powder, but we were able to positively identify him by jacket and ski bottoms. Good on ya, Matty – you've won yourself a Salomon Ranger helmet courtesy of Inski Skis, Boards and Snow Wear for your troubles. Your prize should keep you nice and safe during future stacks. 'Stack of the Week' will continue throughout the season, so if you have any embarrassing, painful, funny, unfortunate or otherwise pics of wipeouts, email hi-res photos with a short blurb to ed@powderlife.com. Happy stacking! Inski Skis, Boards and Snow Wear ph: 0136 21 3267



ALL-Australian park rats Julian, Doug, Hugh, Houlieo and Oliver love stomping tricks on jumps at Hanazono's Stomping Ground. When they're not in the terrain park, these lads like taking natural drops and riding powder in Strawberry Fields.



TOKYO boys Takahiro, Daisuke and Takuma came to Niseko for the first time together. They're all massive fans of hiking the peak and snorkelling through Niseko's famous powder.



Nicolas, Ross, Lorne, Richard and Nana MEET the locals! Being in love with Niseko's super powder snow, these folks are having "a superb day" Niseko-style after working at the recent Big Air Competition at Hirafu, by riding their favorite and no longer secret run, Niseko Village's Superstition.

Mountain style

WHO says Kutchan's not a hub of style? Posing for Powderlife as gangsters, Kutchan-born teens Daisuke and Junya know where to ride... and shop. Most of their bright wardrobes are hand-picked from the latest boarding mags and ordered from 'American', a funky boarding shop in Sapporo. Daisuke sports a perfect colour combination with Helly Hansen's green jacket and SPI Design punk pink pants. Junya styles it up with Burton's punchy comic prints on his pants. Both riders have their helmets adorned with pro-snowboarder autographs, and thrash the powder with matching Burton boards and bindings. Respect to K-Town!



YUKARI and Megumi are the charm of the Centre Four liftie crew. Both came from the west coast of Japan (Osaka and Okayama) and are back for their second season. If they had it their way, they'd be hitting Strawberry Fields forever.

Powderlife hit the town for the joint Chinese New Year / Australia Day festivities.

FLASH



Annie, Miyumi and Olivia in Splash, got down 'in the VIP' into the wee hours of Oz day..



This group of buddies celebrated Chinese New Year in blo blo's oriental-themed bar.



With eyes wide open and eyes wide shut, these two close friends partied the night away in Splash.



Hokkaido Tracks' Richard wore his patriotism on his hat, while Niseko Gourmet's Tess enjoyed a glass of Aussie chardonnay.



Emma, Lizz, Amy and Alli swapped make-up for Australian flags... and still managed to all look gorgeous.



Brooke, Hannah and Elise wore T-shirts that expressed what we're all thinking.



Seiji and Shantala worked on cross-cultural relations in Splash's VIP.



This gang hit the nail on the head, as they partied early on Australia Day at Tanuki Bar's nomihodai.



Yusuke, Megu and Kousei raised the roof at Splash on their big night out.

Saturday, February 7

* **Dancehall Night @ Yuki Bar, 9pm**
Reggae night with local DJ from Kutchan

Sunday, February 8

* **Half Note Jazz Live, 9pm**
Kenji Matsumoto (tenor sax)
No cover charge, order minimum of one drink

Friday, February 13

* **Red Bar Beats Party Volume 4, 10.30pm-4am,**
Cover charge ¥ 1,000 with one drink.
House and techno music by Koji Eguchi from Tokyo (Sound Discovery), Doggy Hero #8

* **Micka Etheridge live @Samurai Bar, 8pm**
Micka is from the Melbourne, Australia, band Symbiosis, No cover charge

Saturday, February 14

* **Half Note Jazz Live, 9pm**
Toshi Arimoto Trio (piano) with a special guest Mikio Egawa (trumpet)
No cover charge, order minimum of one drink

* **Java Dancehall @ Java Bar, 9pm**
Cover charge ¥ 1,000 with one drink.
Reggae DJ from Hakodate

* **Reggae Lounge Night @ Yuki Bar, 9pm**
Local DJ Kutchan Rockers

* **250 Yen Drink Specials! @Samurai Bar**
Four delicious drinks are 250 yen - all night!
Read Head, Chloe Mango, Splice and Toblerone.

Sunday, February 15

* **Half Note Jazz Live, 9pm**
Toshi Arimoto Trio (piano)
No cover charge, order minimum one drink

* **Niseko Utari Festival presents Natural @The Northern Fox, 6.30pm-11.30pm**
Tickets available @ Northern Fox and Mina Mina for ¥ 2,000

Monday, February 16

* **Micka Etheridge live @Samurai Bar, 8pm**
Micka is from the Melbourne, Australia, band Symbiosis, No cover charge

Tuesday, February 17

* **Reggae party @ The Brick, 10pm-late.**
3 DJs and MC. Free entry. All welcome.

Friday, February 20

* **Break Beats Night @ Yuki bar, 9pm**
Niseko-based Aussie DJ Scratch Unique

Saturday, February 21

* **DJ Maco presents @ Java Bar, 10pm**
Cover charge ¥ 1,000 with one drink.



Got an event on between February 21 and March 6? Get it on this page in the next edition of Powderlife - input it in to the events page on our website by March 4.
2月21日から3月6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、ニカ国語(英語・日本語)で3月4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/

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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・カイルムセンター 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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Higashiyama-onsen, Niseko-cho, Abuta-gun,
Hokkaido, 048-1592 Japan
Tel: 0136-44-1111 Fax: 0136-44-3224
hilton.co.jp hilton.com hilton.com/worldwideresorts

January 25-March 31, 2009

* **Kanronomori Steak Fair, 5pm-9pm**
Unleash your taste buds on five different kinds of meat: Niseko duck, Aussie beef, Japanese beef, Tokachi beef and chicken leg. Cost : ¥ 1350
For more information, please contact 0136-58-3800
1月25日~3月31日
冬期限定ステーキフェア@甘露の森ニセコあい鴨、国産牛、オーストラリア牛、十勝牛ハンバーグ、骨付きチキンの5種類のメニュー。
時間: 5pm - 9pm 料金: ¥ 1350~
詳細は0136-58-3800まで

Saturday, February 7

* **Japanese Cultural Tour in Kutchan, 3-6pm**
Indulge yourself in a bit of history over a cup of tea...or sake.
Tea ceremony, natural history museum, Niseko Sake Brewery. Bus leaves in front of Seicomart. Cost : ¥ 1000
For more information, please contact 0136-23-0222
Reservation required.
2月7日(土)
倶知安カルチャーツアー
お茶会、風土館、ニセコ酒造など倶知安町の楽しいスポットを探索するツアー。時間: 3pm - 6pm 料金: ¥ 1000
送迎バスサービス有り(セイコマート前発着) 要予約: 詳細は0136-23-0222まで

Sunday, February 8

* **Taiko drum performance, 3.30-4pm**
Experience tradition with a Taiko beat. Free traditional Japanese drum performances every Sunday outside of Hokkaido Tracks office (next to Seicomart).
2月8日(日)
太鼓演奏会
地元太鼓グループによる生演奏を温かい甘酒と一緒にどうぞ!
時間: 3:30pm
場所: 北海道トラックスオフィス前(セイコマート横)

Saturday, February 11, 18, 25

* **The return of Niseko Pizza staff nights**
The Niseko staff, half price pizza night returns. Every Wednesday in February and March come to Niseko Pizza from

6 pm for half price Pizza. Sing for you supper! Every Wednesday the best karaoke performer will have their pizza for free.
ニセコスタッフのピザディスカウントナイトニセコに勤めているすべてのスタッフの方のみ、半額でピザを食べられる夜がやってきました!
2月と3月の毎週水曜日の6時からニセコピザでピザが半額になります。また、毎週水曜日、カラオケで優秀なパフォーマーの方にはピザをただで差し上げます!

Saturday, February 14

* **Singing contest @ Hanazono, 1pm**
Grab the mic and pick from the song list for your chance to win Roxy/Quiksilver Goggles, beanies, Niseko badges, fleece jackets and K2 T-shirts. Live music
For more information, please visit www.skihanazono.com
2月14日(土)
歌コンテスト@花園
ライブミュージックと一緒に自慢の歌を披露しよう!勝者にはロキシー、クイックシルバーの洋服などの賞品有り
時間: 1pmから詳細は下記のサイトにて www.skihanazono.com

* **Japanese Cultural Tour in Kutchan, 3-6pm**

Indulge yourself in a bit of history over a cup of tea...or sake. Tea ceremony, natural history museum, Niseko Sake Brewery. Bus leaves in front of Seicomart. Cost : ¥ 1000
For more information, please contact 0136-23-0222
Reservation required.
2月14日(土)
倶知安カルチャーツアー
お茶会、風土館、ニセコ酒造など倶知安町の楽しいスポットを探索するツアー。時間: 3pm - 6pm 料金: ¥ 1000
送迎バスサービス有り(セイコマート前発着) 要予約: 詳細は0136-23-0222まで

* **Valentine's Day special, 10am-8pm**

(last order at 7:30 pm) Any plans for Valentine's Day? Graubünden offers a special sandwich and cake menu for you and that special someone. Sandwich with soup for ¥ 900, cake with coffee or tea for ¥ 700.

in the loop

For more information, please contact 0136-23-3371.
2月14日(土)
バレンタインスペシャル@グラウビュンデン ロマンチックなバレンタインデートはこれで決まり!
時間: 10am - 8pm(ラストオーダー: 7:30 pm) 料金: サンドイッチとスープ ¥ 900、ケーキとドリンク(コーヒー又は紅茶) ¥ 700
詳細は0136-23-3371まで

* **Nordic Ski Walk, 8.30am-10am,**

meet in front of Kutchan Town Gym
Enjoy the view of Mt. Yotei while meeting local snow enthusiasts!
For more information, please contact Mr. Okamoto at 0136-23-3371.
2月14日(土)
ノルディックウォーキング
地元のスキーヤーと共に雄大な羊蹄山を望みながらノルディックスキーに挑戦しよう。
時間: 8:30am - 10am
集合場所: 倶知安町総合体育館前
詳細は0136-23-3371(岡本)まで。

Sunday, February 15

* **Rail Jam Comp # 2, noon-6pm**

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.
2月15日(日)
アプレバーレイルジャム大会
ライダーなら誰でも大歓迎! エントリーシートはバーにて配布。
大会当日はアプレバーでジャンプとドリンクを楽しもう!
時間: 12:00pm - 6:00pm

* **Taiko drum performance, 3.30-4pm**

Experience tradition with a Taiko beat. Free traditional Japanese drum performances every Sunday outside of Hokkaido Tracks office (next to Seicomart).
2月15日(日)
太鼓演奏会
地元太鼓グループによる生演奏を温かい甘酒と一緒にどうぞ!
時間: 3:30pm
場所: 北海道トラックスオフィス前(セイコマート横)

Saturday, February 21 - Sunday, February 22

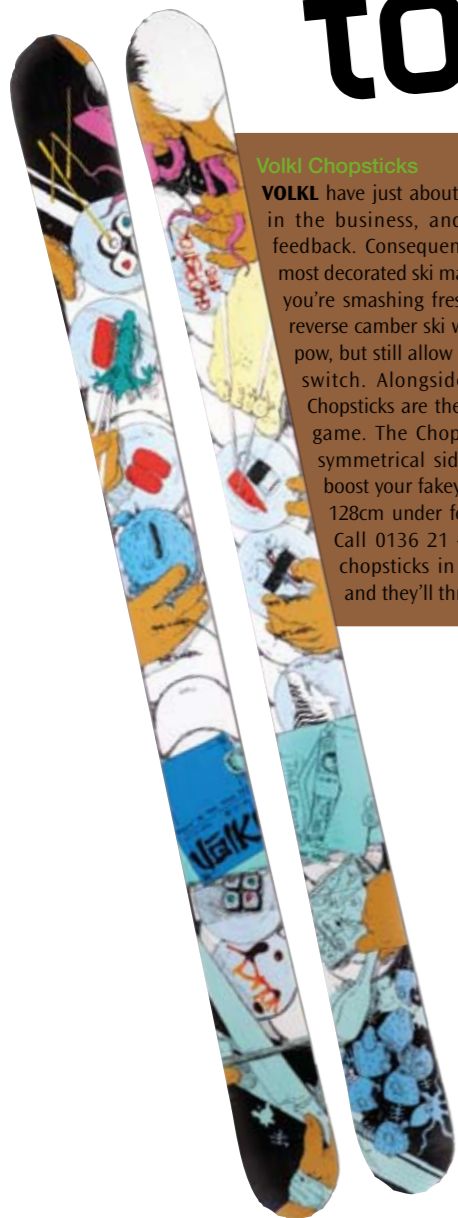
* **Yukitopia Festival, 9.30-8pm**
Biggest snow festival in Kutchan. Twice as many events as last season. Snowman making, food stands, paintball, and much more!
Where: Kutchan Central Park, Niseko Grand Hirafu
For more information, please visit www.town.kutchan.hokkaido.jp
See p46 of this issue for more information
2月21日(土)、22日(日)
雪トピアフェスティバル
名物イベントに多数の新しいイベントを加えてさらにパワーアップ!
倶知安町最大の冬の祭典を皆で盛り上げよう。
時間: 9:30 - 8pm
場所: 倶知安町中央公園、ヒラフスキー場
詳細は下記のサイトにて。
www.town.kutchan.hokkaido.jp

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www.powderlife.com/niseko/events
Got an event on between February 21 and March 6? Get it on this page in the next edition of Powderlife - input it in to the events page on our website by March 4.
www.powderlife.com/niseko/events

Happy Hour 5pm ~ 6pm
All drinks ¥100 off
JAM cafe bar 5pm~2am
tel: 0136-23-0700

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0136-22-2108 (Niseko office)
Or visit our website at:
www.skybus-jp.com

Pwder tools



Volkl Chopsticks

VOLKL have just about the biggest team of test skiers in the business, and they listen to their skiers' feedback. Consequently, Volkl are now one of the most decorated ski manufacturers in the world. When you're smashing fresh lines after a 50cm dump, a reverse camber ski will allow you to fly through the pow, but still allow you to jib off anything and ride switch. Alongside K2's Hell Bents, the Volkl Chopsticks are the leaders in the reverse camber game. The Chopsticks pack a full wood core, symmetrical side cut, a low profile rocker to boost your fakey take offs and a boasts a meaty 128cm under foot. Available from Larry Adler. Call 0136 21 4050. Buy the Volkl branded chopsticks in the ski wrapping for ¥85,000 and they'll throw in the skis for free.

