

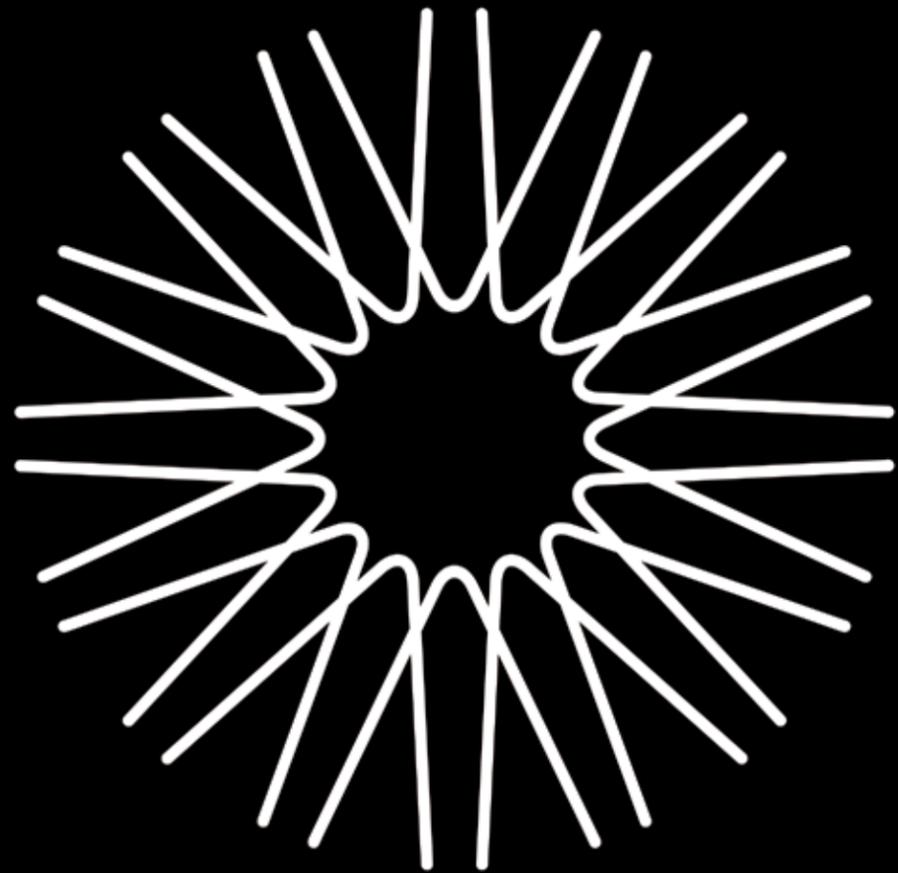


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MAGAZINE

POWDERLIFE NISEKO | VOLUME 6 2013



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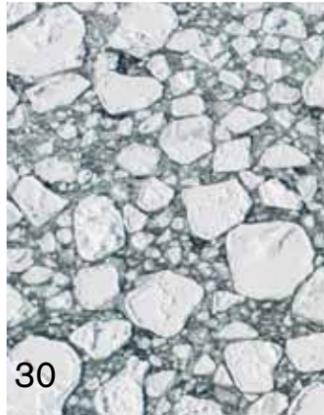
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PIC DAN / NISEKO PHOTOGRAPHY

**WELCOME – OR SHOULD I SAY "irasshaimase"** – to one of the snowiest, quirkiest, coolest little ski resorts in the world. If you're here for the first time, you're in for a pretty special experience. Niseko's snow is commonly referred to as 'champagne powder'. It's so light and dry it's like skiing through fields of talcum powder. It's pretty much as good as it gets... unless you're brave enough to get dropped from a helicopter on top of a remote Alaskan mountain peak.

But it's not just the snow that makes Niseko special. Add to the mix a truly unique cultural experience – the warmth and hospitality of the Japanese people, traditional onsen (hot spring baths), a huge range of incredible Japanese

restaurants – and you've got all the ingredients for a ski holiday experience you can really sink your teeth into.

For those of you who have been here before, you might notice *Powderlife* is a little heavier this year. After pumping out up to 10 issues a year since 2007, this winter we're slowing things down. We're doing just the one high-quality issue, jam packed with interesting articles and eye-popping local photography that will keep visitors informed throughout the season. We think it will sit nicely on the coffee table in your accommodation here, and hopefully when you get home. We hope you like the mag, and know you're going to love Niseko. Enjoy!  
**Kristian Lund / kris@powderlife.com**



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*Powderlife Niseko* is a Niseko Media Publication.  
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COVER Joey Corcoran / East Ridge, Hanazono  
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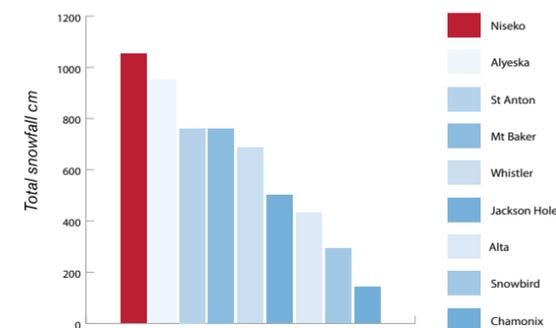
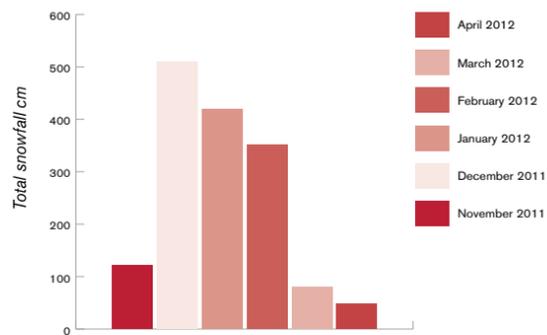
## 2011/12: Winter of the plentiful snowflake

### I know, I know – you don't care how much snow

fell last year, you just want to know about the next week! But we love a good statistic and can't go on without noting last winter's incredible snowfall. The boys at local blog 360niseko take daily readings and keep a very close eye on every flake that falls. By their measurements at village level (250m above sea level) 15.3m of snow fell during the season. That's impressive enough. But a learned friend once explained to me that precipitation is greater on mountains due to the 'orographic effect' (I nodded in agreement). And of course, with higher altitude more precipitation is likely to fall as snow for a longer period. Which I guess must put last year's total on the mountain up towards 20m... or more?

While we're on the subject of totals, check out 360's charts on the right. 5.1m at village level in December 2011! And by the end of January, we were head and shoulders deeper than most major ski resorts around the world.

But back to how much snow could fall in the next week. Well, 360 took measurements everyday between 15 November and 9 April, and recorded snow on 120 of those 147 days. That means it snowed on about four out of every five days all season. Not a bad average!



## Vote now for the Best of Niseko

A warm congrats to last season's **Best of Niseko** winners. While we think all Niseko businesses deserve a pat on the back, these ones got the most mousetraps moving:

- Fine-dining..... Kamimura
- Izakaya (Japanese tapas)..... A-Bu-Cha
- Meal under ¥1000..... Elvis Kebab
- Street-food van..... Taj Mahal
- Bar..... Gyu+ (aka Fridge Door)
- Coffee..... J-Sekka
- Onsen..... Goshiki
- Retail shop..... Rhythm
- Backcountry guide..... Niseko Xtreme



Had an exceptional customer service experience in Niseko? Email the business name to [bestofniseko@powderlife.com](mailto:bestofniseko@powderlife.com).

Winners announced 31 March, 2013 at [www.powderlife.com](http://www.powderlife.com).



## Geisha snow bound

### Lucky visitors may get some great

photo opps when several geisha grace Niseko's snowbound streets this winter. Japan's only official foreign geisha Sayuki Asakusa plans to visit with a fellow geisha or two. Sayuki-san tells *Powderlife* she'll be hitting the slopes by day, and holding traditional banquets and entertaining at private functions by night. For more information and to book go to [www.sayuki.net](http://www.sayuki.net).



## niseko sn-apps!

### Snow-apps... get it? That's right,

Niseko now has a couple of its very own mobile and tablet apps. First of all, we're happier than a Hokkaido brown bear in a snowcave to have this very magazine (and past issues) now available for download free anywhere in the world on Apple's Newsstand. And while you're in the App Store, download the Niseko Live app and stay up to date with real-time lift info, local weather, restaurant directory, daily prize giveaways and more.

## Hirafu hatches a snow egg

A giant 'snow egg' is adding colour and atmosphere to the Hirafu Upper Village this winter. Laid just below the Alpen Hotel on Hirafu-Zaka St, the 14m x 7m geodesic dome houses a bar and café, as well as a retail outlet for Head Porter – a funky Harajuku fashion brand (Harajuku being the Tokyo district famous for all things young and hip). Colours and images are projected on to the ceiling inside the dome and Head Porter is playing tunes to accompany the display. Riccardo Tossani Architecture is behind the space. "We aimed to create an exciting events, retail, food and beverage and gathering space inside a structure that transforms itself day and night," Riccardo says. "It's all possible thanks to the neutral nature of the geodesic dome. There's nothing as plain as a white half sphere, but by projecting virtual environments within it, we're creating an exciting, multifunctional space."



## What's new?

**Luxurious condo Shiki Niseko** has opened in the centre of Hirafu, also housing Niseko's Michelin-starred Kamimura restaurant and retail shops.

The redevelopment of Hirafu's main street – Hirafu Zaka – has begun with the top portion complete. By next winter the whole street should be heated with paved footpaths and buried powerlines.

Skiers starting or finishing at the Alpen Hotel chairlift have a new ticket office, rest area and ski storage complex – Grand Hirafu.Base (ie dot base).

NAC (Niseko Adventure Centre) has acquired the whole of the Weiss cat ski resort this season and is ramping up activities out there.

Explore Niseko, a new booking office for all activities in Niseko, has opened in the centre of Hirafu, next to Seicomart. Look for the snowcat... and a snowmobile up a tree!

Hirafu's new Chalet Ivy Hotel opens on Hirafu Zaka Street this season, as well as boutique apartment building Akazora in the middle village.

A battle for coffee and breakfast supremacy is about to take place with several new options opening up. Keep an eye out for several Lavazza Coffee Spots also popping up around town.

Hokkaido Tracks properties are now part of Interval International's worldwide timeshare holiday network. After Niseko compare powder at Lake Tahoe or thaw out at a beach resort in Thailand! [www.htvacationclub.com](http://www.htvacationclub.com).

## In the pipeline

**Niseko Resorts group** has started planning on a 50-block master planned community – The Orchards – just beyond Hirafu.

Sekka's Shouya Grigg is planning a high-end ryokan (traditional Japanese inn) on a secluded block of land near his own house

Niseko Real Estate's Jess Ripper tells us to expect exciting plans around the base of the Hirafu ski runs following relaxation of national park regulations.

A coup for Niseko's growing cycling scene – the 2013 Tour de Hokkaido will be based here in September.

GROOMERS meet the locals

# taro tamai

Niseko's snow surfing pioneer

TARO TAMAI COULD HAVE BEEN A mainstream pro snowboarder – wearing baggy pants, trying to perfect spinning grabs above halfpipes, and flogging as many boards and accessories as possible for his sponsors. Instead he followed his own path, travelling, surfing, “snow surfing” and creating perhaps the most soulful snowboard brand in the world, Gentemstick. *Powderlife* asked Tamai-san why he doesn't mass market the brand, and what the future holds for him and Gentem.

"Unlike many larger companies, we don't produce boards based on sales predictions. Our focus is quality. This has allowed us to place more value on the environment and the integrity of our company. Year after year we have no problem selling every board we make. Our first priority is making a genuine, high-quality board. Our style is something that will last for a long time without changing much – it's not new or old. If there is snow, our board will always be there.

In 20 years I would like to be making the best boards for my age group at that time. Although I imagine the next generation will have taken over what I'm currently doing for the company.

My goal is to make people aware of the true meaning of snowboarding. Making snowboards is just one of my expressions towards this goal. I'm always searching for new forms of expression. Making films and taking photos are two other ways I express my philosophy. In the future I hope to take more photos and have more time to write. I'm planning to publish a photo book next spring.

I hope my efforts will better the images of snowboarding and surfing, and help Niseko grow into an even greater ski resort." ©



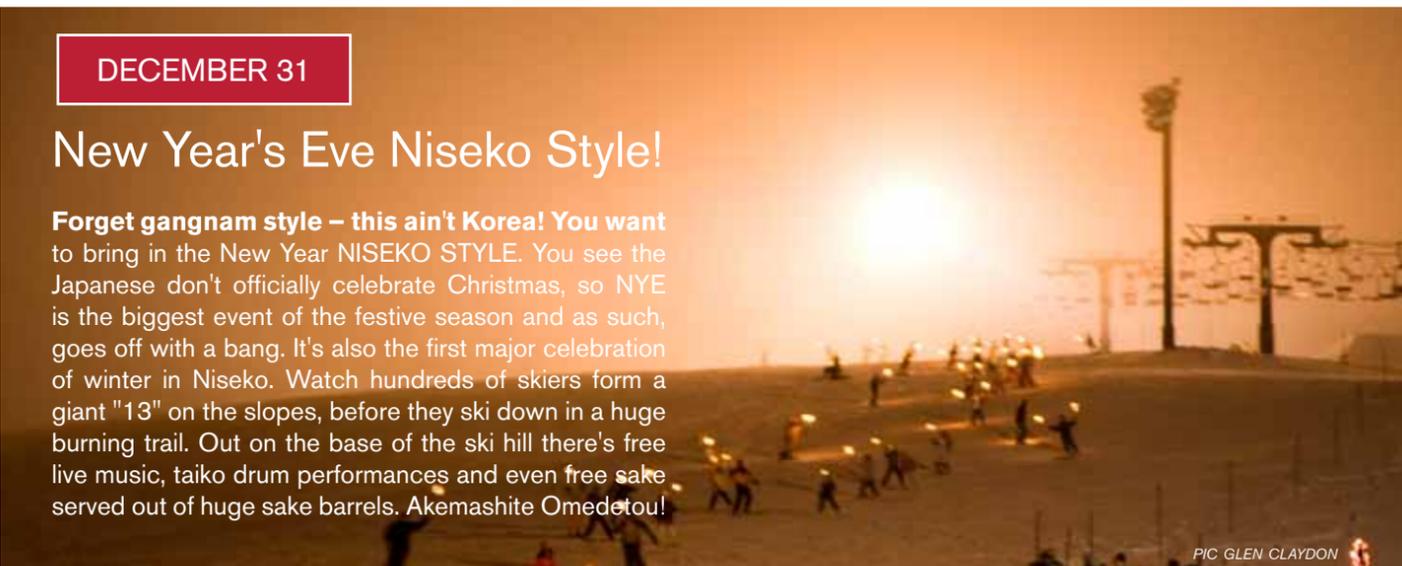
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www.niseko-wow.com

DECEMBER 31

## New Year's Eve Niseko Style!

**Forget gangnam style – this ain't Korea! You want to bring in the New Year NISEKO STYLE.** You see the Japanese don't officially celebrate Christmas, so NYE is the biggest event of the festive season and as such, goes off with a bang. It's also the first major celebration of winter in Niseko. Watch hundreds of skiers form a giant "13" on the slopes, before they ski down in a huge burning trail. Out on the base of the ski hill there's free live music, taiko drum performances and even free sake served out of huge sake barrels. Akemashite Omedetou!



PIC GLEN CLAYDON

JANUARY 12-14

## Niseko Winter Music Festival

Australian Chamber Orchestra artistic director Richard Tognetti fell in love with Niseko after his first visit six years ago. So he found an innovative way to ensure he had to come back every year – by founding the Niseko Winter Music Festival. And we're glad he did! This year they're back for their fourth year. **Ask at your accommodation for details.**

**Saturday 12 January** at Hanazono 308  
**Sunday 13 January** at Grand Hirafu Mountain Centre  
**Monday 14 January** at Hilton Niseko Village



PIC GLEN CLAYDON

FEBRUARY 5-11

## Sapporo Snow Festival

Head into Sapporo and witness giant multi-story snow sculptures and intricate ice carvings of everything from cartoon characters to sacred temples, ice slides to giant animals. Japan's biggest and most famous annual snow festival takes over the centre of Sapporo at the beginning of February every year. Oh, and don't bring food – there are plenty of street stalls to sample.

**Skybus runs day tours from Niseko for those who want a day off the slopes. For more details go to [www.Skybus.co.jp](http://www.Skybus.co.jp).**



## Kutchan's Yukitopia

Yuki (snow) + utopia = Yukitopia, the Niseko region's very own celebration of Hokkaido's snow. Held in the local area's major town Kutchan over two days in mid-February every year, Yukitopia is the biggest local festival of winter. The highlight for many is the "Great Water Trial", or what could best be described as a 'splash for cash'. The idea is to ski, snowboard or slide any way you can down a short slope then across a pool of icy water. Whoever gets the furthest, or makes it to the end, takes or shares in the ¥200,000 prize pool (pardon the pun). Not that many enter to win – dressed in crazy costumes and riding all manner of crazy snow-riding contraptions – the aim of the game is fun. Other highlights include giant snowmen, snow sculptures, snow slides, snow lantern displays, snowmobile rides and much more. **Catch a free bus to Kutchan from outside Seicomart or ask information centres for more details.**



FEBRUARY 16-17

PIC ERIKO MENTZOS

MARCH-APRIL

## March means mountains of competitions

As the temperature warms up in Niseko in March, so do the on-mountain ski and snowboard comps. The Japanese like to go BIG and FAST so make sure you get out on the mountain to check out some of the action. Kicking things off at the start of March is the Namara Ippatsu big air competitions (pictured). 'Namara' in Hokkaido dialect means 'great', and 'Ippatsu' a 'one time action'. Give it everything you've got off one big jump and you might just find yourself the talk of the town. Other fun ones to keep your eye out for are the Minami Ski and Snowboard Battle at Annupuri, the Hirafu Old Boys Giant Slalom and the Super Bumps Niseko Cup. **Contact the resort for details.**



PIC ERIKO MENTZOS

ALL SEASON

## Keep your eye out for...

### Daytime action:

- Taiko drumming performances
- Rail jams and big jumps across the resort
- Hanazono park and bag jump comps

### Après drinks at:

- Lars Longcox Umbrella Bar
- The Vale Bar and Grill
- Hilton Niseko Village

### Nightlife:

- Live music at Half Note. Everything from disco, R&B, soul and rock'n'roll.
- Jam Bar Café's legendary psychedelic GuruGuru parties. Get ready to party Japanese style.
- Reggae music parties around town. But not just any reggae – the special local brand of mountain style reggae. Keep an eye on Splash, Yosaku and Yawaraya and even down in K-Town (Kutchan).
- Unique theme nights at BloBlo, from cocktail parties and warm gluhwein nights, to pole dancing and full moon parties.
- DJ nights and live music at Wild Bill's
- Live music at Tamashii Bar

**For up-to-date details of what's on around town go to [www.powderlife.com/events](http://www.powderlife.com/events).**

# cultural hotspot

Six ways to experience "the real Japan" in Niseko

By | **Christie Dowling**

UNDOUBTEDLY NISEKO IS DEFINED by its bottomless talc-like powder. However, to judge Niseko by snow alone is to do the resort an injustice. Often referred to as 'the Whistler of Asia', the resort's cultural offerings are very much underrated. It's a common misconception that the influx of foreigners to the area has somewhat pushed traditional Japanese customs aside to make way for a more westernised culture.