Nitro Gun Powderstick

"**I AM Shark Man. I am Hungry.**" So says the opening line of the classic Car Danchi 2 DVD, overlaid on a shot of a diminutive Japanese shredder ripping some incredible turns in deep powder on one of the notorious Nitro Guns. If this 181cm deck is not too long for him then it's not too long for you either. This board also graces the DVD cover of Car Danchi 3. Just the look of it screams of deep, deep snow. If you think you've got an all-mountain board that will perform as well riding switch in the Stomping Ground as it does on extra deep days in the back bowl, you're wrong – there's no such thing. Genuine Nisekophiles should be packing a directional powderstick, and Nitro's is one of the best. The massive swallow tail and signature shark's mouth base graphic will make sure you turn heads in the lift queues but this board is more than just for show. The nose will rise above the lightest and deepest powder and it is built with plenty of flex so you can really whip your turns, and bend it to fit it in the Gondola. Available from Victoria Sports in Kanda, Tokyo ¥78,000

Haglofs Couloir Jacket

MOST mountain clothing labels make an instant statement about their wearer. Burton: "I'm a boarder"; Spyder: "I'm a skier"; Billabong: "I'm more of a surfer". Wearing Haglofs just says "I know my stuff". This Swedish brand is one of my favourites and in Northern Europe the mountain-hardened locals won't be seen in anything else. Built from Gore-Tex soft shell fabric, the Couloir is 100% waterproof, and, due to its fleece backer, warmer than most Gore-Tex shells on the market. It has two hand-warmer pockets and a useful chest pocket to hide essentials, and the big helmet-compatible hood will shield you from Siberia's winds. It has big cuffs to fit over gloves and mittens and an internal snow skirt that clips onto your pants, so you'll leave the powder in the bowls where it belongs instead of taking it home in your pants. Available from Niseko 343 Call: 0136 23 0343. ¥73,500. Quality costs.



Hotronic M4 Foot Warmer

LOVE skiing but hate cold feet? You can spend all your dough on flash skis, boards, pants and thermals, but if your toes are frozen and about to fall off you're unlikely to be having much fun. Hotronic is the original all-day battery powered foot-warmer and they've been constantly improving their product since launching 15 years ago. A rechargeable battery back clips onto the back of your boots and is wired to a paper thin electrode that sits under the ball of your foot. The electrode heats up from 1-4 depending on your needs, and a fully charged battery provides between three to 21 hours of power, depending on the level of heating required. Your toes need never be cold again. The M4 is their top of the line unit and it has been used on a number of Mt Everest summits, so it should get you to the top of Mt Annapuri or Yotei easy enough. Available from Larry Adler Call 0136 21 4050. Now on special for ¥28,000



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Hirafu – 8.30am – 8.30pm
T 0136 21 6633
(200m up the hill from the intersection)





LIFTIE KIYO



GROOMER Koutaro



Patrol-AIBON

Name Kiyotaka Sakiyama
Age 33 **Hometown** Okinawa
How long have you lived here? about 3 weeks **So you like powder?** Love it. **Ski/board?** Snowboarder **How long have you been skiing for?** 4years
Why did you come to Niseko? I want to see snow
What did you do in summer time? Stayed in Middle East and South America
What languages do you speak? Japanese and little English
Trips overseas? Yes
Where do you want to go next? Africa and South America
Favourite
Colour prime colours
Brand Solomon
Food Meat and fish **Restaurant** 308, tower beer is the best!
Bar Abucha **Onsen** Norikura Kougou **Onsen** (Nagano) **Ski run** Strawberry fields **Where else do you want to go skiing overseas?** Whistler, Canada
How long will you be in Niseko? till the season ends **What does niseko need?** net café and Macdonald **Niseko secret?** The secret garden(Hanazono) club **What's your life philosophy?** go with the flow

名前 サキヤマ キヨタカ
年齢 33 **出身地** 沖縄県
ニセコに来てどのくらいですか? 約3週間 **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? スノーボード **ボード歴** 4年
なぜニセコに来たのですか? 雪が見たかったから。
夏には何をしましたか? 中東と南米にいました。(世界1周旅行)
話す言語は? 日本語、英語少々
海外には行った事ありますか? はい **次はどこに行きたいですか?** アフリカと南米
好きな…色は? 原色(青、赤、緑)
ブランドは? サロモン
食べ物? 肉と魚介類
レストランは? 308のタワービール最高!
バーは? 阿武茶
温泉は? のりくら高原温泉(長野)
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? ウィスラー、カナダ
ニセコにはどのくらいいる予定ですか? シーズン終了まで
ニセコに今無い物で、必要だと思うものは? ネットカフェとマック
ニセコの秘密は? 秘密の花園クラブがあるらしい。
あなたの人生観は? なんくるないさー。(どうにかなるさ)

Name Ai Tanaka **age** 30 **Hometown** Nagano
Time in Niseko 1month **do you like powder?** Yes, very much. **Ski/board?** Ski **How long have you been skiing for?** 26years
Why did you come to Niseko? Friends recommendation
What did you do in summer time? Garden maintenance, blueberry farm
What languages do you speak? Japanese **Trips overseas?** Yes, France and Hong Kong **Where do you want to go next?** Beautiful place
Favourite
Colour blue
Brand Blue berry farm
Food anything but celery **Restaurant** please tell me
Bar please take me **Onsen** Local onsens
Ski run still exploring
Where else do you want to go skiing overseas? anywhere
How long will be in Niseko? until Spring **What does niseko need?** Macdonalds
Niseko secret? Patrol, Character festival
What's your life philosophy? Antenna

名前 タナカ アイ
年齢 30 **出身地** 長野県
ニセコに来てどのくらいですか? 1ヶ月 **パウダースノーは好きですか?** はい、とっても。
スキーヤー?スノーボーダー? スキーヤー **スキー歴** 26年
なぜニセコに来たのですか? 人と人の繋がりがあって導いていただきました。
夏には何をしましたか? 造園、ブルーベリーファーム
話す言語は? 日本語
海外には行った事ありますか? はい、フランスと、香港
次はどこに行きたいですか? きれいな所
好きな…色は? 藍色
ブランドは? BLUE BERRY FARM
食べ物? セロリ以外
レストランは? 教えてください。
バーは? 連れて行ってください。
温泉は? 地元の温泉
コースは? ニセコについてはまだ調査段階 **海外のスキー場で一度行ってみたいスキー場は?** どこにでも行ってみたい。
ニセコにはどのくらいいる予定ですか? 春まで
ニセコに今無い物で、必要だと思うものは? マクドナルド
ニセコの秘密は? パトロール、キャラクター祭
あなたの人生観は? アンテナ

Niseko Toyru

YUTAKA Takanashi came to Niseko in 1992 as a 20-year-old who had just spent a year in nearby Rusutsu, and got hooked on Niseko's size after visiting for a day. He started skiing before switching to snowboarding. He loved the feel of riding through powder but felt the urge to be different and realised no one was telemarking here. He took to it like a hound to powder and ended up competing on the world circuit. These days he's still skiing hard and is one of Grand Hirafu Resort's poster boys. Six years ago he opened Toyru ski store in Hirafu, specialising in telemark gear and back country equipment. Toyru is just near the Hirafu gondola.

ニセコトイル

高梨穂さんは、留寿都のそばで1年を過ごした後、1992年20歳のときに、ニセコに来て、1日でニセコの魅力に魅了されました。スキーでパウダーを滑るのは大好きだったのですが、あるとき別の衝動に駆られ、誰もテレマークスキーをしていないことに気づきました。テレマークでパウダーを滑るのに夢中になり、ついには世界のサーキットに出場し、今日では、グランヒラフリゾートのポスターを飾る一人になっています。6年前にニセコに、Toyruスキーショップをオープンさせました。ニセコの山を滑る時に必要な道具を取り揃えてあります。Toyruはヒラフ Gondolaのそばにあります。



Nupuri Café and Restaurant

INSIDE Niseko Town's classic European-style train station is a classic little European-style coffee shop. Owner Tamotsu Matsuda was born in the area became a professional skier in his late teens. He travelled the world competing, and while in Europe became interested in its café culture. He decided when he settled down he would one day have his own café. After retiring from the ski circuit he travelled Japan with his wife, living out of a camper van, looking for the perfect place to call home. At the end of it all, they ended up right back where they started in Niseko and have been here ever since. To meet a great local character and eat some excellent local food and coffee, jump in a taxi and head for 'Niseko Eki'. Closed Wednesdays.

茶房ヌプリ

ヨーロッパ風の建物でとてもかわいらしいと評判のニセコ駅の中に茶房ヌプリがあります。落ち着いた雰囲気の内装は観葉植物と、アンティークの家具や骨董品が並んでいます。オーナーの松田保さんは地元で生まれ、スキーの選手として活躍しました。遠征でヨーロッパに行ったときにカフェ文化に触れ、とても強く印象に残ったそうです。選手生活を退いた後、奥様とキャンピングカーで日本各地を旅し、定住の地を探したところ、ニセコにたどり着いたそうです。そんなオーナーはたくさんの趣味を持っています。コーヒーと地元素材を使った料理が自慢です。定休日水曜日。

Pension Berg

RUNNING pensions runs in the family for Pension Berg owner Miwa Hirokawa. Miwa-san was born in Sapporo and later moved with her family to Sounkyo – a famous hot spring resort below Mt Kurodake in central Hokkaido – to run a pension there, before moving to Niseko in 1990 and opening Pension Berg in the centre of Hirafu. After she finished high school she moved to Tokyo and studied to become a professional koto (a traditional Japanese stringed musical instrument) player. She later moved back to Niseko to take over the pension from her family. She and her husband now have three kids and continue to run the pension.

ペンション ベルグ

家族経営のペンションベルグを切り盛りするのはオーナーの廣川美和さんです。美和さんは札幌生まれ、家族が経営する層雲峡のペンションで育ちました。層雲峡は道央に位置し、温泉と黒岳が有名なところ。1990年から、冬は家族でニセコに移り、ヒラフ坂の真ん中に位置する、ペンションベルグの経営をしています。高校卒業後、琴の勉強をするために東京に上京した後、ニセコにもどりペンションのオーナーとなりました。美和さんと、真彦さんと3人の子供たちのあたたかい雰囲気いっぱいのペンションはお客様に大人気です。http://big-hokkaido.com/berg/menu.htm



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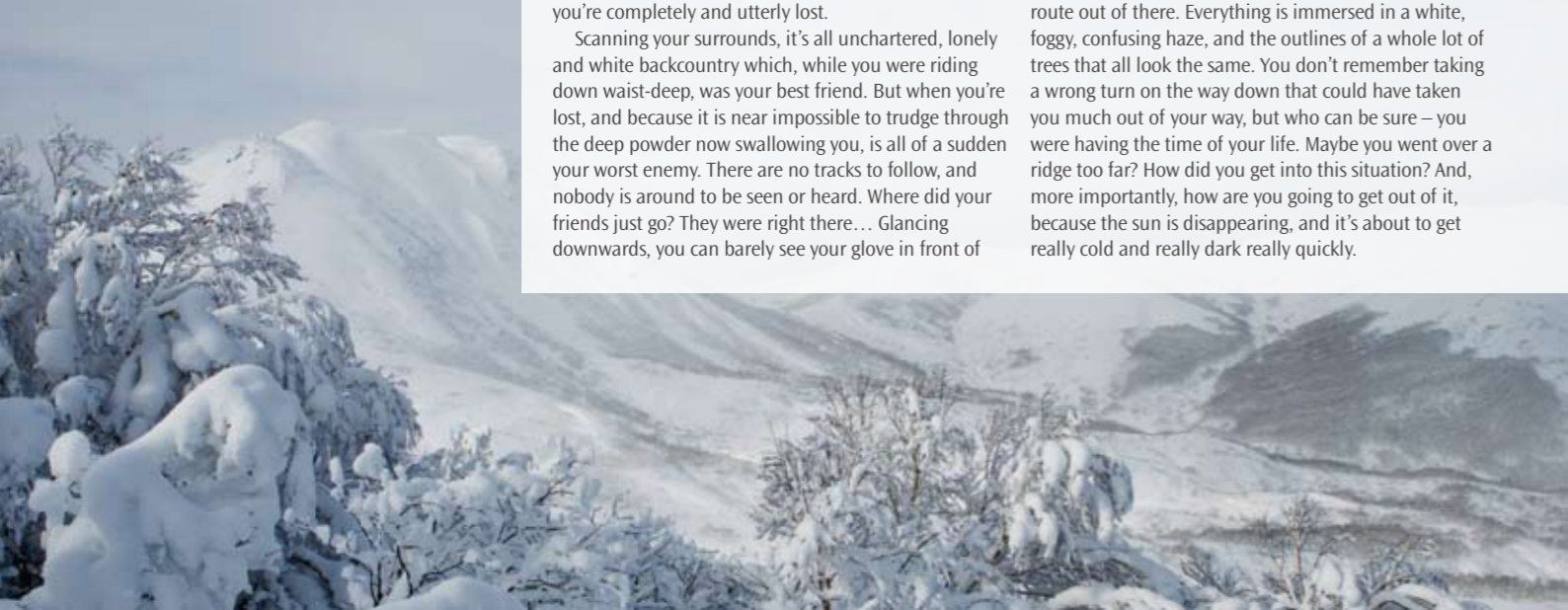
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Lost: the dark side of Niseko's backcountry

By Matthew Thomas



WHITE-OUT... In a matter of minutes you can easily become lost in Niseko's backcountry

ONE minute you're enjoying the run of your life, the next you're completely and utterly lost.