But, before you scratch it from your 'must do' holiday list for fear of missing out on an 'authentic experience', consider this. Niseko is in Japan, a country that has been populated to some degree since the first century A.D. It's the birth place of geisha, samurai, tea ceremonies and sumo. The cities, towns and countryside are overflowing with symbols of history and heritage so, no matter which part of the country you're in, you'd have to be walking around with your helmet on backwards and headphones bolted to your ear canals to miss out.

If you need more proof of Niseko's cultural kudos, here are just a few of the experiences that will have you out of your comfort zone and knee deep in Japanese traditions in no time at all.

*Picture right: The Daibutsu is just one of dozens of temples and shrines in Kutchan. It's not always possible to see them in winter, but drop by the Kutchan Tourist Information Centre (see map p94) and if you're lucky they may be able to help you get access to a traditional place of worship like this. Photo Glen Claydon.*

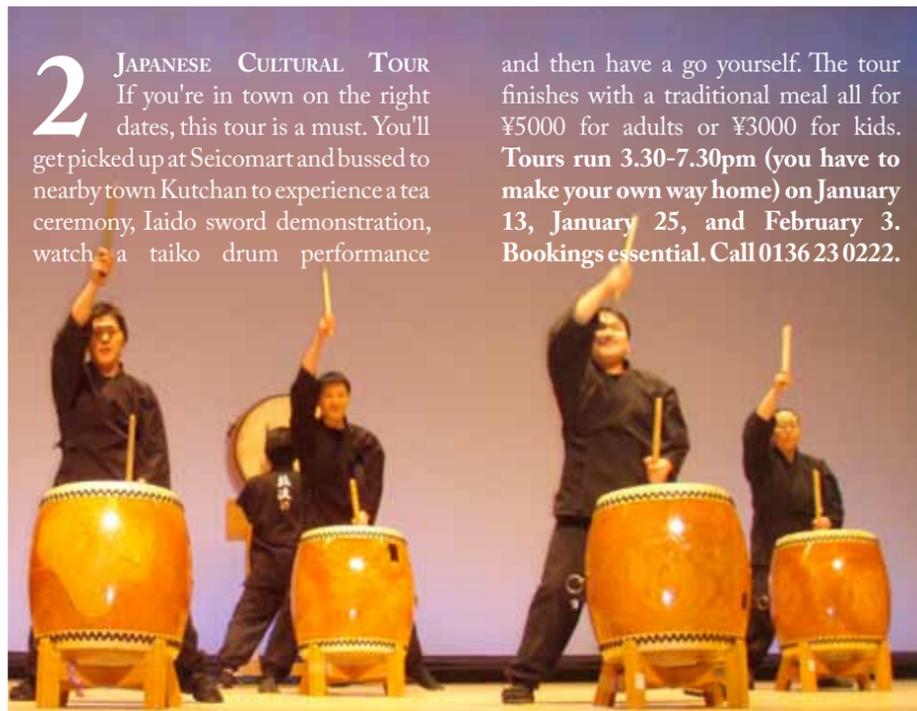
**1 HIRAFU ART GALLERY AND CULTURAL SCHOOL** For the most authentic of Japanese cultural experiences, you need look no further than the centre of Hirafu. You know the Seicomart convenience store? Cross the road towards Tamashii Bar and walk 50m down Momiji-Zaka Street and you will find the Momiji Art Gallery and the Niseko Cultural School. The gallery specialises in Japanese art and antiques, both from contemporary fine art practice as well as cultural artefacts from as far back as the Edo period – with some items for sale if you want to take a piece of Japanese history home with you.

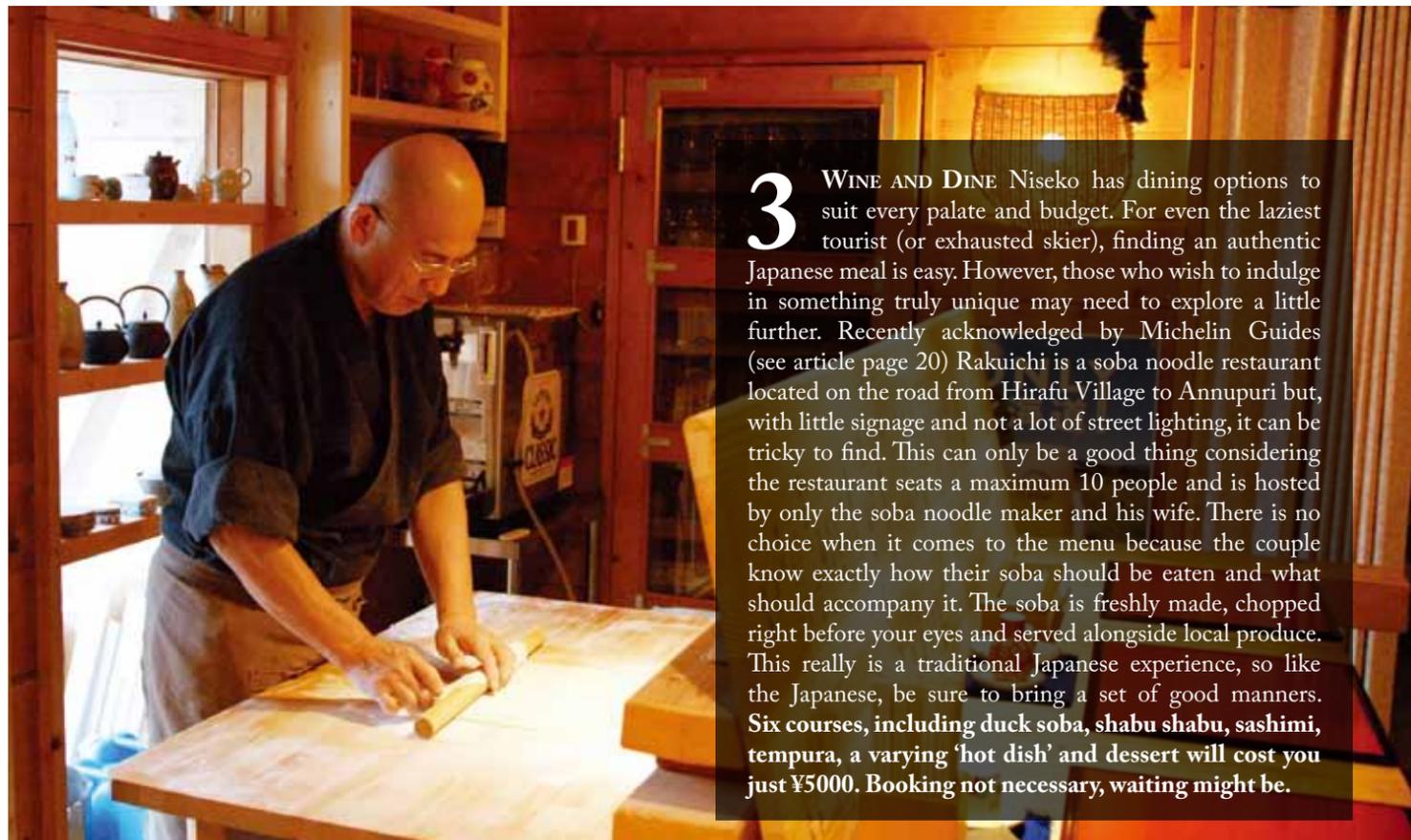
Right upstairs, Niseko Cultural School offers classes in tea ceremony, calligraphy, sushi making and more. From ¥4500. **Reservations for classes are necessary. Drop in or phone 0136 55 8585.**



**2 JAPANESE CULTURAL TOUR** If you're in town on the right dates, this tour is a must. You'll get picked up at Seicomart and bussed to nearby town Kutchan to experience a tea ceremony, Iaido sword demonstration, watch a taiko drum performance

and then have a go yourself. The tour finishes with a traditional meal all for ¥5000 for adults or ¥3000 for kids. **Tours run 3.30-7.30pm (you have to make your own way home) on January 13, January 25, and February 3. Bookings essential. Call 0136 23 0222.**





**3 WINE AND DINE** Niseko has dining options to suit every palate and budget. For even the laziest tourist (or exhausted skier), finding an authentic Japanese meal is easy. However, those who wish to indulge in something truly unique may need to explore a little further. Recently acknowledged by Michelin Guides (see article page 20) Rakuichi is a soba noodle restaurant located on the road from Hirafu Village to Annupuri but, with little signage and not a lot of street lighting, it can be tricky to find. This can only be a good thing considering the restaurant seats a maximum 10 people and is hosted by only the soba noodle maker and his wife. There is no choice when it comes to the menu because the couple know exactly how their soba should be eaten and what should accompany it. The soba is freshly made, chopped right before your eyes and served alongside local produce. This really is a traditional Japanese experience, so like the Japanese, be sure to bring a set of good manners. **Six courses, including duck soba, shabu shabu, sashimi, tempura, a varying 'hot dish' and dessert will cost you just ¥5000. Booking not necessary, waiting might be.**

**4 BIG SAPPORO LIGHTS** While it isn't Tokyo, Hokkaido's capital Sapporo still has that high-tech, bustling, big Japanese city feel to it. With a population of almost two million people, you can definitely get a taste of that 'small fish' feeling. Visiting Sapporo is an experience not to be missed. Luckily it's only a 2.5-hour train ride from Kutchan, just a short bus or train ride from Niseko. If shopping is on the agenda you need look no further than the city's main JR train station. Flanked by two large towers, both full to the brim with boutiques and brand-name stores, 'dropping coin' is easier than finding fresh lines in the backcountry. Head underground and you'll find tunnels lined with even more shopping options. After you've shopped, but before you've dropped, it's essential you visit the local entertainment district of Susukino. This is where the young people hang out, complete with spiky hair, space-cowboy get ups and an enviable cool. There are restaurants aplenty, many of them offering 'tabehodai' (all you can eat) and 'nomihodai' (all you can drink) that have been the downfall of many an over-indulging westerner. Finally, if you can stomach it, jump on the Sapporo Noria (Ferris wheel). This 45.5m-wide, 78m-tall ride offers a birds-eye view and the perfect end to your big city experience. **Take a tour with Skybus (book at Skybus.co.jp), or for a real adventure try your luck on the regular daily trains between Kutchan and Sapporo that cost about ¥2000.**



PIC NISEKO PHOTOGRAPHY

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PIC NISEKO PHOTOGRAPHY

**5 NISEKO BY NIGHT** Japan is a country that comes alive after dark. Just think of Tokyo's famous neon-lit Shibuya Crossing. Every inch of wall-space is adorned with flashy advertising so bright it should technically be offensive but, instead, the garish excessiveness leaves you awe-struck. Obviously Niseko doesn't shine in quite the same way but it has retained that custom of providing an 'other worldly' experience once the sun goes down. In fact, the resort has managed to create a night-time tradition of its very own. Night skiing has become customary to Niseko not because it was invented here, but because this is where it's been perfected. Every evening giant, high-intensity lamps are switched on and fingers of yellow light spread just far enough to reach the off-piste. Riding powder through deathly quiet trees in the almost-dark is an eerie but thrilling experience and one that's hard to replicate anywhere else in the world. But the fun of Niseko by night doesn't stop there. From lavishly decorated Singapore style basement bars to rowdy Austrian beer tents, the small village of Hirafu is home to an array of quirky drinking holes. And, finally, make sure you book into the Alpen Hotel for a karaoke session because no trip to Japan is complete unless you've performed a drunken rendition of any 80s rock ballad or completely destroyed My Heart Will Go On by Celine Dion. **Niseko Pro Powder offer two-hour guided night skiing tours for ¥15,000/person. Karaoke at The Alpen Hotel is ¥3000 per hour.**

**6 IT'S TIME FOR AN ONSEN** There's a certain contradiction associated with visiting an onsen for the first time. For centuries the Japanese have used these nude bathing houses for meditative purposes, healing the body and relaxing the mind. Western inhibitions mean we rarely appear naked in front of anyone except lovers, family and, at a stretch, our closest friends. So stepping across the threshold of an onsen can send us reeling into fits of nerve-rattling awkwardness, rather than a state of Zen. However these feelings only last until you take a deep breath and immerse yourself in the silky smooth hot water. From there it's easy to chill out and let the mix of earthly minerals work their magic. Submerged to the neck, gazing across a dreamlike snow-covered landscape through a veil of steam while snow falls silently all around, is a unique Niseko experience. The total mind and body relaxation experienced in the hours after leaving an onsen is perhaps the only thing that can beat it. Being able to soak your tired muscles and body in a 40C+ onsen after a long day skiing is one of the most amazing things about Niseko. Most onsens in Niseko have a 'rotenburo' (outdoor bathing area), magnifying the experience and offering stunning views of the Niseko landscape. Wherever you stay in Niseko, there will be an onsen nearby. But as every onsen offers a different experience, we recommend you try as many as you can. **The Yumeguri Onsen Shuttle Bus goes past most of the area's popular onsens and costs ¥500. Entry is generally between ¥500 to ¥1000.**



PIC NISEKO PHOTOGRAPHY

We recommend:

**Hirafu**

Yukoro Onsen, Hirafutei, Alpen Hotel, The Vale Niseko

**Hanazono**

Weiss Hotel Onsen

**Niseko Village**

Hilton Niseko Village (pictured above), Green Leaf Hotel

**Annapuri**

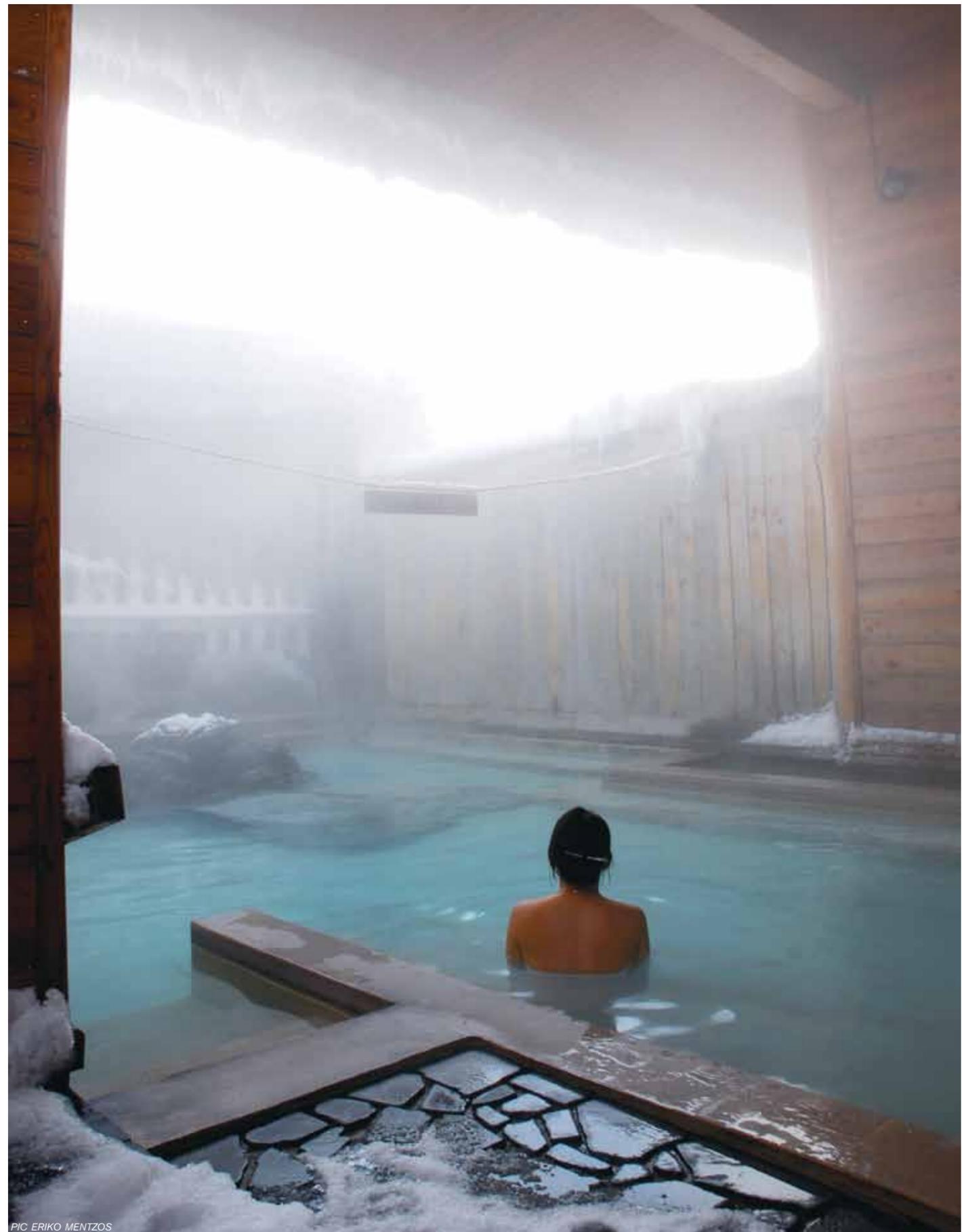
Yugokorotei, Hotel Ikoinomura

**Moiwa**

Kanronomori Hotel, The Grand Hotel (mixed sex onsen)

**Off the beaten track**

Yukichichibu, Goshiki Onsen (pictured right)



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## GROOMERS eat + drink

### Michelin rates eight great

THE BIGGEST RESTAURANT NEWS TO COME OUT of Niseko this year was the announcement of a Michelin star for two local restaurants, following the publication of the first Michelin Guide for Hokkaido. Hirafu's Kamimura received a star (see article page 22) as did Maccarina in neighbouring town Makkari. Meanwhile six more local eateries were acknowledged with 'Bib Gourmand' ratings. Defined as "Inspectors' Favourites for Good Value", Bib Gourmand restaurants offer two courses and a glass of wine or dessert for under \$40 and are of most value to locals. We're pretty sure most locals here don't have enough fingers and toes to count all of their choices fitting those criteria, but Michelin's picks were:

- **Hirafu** // Ichimura Soba
- **Annupuri** // Rakuichi Soba, Del Sole (pizza)
- **Kutchan** // Nakama Ramen (noodles), Yôteizan Soba
- **Niseko Town** // Hanayoshi (sushi, pictured below)



### New restaurants and bars

PLENTY NEW RESTAURANTS AND BARS ARE OPENING AROUND town this year and a few more making changes. Here's a few to get you started, and if they're doing a good job, vote for them for the Best of Niseko by emailing the business name to [bestofniseko@powderlife.com](mailto:bestofniseko@powderlife.com).