Scanning your surrounds, it's all uncharted, lonely and white backcountry which, while you were riding down waist-deep, was your best friend. But when you're lost, and because it is near impossible to trudge through the deep powder now swallowing you, is all of a sudden your worst enemy. There are no tracks to follow, and nobody is around to be seen or heard. Where did your friends just go? They were right there... Glancing downwards, you can barely see your glove in front of

your face, let alone the way you just came down, or a route out of there. Everything is immersed in a white, foggy, confusing haze, and the outlines of a whole lot of trees that all look the same. You don't remember taking a wrong turn on the way down that could have taken you much out of your way, but who can be sure – you were having the time of your life. Maybe you went over a ridge too far? How did you get into this situation? And, more importantly, how are you going to get out of it, because the sun is disappearing, and it's about to get really cold and really dark really quickly.

Many people have experienced this problem when out in the backcountry, and it's easy to get yourself scared – even if you're not really that lost, and just a little further off the piste than perhaps you should be. Something about being out there by yourself tends to play tricks on your mind. Many tourists and locals are forever coming back from the hill with sketchy stories of getting themselves into unsavoury situations, and having to hike themselves out of it. Long walk-outs can be a fact of life here, or any resort. Niseko is infamous for its white-out conditions, which don't make things any easier. With Niseko's open, liberal backcountry policy, it's quite easy to drop yourself into a dire situation. It only really takes one bad decision, poorly made a little later in the day, and you may need to spend several hours by yourself in the bitter cold, with only your thoughts and worries to keep you company. You may even be facing the prospect of spending an entire night in the cold. So, it's time to make a decision – what should you do?

Mobile phone – in Japan, mobile phone coverage is generally pretty good. But if you are headed into more remote areas you may consider taking a satellite phone. As a lighter and cheaper alternative, at the very least let someone know where you are going and when you plan to be back. And don't forget to keep your phone charged!

Extra warm clothes – a down coat is the ideal extra layer that you want in the backcountry. Down offers the best thermal properties to keep you warm, even when you are not moving, is relatively light for the benefit it offers and packs nice and small to fit in your pack.

Food and water - cold weather and hard work takes a lot out of your body. Make sure you stay hydrated and well-fed throughout the day.

Emergency survival kit - waterproof matches, lighter, candles and emergency blankets are essential. You can also put in instant heat packs, signal mirror, flares and firestarters.

2. Moderate your body temperature – try to avoid sweating and stay warm. The easiest way to stay comfortable is to regularly adjust your layers to keep your body temperature even. A common mistake is to start hiking with all your warm clothes on, then wait until you are overheating before removing your top layers. This means that your important skin layers are wet and cold from sweat early in the day. When you start hiking, remove a couple of layers before you start walking. When you decide to take a break, quickly add extra layers before you get cold. It's much easier to stay warm rather than try to get warm.

3. Never go into the backcountry alone – two people working together will greatly increase the chance of each other surviving.

4. Consider your options. If you do get lost, calmly evaluate your situation and options. **Do you know where you are?** Are there any reference points you can see? Where was the last place that you did know where you were? Is there a nearby high point that would get you a better view of your surroundings? Or are you stuck in a white-out with next to no visibility?

Can you retrace your steps following your tracks

back to more familiar ground, or is the wind blowing them away?

What time is it? Do you have much daylight left or is night time approaching? As darkness falls, so will the temperature and visibility, compounding your predicament.

Consider if it is possible to call in a rescue with your phone. Of course you will need to describe your location, and if the weather is extremely poor, then rescue attempts may be futile.

5. Pick a good location to wait it out. If you are totally lost, rescue is impossible, the weather is getting worse and you see no choice other than to wait out the night or the storm, then you need to start thinking about the best place to hole up for the night. Your first consideration should be to protect yourself from the wind and the elements. If you are in the alpine and cannot descend below the tree line safely (if visibility is extremely poor you don't want to run the risk of falling off of a cliff or cornice), then try to find some sort of wind protection behind rocks or a terrain feature, such as a ridge line. You also need to consider if you are in avalanche terrain and need to get into a safer place. Ideally, if you get below the tree line, you will have better protection from the elements, as well as access to wood for a fire.

6. Get home. If you've made it through the night and the storm has subsided enough that you can see where you're going, you need to calmly consider your next move. Do you have contact with the outside world (mobile/satellite phone) and the ability to get help? Or can you now see enough to determine what direction you need to go to get out? If you decide to start moving again, make sure to take note of whatever reference points you have available and keep track of your direction. Carefully consider what you're objective is before starting out: are you heading to a higher location in search of mobile phone reception or a better view of your surroundings, or are you heading down a valley in hopes of finding a road or trail to take you home?

Pick up a copy of the next Powderlife for Andrew's handy tips on how to build a snowcave.

You're lucky that decision is not all up to you. *Powderlife* spoke with experienced Black Diamond Lodge tour guide and certified Canadian Avalanche Association guide, Andrew Spragg, who offered some helpful tips for surviving being lost in the backcountry...

1. Of course, carry the three essential backcountry tools: an avalanche beacon, probe and shovel. But other items may come in handy: **Headlamp** – in winter, the days are short and it's easy enough to run out of daylight and end up returning in the dark. **Spare batteries** – for your headlamp, transceiver and radio. **First aid kit** – no explanation needed. **Cam strap/ski straps** – these can come through in a pinch to resolve a number of problems. For example, if your skin glue gets too wet through the day and will no longer stick to your skis, you can use straps to attach the skins. For snowboarders, they can be used in place of a broken binding or snowshoe strap. **Tools** – basic set that will allow you to repair your bindings or other gear that may break over the course of your day.

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Shiretoko Ice Floes

By Greg Lund



ICEY PERCH... native birds are attracted to the ice floes to feed.

THE Japanese archipelago was once a part of the Asian mainland. The connecting bits have vanished over countless millions of years, but if you look to the north of Hokkaido, the island of Sakhalin – whose northern tip is just off the coast of Siberia – stretches to the south to fall just short of Wakkanai, Japan's northernmost town.

This land bridge of the past brought people, animals and many of the cultural influences that shaped Hokkaido's early history. The hard physical connectives have long since gone, but other links between Hokkaido and the mainland remain strong, particularly in the depths of the region's long, cold winters.

The Amur River, which forms the boundary between Russian Siberia and north-eastern China, empties a huge volume of nutrient-rich fresh water into the northern end of the Sea of Okhotsk, near the island of Sakhalin. This fresh water rapidly freezes in the open ocean, and is driven more than 1000km by the annual north-west monsoon – the same wind that brings Niseko its fabled powder snow – out across the Okhotsk Sea into the north Pacific Ocean.

The southern edge of this vast expanse of drifting sea ice brushes past the top edge of Hokkaido until it hits the Shiretoko Peninsula, a long, thin, dagger-like projection of forest-clad basalt rock on the far north-eastern coast, typically from around the end of January. It remains snagged there for more than a month, wrapping around the tip of the peninsula and pressing up against the Pacific coastline as well. The resulting arctic-like spectacle of white pack ice, extending from the beaches and cliffs on both sides of the peninsula right out to the horizon, is one of the more dramatic sights visitors to Hokkaido can see. It is, in fact, unique in the world at such low latitudes.

The ice is extraordinarily rugged, pushed constantly by the wind against the unyielding basalt cliffs, and compressed and driven upwards into amazing, fantastically shaped outcrops.

In addition to simply marvelling at this panorama from the peninsula, which is now officially on UNESCO's list of World Natural Heritage sites, visitors to the area in winter can actually experience getting out amongst the ice floes in a number of ways.

The easiest is to take a ride on an icebreaker cruise boat out of the port of Abashiri. Large and comfortable and very stable, these boats carry

several hundred passengers at a time on a genuinely exciting trip out through the ice, crashing through the metres-thick cover with reinforced hulls and powerful diesel engines. All to an amazing accompaniment of creaking, groaning, swishing and gurgling, and the sounds of fractured ice rasping down the length of the hull. And the cries of an enormous cloud of sea birds, all wheeling and diving in the boat's wake to take advantage of the rich food opportunities opened up by the breaking of the ice.

However, a more adventurous approach is to hire an experienced guide to take a trek out onto the

"The arctic-like spectacle of white pack ice, extending from the beaches and cliffs on both sides of the peninsula right out to the horizon, is one of the more dramatic sights visitors to Hokkaido can see."

PHOTOGRAPHER'S DREAM... There's plenty to be seen in, on and above the water.



heaving mass and look back at the coast from one of the more unusual vantage points to be found anywhere in the world. A starting point is the town of Utoro, about halfway out along the peninsula on the inner side. A walk out on the ice there leads around rocky headlands to see frozen waterfalls that plunge from cliff tops into the sea, to marvel at the diversity of wildlife – from the deer that pick at sparse foliage in precarious positions on cliff sides, to the seals that travel with the ice from Siberia, and the predators that hunt them.

On many of the raised outcrops, and wheeling in the sky above, you can see the beautiful Owashi, or Stellar's sea eagles – magnificent black and white feathered creatures with two-metre wingspans and bright yellow hooked beaks and fierce eyes that miss nothing that moves.

The guide who led our expedition issued us all with protective dry suits and boots, and himself dragged a large inflatable raft – a very necessary precaution against sudden rifts, that in seconds can leave wide expanses of open water rimmed by greenish-blue tinged sheer ice walls, where beforehand there had been only a jagged and seemingly solid way ahead. It should be stressed that this is not an activity that should be contemplated

without very experienced local leadership.

Even more adventurous types can elect to dive under the ice, and we came upon one such group, similarly clad in warm dry suits, who had found a small opening, dropped a line through it to the bottom, and were taking assisted dives to view the ice, and the myriad of marine creatures that thrive around it – from below.

A day out on the ice – or under it – is exhilarating and very rewarding, but totally exhausting, and it pays to be ski-fit to tackle it. Fortunately, Utoro has a number of very comfortable small hotels and inns, where a soak in the outdoor hot spring with a flask of hot sake or a bottle of wine can bring the lucky bather the sound of the sound of the Shimabukuro (Blakiston's fish owl) on its nightly hunt. The Shimabukuro is another beautiful bird that is, unfortunately, close to extinction. In recent years, however, it appears to be responding to serious conservation measures to replace its breeding habitat artificially, and more sightings – and nocturnal bird calls – are being registered over a much wider area. They are very large birds, with some standing 70cm tall, and in winter wear a spectacular snowy white plumage.

❄️ Continued over page



Photo: Yasuhiro Yamamoto



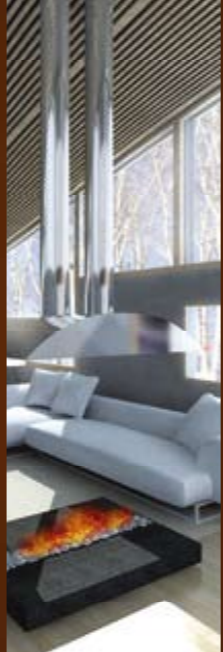




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MAJESTIC VIEW.. The ice floes are dwarfed by giant mountain ranges.

❄️ From previous page

One of our favourite haunts in Utoro is the Iruka (Dolphin) Hotel, perched right on the shoreline at the entrance to the town, and overlooking a wide expanse of ocean. Iruka is owned by Yasuhiro Yamamoto, a wildlife photographer who not only likes to share a drink and great stories about the peninsula at night, but also knows better than most how to make the most of your Shiretoko adventure.

In the warmer months, he operates a cruise boat from which we have had stunning bear-watching experiences along the peninsula's beaches in late summer and early autumn, just as the annual salmon run gets under way. But even in the depths of winter, he can point you to a small minshuku (guest house) by a stream in a narrow river valley where sightings of the owl are (almost) guaranteed.

Shiretoko also boasts the largest concentration of Hokkaido brown bears on the entire island, but in winter, they are all hibernating in the rugged mountains that dominate the landscape. Deer are prevalent, and indeed, because they are protected in the national park, are almost in plague proportions, and when food is scarce in winter, are now killing off trees in the pristine forests by eating the bark.

In addition to being a wonderful tourist spectacle, the annual ice floe phenomenon brings enormous wealth to the Shiretoko Peninsula and surrounding regions. There are waterborne nutrients from the

Amur River's journey through Siberia, locked up in the ice, together with plankton and algae on the under surfaces, which are released in the seas off the northern Hokkaido coast as the floes melt to feed a thriving fishing industry.

Sadly, this spectacular winter event appears to be falling victim to the predations of global warming. Evidence being compiled by ice floe watchers points to a steady decrease in the amount of ice and consequent negative economic impact on the region. The Okhotsk Sea Ice Museum of Hokkaido, in the nearby town of Mombetsu, says sea temperatures have raised almost one degree Celsius over the past century, and the amount of drift ice has shrunk by as much as 40 per cent.

Local old-timers suggest that back in 'the good old days' when they were children, the ice floes were 'as high as mountains'...

Statistically, it can be seen that between 1970 and 2000, Abashiri was locked in by ice floes for an average of 87 days a year, and on at least two occasions this extended to over 100 days. Between 2004 and 2007, this had declined to 65 days a year, with nothing exceeding 100 in the past two decades.

Local old-timers suggest that back in 'the good old days' when they were children, the ice floes were 'as high as mountains', instead of the thin cover seen today. And when you look now at the cliffs rising sheer out of the ocean, it is indeed possible to see the gouges and striations marking old ice activity on the rock faces many, many metres above where today's floes end.

The captains of the icebreakers will tell you that where once the floes were there to be ploughed through until as late as May, now they sometimes have to go looking for good, solid areas of ice to entertain passengers even as early as late February.

All this suggests that there is no better time to start planning a side tour to Shiretoko from Niseko soon. This year would be a good time to start, or make sure it is part of your plans for next year. There are flights from Chitose to Memanbetsu, with a bus ride to the peninsula, or train services to Abashiri and bus connections from there.

Information about the Iruka Hotel can be found online in English at <http://www.iruka-hotel.com/en/index.html>

(And by the way, there is a small local ski slope close by, so you can even take your skis or boards along for the trip).



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Photo: Yasuhiro Yamamoto

FEATHERED FRENZY... A boat tour attracts some of the local wildlife.





POWDER POSTER

rider Tim Myers, Niseko Backcountry photo Glen Claydon

A THOUSAND WORDS...



AIR TIME ... a mystery boarder hangs high and proud. Photo: Jahl Marshall.



HIGH-FIVE ... credit where credit's due for the sheer size of Ruffy's spray. Photo: Niseko Photography



WAIST-DEEP... a unique view from behind of Nick 'Parko' Parkinson dominating Hanazono's backcountry. Photo: Glen Claydon.



BLUE STREAK ... with no tracks ahead, dynamo skier Kelly MacEwan writes her own lines. Photo: Niseko Photography.



UNTRACKED ... skier Lee takes makes the most of a crystal-clear bluebird in Niseko. Photo: Jahl Marshall



EYE ON THE PRIZE ... while some take the lift up, skier Eske takes advantage of early first tracks. Photo: Jahl Marshall.



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Sapporo Snow Festival

By Derek Chamberlain



ICE HOUSE... The Sapporo Snow Festival is home to some of the finest ice carvings in the world

The Sapporo Snow Festival is Japan's biggest winter event and one of the most popular Japanese festivals both in Japan and internationally.

AROUND two million visitors flock to Sapporo every February for the week-long Sapporo Snow Festival.

This year's event, held from February 5-11, is the 60th, and is shaping up to be one of the best yet. There are several celebratory events scheduled, including an Anniversary Fiesta in Sapporo Dome on January 31, and the Happy Candle Night on February 7, when 7000 candles will be used to light up Odori Park like a giant birthday cake. All the other lights in Odori will be turned off from 4pm until 4.30pm on the February 7 to promote ecological awareness and, of course, to show the candles in their best light.

Unlike most festivals in Japan, which are usually religious and/or cultural celebrations, the Sapporo Snow Festival is an entirely secular celebration of winter and winter activities, with a large helping of art festival thrown in. Odori and Susukino, the two central sites, have been until quite recently almost entirely about the sculptures. Over the past few years, however, Odori has been returning to its roots by making its site

more interactive with slides, concerts, a skating rink, live shows and a snow maze built into the front of one of the stages. The third site, which is moving this year to Tsudomu, will continue the tradition the third site has always maintained, to be a winter fun-park for children of all ages. Snow golf, snow rafting, tube slides, cross-country skiing, skating, and snowshoe hiking names only a few of the activities available at the Tsudomu site.

The Sapporo Snow Festival follows traditions that go back to the first years of Japanese settlement in Hokkaido. The Sapporo Snow Festival has been an annual event since 1950, when a group of high school students made the first snow sculptures in Odori Park and provided the spark around which the first festival coalesced. At that first festival there were only six sculptures but there were dog sled races, American-style square dances and other winter activities and contests. That first year, 50,000 people attended out of a population of just 300,000. Last year, there were

290 snow and ice sculptures in three locations about Sapporo and 2,159,000 visitors. In 1955 Japan's newly created Ground Self-Defence Forces began participating in the festival, trucking in tons of snow and building or preparing the large sculptures that are such a prominent feature. The largest sculpture ever built was the 25m-high statue of Gulliver, which sat outside the entrance to the venue for the 13th Winter Olympics in 1972.

It was at the Sapporo Olympic Games, with international media focussed upon Sapporo, that the snow festival gained international attention. It might well have been the spirit of the games that inspired the Snow Festival Committee to create the International Snow Sculpting Contest, which started in 1974. Over 20 different countries have participated in the event at one time or another. Most of the teams are either national teams or teams from Sapporo's sister cities. This year, teams from Indonesia, China, Finland, Hong Kong, Korea, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Portland, Singapore, Sweden, Thailand and the USA will be competing. Most of these teams are selected and sent by their country, and the event has as much to do with tourism advertising as it does snow sculpting, but they have produced some amazing art work over the years. Last year's winners were Thailand, Hong Kong and Japan. The sculptures created for the 36th



International Snow Sculpting Competition will be on display at West 11.

Over the past 60 years feature sculptures have been made depicting landmark buildings from countries all around the world. The Sydney Opera House, London's St Paul's Cathedral, Rome's Trevi Fountain, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, Seoul's Kwang-Hwa-Mun, Egypt's temple at Abu Simbel, and the Brussels' Stock Exchange to name a few. This year, the feature sculptures are the Old Hakodate Court Building on West 5, Seoul's Nandaimon Gate on West 7, and Tokugawa Ieyasu's Castle Hamamatsujou on West 8. Sculptures representing famous people or characters from books, TV programs or movies are also popular, as are scenes depicting major events of the previous year. All of these feature sculptures are first done in scale models from which the sculptors can identify problem areas and which they use as blueprints for the actual build. Many of these models are now on display at the Sapporo Snow Festival Museum, located at the Hitsujigaoka Observation Hill.

One of the most amazing aspects of the festival is the Citizen's Gallery, where every year so many groups apply to participate that the organising committee holds a lottery to see who will be given space for their designs. These groups can, and do, include anyone aged about 12 years old and up. This year there will be 112 sculptures in the Citizens' Gallery at West 12. One of the other features that bears mentioning is the West 6 Hokkaido Winter Food Festa, where there will be dozens of shops selling local cuisine like giant crab, ramen, gengisukan and yakitori.

Construction starts a couple of weeks before the opening and it's quite a sight to see the massive 'blanks' slowly growing as army trucks bring in tons of snow for the festival. Then, the morning after the official closing of the festival, large earthmoving equipment arrives to knock down all the sculptures. This is done to keep them from becoming a hazard, as the snow softens and the 20m piles collapse. Most people advise getting in early to see the sculptures whilst they're still pristine because, though every effort is made to repair damage and remove snow after a storm, winters just aren't as cold as they used to be, and even a slight warming into positive digits can blur the edges of some of the more graceful designs. They also advise people that, whilst there are public lavatories, none of them provide toilet paper, so it's best to take your own in the form of pocket tissues.

NGS is running day-return trips from Hirafu to the festival for ¥4000. Departing from the Hirafu Ski Area Parking Lot #1 at 1.30pm, returning to Hirafu at 10.50pm every day of the festival. Contact NGS to book on (0136) 21 7151.



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Sekka - A hip taste of class, warmth and space

By Vanessa Gibson



CLASSY... Located in the heart of Hirafu, Sekka oozes all that is high-class and sophistication.

LOCAL businessman Shouya Grigg has formed the brand name 'Sekka' into Niseko's own version of 'Virgin'. It is a brand so flexible it can be applied to almost any business, giving it credibility and style.

The Sekka restaurant was the original chic eatery in Niseko, and they now also operate Niseko's most stylish function centre, delicatessens, and they have successfully created a property development arm. The Sekka restaurant has just become better and better, and this year, with the addition of some great new talent in the kitchen and on the floor, it is the best it has ever been.

From the moment you enter Sekka, you are overcome with warmth and class. As you wind your way down from street level to emerge in a beautifully lit, intriguing hallway, you are greeted warmly by your host and drawn to a life-size print of two sumo wrestlers entangled mid-battle. As far as the restaurant entrances I've experienced, this is certainly up there.

After such an impressive entrance, the dining room does not disappoint, continuing with the theme of class and warmth. High ceilings and a large open-plan design provide a feeling of space and grandness so often missing in the increasingly cramped Hirafu. Peeking into the corner of the room, a surprisingly open view of the large kitchen is on show. There is also a mezzanine level that looks like it could be used to host high rollers in a VIP section with ease, a floor-to-ceiling glass

fronted wine cellar and a lovely uncomplicated bar with a quaint Japanese tree sitting at the end. A projector shoots grainy old Japanese film footage onto the wall, a signature of designer Shouya's hip and funky edge that he puts to everything he touches.

Once escorted to our table, our setting was completed with an exquisite large Reidel glass, not common in Japanese dining. With the glass and the wine cellar I would dare you to resist ordering some wine here. My partner was quite excited by the availability of the boutique draft Otaru beer being available – the only place in the Niseko area where you can get it on tap. Indeed it is only available from a handful of locations worldwide, as it can only travel 100km from the brewery. I plumped for a glass of the Alkoomi Semillon Sauvignon Blanc. We enjoyed the beer with some fresh homemade flatbread dipped in good quality oil and fresh aromatic dukkah, which I had previously eyed off in their attached deli.

The menu was small, which my dining partner and I are fond of, as you feel more confident the produce is fresh and turning over regularly. Sekka has always had Italian-Japanese fusion influences, but this season there has been a subtle shift to serving more Hokkaido-based delicacies, cooked with variety of imaginative techniques and methods. Katherine Bont and Kim Wejendorp are recent additions to the Sekka team, and we understand they are to be here for some time, which is great for Sekka,

Niseko and us! Having come from a background working in some great restaurants all over the world, they are dyed in the wool foodies.

We were finding it difficult to choose a starter – they all looked so enticing. Kat helped our decision with her thorough knowledge of each dish. We ended up with hamachi (snapper) cured with sake, served with scattered Hokkaido plump green olives, capers and wisps of saffron. The dish was light and delicate and the combination of flavors really enhanced the hamachi. This went so well with my wine, which we enjoyed so much, we decided to order a whole bottle. The other starter we tried was a renowned favourite, large, plump Hokkaido scallops (hotate) served with Otaru cherry blossom wood-smoked chunks of bacon, seared soya bean and bean puree, a unique but tasty combination of flavours. I wanted to close my eyes while eating it to savour the experience.

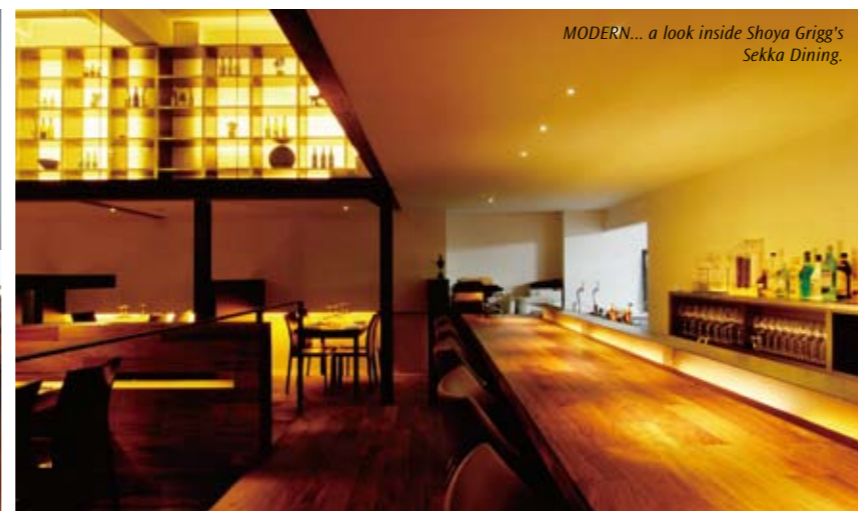
For the second course, 'Ni', we chose a delicate linguine with good-sized portions of fresh Hokkaido crab. A subtle taste of chili came through and, thankfully, Kim showed a deft touch, as it was by no means over-powering. Whilst waiting for our second entrée, a large, aged Pecorino parmesan cheese barrel was pushed on a trolley for our neighbouring diners caught our eyes, and to be more accurate, our noses; holding a wild mushroom risotto inside the massive block of cheese. Our second entrée of grilled prawns served on soft white polenta, Okhotsk rind and braised

beans was also constructed with a touch of brilliance.

We followed Kat's suggestion to share our dishes, so we got to try a bit of everything, especially useful as we followed the usual routine of fish for the female and meat for the male. I opted for the pan-roasted hamachi served with Niseko potato, negi, cabbage and saffron citronette. A balanced, tasteful and elegant ensemble if ever there was one. My partner predictably ordered Sekka's renowned slow-cooked Tokachi beef cheek, which was as excellent as he remembered from last year. To call these dishes fabulous would be an understatement. To complement the mains, we ordered two sides: a mixed-leaf salad and roasted Japanese root vegetables, a great variation to your standard roast vegetables, providing more taste and texture.

We finished off the meal with a refreshing scoop of pure mandarin sorbet and a hazelnut brittle with burnt-orange caramel sauce. A delightfully sweet end to an indulgent evening. We were tempted to try the great selection of Hokkaido cheeses, but couldn't fit them in, and instead gratefully accepted a sample from the aforementioned cheese barrel.

Prices at Sekka were fair, considering the quality ingredients, unique creations, and the high-class service. Most dishes ranged between ¥2,000 - ¥3,000.



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Omuraisu

By Jerod McCann & Naoki Miyamura of EN in-house fine dining

THE word 'omuraisu' comes from 'omelet and rice', as you may have guessed. Omelet, pilaf and other French classics from abroad came to Japan in the late 1800s. The Japanese faithfully followed some Western recipes, and adapted flavors to suit their own tastes. Before long, these variations began spreading throughout kitchens all over Japan.

This recipe only involves a couple ingredients, little preparation and packs enough energy to keep you going through dinner. 10 steps in 10 minutes...



Ingredients:

- Serves 2
- 2 cups cooked rice, any type
- 1 boneless chicken leg, skin off, cut into small cubes
- 1 onion, roughly diced
- 1 cup ketchup
- 2 tblsp oil
- 5 eggs, de-shelled
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Method:

1. If the rice is cold, microwave until just warm. Then set aside.
2. Get your pan smoking hot and add the oil. (A Chinese wok works best for this, as you will need to stir the mixture - it could get messy otherwise.)
3. Lower heat and add the diced onion, sauté for five minutes. Add the chicken cubes and continue cooking for another five minutes until white.
4. Add all the cooked rice and stir fry as if making fried rice. Blast the heat for a couple of minutes to get the rice slightly crispy making sure not to burn the onions.
5. Add ½ cup of the ketchup and lower the heat. Gently mix, taste, cover, and set aside.
6. Whisk the eggs (do not add salt to raw eggs as it will break down the enzymes making them watery).
7. In another large, non-stick pan over low heat pour in half the whisked eggs and let cook until firm. Do this twice using up all the eggs.
8. Spoon the tomato rice evenly between two plates. (To really impress, heat your plates in a warm oven; keeps your food hot during the entire meal).
9. Drape the 'open omelet' over the rice and drizzle with the remaining ketchup. Dust with fresh parsley and serve.
10. With a bit of practice, this should take 10 minutes start to finish. Sure beats the sloppy burger joint around the corner!

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Nicolas Cruz

WE caught up with French pro-skiier and past *Powderlife* cover boy Nicolas Cruz to find out everything from his DIN settings to what tunes are getting him down the hill this season.