- Kushi Dining Tanaka** // Hirafu Intersection in J-Sekka building
- 7 Stars Café** // Hirafu Intersection in J-Sekka building
- Green Farm Café** // Hirafu Intersection, right on the corner
- Yama Dining** // Upper Hirafu in Yama Shizen West building
- The Vale Cellar** // Upper Village in The Vale
- Lars Longox Umbrella Bar** // Upper Village, Hirafu Zaka Street
- Snow Castle** // Upper Hirafu in Chalet Ivy

### Eat like a sumo wrestler in Kutchan

"SUMO WRESTLERS DON'T eat until noon," Satoshi Okawa says. "They practice early in the morning until they've got an appetite, then eat until they can't eat anymore." 62-year old Hokkaido local Okawa-san (pictured left) recalls the strict eating regime he had to follow during his days as a sumo wrestler. He had a five-year sumo wrestling career at the Asahiyama-beya stable in Tokyo in the third highest and most heavily contested sumo division, the Makushita division.

Forty years later and Okawa-san brings to Kutchan what famous wrestler Konishiki once called a legal steroid – "chankonabe". Konishiki bulked up to 287kg with the help of this protein rich stew which is the main course of a sumo meal. Okawa-san has been successful in the chankonabe business for 35 years. Last year he opened Ryogoku, named after the centre of sumo wrestling culture in Tokyo. As you will see, Ryogoku is not just about food, but also immersing yourself in sumo culture. The restaurant is an exhibition of Okawa-san's professional past. Pictures, tournament schedules and the Yokozuna belt of former sumo champion Kitanoumi are on display.

Choose from four chankonabe sets with salt, kimchi and miso broth and up to 22 different types of meat and vegetables. Prices range from ¥1500 to ¥2000. Address 24-12 Nishi 2 Kita 3. Phone 0136 55 5875.



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3 kind of cheese bread cream baked	900 yen
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# kamimura

Niseko's new Michelin star

By | Kristian Lund

WHEN I INTERVIEWED YUICHI Kamimura for this article in November 2012 – via mobile phone shortly after he had landed in Shanghai for a 'research trip' – it was six months since world-renowned Michelin Guides awarded his Niseko restaurant a coveted star in April. However it wasn't until December that he served a Niseko patron as a Michelin-starred chef. "The winter was over and I had closed for the summer while my new restaurant was being built – I was so surprised. I still haven't served anyone since then!"

When he did serve the first course in his famous degustation style, it was in his new restaurant inside the recently completed Shiki building in the centre of Hirafu. "Seven years ago I opened a 12-seat restaurant in Sapporo. Then five years ago I moved to Niseko with 40 seats. My new restaurant in Shiki has a bigger kitchen and 50 seats and it's in a better location."

Kamimura-san is the protégé of Tetsuya Wakada, a three-star Michelin chef heading the kitchen of one of Australia's best restaurants, Tetsuya's.

In April, the renowned Michelin Guides launched a Hokkaido edition for the first time – a welcome recognition of the quality of Hokkaido food. Hokkaido is known as the 'food bowl of Japan' and Kamimura hopes Michelin's recognition will help elevate the region's status as a food destination. "It's a huge chance to get exposure for Niseko as a food destination. I hope it's going to bring more people to Niseko, and I think it's a great thing for Hokkaido."

**Kamimura is open all winter and all of next summer in 2013.** ☺



STAR CLASS... the man himself, Kamimura-san, left. And a selection of his colourful and creative Michelin-star-quality dishes. Food pics Glen Claydon.

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# Pioneering paradise

From gravel track to powder turns. Niseko has come a long way in the past 50 years. And looks set to go a lot further in the next.

Story | Ian MacKenzie

CROSSING THE ST MORITZ BRIDGE heading into Hirafu at night and the lights look like a tangled jewel necklace on a dark shoulder, snow falling on misty shapes. The first of two traffic lights is 3km from the lifts. The New Ginrei Lodge stands to your right as you drive in, as if standing guard in much the same way as the original Ginreiso did for many years towards the top of Hirafu Zaka Street, before it was sold and knocked down.

Ginreiso was one of the many Japanese-style lodges built in the 1970s. After the 1972 Olympics in Sapporo, skiing took off with the famous ski movie *Watashi wo sukii ni tsuretete (Take Me Skiing)* capturing the Japanese imagination. Blue roof, tatami floors, futons, communal

bathrooms and canteen, cheerfully run by the Okada family, it represented the old guard. A generation and style of lodging that has disappeared and been replaced by something more modern and international over the past 10 years.

Originally, Niseko was an onsen (hot spring) resort, the first of which was built in 1897 by K. Yamada at the base of the Onsenzawa run, in between the Ace and King lifts as they are now. The names Ace and King are derived from the two lodges that first stood at the base of the mountain – Alpen Sansou and Kogen Sansou, that later became the Alpen Hotel and the Kogen Hotel respectively.

The tang of slightly rotten eggs as you ski to Centre Four comes from sulphur,

the staple export of Hokkaido in the late 19th and early 20th century. The Yamada Onsen stood at the base of the mountain for 15 years before Theodore von Lerch from the Austria-Hungary military trained the Japanese army to ski at Mt Annupuri in 1911. Fifty years later in 1961, the Niseko Kogen Kanko Co Ltd began lift operations.

Niseko Annupuri opened in 1972, Niseko Village (Niseko Higashiyama, as it was then) opened in 1982, and Hanazono 10 years later. Over 20 years, the resort grew to include four resorts, eventually combining to form the Niseko United in 1993.

A steady stream of excited pioneers from Honshu (the Japanese mainland)

began to settle in Niseko after holiday experiences here, building pensions, lodges and hotels. As recently as 10 years ago, the majority of skiers stayed at lodges such as Lodge Uranaka, Sakae, Ginreiso, Fuji Lodge and Takagi Sanso. Each of these lodges was built on the gravel road that climbed the mountain through brush and forest to the base of Yamada Onsen from the traffic lights on Route 343 near Seicomart. Each one had a rich and deep history of hosting visitors to Niseko as the forest below them slowly disappeared to be replaced by hotels, izakayas (Japanese tapas-style restaurants), pensions, traffic lights, tarmac roads and souvenir shops.

As the lodges like Ginreiso and the pensions slowly disappear to be replaced



LOOKING BACK... Main pic: Hirafu Zaka Street taken from about the Alpen Hotel circa 1950s, with the future lift line marked on the right (photo courtesy Hidetoshi Sato). Below: the same aspect taken from a little further down the street in 2011 (photo Glen Claydon). Below left: the first lift in 1962 (photos courtesy Kutchan Tourism Association). Bottom: the King Bell Hut 1979 (photo courtesy Hidetoshi Sato).





Right: A photo taken from Hirafu's first lift in what is believed to be spring of 1962, at the end of its first winter of operation. In the distance, a gravel Hirafu Zaka Street from the traffic lights where the Seicomart is, up to the Kogen Sansou and old Yamada Onsen, where the Welcome Centre and Hirafu No1 car park are now (photo courtesy Hidetoshi Sato).

Below: Believed to be taken in the early 1960s, looking up from Kogen Sansou (what became the Kogen Hotel) above the car park (photo courtesy Hidetoshi Sato).

Left: Hidetoshi Sato (photo Mike Richards), long lift lines and some of the first people ever to use the lifts in Niseko, 1962... "Please raise your ski tips up" (photo courtesy Kutchan Tourism Association).

Top left: Taisetsukaku Lodge in 1962, roughly where the Welcome Centre is now and just above the car park. Kogen Sansou beyond (photo courtesy Kutchan Tourism Association).



by modern sleek developments, so too do the stories. Before Niseko was a ski resort, the Hakodate mainline railway brought visitors to Niseko for the views and onsens but also brought telemark skiers and locals who had been introduced to skiing by the European masters.

Avid skiers would complete the hike to the peak in two and half hours on wooden skis with leather boots and bear-trap bindings, a single pole to help them turn. No hotels stood between the Yamada Onsen and the Hirafu Station about 2km below the village. They would gleefully ski all the way down to the station through wooded slopes.

During winter, **Hidetoshi Sato** (pictured) can be found in the Welcome

Centre, built in 1977. He is a happy man, tanned skin and cheerful smile, well-set, slipping quickly from English to Japanese with the careful grace of someone carving down the Super Course run.

This year will be his 35th season in Niseko. He first came as a junior high school student in 1970 and stayed at the Alpen Sansou, where the Alpen Hotel now stands. There was a total of seven places to stay. Kogen Hotel, Yamada Onsen, Victoria Lodge (now Blowhard), Takagi Sansou, Ginreisou and the Hirafu Kankou Hotel which later became the J First.

Sato-san opens up a worn leather filofax, bulging with notes and a biro, and turns to a page in the back full of neat

characters and colour coded data. His fingers move over the items, recalling dates and places.

He began work at the Alpen Sansou as a bartender in 1977 and, with the 50 or so locals who lived in Hirafu, skied the thigh-deep powder just off the groomed runs on thin 2m boards, tips raised slightly, perfecting the *raseru* manoeuvre (a human snowplough), powder snow arcing over head and shoulders. There were no boundary ropes and no patrollers to warn you of the dangers. Experts would hike the peak and ski the north face only after carefully assessing conditions.

In 1982, the lower village became a jungled mass of land lots and gravel roads. Pensions appeared, the first of which were

Full Note, Mt Base and Penguin Mura. Taisetsukaku, which would later become the Scot Hotel, was built and more lodges appeared in time for the Japanese ski movie-inspired leisure boom. The Alpen Hotel was expanded to include more guest rooms and a swimming pool.

From 1988 to 1992, 27 years after the first lifts began turn, Japanese people travelled to Niseko in droves, as did pension owners and young local farmers looking for work in the winter.

The peculiar allure of Niseko, like a siren in the powder, tempted a new kind of pioneer in the late 90s and turn of the new century. Murmurs of endlessly deep powder snow began to drift over the internet as thrill seekers began to search

for the Holy Grail of powder skiing and boarding. Much like their Honshu brethren before them, Australians began to arrive at lodges, pensions and backpacker lodges run by 'gaijin' (foreigners). In 2001 the Snow Japan website had two properties in Niseko to choose from, Hirafu Chalet and Niseko Chalet, and only three companies sold packages to Niseko – Niseko-Hirafu Snow Tours (now Niseko Powder Connection), Deep Powder Tours and Snowave (now Skijapan.com). A total of 2500 foreigners visited Niseko in that season. Last year that number was 45,000.

The steady stream of skiers and boarders looking for great snow and a cheap alternative to expensive, slick North

American resorts soon became families seeking self contained accommodation, ski-in/ski-out units, with concierge services, ski schools, private transfers, and resort office services. The gaijin pioneers began to develop condominiums, a real estate boom began and Niseko began to attract much more attention.

With the purchase of the Hanazono resort from Tokyu Resort Service (which owns Hirafu), Nihon Harmony Resorts brought a higher level of marketing and branding to a destination that had been careening forward on the strength of webpages and owner/operator tour companies; gaijin learning the ropes as they started to experience figures like 200 per cent growth from season to season.

Circa  
1980



Photo courtesy Hidetoshi Sato

2008



Photo Aaron Jamieson / Niseko Photography

November  
2012



Photo Aaron Jamieson / Niseko Photography

Niseko has always developed in a ramshackle fashion, with onsens, resorts, lodges, and pensions popping up in no particular order and under no strict covenant. And along with that has come kindred souls being called to the powdery mountain, unable to resist. Each generation has one thing in common – they have all been compelled to stay a little longer and make Niseko a more meaningful part of their life. Not just a holiday, something more.

Okada-san has built a new Ginrei at the traffic lights. His guests will look at Mt Yōtei as they eat breakfast. He has learned that there is a different way for his guests to enjoy an ever-changing Niseko.

Sato-san starts his 35th season welcoming guests to Niseko as they alight buses at the Welcome centre at the Hirafu No1 car park. He has his notebook and photo albums that show the dense forest and lonely lodges, the lift construction over the past 30 years, and the gravel road and forest where The Barn and Kimamaya now stand next to his house. Like Ginreiso, he has sold his home and is moving to Yōtei no Sato, a quiet enclave of houses 2km from the Welcome Centre. He looks forward to seeing Niseko grow and become a year-round resort. Not just a place to ski but a place to hike, cycle, learn, relax and enjoy the beautiful food, water and scenery.

The name Niseko means ‘a mountain facing a precipice’ in the ancient language of the indigenous Ainu of Hokkaido and likely refers to the towering waterfall Haru no Taki (Spring Waterfall) in the gully beyond the left of the Ace Quad lift above the Alpen Hotel. It may also refer to the challenges that Niseko presents, the precipice that each new visitor faces, the chance for renewal, change and enjoyment.

From gravel roads and forests to condominiums and Michelin star restaurants, Niseko continues to pioneer the winter experience in Japan.

IAN MACKENZIE HAS SKIED NISEKO WINTERS AND GOLFED NISEKO SUMMERS SINCE 1999. HE'S OWNED AND OPERATED SEVERAL COMPANIES IN NISEKO AND LAST YEAR FOUNDED BESPOKE TRAVEL SERVICE NISEKO WOW. ☺

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# The end of the earth

Hokkaido's Shiretoko Peninsula is one of the most spectacularly rugged places in Japan. And like Niseko, it saves its best for winter.

Story | **Greg Lund**

SO HIGHLY REGARDED IS SHIRETOKO AS A UNIQUE WILDERNESS area that in 2006 it was formally designated a World Heritage site – only the third in Japan to be so recognised by UNESCO. Shiretoko, in the language of the native Ainu inhabitants of Hokkaido, means ‘the end of the earth’. And once experienced, it is easy to imagine how it got its name.

If you take a map of Hokkaido and draw a line from Niseko, close to the west coast, diagonally across the island to the north-east coast, your attention is drawn to a long, thin, sliver of land that juts – dagger-like – out into the North Pacific. Less than 100km long, and unpopulated for most of its length, it is one of the most remote, and spectacularly rugged places in Japan. A high mountainous spine rears sharply up from a very narrow coastal plain, characterised by weathered basalt cliffs over which numerous rivers and hot spring waterfalls tumble down into incredibly clear, aqua ocean.

It is home to very few people, but a wonderful variety of exotic flora and fauna. The star inhabitants are an estimated 300 or more

brown bears. Weighing up to 400kg and related to the North American grizzly, these wonderful animals can be seen at close quarters for most of the year, except winter. In autumn, when the salmon run upstream to spawn, the bears delight visitors with their fish-catching skills as they seek to stack on protein and fat in preparation for hibernation over the long, cold winter.

Thousands of Ezoshika – a deer native to Hokkaido – roam the peninsula and are the source of excellent venison dishes in the hunting season (outside the national park).

The peninsula is also the last safe habitat of one of the world's most spectacular owls, a very large species known locally as shima fukuro, but elsewhere as Blackiston's Fish Owls. Growing to a height of up to 70cm and with a wing span nearing 2m, these extraordinary nocturnal creatures are being nursed back from the brink of extinction in the national park. Sitting neck deep in a rotenburo (open air hot spring bath) under the stars with a cold beer on a still night listening to the call of the shima-fukuro is an experience not easily forgotten.



PIG AZ / NISEKO PHOTOGRAPHY

Like Niseko though, Shiretoko saves its spectacular best for winter, when floating pack ice emanating from the Siberian coast is driven by the north west monsoon to jam up against the coastline of the peninsula, forming a shelf of solid, undulating, creaking and groaning ice that stretches to the horizon.

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





PIC AZ / NISEKO PHOTOGRAPHY



PIC YASUHIRO YAMAMOTO



nutrient-rich fresh water into the northern end of the Sea of Okhotsk, near 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 powder snow – out across the Okhotsk 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, typically from around the end of January. It remains snagged there for more than a month. 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. The ice is extraordinarily rugged, pushed constantly by the wind against the unyielding basalt cliffs, and compressed and driven upwards into fantastically shaped outcrops.

In addition to simply marvelling at this panorama from the peninsula, 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. It's 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.

For the more adventurous, it is possible to have an even closer encounter with the spectacle. It is possible to dive out underneath the ice, but for the average *Powderlife* reader a less extreme option is to hire an experienced guide to take a trek out onto the 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. 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.

Sadly, this spectacular winter event appears to be falling victim to the predations of global warming. 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.

All this suggests that there is no better time to start planning a side tour to Shiretoko from Niseko soon. There are flights from Chitose to Memanbetsu, with a bus ride to the peninsula, or train services to Abashiri and bus connections from there.

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.

GREG LUND IS A FORMER DIPLOMAT WHO HAS LIVED IN JAPAN FOR MUCH OF THE PAST 30 YEARS, THE PAST 10 IN HOKKAIDO. ☺



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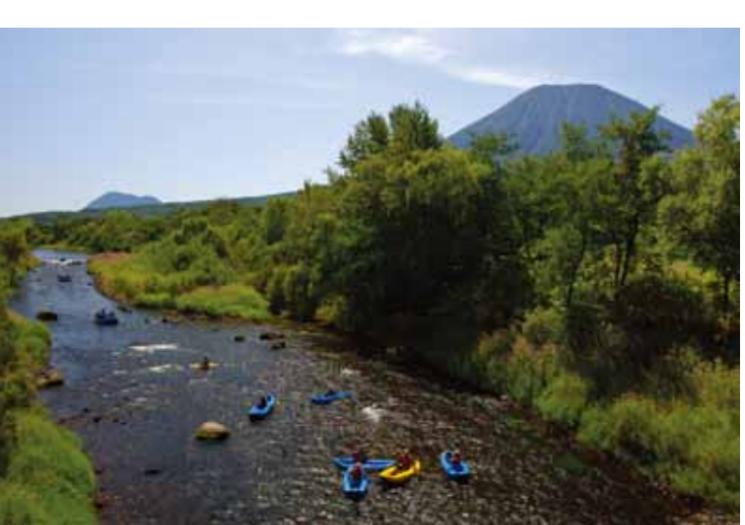
WAIST DEEP four seasons feature

# After the melt

After six months of clouds and cold, the sun comes out and uncovers a whole new world. You'll be amazed at what lies beneath.

Story | **Magnus Alexander**





ABOVE THREE PICS GLEN CLAYDON



PIC AZ / NISEKO PHOTOGRAPHY

## The green season

SOMETHING YOU OFTEN HEAR FROM BOTH JAPANESE AND foreigners who now call Niseko home is: "I came for the winter, but stayed for the summer". Niseko is a spectacular place after the melt. Following months of relentless snowfall, the sun finally dominates. Within days of the snow melting back a myriad of tiny plants can be seen emerging. After waiting patiently beneath metres of snow for almost half a year they've seized their chance and reach towards the sun. Over the coming weeks billions of these little plants will shoot upwards and outwards faster than the snow can disappear. The barren white landscape of winter will be rapidly replaced by a lush, dense, living green. The air is crisp and clean and locals relish the natural warmth of the sun's rays on their skin. Water from the melting snow inundates the rich volcanic earth and life is everywhere. The vegetation is thick, from the undergrowth to the tree tops. A richer green is hard to imagine. People are drawn to outside pursuits to take in the environment, breathe the sweet air and drink from the pristine water sources.

Niseko is tailor made for outdoor activities. Ironically it's the very same landscape and weather that makes winter so special that plays a big part in making summer the same. Mountains to hike or ride, cliffs to climb, high peaks to conquer and even paraglide off. Melting snow fills wild rivers with enough power to offer world class rapids in spring, before subsiding later in summer to provide gentle streams to drift down and dive into. The list of outdoor activities is endless – golf, cycling, rafting, kayaking, canyoning, wakeboarding, fly fishing, paragliding, surfing, hiking, mountain climbing and much, much more.

To top it all off the climate could rightfully be described as perfect. Forty two degrees north of the equator, Niseko escapes the oppressive heat and humidity of the rest of Japan and Asia, instead enjoying a long, dry, warm spring-summer period. The temperature rarely tops 30C (86F). It's like enjoying the best outdoor landscape on offer anywhere in Asia, with the air conditioner set to medium.



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In summer 2012 a group of 25 kids from Hong Kong travelled to Niseko for two weeks of fun, education and adventure on the EdVenture Niseko Summer Camp. The kids enjoyed an endless range of experiences that were a world away from their lives back home. They rode horses and played in mountain streams, visited farms and milked cows, made bread and picked fruit and vegetables straight out of the ground. While the kids had the time of their lives, parents were perhaps even more blown away. Hong Kong expat, father of two and managing director of Niseko Country Resort Eddie Guillemette said the green season was the future of Niseko. "It's easy to see when you get a bunch of Asian and expat kids who spend their whole lives in a concrete jungle escape a terribly hot summer to Niseko," says Eddie. "To see our kids milking a cow, getting eggs from under a chicken, tending to gardens... it's nothing like anything they experience back home". For details about future camps visit [www.edventureglobal.com](http://www.edventureglobal.com).

## Autumn offers one more spectacle...

If spring and summer weren't full enough of surprises, autumn is yet another highlight of the year. A week or two after the vegetation at the top of Niseko's mountains begins to change from the deep, rich green of summer to a patchwork of yellows, browns and reds, the same happens in the villages in the foothills. It's a spectacular display of nature and one of many locals' favourite times of the year. Not only are they immersed in the vibrant new colours, it also feels like the prelude to winter – the opening scene before the main event.

On the first of the cold, rainy days there's every chance you can look up at the top of the mountains and see the clouds part and snow dusting their peaks. Within a month or two dustings will become deluges, and a thick blanket of snow will extinguish all colour. By now the bikes and golf clubs are in storage and the skis and boards have been unstashed once again.



PIC YASU / NISEKO PHOTOGRAPHY



PIC YASU / NISEKO PHOTOGRAPHY

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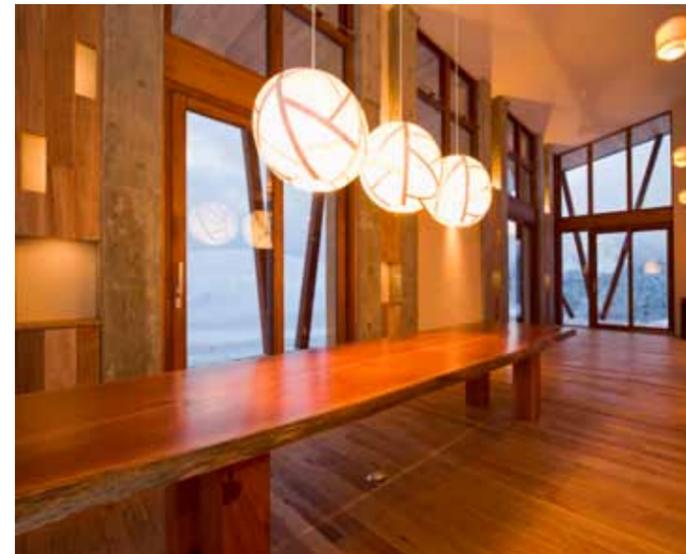
WAIST DEEP architectural feature

# Places called home

By | Kristian Lund



Niseko is no longer just a holiday destination. It's rapidly becoming a lifestyle destination and hundreds of foreigners now call it "home".



## A home for all seasons

**CONCEPT ARCHITECT**  
Riccardo Tossani Architecture  
**TECHNICAL ARCHITECT**  
AI Construction  
**BUILDER**  
Ishizuka Kensetsu  
**PROJECT MANAGER**  
Niseko Real Estate

JUST A SNOWBALL'S THROW FROM HIRAFU – AT THE FOOT OF MT YŌTEI ON A 10-HECTARE property bordering the Shiribetsu River – this house is truly a home for all seasons. Built for a family to live in year round, it was designed to capture Yōtei, the ski hill, and its surrounds. “The concept was to blend in with the surrounding shirakaba (silver birch) trees,” says its owner, an Australian who has lived in Niseko for 15 years. “We wanted large opening windows and a deck wrapping around the house to merge the inside-outside experience. In summer it’s truly beautiful.”

The interior uses a combination of recycled Japanese timbers and Australian eucalypts – exotic hardwood that gave the local builders’ saw blades a work out like they’d never seen before. Historical local timber was rescued from a decrepit tea house built during Hokkaido’s herring-trade boom about 120 years ago. Sandstone blocks were also salvaged from old warehouses in nearby Otaru and Yoichi and used both inside and outside.

Architect Riccardo Tossani says the surrounding landscape inspired the design. “Reflecting the geometries of indigenous Silver Birch forests, the deep colonnades provide shelter from the heavy snow in winter, and shade from the summer sun, creating an all-season ‘outdoor room’ from which to enjoy the exquisite landscape. Elevating the residence above the deep winter snows, the deeply cantilevered, wrap-around verandahs allow the building to ‘float’ above site.”

**PHOTOGRAPHY** Glen Claydon



# Hanazono House

## CONCEPT / INTERIOR

Shouya Grigg

## ARCHITECT

Makoto Nakayama

## BUILDER

Town Kensetsu

## PROJECT MANAGER

Sekka Style / Nakayama Architects



SHOUYA GRIGG SEARCHED A LONG TIME UNTIL he found the perfect piece of land on which to create his masterpiece – Hanazono House.

Despite its seclusion – see the orange glow of the rusted corten steel exterior in the right of the top right picture – it's just minutes drive to the Hanazono ski resort and the local town Kutchan, and just a few minutes further to Niseko's main resort Hirafu.

While the 600sqm, five-bedroom house itself is a work of art, the creative photographer, graphic designer and man behind the Sekka brand says it's looking outside that gives him most inspiration here.

"The windows here are like picture frames," Shouya says. "The views outside, no matter what season, are like an evolving painting on a wall. I don't look outside in winter and see cold, wind and snow. As an artist I see pictures."

"This house gives me a lot of inspiration for my work. The way the snow comes down, the way it blows through the trees, the way it sticks to the windows, the way it drifts – here it's like living in an art gallery."

Mt Yōtei is ever present, commanding and sometimes appearing so close it could well be a part of the sprawling 15,000 tsubo (5ha) property. With the only sign of life being Kutchan town's houses just speckled thumbnails in the distance, Hanazono House is in a land of its own.



PHOTOGRAPHY Shouya Grigg



## Eco 260

### CONCEPT DESIGNER

Bernard Gauthier

### CONSULTING ARCHITECT

Kanamaru Sekkei

### BUILDER

Shintaihei

### PROJECT MANAGER

Niseko RDC

### PHOTOGRAPHY

Aaron Jamieson /  
Niseko Photography

FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS, BERNARD Gauthier now designs homes for himself around the world as a hobby. And now the Frenchman chooses to spend about three months every year in his Hirafu labour of love – Eco 260. For Bernard, Niseko is paradise. “Here there’s peace and quiet, safety and no worries,” he says. “For me, this is a paradise, and that’s why I built my house here.”

The 932sqm, six-storey, six-bedroom mansion in the Hirafu Middle Village was named after its environmentally friendly, self-sustaining features. And of course for its unparalleled 260-degree views from the huge open-plan living area on the top floor.

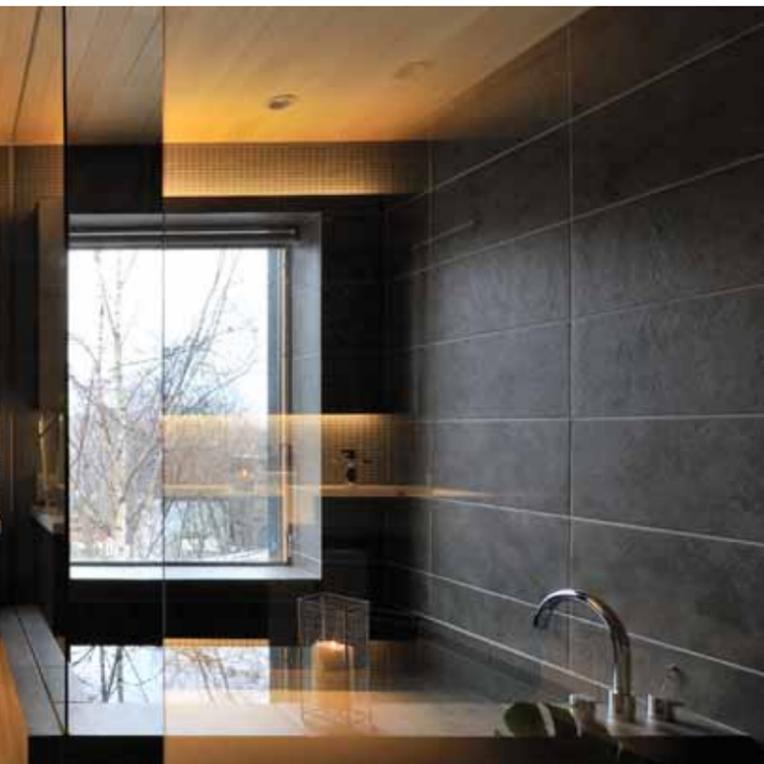
The environment is of utmost importance to Bernard and wife Lily. Eco 260 has 20 geothermal bore holes, all 115m deep, that provide all the heat required for the pool, jacuzzi, driveway and floor heating. When sunny, 54 solar panels produce enough power that it’s sold back to the national grid to offset winter consumption.

And as for the views, the outlooks from every room in the house are stunning. But perhaps the most spectacular, Bernard says, is Mt Annupuri at night. “It’s an amazing view of Mt Yōtei to wake up to every day, but I find myself eating dinner facing the opposite direction to look at the mountain alive with skiers at night.”

Bernard designed every element of the house, from the giant swinging front door to the custom tap fittings. “I designed everything in the house because I know what I want,” he says. “I don’t want to live in a house of an architect – I want to live in my house that I designed.”

The *piece de la resistance* within Eco 260 is undoubtedly the 10mx4m stainless steel swimming pool – the only pool within a private residence in Hirafu. “What can I say, I wanted a stainless steel swimming pool,” Bernard says. “I have the same pool in Switzerland. I can’t explain it – with stainless steel you feel something great under your feet.”





# Kasetu

**CONCEPT DESIGNER**  
West Canada Homes  
**ARCHITECT**  
Endo Atelier  
**BUILDER**  
Ishizuka Kensetsu  
**PROJECT MANAGER**  
West Canada Homes

IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG FOR THE HONG KONG-based owners of Kasetu to decide they wanted to build a house in Niseko. "We started looking for land on the second day of our first visit," they said. "Now each time we return to Kasetu, we feel like we're home in a way that is similar to being in our home in Hong Kong."

The family now comes to Niseko several times a year to relax, enjoy the natural environment in both summer and winter, escape the heat and hustle and bustle of Hong Kong, and to enjoy the local cuisine. "And most importantly, creating wonderful and new family memories for our kids, each and every time we visit."

The home's name itself ties Niseko in with the family. The children's names all share a common Chinese character 佳 (ka), which means 'excellent'. The second character 雪 (setsu, or yuki) is 'snow'. The Japanese kanji character combination of these two characters therefore has the meaning 'excellent snow'.

The local dining options are a big part of Niseko's appeal for the family, along with the incredible variety of family activities available year round. "The Niseko area is like an onion – we're constantly discovering new layers. We love exploring the outdoors with our kids, whether in ski boots, hiking boots or sandals. Also, enjoying the fabulous culinary offerings at local restaurants or just cooking at home the amazingly fresh and delicious local produce."

Having spent time in ski resorts like Whistler, Breckenridge and Squaw Valley, the family knew what they wanted. "We sought to maintain the comfort and function of a traditional alpine lodge, while infusing the design with modern themes and Japanese elements. Our overriding design objective was to make Kasetu warm, cosy and family-friendly."

PHOTOGRAPHY Kotaka

# Seshu

**ARCHITECT**  
 Kazuhide Ishide  
**BUILDER**  
 Housing Operation Architects  
**PROJECT MANAGEMENT**  
 Taiga Projects  
**INTERIOR DESIGN**  
 Kazuhide Ishide/  
 Keith Rodgers



PHOTOGRAPHY Glen Claydon

FOR THE OWNERS OF SESHU, THEIR NISEKO HOME AWAY FROM home represents life in a unique, powder-covered landscape. "Seshu for us represents a tranquil place in a winter wonderland, culturally and climatically diverse from our Australian home," say owners Priya Selva-Nayagam and Craig James. "We love bringing friends to our house, sharing the warmth of its spaces, the smell and look of the local Hokkaido timber, relaxing in the hot tub or indulging in the remarkable local produce. Time behaves differently in Niseko." The building's name is inspired by famous Japanese painter Tōyō Sesshū in line with their love of art. The kanji characters that make up the name also mean "snow boat", reflecting the roofline which resembles the prow of a ship. Project manager Keith Rodgers says the roof is a defining feature. "The roofline drove our design, curving up across the front, with the extended eaves angling inwards, then upwards," Rodgers says. "It's a timber-frame house and we wanted to showcase the abilities of the remarkable Japanese tradesmen." ☺



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THE WOODS  
AT NISEKO



# A thousand words

If a picture says a thousand words, there's no better way to describe skiing and snowboarding in and around Niseko than the next 10 pages.



*Mt Yotei... Various perspectives of our favourite semi-dormant volcano.*

*Previous page: Jesse Flanagan taking in the unique scenery on the way back down the Kutchan face. Photo Glen Claydon.*

*Above: The stars had aligned for Niseko Photography's Aaron Jamieson when he snapped Powderlife co-founder Bevan Colless and his dog Yuuki in Yotei-zan's crater on a perfect day.*

*Left: A classic Hirafu bluebird powder day. Photo Yasuyuki Shimanuki, Niseko Photography.*

*Right: The opposite perspective – riding down Mt Yotei towards Mt Annupuri. Photo Glen Claydon.*





*POWDER SHOTS...Local photographer Glen Claydon landed the dream job as official photographer for the Warren Miller film crew as they filmed for their feature film 'Flowstate'. The 10-day shoot was guided around Niseko by Clayton Kernaghan from Black Diamond Tours who lead the team into the best locations the area has to offer. Glen's shots were used to promote the movie and for the Warren Miller magazine Snowworld sold at the screenings.*

*Left: Roman Rohrmoser, back flip at Goshiki Onsen.*

*Right: Tyler Ceccanti loved the tree runs at Niseko Village.*



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**POWDER SHOTS**



*POWDER TRIP... This series of photos was taken by Jordan Manley while touring with Arc'teryx-sponsored skiers Chad Sayers and Forrest Coots. After several days of non-stop powder in Niseko under the guidance of Black Diamond Tours, they jumped in the "BD Big Rig" and scored three bluebird days at Tokachidake.*

*Above: Chad Sayers bringing the heat above the volcanic steam vents. This shot appeared in a recent issue of Powderlife's much bigger, badder brother, Powder Magazine.*

*Left: Forrest Coots getting deep above the Tokachi snow ghosts.*

*Right: Forrest dwarfed by a giant Tokachi pine.*





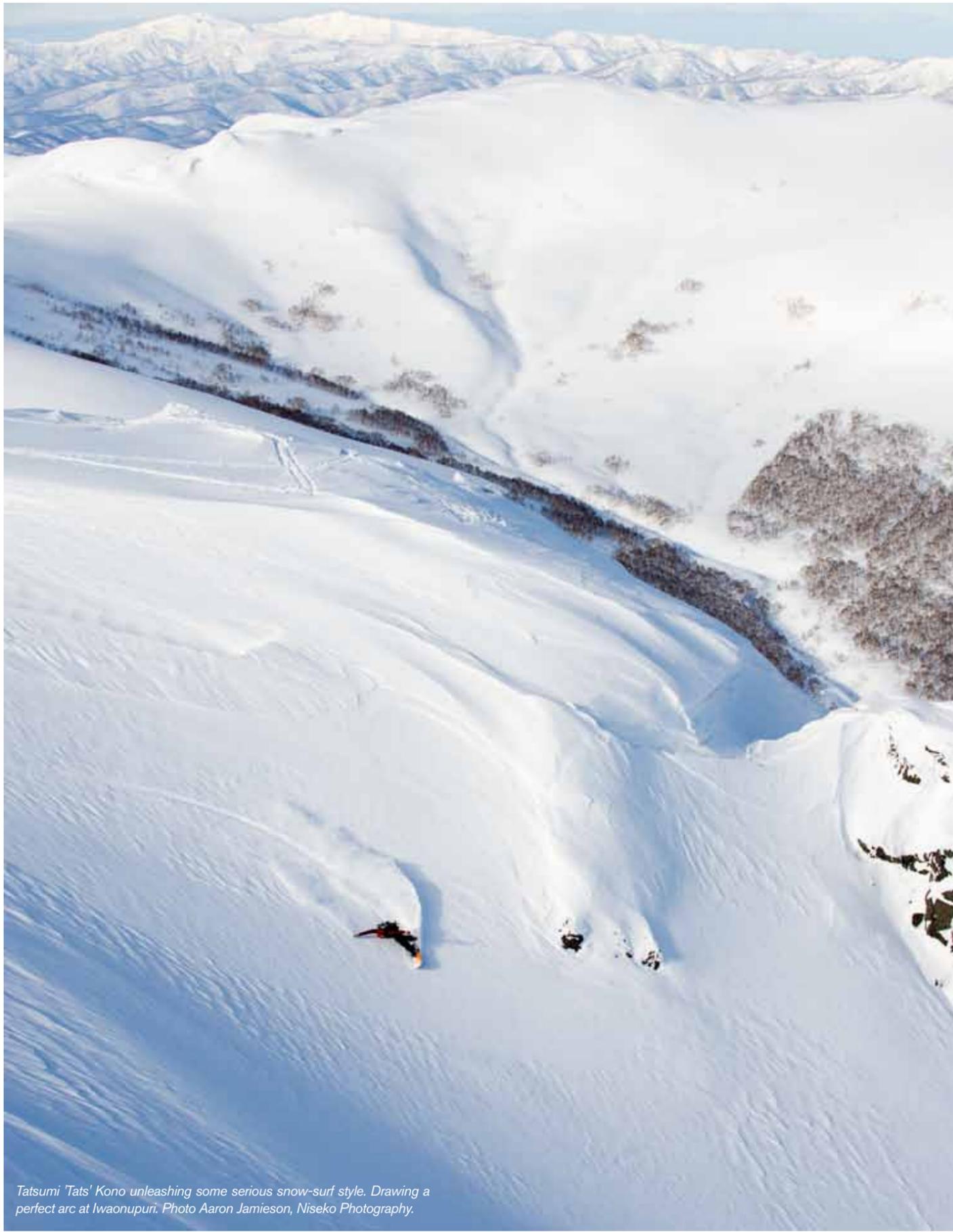
*SKIP THE QUEUES... Don't like waiting in line? If you're prepared to hike up, you're almost guaranteed fresh lines down.*