Name	Nicolas Cruz Mermey
Nickname	Tortionnaire/Zurc/Cru/Bambi
Born	October 1, 1982
Sponsors	Amplid, Electric, Hestra, Discrete, Chatel, Skullcandy, Eleven.
Setup	Amplid Cholesterolone, reverse camber, 184cm, Amplid binding 816, 13 DIN, centre-mounted
Favourite terrain	La Leche, Châtel/Entre Rios, Las Leñas, secret spots in Niseko
Favourite move	S Dobardo Capoeira Move, Big Cork 3 when I manage to throw them (not often), 0 spin
Time in Niseko	At the time I answered these questions – one month, three days and some hours
Time riding	Since age two

Loyalty to Loyalty, Cold War Kids, 2008

THE Cold War kids have been bashed around by critics lately for the mismatched vocals and their odd style of rhythm. It is true that the music is a little odd, and lead singer Nathan Willet's voice is not quite on key...ever. But hey, that makes them them. The first track from the album, *Something is Not Right With Me* even had an early cameo in this season of HBO's *Entourage*. Overall, a very good album and is definitely down for one of my favourites of late '08. Rating: 3.5 Off-Pitch and Whineys out of 5. **Songs to listen for: *Something Is Not Right With Me, Mexican Dogs and Golden Gate Jumpers.***



i Soulja Boy Tell 'em, Soulja Boy, 2008

WHAT do Soulja Boy and Adolf Hitler have in common? Neither of them knows what the hell hip-hop is, and they both committed serious crimes against humanity. Sure, Soulja Boy's first commercially released song, *Crank That (Soulja Boy)*, was a hit in the commercial world, but that's where he should have stopped. Chant, be inane, repeat! This should be the album name. Rating: 1 Thank You Soulja Boy For Making Everyone Else Look Goods out of 5. **Songs to listen for: Quite simple for this one – don't bother at all.**



You Have No Idea What You're Getting Yourself Into, Does It Offend You, Yeah?, 2008

DOES It Offend You, Yeah? is one hell of a dance-rock group that recorded one hell of a dance-rock album – and puts on one hell of a live performance. This is an album that you should really tune in to when you are boarding. You will attempt a double back flip off a 50ft drop with one foot locked in...and you will definitely die doing it. But wow, at least you will be listening to some damn fine music. Rating: 4.8 *Powderlife* Or Any Of Its Contributors Are Not Liable For Death Or Injury While Listening To This Albums out of 5. **Songs to listen for: the whole damn album is great. Buy it and listen to it all.**



Top 10 Powder tracks

1. *Shook One Part II* – Mobb Deep
2. *Adrenaline* – Mobb Deep
3. *Fall Back* – Big L
4. *Dile* – Don Omar
5. *Le Son Qui Met La Pression* – Lunatic
6. *Alive (whole album)* – Daft Punk
7. *Abesses* – Birdy Nam Nam
8. *Bun Down the System* – Collie Buddz
9. *Turn Me Up (feat. Abzibiza Satisfaction Version)* – Benassi Bros
10. *Dammit* – Blink 182



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Lesson 5: Making conversation

APART from the fun you're having sliding down the mountain and eating up a storm – the highlights of your holiday in Niseko are likely to be the interactions you have with the locals. Why not make them even more memorable by trying out some of these phrases? Also, if you're here for the season, today's lesson has some essential language to help you in your mission to make friends – or special friends ...

1. 初めまして Hajimemashite Nice to meet you.

When you meet someone for the first time, say: **Hajimemashite**. Depending on the situation and the degree of formality required, you could do some kind of semi-bow or bow when saying this. If you meet someone in a bar in Hirafu a bow-type nod is usually enough.

2. お名前は? Onamae wa? What's your name?

Normally people will introduce themselves, but if they don't, you can ask them: **Onamae wa?** After they say their name, you can repeat it back to them to make sure you've heard right, adding **san** to the end. Just remember, **san** is only for adding to other people's names, you'll sound foolish if you add it to your own name. Say your name by itself, or add **desu**. **Bob desu** (My name is Bob). After you've exchanged names, say: **Yoroshiku onegaishimasu**. This doesn't have an English equivalent, think of it as: nice to meet you, part two.

3. どこから来たの? Doko kara kitano? Where are you from?

If you're a Caucasian in Niseko, don't be surprised if people skip this question and ask: **Oosutorariya jin?** (Are you Australian?) If you ask a Japanese person where they're from and they answer Japan, ask them: **Nihon no doko?** (Whereabouts in Japan?)

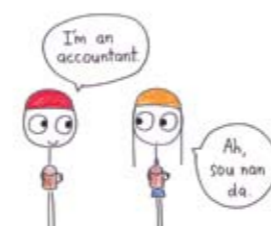
4. 何才? Nan sai? How old are you?

In Japanese conversation, it's common to ask how old people are – partly to figure out what kind of grammar you can get away with. If you don't want to reveal your age you can say: **Naisho** (It's a secret) or **Yada, itaku nai!** **Hazukashii!** (I don't want to tell you! It's embarrassing.) Or, if you're obviously middle-aged, you can turn it into a joke by saying: **Hatachi** (I'm twenty). They'll probably laugh and say: **Usu!** (You're lying!) If you ask someone their age, they might say: **Nan sai ni mieru?** (How old do I look?) The easiest way out of this nasty trap is to say: **Wakaranai** (I don't know).



5. 日本は初めて? Nihon wa hajimete? Is this your first time in Japan?

Early on in the conversation, they'll probably want to know if it's your first time here: **Nihon wa hajimete?** If it is, say: **Hai** (Yes). If not: **lie, ni/san/yon/go kai me** (No, it's my second/third/fourth/fifth time). Other common questions are: **Dono gurai iru no?** (How long are you here for?) and **Doko de tomatte no?** (Where are you staying?)



6. 仕事は何? Shigoto wa nani? What do you do?

This is not always a brilliant question in Japanese conversation, since people will often give you a very vague answer, like: **Sarariman desu** (I work in an office). If you're really interested, you'll have to ask something more specific, like: **Dou iu**

kaisha? (What kind of company is it?) When you're ready to move on to the next topic, just say: **Ah, sou nan da?** (Oh, really?) If a fellow resident/seasonal worker finds out you're in Niseko for the season, they'll probably ask: **Doko de hataraiteru no?** (Where are you working?), followed by: **X chan shitteru?** (Do you know X chan?)

7. 日本語上手! Nihongo jyozu! Your Japanese is excellent!

If you attempt to say a few words in Japanese, but you clearly aren't proficient in the language, someone is likely to clap their hands excitedly and exclaim: **Nihongo jyozu!** (Wow, your Japanese is excellent!) This may seem strange, but don't worry, they're probably not taking the piss, they're just trying to be nice and encouraging. You can respond by smiling shyly, shaking your head regretfully and saying something like: **lie mada mada desu** (No, I've still got a long way to go). Or you could buck the trend and see what happens if you confidently say: **Hai, tensai desukara** (Yes, because I'm a genius).

8. 何型? Nani gata? What's your blood type?

If someone suddenly asks you what your blood type is – **Nani gata?** - don't be alarmed, it's not because they're a doctor getting ready to administer a blood transfusion. It's just small talk, like asking someone what their star sign is. If you don't know, just pick one of the following: O, A, B or AB. If someone you ask turns out to have the same blood type as you, you should look surprised and overjoyed and say: **Honto?! Watashi mo!** (Really?! Me too!)



9. カラオケ好き? Karaoke suki? Do you like karaoke?

If someone starts asking you if you like various things, they could be trying to segue into giving or eliciting an invitation. So, if you're on the market for someone to help keep you warm during the cold Niseko nights, be sure to respond enthusiastically! **Karaoke suki?** (Do you like karaoke?) **Daisuki!** (I love it!) **Jya kondo ishhyo ni ikou ka?** (Let's go together sometime.) **Zehi!** (That sounds great!) This is the perfect lead-in to exchanging **keitai** (cell phone) numbers, or **meado** (email address).

10. 写真一緒に撮る? Syashin issyo ni toru? Shall we take a photo together?

Now that you know each other's name, blood type and email address – the only thing missing is a photo! Suggest taking a photo with someone: **Syashin issyo ni toru?** If someone asks you, say: **li yo!** (Sure!) If you're the person with the camera, say: **Cheezu!** (Cheese!) Then wait for them to say: **Mou ikkai!** (Please take another one). And if you're in the photo, don't forget the gesture – in Japan you could get arrested for not making a peace sign in a photo!



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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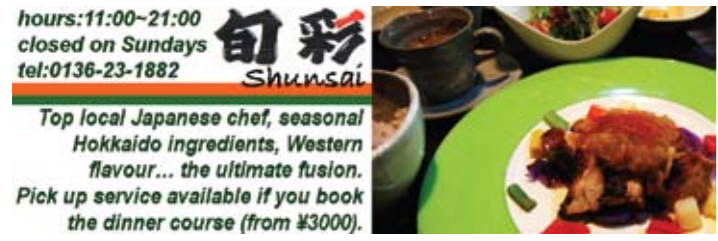
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Introducing Kutchan

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

hours: 11:00-21:00
closed on Sundays
tel: 0136-23-1882



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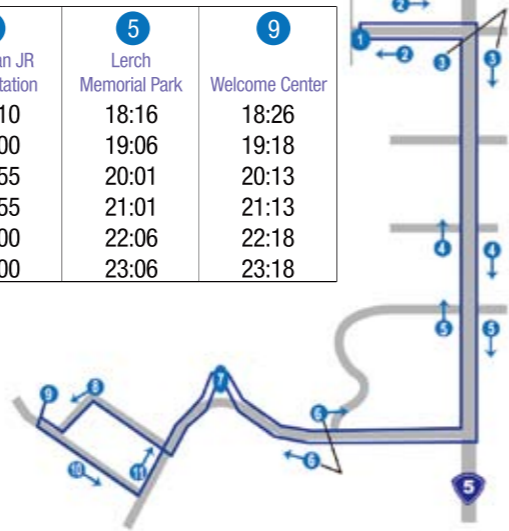
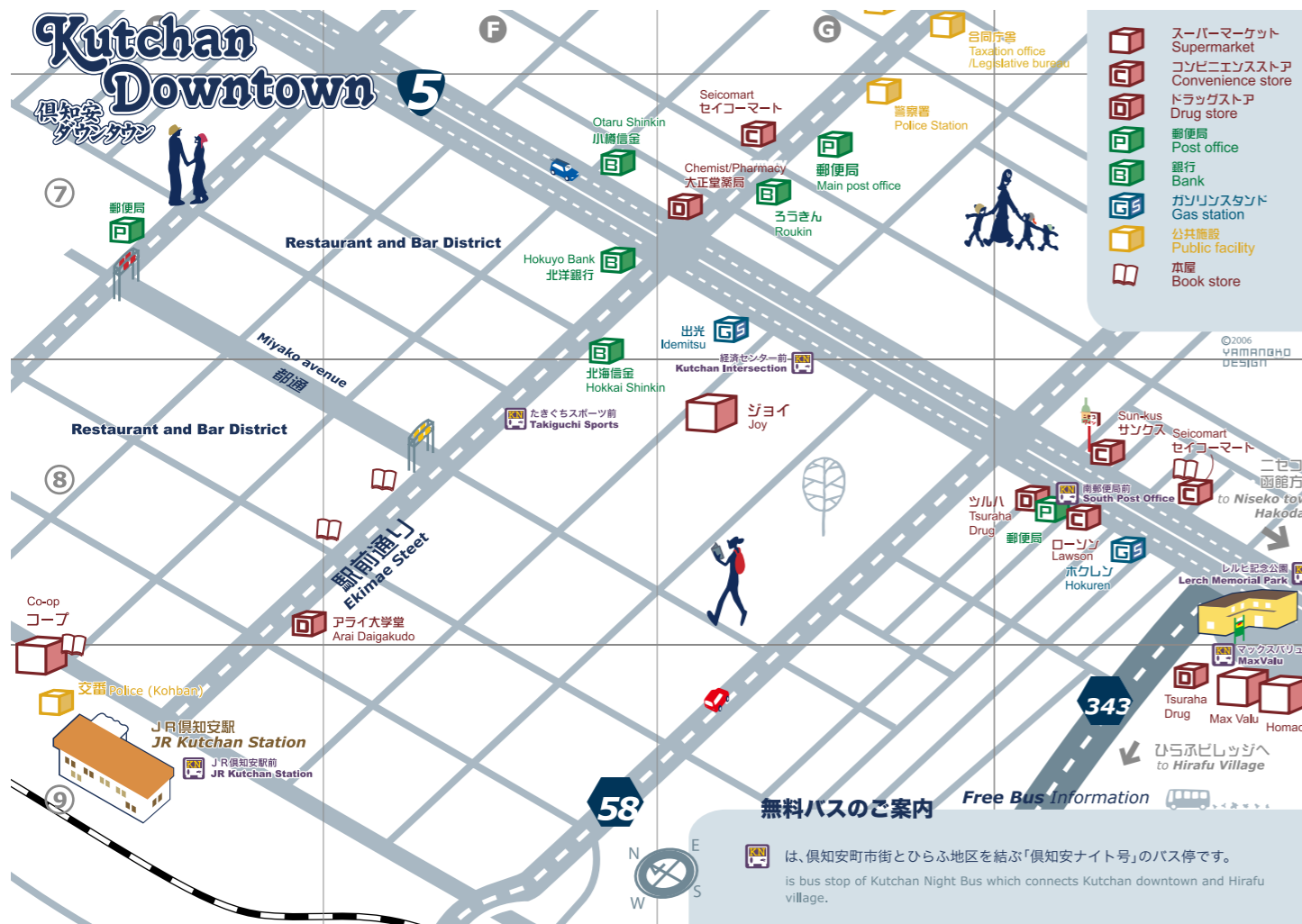


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Kutchan Night-Go Bus ¥100 for an unlimited pass

9	11	5	1
Welcome Center	Seicomart Hirafu intersection	MaxValue	Kutchan JR Train Station
17:00	17:03	17:14	17:20
18:30	18:33	18:44	18:50
09:30	09:33	09:44	09:50
20:15	20:18	20:29	20:35
21:15	21:18	21:29	21:35
22:20	22:23	22:34	22:40
23:20	23:23	23:34	23:40

1	5	9
Kutchan JR Train Station	Lerch Memorial Park	Welcome Center
18:10	18:16	18:26
19:00	19:06	19:18
19:55	20:01	20:13
20:55	21:01	21:13
22:00	22:06	22:18
23:00	23:06	23:18

Kutchan Downtown

Restaurant and Bar District

Free Bus Information

は、倶知安町市街とひらふ地区を結ぶ「倶知安ナイト号」のバス停です。
is bus stop of Kutchan Night Bus which connects Kutchan downtown and Hirafu village.