*Left: Two boarders leave fresh tracks on the least-skied face of Mt Annupuri... the Peak down to Goshiki Onsen. Photo Glen Claydon.*

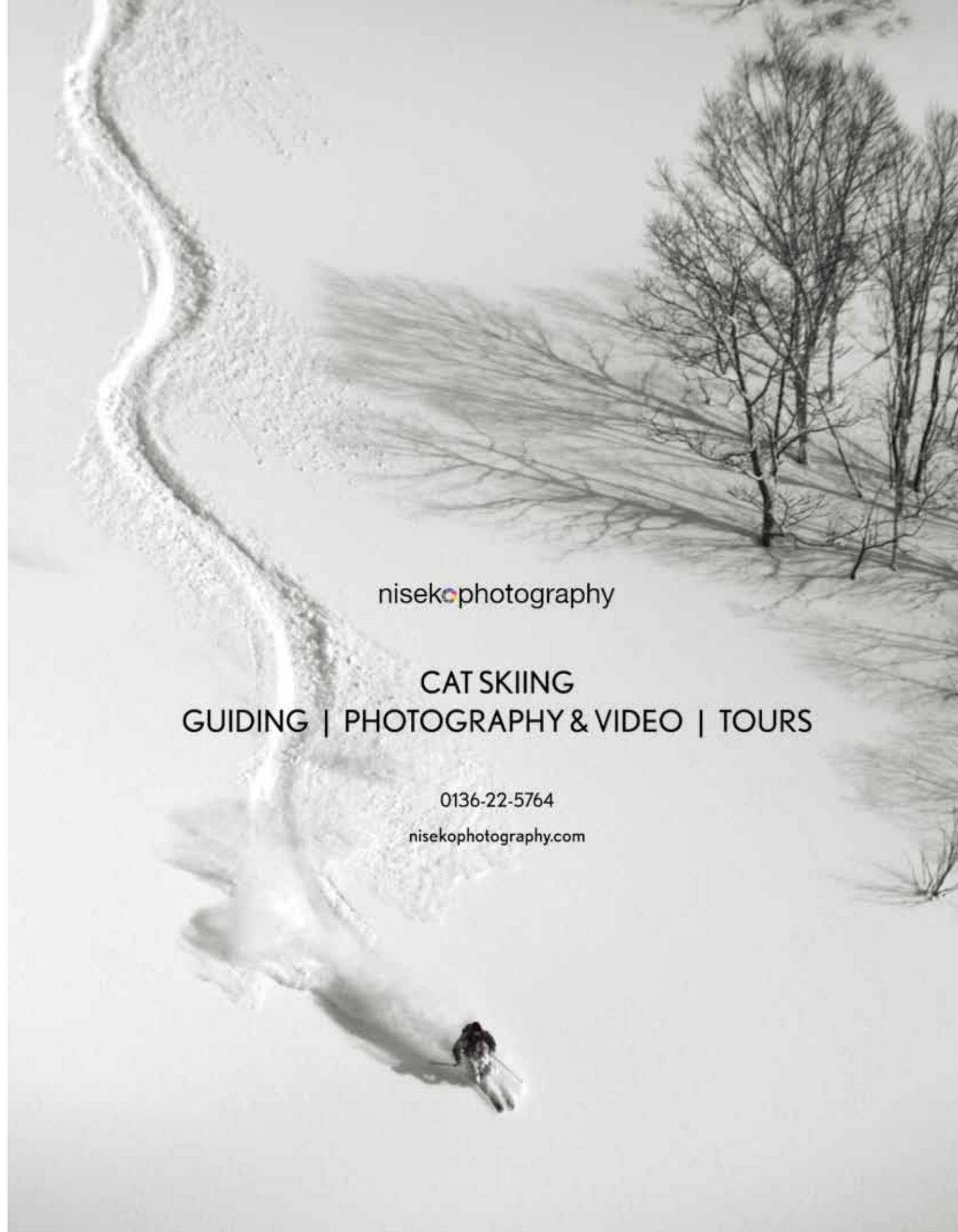
*Above: Hiking Chisenupuri, making tracks up one of many Niseko backcountry peaks. Photo Yasuyuki Shimanuki, Niseko Photography.*

*Right: Darren Teasdale creates a perfect powder storm off the Hirafu Peak. Photo Yasuyuki Shimanuki, Niseko Photography.*





*Tatsumi 'Tats' Kono unleashing some serious snow-surf style. Drawing a perfect arc at Iwaonupuri. Photo Aaron Jamieson, Niseko Photography.*



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# Ultimate mobility

Story | Scott Bowman



A LOT OF PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT NISEKO – POSSIBLY THE WORLD’S best lift-accessed powder (minus the lift lines), unbelievable food, amazing culture, the list goes on. But what a lot of people don’t realise is Niseko is only just a little piece of the pie. A short sled ride north and you are in some of the most epic backcountry around. And that’s where my little story starts. Actually, it doesn’t start up north – it starts in my backyard. I’d been lucky enough to buy a nice little chunk of Hokkaido that sits in the mountain range that separates Niseko from Sapporo – snowmobile country.

A few years back we’d spotted a cabin hours from nowhere deep in the backcountry. Recently one of the local guys we ride with said he knew all about it, and set about getting the green light for us to use it. A plan was hatched. We packed the sleds, split boards, rum, food and sleeping gear and hit the road. Well, I suppose you could say we didn’t hit it – we made it.

We set off about 1pm for the three-hour trip out there. It was early spring so the sledding was quick. Once atop the main range we noticed some big, fresh – very fresh – bear tracks. The boys were freaking out, seeing things, hearing roars. To get them

going even more I told them spring bears were more dangerous than autumn bears because they were hungry after a winter of hibernation. I was really speaking out of my arse – the closest I’d come to a wild animal was a cranky cow on dad’s farm. Fortunately no one was mauled that day.

We were making good ground and all looked well. Apart from the usual sled getting bogged and the occasional roll over, we were having fun – usually at the new rider’s expense. Luckily we had good lights on the sleds because it started to get dark and we needed to navigate some pretty hairy ridgelines.

Once we arrived we got the fire going, set up our sleeping bags and hung out our gear to dry. Now this was when the serious stuff started. I’d never really liked Monopoly, but that all changed at the cabin. Getting your favourite board token was nearly more important than what was for dinner. Picture it, five smelly men sitting around in thermals, drinking rum, eating cheese and cold cuts, and playing Monopoly in a cabin in the middle of the Hokkaido wilderness. I’d later heard some young guys referring to our cabin as Brokeback Mountain. For the record, I’ve never



seen the movie and have no idea what they’re talking about.

The night grew old. Some of us got richer, some of us went bust, before we retired to our minus-30 down bags. The cabin is dependent on fire for heat but we were careful not to burn too much wood. We read the cabin log book and it seems the hut rarely sees anyone until spring. The firewood stack was still plentiful. We left some supplies for the next guests – candles, matches, and a bottle of OP rum.

The cabin sits at 1000m with the summit roughly 1600m. When you walk out the door you look up at an incredible U-shaped bowl. After roaring wind all night we were greeted by a sunny, windless day. Wind loading was going to be a problem. We hiked the ridge straight out the cabin door and managed five laps on a nice little protected line, just to get the feel of the place. We stopped to have a bite to eat while scoping out another line. We chose to check the stability with a little ski cut just on the roll in. With a light little cut the whole face ripped out and avalanched. Our day finished early but we were happy and buzzing. This is true backcountry and it’s my backyard. ☺



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By | **Bevan Colless**



**Salomon Rocker 122**

Ski manufacturers have realised that the pride skiers get from having the fitness and ability to ski deep pow on 'carving' skis is really just bravado, and stopping every two minutes to rest your legs is not so much fun. For Niseko's deep days, may I suggest you'll be wanting 120cm+ under-foot and a rockered base to compliment the fluffy stuff. The 122's subtle twin rocker makes it more like surfing than the skiing you think you know, and the full wood core gives it the rigidity needed to prevent chatter on the groomers. A great ski for those wanting to progress up to a fat powder ski from a mid fat, and one that's almost made for Niseko. **¥86,250 from Rhythm.**



**MSR Lightning Ascent** There are many products in life you can skip on. Snowshoes aren't one of them. Bypass the designer label jeans and save your pennies for a pair of Lightning Ascents. MSR is the leader of the pack in snowshoeing and this is their best shoe. Narrow enough so you can walk with a normal gait, but they still float well in the deep stuff Niseko will no doubt offer up. **¥31,500 from NAC.**

**Gentemstick / TTSD**

So you want to look like you really know your Niseko stuff? The first thing you have to do is eschew the advice of your park-rat salesman, give up going backwards, and get a directional board – Niseko's pow is just not designed for standing in the centre of your deck. Next, get yourself down to the Gentemstick Showroom, next to the Gentem Café. The final step is to loosen your purse strings (there's sometimes comfort in paying more) and get yourself one of Gentem's finest. The TTSD (Taro Tamai Snowsurf Design) is a sub-brand of Gentemstick and the wider bamboo-based decks are literally custom-made for Niseko's pow. My pick is the 163cm Big Fish – for me the Super Fish is too big to fit easily into the gondola and the Rocket Fish too wide for the trees. **¥155,400 and only available from the Gentemstick Showroom.**



**BCA Float Avalanche Airbags**

In the war against avalanches, the first weapon is always BPS – beacon, probe, shovel. Next is an avalung so you can breathe longer if you are buried. And finally an airbag to keep you on top of the slide. The BCA Float Systems are now the lightest and most affordable on the market. They activate via compressed gas and the bags also provide additional trauma protection to the head, neck and upper body. Refilling and travelling with the compressed cylinders is problematic, better if you can leave them in your Niseko pad at the end of the season. **¥69,300 for the 22L pack from Rhythm.**



**SumoSox** Designed by skiers for skiers, made from dri-release wool. They're thin to provide the perfect fit yet warm enough for the coldest Niseko days. **¥2000 from Rhythm.**



**K2 Rescue Shovel**

Dig your car out from a pile of powder, or your buddy from under an avalanche. Built tough so it won't fail at the critical moment. **¥10,900 from Inski.**



**Oyuki Facemask**

Designed and tested in Niseko, the fleece lined neoprene provides the ultimate protection for your face on cold Niseko days. **¥3000 from Rhythm.**



**Snow Peak Chopsticks**

A Niseko backcountry must. Store the wooden tips inside the metal grips to keep the teriyaki sauce off your avy transceiver. **¥2300 from NAC.**

**RC Powder Leash**

Niseko's powder is so light and fluffy it's guaranteed to swallow rogue skis. Needle meet haystack. A leash is a must. **¥1200 from Rhythm.**



**Sorel Caribou** The 'well-heeled' in Niseko don't wear heels at all, they wear Sorel Caribous. Extra warmth, extra grip and a couple of style points. **¥17,000~ from NAC.**



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# mountain guide

before you hit the slopes, get yourself acquainted with mt annupuri – home of the niseko ski resorts.



PIC AZ / NISEKO PHOTOGRAPHY

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### The Niseko United

**Niseko is the name given to the four independently owned** ski resorts on the southeast face of Mt Annupuri, collectively known as the Niseko United.

The most well known and visited of these resorts is Grand Hirafu, commonly known as Hirafu. The resort itself is great, but unless you know your secret spots, the powder quickly disappears due to the traffic it experiences during the day.

But that's the beauty of Niseko – there are four resorts you can ski, board or bus between with ease, all with slopes and terrain to suit complete beginners to professionals.

If you're looking up at the mountain from Hirafu, the family friendly / off-piste powder haven of Hanazono is over a few hills and gullies to your right.

To the left, beyond the massive out-of-bounds avalanche-prone bowl you can see in the pic below, is the up market and slower-paced Niseko Village, home of the Hilton and formerly known as Higashiyama.

And to its left, bookending the Niseko United is Annupuri, famous for its back bowls and tendency to hide some of the longest runs and secret stashes of premium Niseko powder.



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## grand hirafu: the centre of it all

Grand Hirafu's new high-speed, eight-person gondola, 12-chair lift system and ski slopes will fulfil all your skiing and snowboarding dreams. Advanced riders and skiers can cruise the open powder fields from the top lifts to get up to floaty powder speed fast. Hike out of the top access gate to the peak and have your choice of riding down to Hanazono, Niseko Village or Annupuri. Grand Hirafu's in-bounds groomed runs are lined with silver birch trees and powder stashes from top to bottom.

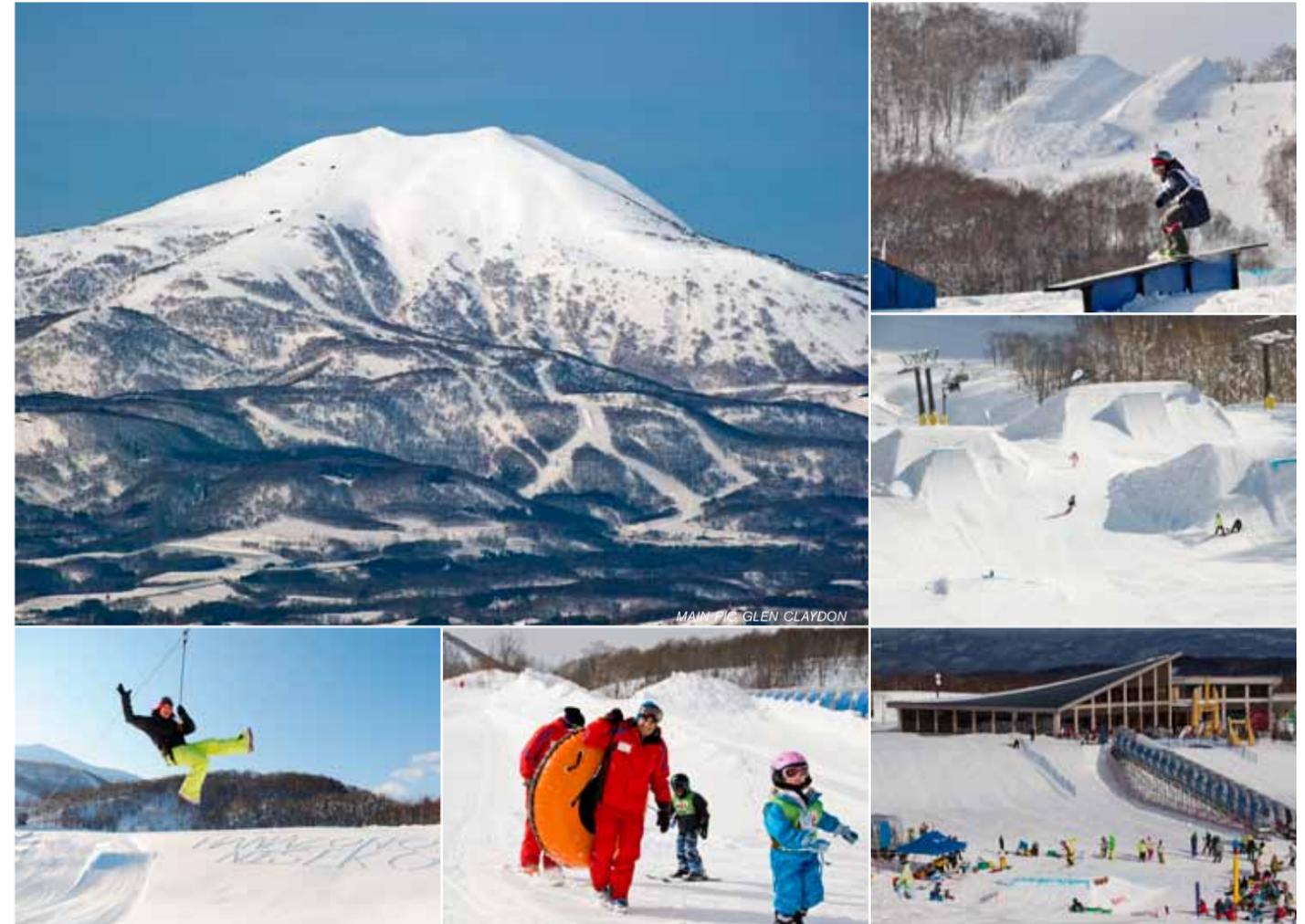
The bottom of the mountain has beginner slopes that are perfect for learning or taking a lesson along with

a fun park and halfpipe to get a last hit before catching the lift back up. There is a free shuttle bus system that runs through the entire village to get you around the mountain and village with ease. The Ace Hill mid-mountain chalet and all the restaurants around the base lifts - including the new day centre - give you many options for lunch and a place to rest your legs. Hirafu is a beautiful ski area during the day and just as amazing under the lights, with up to six lifts operating until 9pm every night.

**Profile by Ashley Nicholls, Holiday Niseko / [www.holidayniseko.com](http://www.holidayniseko.com)**

### Go to Hirafu for...

- ✓ Central convenience
- ✓ Popular beginner's slope
- ✓ Kids zoo
- ✓ Terrain for every mood
- ✓ To hike the peak
- ✓ Ultimate night skiing
- ✓ Après drinks and dining



## hanazono: powder laps and playtime

With a particular focus on families and a lot of money spent on infrastructure for kids fun and lessons at the impressive Hanazono 308 base station, Hanazono truly offers something for everyone.

Facing north and east, the snow stays cold and with three high-speed chairlifts there is potential for endless powder laps. For Dad it boasts amazing terrain and steep tree runs (did you say Strawberry Fields?); for Mum the groomed runs are wide, mellow and scenic; and for the teenager it boasts Hokkaido's biggest and best terrain park – the Stomping Ground. Complete with jib lines, intermediate and advanced jump lines,

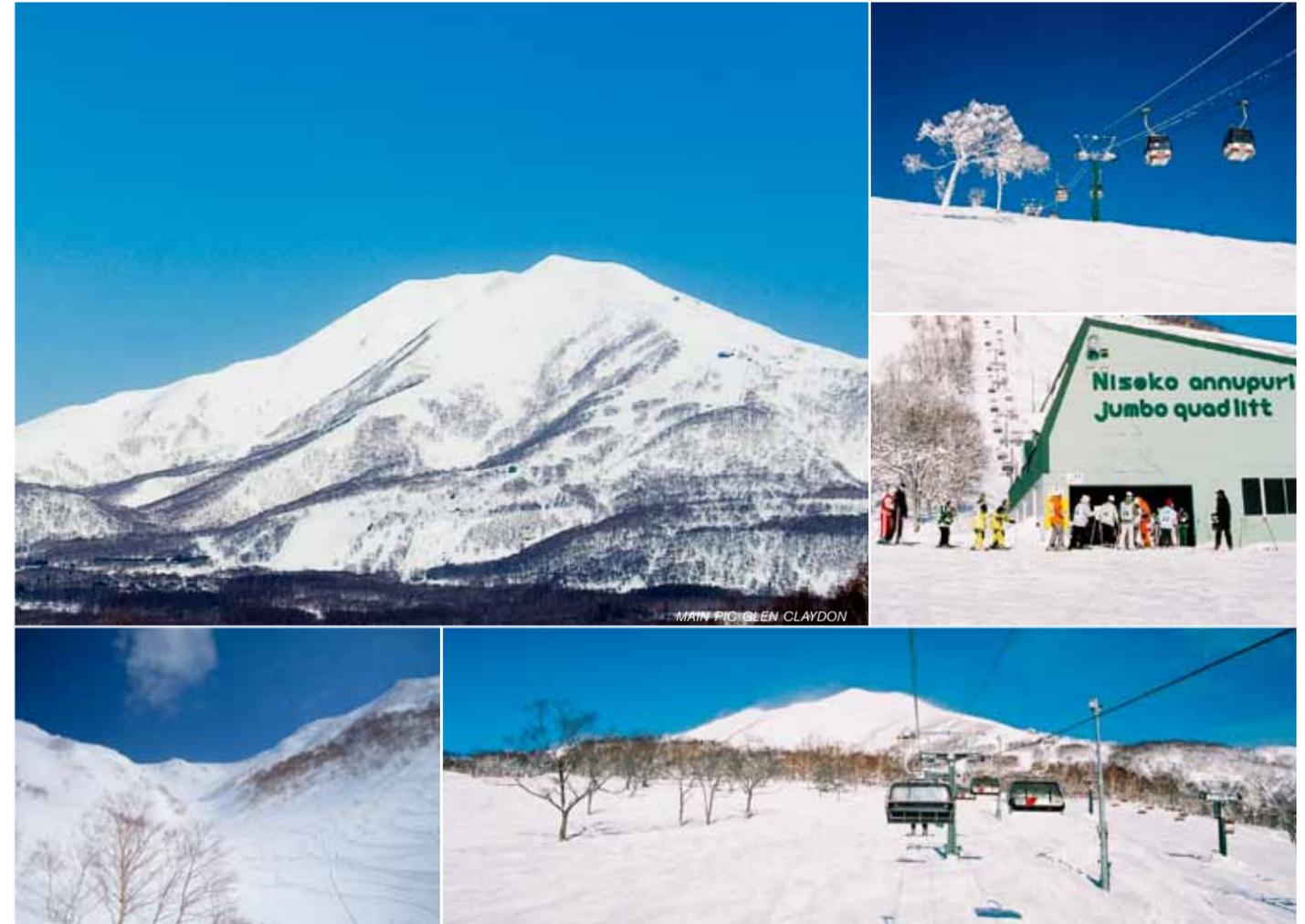
FIS certified competition halfpipe and a bag jump to try new tricks on.

Hanazono has this year expanded its kids and beginner learning areas and made improvements to the kids indoor facilities. There is now a third 'magic carpet' elevator, snow train and dedicated learning areas for each of the NISS ski school products. NISS is the only snowsports school in Niseko to offer a full complement of kid's snowsports school programs in a specialist children's learning environment.

**Profile by Ashley Nicholls, Holiday Niseko / [www.holidayniseko.com](http://www.holidayniseko.com)**

### Go to Hanazono for...

- ✓ Family fun
- ✓ Mellow groomers
- ✓ Strawberry Fields
- ✓ Full kids snowsports school program
- ✓ Snow adventure activities
- ✓ Bag Jump
- ✓ Famous crab ramen



## niseko village: five-star niseko experience

Niseko Village sits in between Grand Hirafu and Annupuri and offers something for everyone. Skiable from all the Niseko United resort areas and also on the free shuttle bus line, we highly recommend a day at the village.

Known to be the sunniest area on the mountain, it's easy to find great skiing and snowboarding all day on the expert, intermediate and beginner slopes. The gondola station is right outside the Hilton hotel and you can enjoy amazing scenery out of the gondy's bubble windows when riding to the top. There are four other chair lifts that access everything you want from the base area to the top.

Niseko Village has the only double black diamond slopes in the Niseko United ski area and offers a backcountry awareness course to educate people on the closed bowl under the gondola called Mizuno no Sawa. After taking an educational safety course you are allowed to access the area, depending on snow stability, two times per day under ski patrol's discretion. There are also great winding runs for the family and intermediate skier or snowboarder in between the areas steep terrain.

**Profile by Ashley Nicholls, Holiday Niseko / [www.holidayniseko.com](http://www.holidayniseko.com)**

### Go to Niseko Village for...

- ✓ Long, fast groomers
- ✓ Flat beginners runs
- ✓ Private resort vibe
- ✓ Family snow activities
- ✓ Reindeer sledding
- ✓ First Tracks Cat Skiing
- ✓ The Hilton - eat, drink and have an onsen

## annupuri: mellow groomers and badass bowls

Niseko Annupuri is known for its easy access powder and quiet slopes. Mellow tree runs, powder fields, inbound gullies, groomed runs, park jumps or night skiing and snowboarding – Annupuri's got it all. One gondola and five chairlifts provide access to amazing inbounds terrain and connect to all the Niseko United resorts.

Hiking out from the top gate will get you on top of some seriously steep open faces with beautiful views of the Panorama Mountain Line and Sea of Japan to the west. Skiing out from Annupuri's backcountry gates will give you access to amazing ravines and gullies that funnel you back to the base

area. Going out of these gates is not for beginners and most of the area's serious avalanches happen out of bounds here. Backcountry gear, snowpack knowledge and a good riding partner are a good idea when venturing out into Annupuri's massive back bowls.

The in-bounds slopes of Annupuri have terrain for all levels of skiing and snowboarding. Relax and treat yourself to a midday lunch in one of many restaurants at the base before getting the comfortable gondola back to the top.

**Profile by Ashley Nicholls, Holiday Niseko / [www.holidayniseko.com](http://www.holidayniseko.com)**

### Go to Annupuri for...

- ✓ Wide, cruisy groomers
- ✓ The bowls
- ✓ Long, deep powder runs
- ✓ Laid back night skiing
- ✓ Lunchtime dining variety
- ✓ All you can eat BBQ
- ✓ Yugokorotei Onsen

# lights, camera...

When the lights go on, the "kids" come out to play

**NOCTURNAL** SKIERS AND SNOWBOARDERS IN NISEKO ARE arguably treated to some of the best flood-lit night terrain in the world. After dark, three of the four Niseko United resorts are still open for business – Hirafu, Niseko Village and Annupuri.

The mountain is a completely different world in the hours of darkness. The flood-lit atmosphere and the way the shadows are cast on the mountain make it a spectacle worth experiencing. With the lights pointing in from all directions, it's like a 3D fantasy land.

Many would be surprised to hear that visibility at night is often crystal clear – much better than during the day, when white-outs can make things a little hazy. With a good pair of goggles, clarity at night is constant. The lights also make it easier to see all the lumps and bumps.

Late afternoon and early evening are also often when harsh weather goes to bed, meaning it can be calm and eerily still. And with temperatures lower, it frequently makes for lighter, fluffier, better quality powder.

Hirafu is arguably the all-round king of night skiing. The resort has been offering night skiing for almost 50 years, so it's no wonder they've got it down pat. 1287 metal halide lamps have been erected strategically around the resort lighting everything from the beginners slope to vast swathes of the resort's off-piste powder stashes. In all, there are about 70ha open to explore.



PIC GLEN CLAYDON

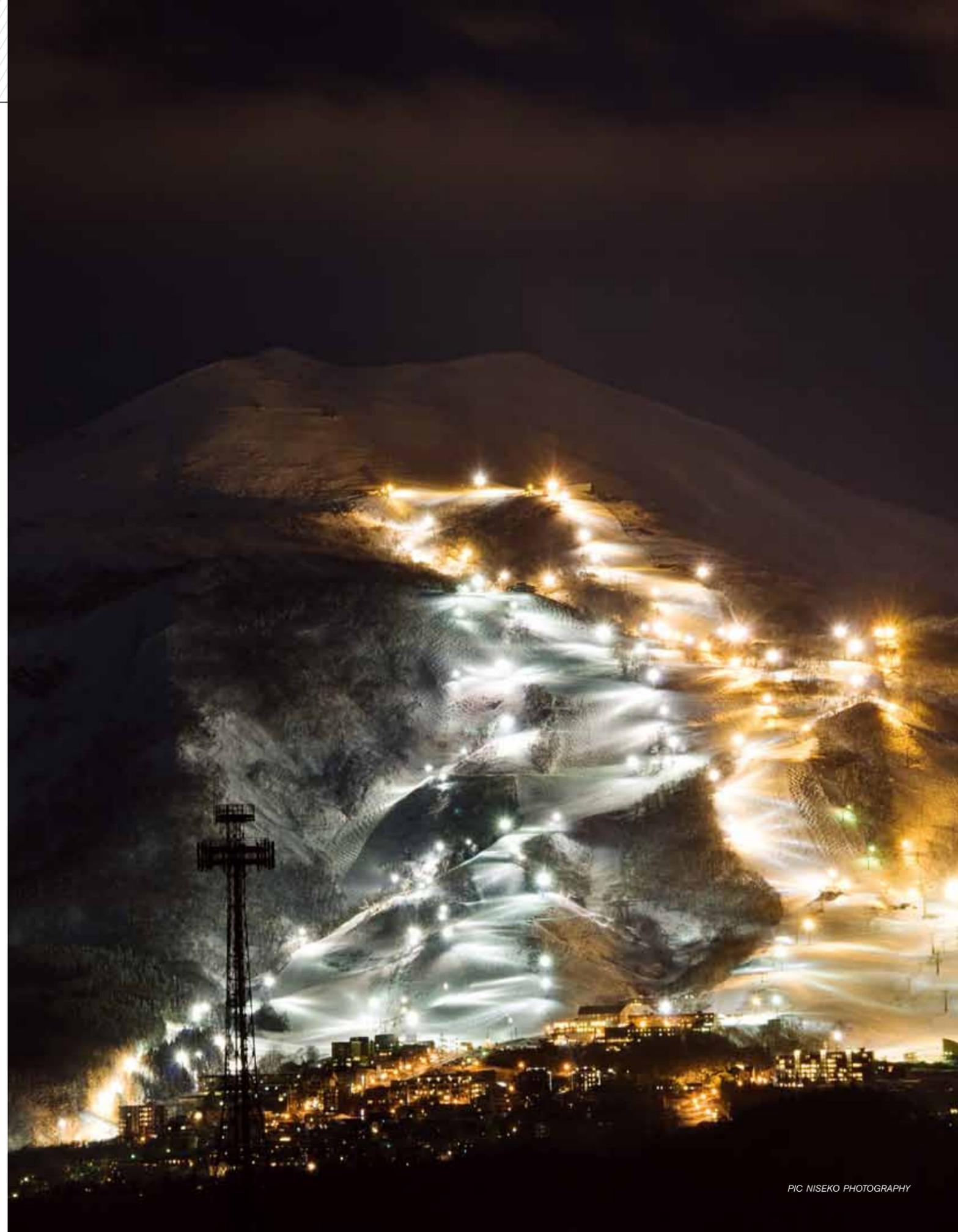
**Beginners** The beginners slopes are all very well lit at all three resorts – Hirafu, Niseko Village and Annupuri. Take your pick!

**Intermediates** Our pick for intermediates and older families at night is Annupuri. With not much accommodation right near the slopes, the long, wide runs are almost always empty, meaning some nights you can almost have the resort to yourself.

**Powder Hounds** Unless you're happy to cruise or go for a few relaxing laps with the family, head to Hirafu. Literally most of the mountain is lit up either directly or ambiently. If it's snowing hard, your tracks will be filled in by the time you get back up so you can do your favourite run over and over again. You haven't experienced all Hirafu has to offer unless you've skied it on a night like this.



PIC NISEKO PHOTOGRAPHY



PIC NISEKO PHOTOGRAPHY

# backcountry safety

Seriously, take care out there

NISEKO IS CERTAINLY A PIONEER IN JAPAN WHEN IT COMES to opening up backcountry to allow more freedom to ski and ride off-piste. To a certain extent, Niseko matches many other forward-thinking, liberal resorts around the world, allowing more mountain access than many international resorts.

Niseko follows the lead of several European and North American resorts – like Jackson Hole, Squaw Valley and Chamonix – by allowing backcountry access through specific gated points on the ski area boundary with careful management and a 'ski-at-your-own-risk policy'. The gate system means those exploring 'out the back' can do so with the knowledge experienced local ski patrollers have checked the mountain and weather conditions and consider it 'safe' (with due caution).

The person who was pivotal in the instigation and implementation of the backcountry gate system and the Niseko Rules is local legend Akio Shinya (pictured right). For 20 years, Shinya-san has been assessing avalanche conditions in Niseko. Without him, Niseko may not have such a liberal backcountry policy, and there would be much less terrain to ride.

If you do venture into the Niseko backcountry, you may well meet Shinya-san at one of the entry gates. He'll advise you in Japanese or English on the day's problematic or dangerous areas, and may even suggest where the best of Niseko's world-famous powder could be found.



PIC NISEKO PHOTOGRAPHY

[Daily Avalanche Report  
http://niseko.nadare.info](http://niseko.nadare.info)

We've collected tips from local experts to help keep you safe in Niseko's backcountry. Just remember, all the equipment and knowledge in the world are no substitute for due caution and common sense.

**1. Obey the Niseko Rules**

Listed on the course map (p73). Read them and heed them.

**2. Check weather and avalanche reports**

Know what weather to expect and the avalanche report.

**3. Listen to and obey ski patrollers.**

They know what they're talking about and are there to ensure everyone on the mountain stays safe.

**4. Have essential equipment**

Make sure everyone has a working beacon, probe and shovel... and knows how to use them.

**5. Plan your trip**

Learn the area and let someone know when you'll be back.

**6. Don't enter closed gates**

If the gates are closed, they're closed for good reason.

**7. No go zones**

Locals don't even think about skiing these, don't think you can.

**8. Don't duck ropes**

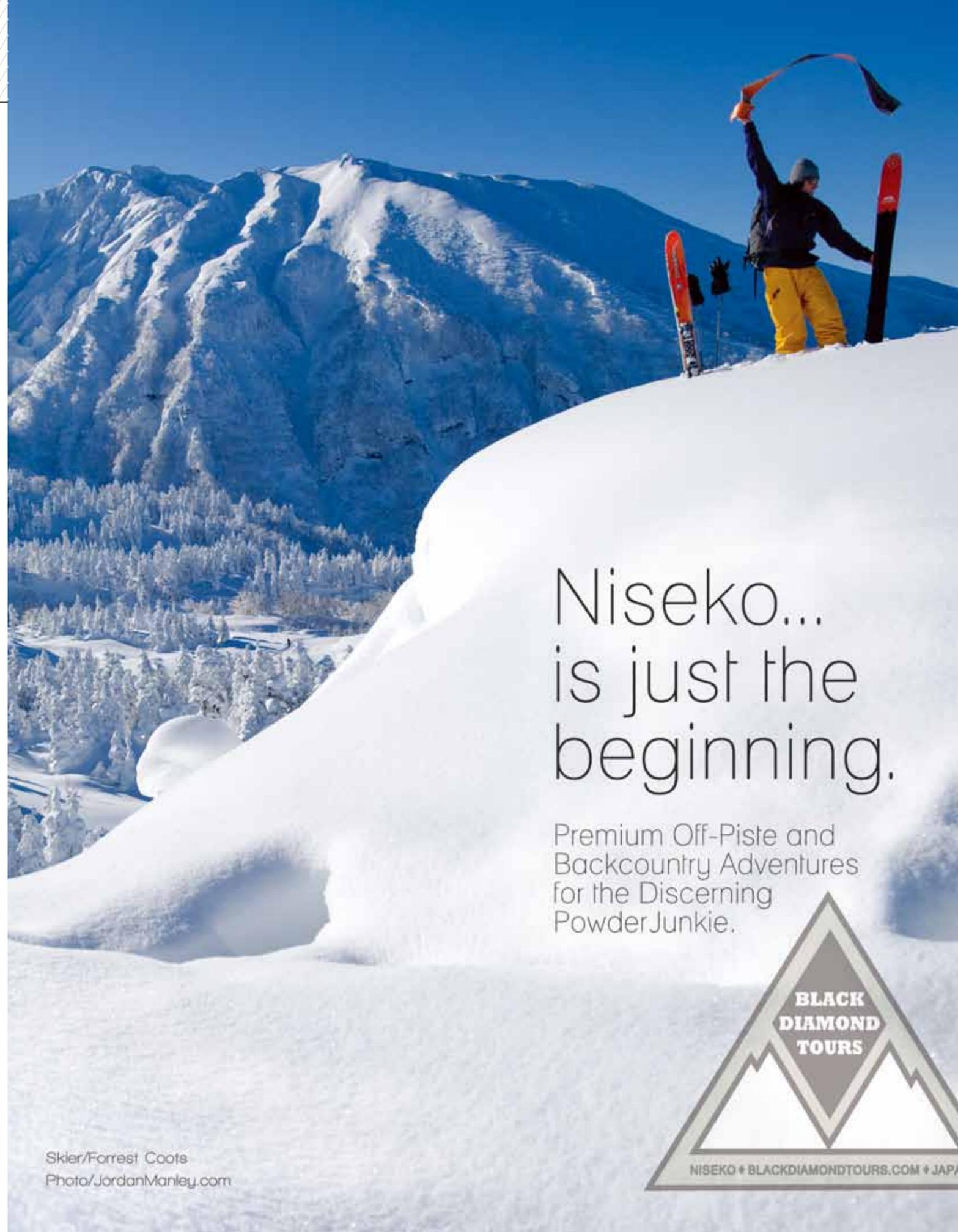
They are the boundary between safe and potentially unsafe.