Yukitopia: Kutchan's snow festival

By Shukin Moderski



THE Japanese love a festival and February sees the winter festivals throughout many of the alpine regions. While most people will have heard of Sapporo's world-renowned snow festival (see p.36 for Powderlife's run down), Niseko's service town, Kutchan, has its own snow festival, Yukitopia (Yuki means snow).

If you own a pair of skis or a snowboard that isn't just collecting dust and growing rust in your shed, chances are you came to Kutchan to enjoy Niseko's snow. You are well aware of its serene beauty, friendly people, and of course it's fluctuating climate. It can rain one day, just to give you an excuse to take a break and go have a coffee, get cashed up, have a massage and an onsen, and wake up to find the temperature has dropped and its knee deep at your doorstep! Well rested, you hit the slopes once more to find your self saying: "That was the best day ever!" A phrase I put as much stock in as "I'm never drinking again!"

While most of us enjoy playing here, spare a thought for the men and women who move more powder in one winter than Pablo Escobar did in a lifetime – the people of Kutchan who clear the snow. While you might be enjoying a night on the town, singing karaoke, or West Australian wines in front of your fireplace, some Japanese wives are up at 2am preparing breakfast for their husbands who have to be in their snow plows by 3am. Year after year these nocturnal people keep the city going by pushing powder.

21 years ago, some of these guys got together to find a way they could spend a couple of days having a few drinks and playing with their kids in the snow while they still recognized them, and hence was the birth of Yukitopia! This year's Yukitopia will be held Feb 21st & 22nd at the giant ski jump behind Kutchan train station.

Below you will find a list of events;

Feb. 21st (Sat)

- 9:30~13:00 Snow Camping Demo
- 10:30~17:00 Giant Snowman with slippery slide
- 10:50~11:00 Daiko drum extravaganza
- 11:00~18:00 Food / drink Stalls
- 11:00~17:00 Flea Market
- 11:00~11:20 Festival Opening: Rice Cake Grab
- 11:30~13:00 Human Hammer Throw
- 12:30~14:00 Snowball Fight (adults)
- 13:00~14:00 Bobsled
- 14:00~15:30 Snowball Fight (children)
- 14:00~16:00 Song and Dance Event
- 15:00~16:00 Snowball Target Practice
- 16:00~17:00 Raffle Draw
- 17:00~18:00 Hot Pot (Nabe) Extravaganza
- 17:00~17:30 Candle Light Event
- 18:30~20:00 Kutchan Pub Crawl

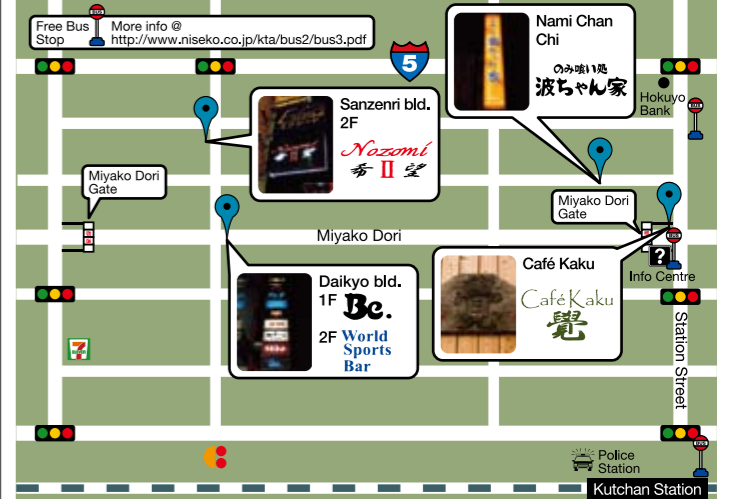
Feb. 22nd (Sun)

- 10:00~15:00 Snow Camping Demo
- 10:00~15:30 Food / drink Stalls & Flea Market
- 10:50~11:00 Snowmobile Experience
- 10:00~10:30 Character Show
- 10:00~12:30 Human Donkey Race
- 10:00~14:00 Paintball Comp
- 11:30~12:30 Let's make Mochi (rice cakes)
- 12:00~13:00 Hot Pot (Nabe) Extravaganza
- 12:30~13:15 Treasure Hunt
- 13:15~13:30 Rice Cake Grab
- 13:30~14:00 Character Show
- 14:00~15:30 The Great Water Trial

For more information call:
22-1121(ext. 242)



Wine & Dine in Kutchan



Free Bus Stop | More info @ <http://www.niseko.co.jp/cta/bus2/bus3.pdf>

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Sanzenri bld. 2F
Daijyo bld. 1F
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Open: 18:00 to 24:00 Closed on Sun.

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Budget: from ¥1,500
Open: 16:00 to 04:00 Close randomly

Be.

Daijyo bld. 1F, N2 W1 TEL: 0136-55-6905

A cozy bar, complete with pool table, soft darts machines, and a full DJ setup. Relaxing spot where you can hang with friends or mingle with locals. Local DJ/Live parties are often scheduled. Checking in @ www.powderlife.com/niseko/event s/for upcoming events.
Budget: from ¥1,000
Open: 19:00 to 03:00 Close randomly

Nozomi II

Sanzenri bld. 2F, N3 W1 TEL: 0136-22-5478

Want to drink cheaply in Japan? "Nomihodai" is the answer. Nozomi II has two great "Nomihodai" (all-you-can-drink) options; for ¥2,000, For ¥3,000 you can stay till closing! Soft darts, slot machines, Karaoke and a friendly staff await you, group discounts are also available.
Budget: from ¥1,500 *after 0:00 ¥1,000 for seat charge
Open: 21:00 to 06:00 Close randomly

Men Who Ride Mountains

By Stirling Goldman

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

Greetings ladies and wannabes, Stirling here. The *Powderlife* punters have asked me to write another piece for their feeble mag. Clearly they have some sense and realise that Stirls provides PL with some serious kudos, and has increased their female readership by close to 600 per cent... so they now have six female readers rather than one. Let's be honest, the ladies are too busy chasing Stirls to have time to read anyway. So, it got me thinking... I use the word 'punter' quite a lot. Therefore, I thought I would write an article about 'punterism'. Check up Wikipedia and you can see one definition of a punter as: "...a beginner skier or snowboarder, especially one with particularly bad style." Now Stirls concedes this is fairly accurate, but it lacks the Goldman edge, and let's face it, even S.G was a beginner skier with bad style once. Although that was for my first 30 minutes on skis, and I was 9 months old. And having skied all over the world, from Baw Baw to Zermatt, Stirls will outline in further detail the top 10 things that make a Niseko punter.

Number 1: Any snowboarder – enough said. Except my buddies from Car Danchi – they go alright. And Lorne from Ridgerunner – he goes OK too.

Number 2: Anyone, and I mean anyone, who skis or snowboards home on the road. This is a huge leap to upper level punterism and remains one of the worst sights in the world of alpine sport.

Number 3: Anyone claiming they get 'face shots' of powder yet never leaves a groomer. The only face shot they will get is from Stirling when he hears this. You want deep – get off piste.

No. 4 People who keep lift passes attached to their jackets from previous seasons. Stirls is a well travelled man, he doesn't need a grubby Baw Baw '02 lift pass attached to his jacket to prove it. Only punters do. Thankfully the Niseko passes are electrically scanned, so punters can't include Niseko in this form of punterism. Source some scissors punter.

Number 5: People using skiboards - a.k.a mini-skis, big boots, etc - these things should be contraband at any ski resort or hire shop. You should have to sign a waiver form to be awarded lifelong puntership just to hire them.

Number 6: Anybody who thinks he can out-drink, out-ski or out-spade Stirls with the ladies. Instant punter status. Let's be honest nobody competes with Goldie. You'll only die trying.

Number 7: Anyone claiming to have skied all of Niseko once they have done Strawberry Fields twice. While Goldman concedes it is good at the right time, there are usually more punters than not in there.

Number 8: Any fat bastard who claims to be a good skier. No athlete is fat. Except sumos and John Daly – and they don't ski. Only a true punter would boast about their ability while bulging way over their belt. Stirling works hard to maintain his chiseled frame, as should all the alpine elite.

Number 9: Those starting fights at the pub or stealing jackets. All aboard to punter central. Stirling does his talking on the hill, not with fists or with theft. Just look for the signature 'S' cut in some fresh pow and you know Stirls has owned it.

Number 10: Anyone pronouncing Niseko



as Nee-say-ko. Or Seicomart as Psychomart. Or Yotei as You-tie. It's not that hard, punter! So there you have it. If you avoid these 10 points, Stirling may give you the 'OK' tag. Except for the ladies - they just get the 'Goldman tag'. Happy skiing!

Q: Stirling, I'm a massive fan. Just wondering what you carry when you enter the backcountry? (Pedro, France).

A: Pedro, who isn't a massive fan? Quit the small talk. But good question all the same. Stirling always has his beacon and backpack when going out the gate. And Stirling also carries the following:

- Shovel
- Electric space blanket... but usually a lady will come and keep me warm (see below)
- Extendible probe – but I was born with that.
- Water from my Evian sponsors
- Mars (another sponsor, as I do like to work, rest and play)
- Mobile phone and little black book – it is amazing how many ladies are willing to risk their lives and come for their one shot at Stirling time when I get stuck in the back country. P.S. I never call the favourites in case they don't make it.
- My patented 'Stirls' Snorkel' – Stirling gets deep in the pow.
- iPod – with my I Just Wanna Ride with Stirls classic hit on repeat.

• A mirror – sometimes I forget how good looking I am.

Q: Stirling I heard a rumour when reading a gossip mag recently that you were in line to become the next James Bond, but changed your mind at the last minute. Is it true? (Susie, UK).

A: Susie, the secret was generally quite well kept, but yes, it is true. I had the gig but knocked them back. There were several reasons:

- 1) They wanted me to cut my locks, and we all know Stirls changes for no one.
- 2) The filming was scheduled for six months ahead of when I signed, in anticipation that is how long previous actors had needed to get in shape. Once I ripped my shirt off at the audition, they soon realised I was ready to go. They were unable to bring the shooting dates forward and it was to mean I would miss the Niseko winter.
- 3) The film had only scripted liaisons with two ladies (and they had to be acted) over a two month filming period, which was a little below Stirls' regular quota. So they ended up going with Jenny Craig or whatever his name was. But don't worry Susie, Stirling is coming to a cinema near you, and he will provide some 'oh-oh' seven times - just for you!

Got a question for a man who knows? Fire it to stirling@powderlife.com.



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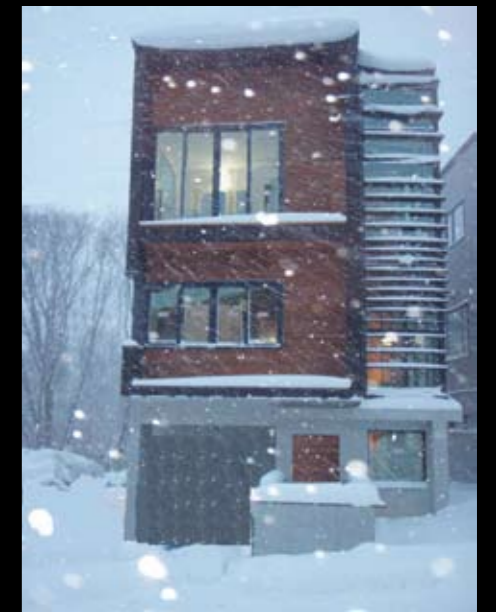
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HK Developer capitalises on subdivision

THE long-vacant Country Resort subdivision, created by Izumikyō Real Estate, is now being populated by Hong Kong-based developer Niseko Resorts Group.

Country Resort's clearing, subdivision and roadworks were originally completed by Izumikyō Real Estate more than six years ago, creating flat, developable blocks that ranged from 500sqm to 1,300 sqm. The area then remained quiet for four years until Niseko Resorts Group took interest in the project.

Niseko Resorts Group was founded by its managing director Chi Guillemette, who fell in love with Niseko after her first trip here from Hong Kong in 2003. Over the last two years the group has built and sold 25 homes ranging from 130sqm to 1300sqm, creating a little village of sorts in Country Resort. Using Niseko Resort Design and Construction as the lead builder, the group is continuing the development of the area.

Andrew Hooper-Nguyen, the operations director for Niseko Resorts

Group, said there were many new and exciting plans for the project. "As well as having another 15 houses available, we also have plans to build a recreation centre including a cafe/restaurant and children's room in the Country Resort sub-division," he said. "We are also pre-marketing Akazora, a collection of 15 condominiums in middle Hirafu Village."

Niseko Resort Group also offers a guaranteed yield of 7 per cent for two years, 24-hour concierge service and on-demand shuttle bus service in winter.



COUNTRY RESORT... Hong Kong developers are loving it here.



THIS IS THE LIFE... A taste of the country.



FINE LIVING... modern life inside the resort

HT spreads to Furano

HOKKAIDO Tracks has expanded its operations out of the Niseko area, choosing the Furano ski fields as a first point of focus.

A new Hokkaido Tracks office is functioning on the future development site, open Saturdays 1pm-5pm, Sundays 9am-2pm, Wednesday 1pm-5pm, and Thursday 9am-12pm.

Furthermore, the Shibisey apartments in Furano will be located in front of the Mount Furano gondola base.

Hokkaido Tracks sales and marketing manager James Gallagher said the market was 'totally undeveloped,

compared to Niseko'. "There has been very little new development for 10 years, and there are no self-contained accommodation options close to the ski lifts," he said. "We recognise an opportunity to provide a level of accommodation that we know will suit the needs of the emerging local and international travel market."

Gallagher said locals were hoping the development would boost visitation and business in Furano, adding that they also hoped building and occupants respected the unique local culture of Furano.

New Alpen project sells well

AUSTRALIAN developers Consolidated Properties and Hutchison Builders announced they have secured enough pre-sales to go ahead with the construction of their 26-unit Alpen Views development.

With Alpen Ridge completed, and the construction of Alpen Views to commence this April, the Brisbane-based developers also announced they were working on securing two additional Upper Hirafu locations to continue with the development of the Alpen brand.

David Tarantini, a project partner

for Consolidated Properties, said everyone involved with the Alpen Ridge project helped make it a huge success. "The biggest complaints we received from owners were regarding the lack of scissors in the units and the dish towels that were nearly waterproof," he said. "We used the combination of Australian Cottee Parker Architects and Japanese HNS Architects for design and Iwata builders for the construction. The team worked perfectly for the Alpen Ridge building and we plan to continue to use the same team for our future developments."

Niseko's 'original developer'

By Chris Lane, Izumikyō Company client advisor



AFTER... One of Izumikyō Company's projects – the final product.

IZUMIKYŌ Company has had a hand in the creation of the Niseko resort area since 1973.

After successfully developing such integral sites as the Hirafu Middle Village, Izumikyō, St. Moritz and Country Resort, the pioneering developer is about to release what it calls its 'newest and greatest project', Hanazono Hills, with the release to be announced, but on-track for this year.

Izumikyō Co. – with an office now based in Izumikyō 2 – has spent the last 36 years creating infrastructure around the Niseko resort, and says it takes pride in sustainable development efforts. Izumikyō Co. says it is also 'proud of dealing directly with the customer and cutting out the middle man, which is the real estate agent'.

Izumikyō Co. first emerged as a developer front-runner in Niseko just before the bubble years of Japan. The 78-year-old head honcho of Izumikyō Co. Masahiko Nishimura reminisces about the good old days, when Niseko went through its first boom and was promoted to the domestic market as 'Japan's ski paradise'. He says 'property was taken off the market the same day it was listed'. "Back then, you couldn't get listings fast enough, as there was always a buyer hoping to get in on the action," Masahiko-san says.

In 1985 Izumikyō Co. developed Izumikyō 1, 2, and 3, which remain titled as such today. A major milestone was the commencement of a

free ski shuttle bus service which serviced all of the village.

During the Japanese economic slump commencing in the early 90's, Izumikyō Co. still continued its sustainable development campaign and successfully released the St. Moritz Village. Times were tough in Niseko during that period, and business didn't really pick up until the first foreigner came and bought land from Izumikyō Co. in the Resort Land development back in 2003.

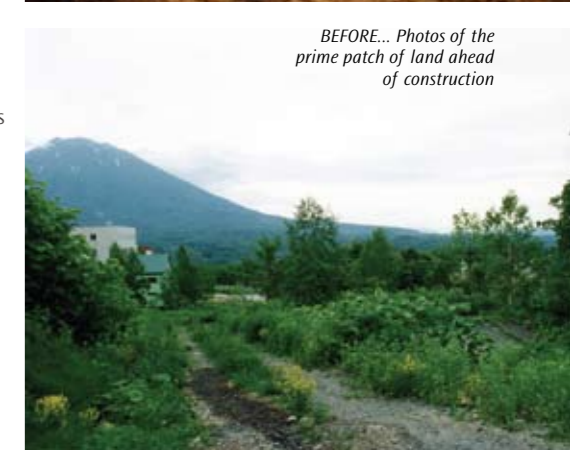
Over the last six years, international buyers have been flooding into Niseko and snapping up everything the developers can release once again, says Masahiko-san.

"As we are the Niseko land wholesalers, we depend on turning over sales at a discounted rate as opposed to sitting on a single prime piece of real estate for an indefinite time period," he says.

Masahiko-san says Izumikyō Co. has a busy and prosperous future ahead. "Rest assured that we are working hard to release our next high-grade subdivision," he says. "As all eyes are on Hanazono, we are busy preparing our 52-home village within walking distance of all the action, to be created by Hanazono's owners; Pacific Century Property Development (PCPD). We are happy to report that everything we have planned is on schedule and slated to be released within the year."



BEFORE... Photos of the prime patch of land ahead of construction



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Geothermal: heating of the future

By Matthew Thomas

MANY parts of Japan are considered to be 'geothermal hotspots'. And one of these hotspots is Niseko.

This snowy little village may be chilly above-ground in winter, but below the Earth's surface it is blessed with shallow, easily harvestable resources. This means sustainable energies systems like geothermal heating can be installed and used without many problems. Niseko sits atop active soils, and is home to many an Earth-heated onsen (thermal baths).

Many believe that because geothermal heating doesn't rely heavily on the burning of fossil fuels, it produces a smaller carbon footprint. This means less of a contribution towards global warming – something of concern to snow-loving skiers and snowboarders.

In Layman's terms, geothermal heating is defined as the use of the Earth's thermal energy for space and water heating. It is a concept that has been utilised since the time of the Roman Empire, as a way of heating buildings and spas by using sources of steam and hot water that exists near the Earth's surface. The geothermal heat pump system exploits the temperature differential between below and above-ground environmental conditions, converting that differential into carbon emission-free energy used for heating or cooling. Temperatures in this area of the Earth remain at 10 to 16 degrees Celsius year-round.

Niseko has many commercial and private residences that utilise geothermal heating to maintain temperatures on a property's floors, panels, roofs and roads, for example.

"You don't need to feel guilty – economically, environmentally or otherwise – for leaving the heater on all day and night."

One of the most experienced development and project management companies in the field of geothermals is West Canada Homes. WCH has been involved with five Niseko projects that implement geothermal heating – Asahi, Mangetsu, Setsugen, Zekkei and the Tancho Centre, which was WCH's first geothermal project. President of WCH, Paul Nikel, sights the positive environmental factors of geothermal

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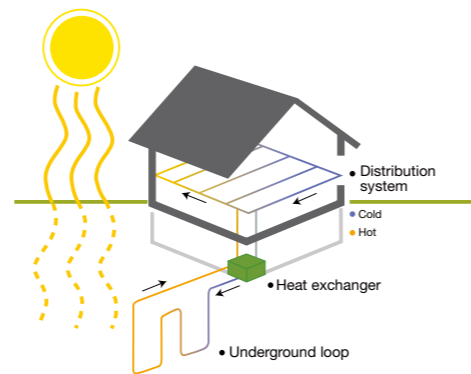
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Experienced architect of more than 20 years, Tokyo-based Riccardo Tossani, of Riccardo Tossani Architecture, has much experience and a strong belief in environmentally sustainable design. He is currently building a private residence between Hirafu and Mount Yotei that will employ geothermal heating. "The system offers significantly reduced costs for heating rooms, floors, driveways and walkways over conventional systems," says Riccardo.

He says the positives of geothermal heating are 'substantial'. "With this technology we can supplement or even replace conventional heat exchangers and air-conditioners with a non-polluting, inexhaustible alternative, which can be run at very low cost," he says. "Coupled with radiators such as the PS variety, commonly used in Niseko and Hokkaido, it is quiet and non-allergenic, safe and compact."

Riccardo says this local residential project was conceived from the outset with thermal performance principles, to reduce demand on artificial energy and the emission of greenhouse gases. "For areas as environmentally sensitive and beautiful as Niseko, this is no small concern," he says.

Riccardo also agrees that initial installation costs for the system will be higher. "However, costs are coming down as



How does geothermal heating work?

The heating process starts when a pressurized, bio-degradable refrigerant gas – usually anti-freeze – is expanded and circulated within a closed, underground loop. As the temperature of the non-toxic gas drops as it expands within in the loop, it concurrently gets reheated by the Earth's warmth. After exiting the loop, the heated refrigerant gas is made hotter by recompression, and then transferred to a heat exchanger where it cools off, in turn warming the house. When reversed, geothermal heating can have a cooling effect.

the system becomes more popular in residential construction," Riccardo argues. "These added costs are subsidised in some communities, and should be considered in terms of life-cycle to assess the financial, if not environmental, viability."

Rett Anderson, from Niseko Resort Design and Construction, is a builder responsible for Hirafu's Ezo Views development in Izumykyo 1 – to be finished by November this year. Moving away from the obvious environmental, cost and durability pluses of geothermal heating, he mentioned several 'everyday' positives. "You can't really distinguish any difference between geothermal and conventional heating, besides a lower power bill," he says. "But there are no unsightly vents on the wall, no forced air as well, so the air in the house will not be dried out either because geothermal heating is radiant heating, which is also much cleaner than fuel heating. Geothermal is very maintenance-free – once you have done the pipe work, there is little to nothing to do. You don't need to feel guilty – economically, environmentally or otherwise – for leaving the heater on all day and night."

EZO VIEWS
A NEW ERA OF LUXURY LIVING IN NISEKO - COMING SOON

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<p>Freshwater 403 Upper Hirafu</p>  <p>2 ¥42,800,000</p> <p>This discrete apartment combines a chic design with ski chalet atmospherics. Its 2-key system maximises rental returns. This quality apartment offers an ideal retreat after a day of adventure. Priced just a whisker above original purchase price.</p>	<p>Hirafu House 7 Middle Hirafu</p>  <p>2 ¥42,000,000</p> <p>A stylish 2 bedroom house enjoying a quiet location close to onsen. Selling very close to its 2007 purchase price. Great winter and summer rental returns.</p>
	<p>Yotei Tracks 108 Upper Hirafu</p>  <p>2 ¥38,000,000</p> <p>The best investment deal in the village - let me show you the figures. Central location, tasteful interior and a consistent rental return. Call me now or regret at your leisure.</p>

Geothermal: heating of the future

By Matthew Thomas

MANY parts of Japan are considered to be 'geothermal hotspots'. And one of these hotspots is Niseko.

This snowy little village may be chilly above-ground in winter, but below the Earth's surface it is blessed with shallow, easily harvestable resources. This means sustainable energies systems like geothermal heating can be installed and used without many problems. Niseko sits atop active soils, and is home to many an Earth-heated onsen (thermal baths).

Many believe that because geothermal heating doesn't rely heavily on the burning of fossil fuels, it produces a smaller carbon footprint. This means less of a contribution towards global warming – something of concern to snow-loving skiers and snowboarders.

In Layman's terms, geothermal heating is defined as the use of the Earth's thermal energy for space and water heating. It is a concept that has been utilised since the time of the Roman Empire, as a way of heating buildings and spas by using sources of steam and hot water that exists near the Earth's surface. The geothermal heat pump system exploits the temperature differential between below and above-ground environmental conditions, converting that differential into carbon emission-free energy used for heating or cooling. Temperatures in this area of the Earth remain at 10 to 16 degrees Celsius year-round.

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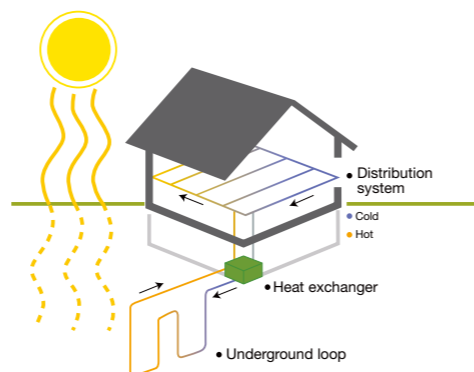
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question and answer real estate

Q&A
 with Tetsuo Ikee

Interview by Yuri Hamada




WHEN you see the stylish houses being built in Hirafu, you often see the sign 'IKEE'. Powderlife spoke to the owner of IKEE, Tetsuo Ikee, who shared his thoughts about the village development and Niseko's future growth as an international ski resort.

Can you tell us about some of your background, including the reason why you started your business here in Niseko?

I was born in Sapporo, and studied architecture at college. My father had his own construction company, so I've spent most of my career learning what I know from him. When I was in college, I often came to Niseko both in summer and winter to hike around Mt. Yotei, and the surrounding mountains. Since then, I've dreamed about living in Niseko and developing this home away from home.

Compared to the first time you came here, how has Niseko changed?

If you drive through the Lower Village, you will see many houses crammed into each block. When I first started developing in '89, my first building was where the IKEE office is now located. At that time, most of the houses here were small pensions owned by Japanese with much larger lots. But four or five years ago, many Australian developers started spending their holidays in Niseko, which has led to the big property development you see nowadays.

The development in Hirafu is mostly condominiums. Do you like doing this style of building, or do you prefer building more unique styles of houses?

Including my time in Sapporo, I have built over 500 houses; in Niseko about 100. Almost all of the projects I've been involved with were either condominiums or duplexes. It's important to consider the needs of the tourists and the big consumer, the Australian market. For this reason, I think it is important to build what they want, not what we as the developers want. At the same time, it's important for all developers to consider their own abilities, and the possibility of utilising this to create a more harmonious village. As of late, I would like to step back and start seeing the village as a whole, and not just the next project.

What kind of architecture has been your biggest influence?

I don't really have one, but when I went to China three years ago, I was overwhelmed by the number of people and the variety of buildings in the cities. After that trip, IKEE started to import high quality building materials from China. That way we can offer better prices for homebuyers without lowering our standards.

What do you think of the development boom that has happened in Niseko?

Too many things happened at one time. There wasn't enough communication between companies who built their buildings next to each other. If possible, I would like to have government support for the development. Niseko is a gorgeous place, but having so many different styles of buildings, and with exposed power lines everywhere, Niseko's natural beauty is diminished. The Lower Village community has put lots of effort into changing the garbage stations from the

chicken wire boxes of old to a much neater-looking, log house-style shed. This is a good example of the changing mentality of people who are already picturing Hirafu Village as one. If we have a building code to follow, it would be a huge step in the right direction.

Niseko might be the first case in Japan where foreign developers outnumber Japanese. Is that the case, and what do you think about it?

I would like to see more Japanese companies in this area. After the Japanese bubble burst, it has been quite hard for most Japanese companies to collect money for these kinds of big projects. If Japanese companies and foreign companies could meet in the middle to support each other and work towards the same vision, it would lead to a more successful village-wide development in Niseko.

Do you think the boom in Niseko over the past few years was a bubble, or do you think Niseko still has a bright future?