**9. Hire a guide**

If you're inexperienced, hire a reputable guide. They will also put you into much more powder than you'll find by yourself!

**10. Explore the backcountry with reliable people**

The least experienced person should still know backcountry safety theory and what to do in case of emergency.



Niseko...  
is just the  
beginning.

Premium Off-Piste and  
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for the Discerning  
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Skier/Forrest Coats  
Photo/JordanManley.com

# Kiroro snow world

Just over the range from Niseko

Story | Ian MacKenzie

THE ROAD OVER MT POKUTOSAN TO THE NORTH OF KUTCHAN rises through a tunnel, then slowly lowers you into the valley that leads to Akaigawa Village. A solitary traffic light and intersection is the only interruption in our journey.

Forty kilometres later, we turn right into the resort and snake towards one of the two hotels, the Piano Hotel, looming on our right, then drive up to the Mountain Hotel and Mountain Centre car park. The resort is spread out before us with runs and lifts sprawling upwards and outwards. An escalator carries us up to the mountain centre, past the aroma of fresh melon bread. Northwave radio is broadcasting from the resort and people are milling around waiting for instructors.

Kiroro has only become a reasonable day trip from Hirafu in the past three years, after the opening of Route 393 that intersects the Otaru – Akaigawa highway. The one-and-three-quarter-hour journey has been cut to about one hour. The resort was originally built by Yamaha, hence the name Piano for the main hotel that is 500m from the Mountain Centre and serviced by a shuttle bus that runs every 13 minutes. Kiroro also receives an average 14m of snow per year.

We take our time getting organised. Kiroro is a relaxed place and when Nagamine 1 starts at nine o'clock, we hop on the lift to start with a warm up on the Powder Line. Two hooded, detachable quads take us to the top of Nagamine Peak, looker's left from the Mountain Centre. On a clear day you can see the Sea of Japan if you loop around to the north-facing back bowl. Skier's left is a steady intermediate pitch, which is not groomed until 10 o'clock in the morning. The powder is knee deep and flies around us. There are two other skiers carving perfect turns in unison with matching silver ski wear, an elderly couple from Sapporo.

We head down to the Kiroro Gondola. The Nagamine No 1 course back to the gondola is the course that most people cite to prematurely judge Kiroro. The long green run, especially at the bottom, is a challenge for boarders or skiers without the right wax. However, the resort provides a free wax service in front of the Mountain Centre.

The truth is that Kiroro provides the perfect progression of terrain for any skier or snowboarder, ranging from technical powder runs through the gullies and ridges of Hangman, just underneath the Gondola, or the consistent, steep powder tree runs in Finding Your Feet. For beginners the Centre courses make Kiroro the perfect place to learn.

The Kiroro Gondola takes 15 minutes to get to the peak of Mt



Asari and travels for 3300m, covering 800m of vertical. In three years skiing at Kiroro, the longest I have waited in line for the gondola is four minutes. Normal service is to click out of our skis and walk straight on to the lift uncontested. The gondola climbs up the centre of the resort from the Mountain Centre.

The whole place has the feel of an American resort, with the ski school (Annie's Ski Academy), restaurant, rental shop, ski patrol, lift ticket office and genuine ski-in/ski-out hotel, all in one central space surrounded by majestic peaks.

As well as the gondola, four other lifts start at the Mountain Centre and spread out into the bowls like a crooked hand. Once you ski down to the base area you have the option of the Nagamine lift, Yoichi Express Lift or Asari Lifts to take you to the other sides of the huge skiable terrain. Most of the lifts have foot rests and wind guards to maintain speed when the wind gusts pick up.

Without the hundreds of condominiums and powder seekers that other resorts have, the snow is allowed to accumulate rather



SKIERS IAN AND NERYS / PICS MIKE RICHARDS

than the new snowfall – skied out, new snowfall – skied out cycle that other resorts experience. Much like Niseko 10 years ago, Kiroro provides fresh, deep turns in dry powder well into the afternoon.

A day lift pass is ¥5000 and excellent value for the eight lifts providing access to more than 20 runs. Yet, Kiroro feels bigger than that. The alpine vista, Mt Yoichidake looming at 1440m to the south, adds a sense of the dramatic, a feeling of scale and great size.

From the Kiroro Gondola, which drops you off at 1140m, the Asari Dynamic course sits atop a broad ridge and funnels down to the Centre A, B and C courses. Kiroro powder, however, is in the numerous tree runs off to the sides and out of view from the piste and the lifts.

We drop into a small stand of trees and immediately ski into waist deep powder that hasn't been touched for days. Several turns lead us to a small run out and into another stand of trees. We pause beneath a buckled Silver Birch to survey the similar

lines further up the ridge and further down below us. The scale of it is immense, the terrain technical and loaded with fresh snow. Below us, three large bowls descend upon the single, tight track that provides our run out. The track weaves through huge onsen holes, reminding us of the need to stay safe.

On the other side of the valley, between the Nagamine Peak and Asari Peak, vast open fields of snow all head down to the same valley floor, endless lines through Silver Birch trees and old pine.

By the time the Gondola closes at three thirty, we have managed nine laps. The snow has been suffocating, the terrain challenging.

We grab a coffee from the vending machine and browse the ski and board shop before jumping back in the car for the one hour drive back to Niseko.

Snow continues to fall as we leave, silent and persistent. I notice that the Kiroro sign has almost disappeared under an enormous wave-like cornice. I take a photograph – it seems appropriate. ☺

# resort guide

*POWDERLIFE* is your niseko travel guide, on the ground in niseko and online anywhere in the world at [www.powderlife.com](http://www.powderlife.com)



## Tourist Info

### The Niseko Grand Hirafu Welcome Centre

Wide range of brochures from the area and transport information. Location: Top of the main street (Hirafu Zaka) in Hirafu (map p97/E1). 0136 22 0109.

### Kutchan Information Centre

Plenty of brochures and English-speaking staff. Location: Main Street, Kutchan (map p94/B4). 0136 22 1121.

## Getting Here and Away

### New Chitose Airport.

For departure and arrival times. 0123 23 0111. [www.new-chitose-airport.jp/language/english](http://www.new-chitose-airport.jp/language/english)

### Getting from New Chitose to Niseko

**Bus** This is a cheap and efficient option. Buses leave every 30 minutes from the airport to Niseko and take about three hours (includes rest stop and drop off at Rusutsu). Whiteliner Buses, Chuo Bus, Donan Bus and Hokkaido Resort Liner. Visit the Welcome Centre for bookings back to Chitose. About ¥2300 one way or ¥3850 return.

**Door-to-Door Transfer** Skybus offers a door-to-door transfer service to and from the airport to Niseko, or Sapporo. 0136 555 301 / [www.skybus.co.jp](http://www.skybus.co.jp).

**Train** The most scenic route. There's no direct train from Chitose to Kutchan (the closest station to Hirafu). All run through Sapporo and Otaru. You'll need to change platforms. About ¥2600 one way. [www.japanrail.com](http://www.japanrail.com).

## Car Rental

### Niseko Auto Rentals

Specialising in large 7-8 passenger 4wd vehicles: Delica Space Gear and Toyota Hiace. (map p94/F8) 0136 44 1144. [www.nisekoauto.com](http://www.nisekoauto.com).

### Toyota Rent-a-Car ShinSapporo

One-way hire from Chitose airport to Hirafu about ¥7000 for six people/24 hours. Pickup Chitose, Sapporo or Kutchan. 0118 15 0100.

## Transport Around Niseko

### Taxis

Drivers probably won't speak English so you will need a business/place name and map. Kutchan Hire 0136 22 1212. Misora Hire 0136 22 1171. Niseko Hire 0136 44 2635.

### Bus

**Niseko United Shuttle** Connects Hirafu, Niseko Village and Annupuri resorts. Pickup/drop-off points in Hirafu include Hirafu Gondola and the bus stop near Hirafu intersection.

¥ Free if you have an all-mountain pass / 1 point if you have a 12-point mountain pass / or ¥500 for adults and ¥300 for children.

**Grand Hirafu Village Shuttle Bus** Shuttle buses run throughout Hirafu every 15 minutes, all day, every day, until the end of night-skiing. ¥ Free.

**Hanazono Shuttle Bus** Runs throughout Hirafu Village and out to Hanazono from 7.50am to 6pm. Look out for the blue buses. ¥ Free

**Kutchan Night Go Bus** Runs to and from Hirafu to Kutchan Station every night. ¥ One ride ¥100 / Season Pass ¥1000.

## Money

### ATMs

**Hokkaido Tracks Holiday's Office** Hirafu (map p97/E2). Accepts all major cards.

**Kutchan Main Post Office** Map p94/E3. Accepts all major cards.

**All 7 Elevens** Accepts Visa Plus, JCB, AMEX, Diners Club, Discover, China Union Pay.

### Credit Cards

Lift tickets, ski hire and ski lessons can all be paid for by credit. Most large restaurants offer credit card facilities too, however some small businesses are cash only. Check before ordering.

### Currency Exchange

**Kutchan Post Office** Map p94/B2.  
**Hokuyo Bank** Map p94/B3).

Dear Valued Customers,  
Welcome to Niseko.  
We hope you enjoy your time here.  
Thank-you for booking with us.

Kind Regards  
Holiday Niseko  
tel: 0136 - 21 - 6221



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For everything from toothpaste to alcohol and late-night snacks try:

#### Hirafu

- [Seicomart](#) Map p96/D2
- [Lawson](#) (24 hours) Map 97/E3
- [Piz Gloria](#) Map p96/D2
- [Alpen Hotel](#) Map p97/E1

#### Kutchan

- [MaxValu](#) For all your food/drink/grocery needs. Map p94/G3.
- [Homac](#) For household/hardware. Map p94/G3.
- [Best Denki](#) For all your electrical and technical needs. Map p94/B4.
- [M-Pocket](#) For imported groceries and alcohol. Map p94/B3.
- [¥100 Shop](#) As the name suggests! Map p94/B4.

### Telecommunications

#### Internet

Most accommodation will have LAN connections and there are free WIFI spots in businesses all over Hirafu and other areas.

#### Mobile Phones

Only 3G phones will work in Japan. Some accommodation providers offer mobile hire.

#### Domestic Calls

Green and grey public phones take coins or pre-paid telephone cards. Local calls don't require the '0136' unless made from a public telephone.

#### International Calls

Dial (010) and then the code of the country you wish to call. If the number starts with 0 – drop the 0 and dial everything else.

### Post Offices

Look for the red '〒' symbol. There are three post offices in Kutchan and two in Niseko town. In Hirafu, post-office services are available at Piz Gloria and Seicomart.

### Electricity

Standard voltage is 100v AC. You can use most electronic items without a problem, but some high watt devices such as hairdryers may not run on full power. Plugs are the international standard (flat, two-blade type).

### Medical Services

#### Kutchan Kousei Hospital

No appointment necessary. Map p94/A3. 0136 22 1141.

#### Niseko Physio

The only acute sports injury specialist in the village. Map p96/D3. 0136 22 0399.

#### Tsuruha Drug Pharmacy (red sign)

Map p94/G3. Corner Route 5 and Route 343, next to MaxValu.

### Stay Safe Around Town

#### No skiing/boarding on roads or footpaths

While it may seem much quicker and easier than walking, skiing and snowboarding home from the hill is dangerous and is frowned upon by locals.

#### Snow falling off roofs

Be careful when walking or parking your car below sloped roofs. They shed snow very regularly in very large, heavy loads that can damage cars and seriously injure people.

#### Drinking Dangers

Make sure you leave the bar with someone else. Also make sure you rug up and stay warm – people have been known to fall asleep in the snow on the way home. If you notice someone who is intoxicated and looking like they might get into trouble, report them to the police or the safety centre located outside Seicomart.

**One third of all injuries in Hirafu are caused by people falling on the street. Wear shoes with a good grip or buy and attach rubber sole cleats with metal studs.**

### Rubbish Guide

#### Help keep Niseko beautiful

Take a second to make sure you're throwing your rubbish in the correct bin.

#### Burnable rubbish (燃えるゴミ moeru-gomi)

Contrary to what most of us are brought up to believe, burnable rubbish in Japan means plastics, as well as paper and food scraps.

#### PET bottles and cans (ペット、缶)

Plastic drink bottles (with lid/label removed) and aluminium/steel drink cans

#### Compost (生ゴミ nama-gomi)

When available, compost bins are for food scraps. Though be careful, tea bags are not considered compost.

#### Non-burnable (燃えないゴミ moenai-gomi)

Non-burnable rubbish is for rubbish that doesn't fit the other categories, including items such as broken glass, ceramics and metals.

### Onsen Etiquette

#### What to bring?

Bath towel, modesty towel and toiletries. Most onsens provide body soap and shampoo, and sell modesty towels for about ¥200.

#### How much?

Most onsens range between ¥500 to ¥1000.

#### What to do?

1. Enter the changing room through the appropriate door: 女 for women, 男 for men.
2. Remove your clothes and put them in the basket or locker provided.
3. Have a shower and wash yourself thoroughly before entering the onsen.
4. Use the modesty towel when walking into the onsen then slide into the water, never jump.
5. Don't let your towel enter the onsen water. Fold it and place it on your head like the locals.
6. Soak, contemplate and relieve your aching muscles and body.
7. Dry yourself off as best you can before going back into the change room.

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85min Gold Course (AllBody 40min+Foot25min) ¥10,000	Head 20minutes ¥3,000

The salon 1 at 1F J-sekka Building Hirafu Intersection.  
The salon 2 at 1F Serenity Building, on Hirafu zaka, opposite to Hotel Hirafu-tel.  
Pick up available. On-site massage available (Extra 1000 yen).

Call for an appointment or just drop in.  
Ph. 0136 23 2004 info@inkarebaza.com

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Learn with people of similar abilities and explore with the people who know the mountain best. Interaction with new skiers & boarders makes learning even more fun

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Learn the basics, enhance your skills, fine tune your technique and ultimately get the most out of your time on Niseko's sensational snow with PROSKI's qualified instructors. More info on lessons and rates online!

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2 CENTRAL LOCATIONS!  
> SKI SCHOOL & DEMO CENTER ACROSS FROM THE 'ACE FAMILY CHAIR'



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## What do I do if I get injured?

By **Bevan Colless** | Niseko Physio

ONE OF THE MANY CONCERNS international skiers have about coming on a ski holiday is: "What will I do if I get injured?" And let's face it, on a ski holiday zooming through trees and over bumps, the chance is always there.

Most assume correctly that as Japan is a developed nation they will have good medical care, however there are still concerns over differences in language, culture and potential cost of the care. Fortunately due to the volume of international skiers, Niseko is now one of the best places to be an injured foreigner in all of Japan. Unfortunately there is still no medical clinic in any of the ski villages (Hirafu, Niseko Village, Annupuri or Hanazono), and the main hospital is in Kutchan, 7km away from

Hirafu. This little rural hospital never asked for or expected to have so many injured non-Japanese speakers coming through their doors, but they have done well over the last 10 years to adapt. They have a translator there to assist non-Japanese speakers, and lead you through the process. Many skiers are transferred by ambulance from the mountain directly to the hospital, or some take a taxi. There is an X-ray and MRI machine there in the hospital. But orthopaedic cases (as most ski injuries are) are seen in the mornings only. The whole process takes you most of the day. For very serious injuries, patients are transferred by road or helicopter to a large hospital in Sapporo, the capital of Hokkaido.

In Hirafu, Niseko Physio has become the first port of call for many foreigners that are injured. We often have a quick

'triage' discussion with patients who have dropped in and then decide if they are suitable for us or need to be transferred to the hospital. We can handle almost all knee injuries and are specialists in this area. Most shoulder injuries, lower backs, necks and the like generally do not require a visit to the hospital. We do not relocate dislocated shoulders and these need to go to the hospital.

If you have travel insurance you can claim the cost of treatment back from your insurer and often an upgrade to business class for the trip home too! The cost of health care in Japan is not as expensive as most would assume and certainly cheaper than the US. So of course do your best not to get injured, but rest assured that if you do there are systems in place to take good care of you and get you home in one piece. ☺

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**D2** A-BU-CHA 2  
Map p96 UPPER HIRAFU

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Breakfast 7am – 11am  
Lunch 11.30am – 4pm  
Dinner 6pm – 1am  
☎ 0136 22 5620

A wide variety of meals and drinks – top marks!

**D3** BARUNBA  
Map p96 MIDDLE HIRAFU

Barunba is a little bar situated on Momiji street. Enjoy your time with local skiers and snowboarders. Have a drink with us, and enjoy our funky, small bar atmosphere here in Niseko!



8pm–3am  
Open 7 Days

HAI-CARUMBA! BAR BARUNBA!

☎ 0136 55 5615

**D2** GLOORIOUS COFFEE  
Map p96 UPPER HIRAFU

Located inside Rhythm, serving take away premium LAVAZZA coffee. Drop in and enjoy a delicious brew each morning before you hit the slopes. For those of you with a sweeter tooth, trying our decadent hot chocolate is a must!



8pm–4pm  
Open 7 days

"It's the best coffee in town!"  
Point card – 6th coffee FREE!

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**C4** HALF NOTE  
Map p96 MIDDLE HIRAFU

Enjoy live weekend jazz and dancing nights, and other live music on weekdays. With, jazz, billiards and table tennis, there's always something going on at Half Note. Check out Half Note's regular jazz events at www.nisekohalfnote.com.



6pm–midnight  
Open 7 days

Hirafu's only jazz bar!

☎ 0136 23 2727

**D2** BANG BANG  
Map p97 UPPER HIRAFU

Ramen lunch at Bang 2 again this season! We take great pride in our fresh seafood and look forward to offering you mouthwatering dishes from our wide-ranging menus.



Lunch 11am – 4pm  
Dinner 5.30–11.30pm  
Occasionally closed  
☎ 0136 22 4292

www.niseko.or.jp/bangbang

We take great pride in our fresh seafood

**F8** BLACK DIAMOND RESTAURANT  
Map p94 HIGASHIYAMA

Offering a wide variety of food and drink from around the world. Delicious original Hokkaido pork spare ribs, Japanese daily specials, and Western. Billiards, darts, happy hour and drink specials daily!