I don't think this is a bubble, but there is a lot of truth in regards to the rising value of land in Niseko. The land value jumped up to 15 times more than it used to be. This is crazy, and also too good to be true. This year, construction has decreased 70 per cent since last year. With this being said, I still continue to believe in Niseko's future as an international ski resort. That's the reason I am so concerned with the village as a whole. A harmonious Hirafu Village, combined with Niseko's super high-quality powder snow, would make Niseko a very difficult world-class international ski resort to compete with.

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

FOR YOUR SAFETY

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

ALPINE RESPONSIBILITY CODE

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


KNOW THE CODE: IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY



ATTENTION

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

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



Ski area shuttle bus
Niseko Free Passport Bus

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

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

- Lift ticket counter
 - Rest room
 - Phone
 - Kid's room
 - Restaurants
 - Café
 - Shop
 - Information
 - Rentals
 - Ski school
 - 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**
 - Name of Lift**
Length · Time required · Number of lift ticket points
- *Lift operating times and courses are subject to change due to weather, snow and light conditions etc.

Strictly off limits

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

Niseko Rules

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

- 1. CERTAIN CLOSED AREAS WITHIN NISEKO ARE STRICTLY OFF LIMIT AND ARE NOT TO BE ENTERED AT ANY TIME**
Yu no Sawa(Gully between An'nupuri 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 An'nupuri Avalanche Prevention Committee, the Niseko Mountain Resort Safety committee, the Niseko Free Passport Committee and the Hokkaido Shiribeshi Alpine Accident Prevention Committee.

Services

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221-025 [MAP D2]
- Niseko Photography
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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]

Hotels

- 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]
- Yamada Onsen Hotel
山田温泉ホテル
22 0476 [MAP E1]



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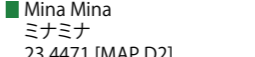


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ヤミーズ
21 2239 [MAP C3]

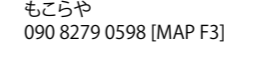
- Kumagoro
くまごろう
23 3381 [MAP B3]
- Landmark Deli
くまごろう
23 4285 [MAP E2]
- Loaf Lounge
ローフラウンジ
22 1022 [Kutchan]



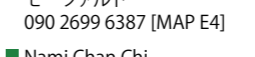
Maru
まる
22 5020 [MAP E3]
Traditional Japanese 'donburi' restaurant. 11:30am-2pm/5-11pm. Pick up available. Reservation required



Mina
ミナミナ
23 4471 [MAP D2]



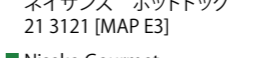
Mokoraya
もこらや
090 8279 0598 [MAP F3]



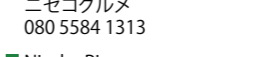
Mozart
モーツァルト
090 2699 6387 [MAP E4]



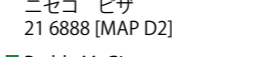
Nami Chan Chi
波ちゃん家
21 2258 [Kutchan]




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
パディーマギンティーズ
55 8020 [MAP C2]



Spur Chinese Restaurant
シュアール(中華レストラン)
22 1105 [MAP C1]



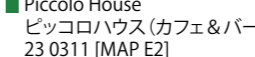
Tsubara Tsubara
つばらつばら
23 1116 [MAP E4]



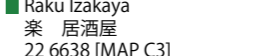
Paul's Cafe and Bar
ポールズカフェアンドバー
090 9083 6764 [MAP C3]
Specialising in Belgian beer and rotisserie chicken. More than 30 beers on tap or in bottles. Belgian Waffles.




Payoka
パヨカ
22 0117 [MAP E1]



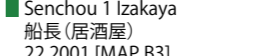
Piccolo House
ピッコロハウス(カフェ&バー)
23 0311 [MAP E2]



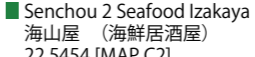
Raku Izakaya
楽 居酒屋
22 6638 [MAP C3]



Rin Izakaya
りん 居酒屋
22 1444 [MAP B3]



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]

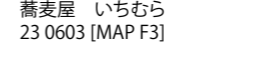
- Grandpapa
グランパパ
0136 23 2244 [MAP B3]
- Graubunden
グラウビュンデン
23 3371 [MAP E4]



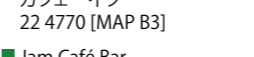
Hana Jizoh Bakery
花地蔵
23 0331 [MAP F4]
Amazing sweet and savoury breads and pastries. Must try! Get the free village shuttle to bus stop 27.



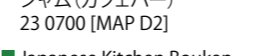
Hirafu Fleur
創作料理ヒラフル
23 3306 [MAP E1]




Ichimura Soba
蕎麦屋 いちむら
23 0603 [MAP F3]



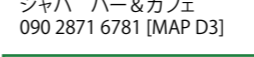
if... Cafe
カフェ イフ
22 4770 [MAP B3]



Jam Cafe Bar
ジャム(カフェバー)
23 0700 [MAP D2]



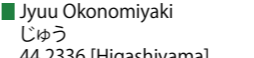
Japanese Kitchen Bouken
冒険家族
22 3759



Java Bar and Cafe
ジャバ バー&カフェ
090 2871 6781 [MAP D3]




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



Jyuu Okonomiyaki
じゅう
44 2336 [Higashiyama]



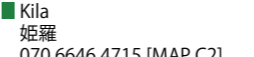
Kakashi
かかし
23 2622 [MAP D2]



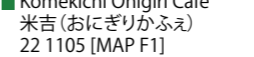
Kame
亀
22 0339 [MAP E3]



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



Kila
姫羅
070 6646 4715 [MAP C2]



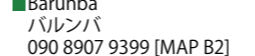
Komekichi Onigiri Cafe
米吉(おにぎりカフェ)
22 1105 [MAP F1]

Restaurants, cafes and eateries

- A-Bu-Cha
阿武茶
22 5620 [MAP C2]
- B's Cafe and Bar
ビーズ カフェ&バー
22 1480 [MAP D1]



Bang Bang
バンバン
22 4292 [MAP C1]
Owner Masanobu Saito chooses the best ingredients in Japan. One of Hirafu's most popular izakayas.



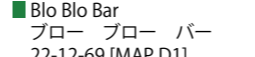
Barunba
バルンバ
090 8907 9399 [MAP B2]



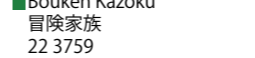
Black Diamond Lodge Restaurant
ブラックダイヤモンドレストラン
0136 44 1144 [Higashiyama]
Just 300m ski or bus from the Hilton Niseko Villlage. Check out or great Western and Japanese menu.



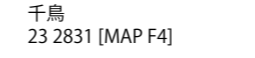
Blo Blo Bar
ブロー ブロー バー
22-12-69 [MAP D1]




Bouken Kazoku
冒険家族
22 3759



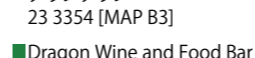
Chidori
千鳥
23 2831 [MAP F4]



Curry Goya
カレー小舎
23 3688 [MAP F4]



Downtown
ダウントウン
23 3354 [MAP B3]



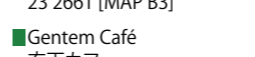
Dragon Wine and Food Bar
ドラゴン ワイン&バー
21 7700 [MAP B2]



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



Fujizushi
ふじ鮨
23 2661 [MAP B3]



Gentem Cafe
玄天カフェ
23 3154 [MAP B1]

Hirafu Village map 2009
2009 Yamano Kodashi

The map is divided into three main sections: South Village, Main Village, and East Village. It features a grid system with letters A-F and numbers 1-4. Various icons represent different types of facilities: hotels, restaurants, cafes, bars, shops, and ski-related services. Key locations include Niseko Grand Hirafu, Niseko Kogen Hotel, and various ski resorts like Hirafu and Niseko. The map also shows major roads like the 343 and 345, and the location of the 2009 Winter Olympics venues.

Six-digit (local numbers) need the prefix 0136 if dialing from mobile phones, pay phones, or outside Niseko.

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
バルンバ
090 8907 9399 [MAP C3]
Be.
ビー
556 905
Blo Blo Bar
プロプロ・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 +)
ギョウタスバー
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&アンダーバー
090 9083 6764 [MAP C3]
Red Bar
レッドバー
22 6687 [MAP B3]
Splash
スプラッシュ
23 1688 [MAP C3]
The Brick
ブリック
22 3444 [MAP D3]

- Yuki Bar and Café
雪場カフェ
22 0234 [MAP B2]
Wild Bill's
ワイルドビルズ
22 5652 [MAP D2]

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
イクスム 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]

NAC Niseko Adventure Centre
ニセコ アドベンチャーセンター
23 2093 [MAP E3]
Lessons and winter mountain tours, year round activities, indoor climbing wall, shop, and café.

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]
SAS Scott Adventure Sports
SASSコットアドベンチャースポーツ
21 3333 [MAP B2]

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 プロパティアー
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 リアルティアー
23 2221 [MAP C2]

- Niseko RDC
ニセコ RDC
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]

- 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]

- Sun Sports Land
サン スポーツ ランド
23 3220 [MAP A3]

We are trying to collect every phone number in the village for this directory. There is no charge for basic listing. If your business does not appear here, please email info@powderlife.com

もし電話帳に御社の電話番号の記載が無い場合、又は誤った電話番号が記載されていた場合はkris@powderlife.comまでご連絡下さい。

www.powderlife.com

Ski schools

- NAC Niseko Adventure Centre
NAC 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
ニセコインターナショナルスノースポーツスクール
21 6688 [MAP F1]

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
ニセコグラウンドサービス
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]
Izumikyō
泉郷
23 3301 [MAP D4]

- 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]

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www.powderlife.com

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.

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.

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Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) knee reconstruction.

By Dave Garrick



Dave Garrick
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WHETHER you are sitting in the orthopaedic surgeon's room or on a physio treatment table, when you hear the words: 'You have torn your anterior cruciate ligament and will probably need a knee reconstruction'; I am sure the reaction is fairly similar. After a few expletives and overcoming the shock of the scary sounding words, you start to wonder whether you'll have a reconstruction and what it actually involves. Bode Miller, Alicia Camplin, Tiger Woods and even *Powderlife's* own Bevan Colless have found themselves in this situation!

The ACL is the main stabilising ligament in the knee and without it the knee is vulnerable to giving way. Due to the design and tension of the ligament, the odds of this healing on its own once it has ruptured are less than 1 in 100. The ligament tends to fray like a horse's mane when it ruptures so for it to heal naturally is quite some task. Sometimes, you can get lucky and the scarring of the injury may lead to a functionally 'stable' knee, but for most people sustaining this injury surgery is the advised option.

The good news is that you are much better off having this procedure done now than 25-30 years ago. The surgical techniques are far more advanced now than they were back then. These days the entire procedure is performed arthroscopically (via a camera) and usually as a day procedure. You should be walking very soon afterwards and not need crutches for very long. In days gone by a reconstruction required a week or two in hospital, a long zipper scar over the knee, a cast and months on crutches.

These days, there are generally three types of ACL repair techniques being used:

1) Hamstring graft – a strand of the hamstring tendon is cut from behind the knee and then looped 4 times and inserted into the bones where the ACL attached

and held in place with screws. This is currently the most commonly used technique. Occasionally patients will have hamstring strains in the early phases of rehab, but this is usually not a long term issue.

2) Patella tendon graft. This procedure involves a strand of your patella tendon with a piece of bone off either end that is then screwed into the bones where the ACL was attached. This is less suitable for those who have to kneel a lot or possibly in jumping athletes due to the loads on the patella tendon with this activity. AFL players often tend to use this technique due to the higher risk of hamstring tears in these athletes.

3) Allograft, from a cadaver. This is generally only used for repeat offenders when the hamstring or patella tendon has already been used, but is gaining popularity in the United States, due to the lack of extra trauma to the body.

There is also a new procedure called the LARS technique which involves using a synthetic graft. This is not widely practiced and generally only useful in ACL injuries that rupture in the middle of the ligament. The benefits are that the rehab takes about half the time, and for an elite athlete this could be the difference between missing a season and not. It will be interesting to see the development of this technique, but it is unlikely to ever be the first choice for an amateur.

So I've ruptured my ACL. Do I have to have a knee reconstruction?

The simple answer is no, but it generally means you have to modify your lifestyle to straight-line activities. Contrary to what you may think, you can ski without an ACL and plenty of people do, often with a brace. However, if you want to be involved in directional-change sports or activities, knee reconstruction is usually recommended, which is why a younger, more active patient will usually be advised to take this route.

There is a school of thought that stabilising the knee via surgery will lead to less degenerative changes over time as there is less 'wobbliness' of the joint. Whilst this makes clinical sense, in reality it appears that the initial injury is enough to cause wear and tear later in life whether or not you have an operation. Surgery will reduce secondary meniscal (cartilage) tears over time.

What does the rehab involve?

Depending on your surgeon, rehabilitation will start anywhere from the next day to two weeks post operatively. Many surgeons are not even using a brace post operatively now. The goals of rehabilitation are similar regardless of the technique used. Rehab is imperative to your recovery under the supervision of a knowledgeable physiotherapist. It will focus on regaining range of motion, reducing swelling, improving strength and proprioception (balance reactions), and a graded return to sport.

A general rule of thumb is a full return to sport at six months for an elite athlete and closer to nine months for the amateur. With regards to skiing, it is recommended you start on groomed runs with lowered DIN settings prior than racing for the Niseko back bowl deeps.

So you may be asking how can you prevent rupturing your ACL in the first place?

There is some research involving American female soccer players and Scandinavian female handball players that a program focussing on proprioception, landing technique (with the knee bent more than 30 degrees) and strengthening (particularly of the thigh muscles) may help reduce the incidence of non-contact ACL injury. Although not skiing, this may have some relevance for a get fit to ski programme before coming to Niseko.

Happy skiing and with any luck you won't be hearing me talk to you individually about ruptured ACLs at Niseko Physio.

These are some events you may experience to suggest you have torn your ACL:

- A traumatic event that often involves twisting of the knee. 70 per cent of ACL injuries are non-contact and are commonly seen in touch footy, skiing and netball.
- Swelling that usually develops relatively quickly (within two hours) after the injury.
- Pain that will often get better quite quickly, however it is usually enough to stop the patient continuing the activity.
- A 'pop' sound at the time of injury and a sense that the knee temporarily 'came apart.'
- A giving way of the knee after injury particularly on twisting or changing direction.



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