4pm–11.30pm  
(Last food order 10.30pm /  
last drink order 11pm)  
☎ 0136 44 1144

www.bdldodge.com

Free pick-up from the Niseko Village area !

**B3** GYU+ (AKA THE FRIDGE)  
Map p96 LOWER HIRAFU

Gyu+ (aka The Fridge/Fridge Door Bar) has been open for over 10 years serving single malt whiskeys, hot cocktails and a long menu of original drinks. Open from 4pm during peak season.



6pm–1am (4pm– Jan-Feb)  
(Last order 12 midnight)  
Open 7 Days  
☎ 0136 23 1432

www.gyubar.com

Hand selected vinyl records, cocktails & rare Japanese whiskey

**E2** JAM CAFÉ BAR  
Map p97 UPPER HIRAFU

Try our Jam Special Burger, and mega waffles with coffee for lunch. We serve various izakaya (Japanese tapas) style dishes at reasonable prices. More than 80 kinds of drinks available!



12 noon – 3pm  
(Last order 2.30pm)  
Dinner 6pm to midnight  
☎ 0136 23 0700

www.jamcafébar.com

www.facebook.com/jamcafébar

Take away is available. Enjoy our mouth watering home-made sweets!

**E3** KAMIMURA  
Map p97 UPPER HIRAFU

An intricate fusion of East meets West, we offer an array of degustation menus. This style of dining allow our guests to experience a wide range of flavours with a delicate balance of fresh vegetables, meats and seafood.



From 6pm  
Monday to Saturday

www.kamimura-niseko.com

The iconic Michelin-starred French restaurant in Niseko!

☎ 0136 21 2288

**C3** NISEKO PIZZA  
Map p96 HIRAFU INTERSECTION

Delicious pizzas and pasta! Salads, sides and a wide menu from our grill. Whether a casual beer from our extensive draft selection at our contemporary bar setting, or a delightful dinner paired with beautiful wine in our family oriented atmosphere, we have something for everyone!



Open 5–11pm / 7 days  
All year round

www.nisekopizza.jp

Fast Delivery! Dine In or Take Away

☎ 0136 55 5553

**C3** STEAK ROSSO ROSSO  
Map p96 MIDDLE HIRAFU

Casual steak house with a contemporary flavour. Juicy, tender wagyu and Kobe beef and a variety of imported wines. Enjoy yourself to satiation with our stylish cuisine and refined hospitality.



Dinner 6pm–11pm  
Occasionally closed

www.rossorosso.net

A must for steak lovers!

☎ 0136 21 7100

**D3** TUK TUK  
Map p96 MIDDLE HIRAFU

Yummy, tiny Thai Restaurant Tuk Tuk's delicious menu uses the finest ingredients from Hokkaido and Thailand. Non-spicy and vegetarian available. Take away, private parties and catering are available.



6pm – 11pm  
Occasionally closed

www.tuktukniseko.com

The only Thai restaurant in Hirafu!

☎ 080 3249 4092

**E8** M's CAFÉ (SAISON CLUB)  
Page 94 HIGASHIYAMA

Try our huge traditional Japanese nabe hotpots with meat, seafood and vegetables. We have shabu shabu and sukiyaki.



Lunch 11am – 4pm  
Dinner 5 – 9pm  
Closed Thursday  
☎ 0136 44 3380

www.saison-club.com

Warm your body with our big hearty hot-pots

**F4** NORTH FIELD LODGE  
Map p97 IZUMIKYO 2

Banquet 7pm. Tuesdays make your own sushi ¥2500. Thursdays fresh local seafood: oysters, crab, fish ¥4000. Sundays Vietnamese banquet by our Vietnamese chef ¥2500. Reservations by 10 am on the day. Pickup available. Book an inhouse massage before dinner!



Open 7pm  
Tuesdays, Thursdays  
and Sunday  
☎ 0136 22 6675

www.north-field.jp/en

Banquet Dinner. Pickup and dropoff. Call by 10am.

**F3** TAJ MAHAL  
Map p97 IZUMIKYO 1

Enjoy the best of Indian traditional cuisine & courtesy service. Experience Indian meals with Indian beers & wines at our prestigious restaurant. Vegetarians meals available. 10% discount on takeout orders. Free local delivery.



11.30am to 10.30pm  
Open 7 days all year round

www.tajmahalgroup.com

Dine in, take-away & delivery

☎ 0136 22 4566

**D4** YUMMY'S PIZZA  
Map p96 MIDDLE HIRAFU

Cesar Salad, Avocado Salsa Salad, Chicken Wings, Bacon Pepper Steak, Baked Cream Potato, Cheese Fondue, wines and of course various styles of pizza. And more more!



5–10.30pm / 7 days  
Delivery available in the Hirafu area  
☎ 0136 21 2239

www.yummypizza.jp

Yummy homemade crust pizza and western foods restaurant

**F8** BLACK DIAMOND TOURS  
Map p94 NISEKO VILLAGE – HIGASHIYAMA

Check out Niseko's incredible slackcountry terrain or visit another epic nearby resort. Options include Rusutsu, Sapporo Kokusai, Kiroro and Teine Highland. We also have a range of backcountry tours to suit your lung capacity.



8am – 6pm / 7 days

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

Niseko's Backcountry  
Powder Specialists

{ 0136 55 5953  
(or 090 2054 8687)

**D3** CULTURAL SCHOOL & GALLERY  
Map p96 MIDDLE HIRAFU

Personalised classes (max 6/class) by English speaking Japanese for tea ceremony & kimono dressing, calligraphy, brush & ink painting, intensive sushi. From ¥4500. Perfect on your own or with friends. Bookings ONLINE, Momiji Art & Antiques, Ski Japan.



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

Experience true Japanese culture  
at Niseko Cultural School in Hirafu

1pm–7pm  
Open 7 days  
{ 0136 55 8585

**D2** JAPANESE CULTURAL TOURS  
Map p96 UPPER HIRAFU

**Tour dates: Jan 13, Jan 25, Feb 3.** Travel to nearby town Kutchan and experience a tea ceremony, laido sword demo, taiko drum performance/participation, traditional meal, and more depending on tour. ¥5000/¥3000 kids. Departs from Hirafu Seicomart, ends in Kutchan.



3pm – 7.30pm  
Bookings essential

[www.kutchan-town-st.com](http://www.kutchan-town-st.com)

Experience traditional Japanese culture!  
Reservations required

{ 0136 23 0222

**C2** NISS HANAZONO AND HIRAFU  
Map p96 UPPER HIRAFU AND HANAZONO

Smile and style with our team of experienced instructors for a day of fun, safety and learning. With two great locations and a suite of group, kids and private programs we'll help you learn new skills, gain confidence and above all enjoy your time in the powder of Niseko.



8.30am–8.30pm  
Open 7 days

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

Kids are our speciality  
Hirafu and Hanazono

{ 0136 21 6688

**F8** BLACK DIAMOND SNOWMOBILE TOURS  
Map p94 NISEKO VILLAGE – HIGASHIYAMA

Looking for something exciting and different for a day off skiing or boarding? Full throttle action for all ability levels aged 12+. Great on and offtrack terrain, small groups (max 4:1 client/guide ratio) and qualified, safety conscious guides!



8am – 6pm / 7 days

[www.blackdiamondtours.com/tours-snowmobile.html](http://www.blackdiamondtours.com/tours-snowmobile.html)

1-hour Introductory Tour ¥8500  
1-hour Deep Powder Tour ¥10,500

{ 0136 55 5953  
(or 080 5586 3490)

**D2** EXPLORE NISEKO  
Map p96 UPPER HIRAFU

Explore Niseko can provide information and book any tour, activity or service for you in Niseko. Simply call or drop by our office right in the centre of town. We're in the old A-Bu-Cha 1 building on the corner at the traffic lights, next to Seicomart.



[www.explore-niseko.com](http://www.explore-niseko.com)

Activities, bookings, information.  
Everything you need. One Location.

7.30am–8pm  
Open 7 days

{ 0136 55 8848

**F3** NAC CAT SKIING TOURS  
Map p97 IZUMIKYO 1

New for this season, NAC has acquired the whole of Niseko Weiss Mountain for your cat skiing pleasure.



8am – 9pm  
Open 7 days year round

[www.nac-web.com](http://www.nac-web.com)

NAC PRIVATE CAT RESORT  
Niseko Weiss Horn

{ 0136 23 2093

**D2** SAKURA  
Map p96 UPPER HIRAFU

Tucked in behind Paddy McGinty's, Sakura offers a wide selection of gifts including kimonos, geisha hairpins, pottery, paintings, traditional wooden furniture and more.



[www.sakura-niseko.com](http://www.sakura-niseko.com)

Your one-stop  
Japanese souvenir shop

1pm–7pm  
Open 7 days

{ 0136 21 7007

**ALL** DEEP POWDER TOURS SKI HOLIDAYS  
Japan UPPER HIRAFU

A licensed I.A.T.A international travel agent. Check out our website for a broad overview of the many ski resorts in Japan that we offer.



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

**E2** HOKKAIDO TRACKS HOLIDAYS  
Map p97 UPPER HIRAFU

HT Holidays is Niseko-Hirafu's leading accommodation provider. We have been managing and marketing quality condominiums and resort homes in Niseko since 2003 and are the market leaders in relation to product, services and service delivery.



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

Experience exceptional

8am – 9pm  
Open 7 days

{ 0136 21 2557

**F8** NISEKO AUTO RENTALS & SALES  
Map p94 NISEKO VILLAGE – HIGASHIYAMA

Complement your holiday or home with a 4WD vehicle. Local licensed dealer offering affordable rentals and sales IN ENGLISH. Short and long-term rentals available. English navigation available. 24hr English emergency roadside assistance.



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

4WD vans from  
¥46,200/week or ¥135,000/month

8am–8pm / 7 days

{ 0136 55 5991  
(or 080 5586 3490)

**D3** NISEKO PHYSIO & MASSAGE  
Map p96 MIDDLE HIRAFU

Australian trained physiotherapists specialising in knees, and all snow sports injuries. Serving Niseko since 2006 and in Tokyo since 2002. We also operate Niseko Massage, oil sports and relaxation massages from ¥6000 per hour.



[nisekophysio.com](http://nisekophysio.com) & [nisekomassage.com](http://nisekomassage.com)

Niseko's injury centre also providing  
sports and relaxation massage

8am–8pm  
Open 7 days

{ 0136 22 0399

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Niseko NISEKO

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- Property Maintenance
- Independent Building Reports
- Custom woodwork, doors & windows



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

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solutions for Niseko

Call John 8am–8pm

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**ALL** J AMOS CONSULTING  
Niseko NISEKO

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

Chartered Accountant  
& MYOB Consultant

8am – 8pm  
All year round

{ 090 2650 4909

**ALL** NISEKO OWNERS  
Niseko UPPER HIRAFU

Niseko Owners is a property management company with expertise in managing properties economically and efficiently. We manage a large portfolio of residential/commercial properties and undeveloped land. Property details, agreements, statements and invoices are all stored online for easy access.



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

Property & Asset Management  
See our website for more details

Operating all  
year round

{ 0136 55 8122

**ALL** POWDERLIFE ADVERTISING  
Niseko NISEKO

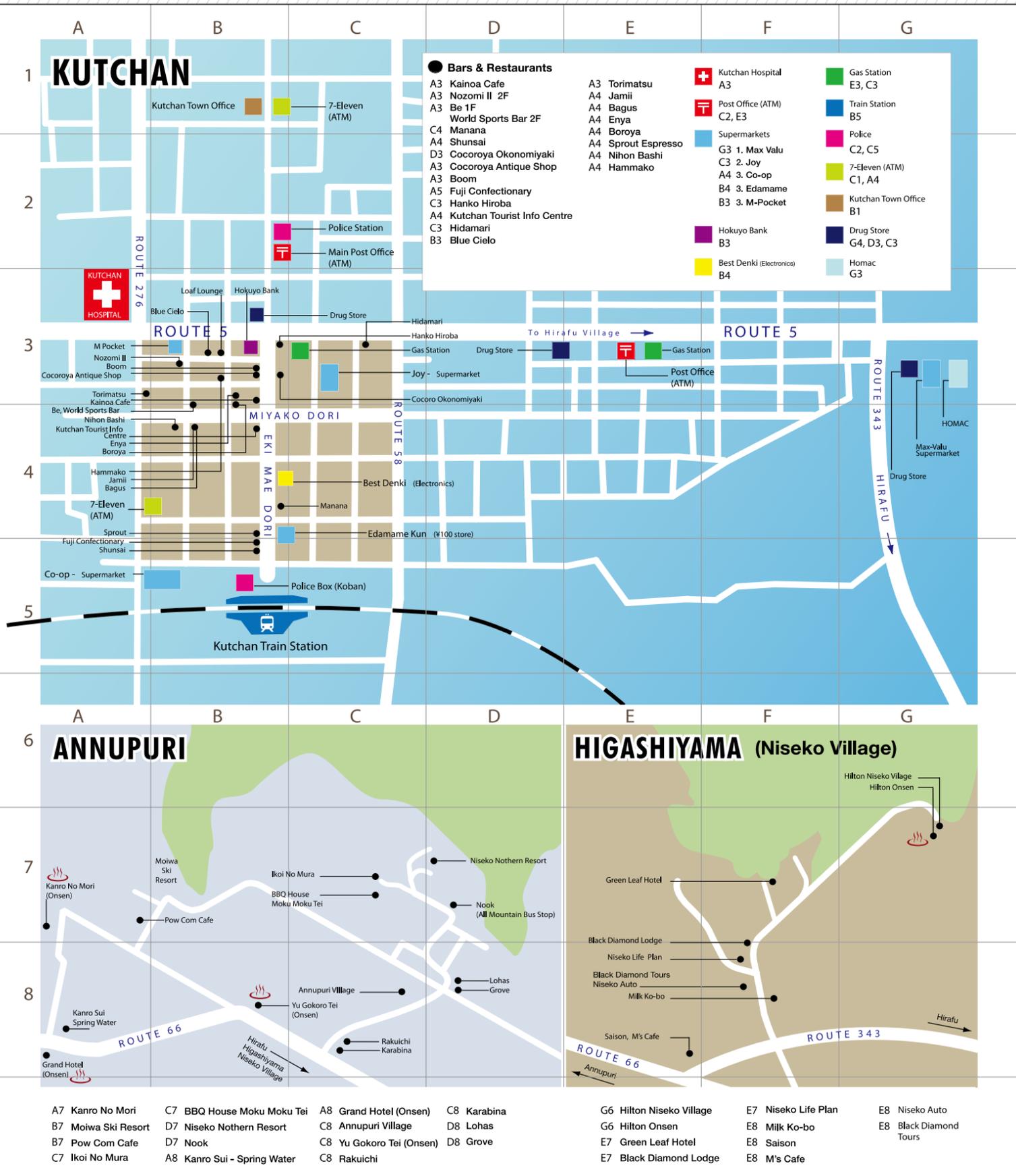
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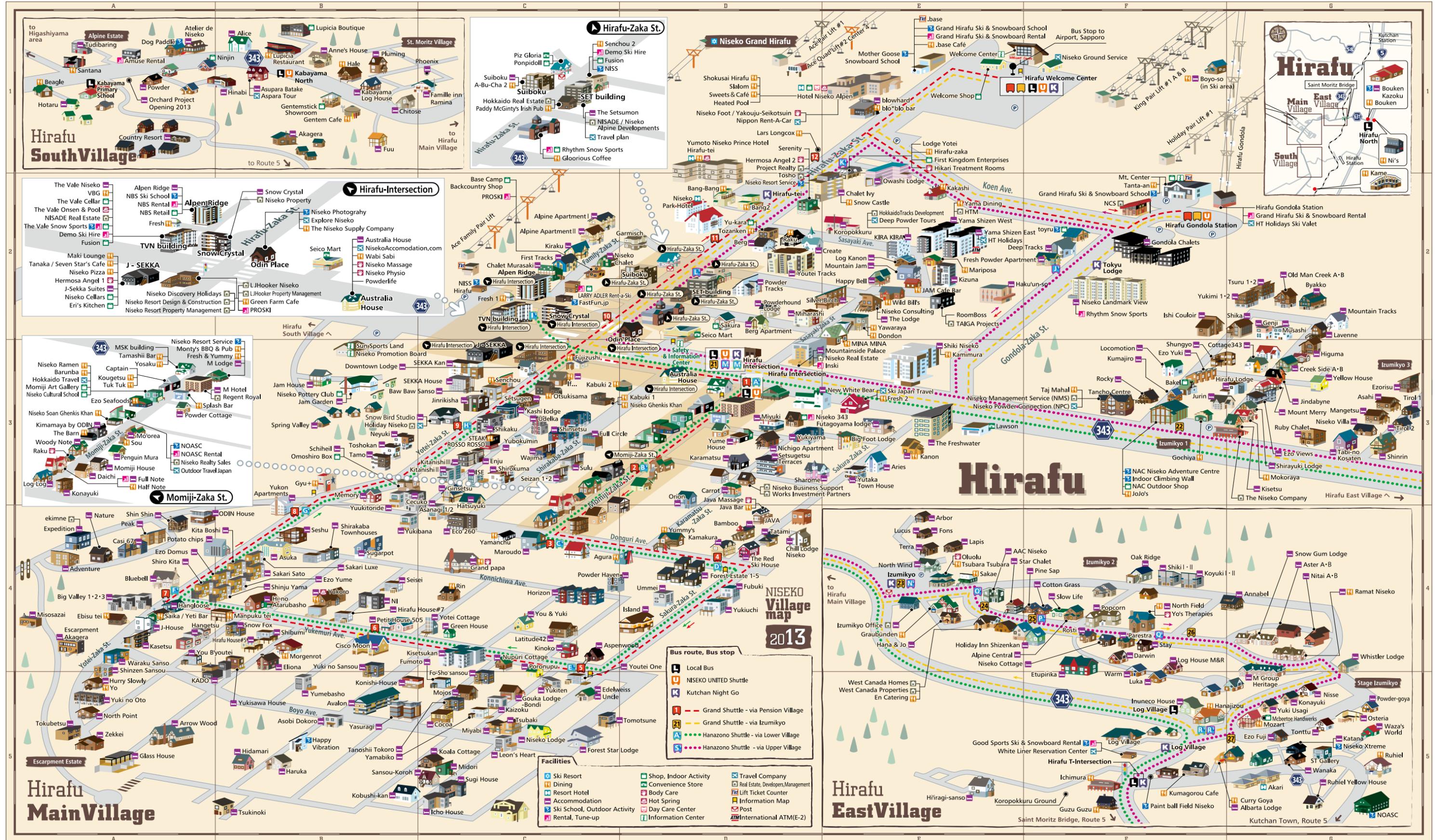
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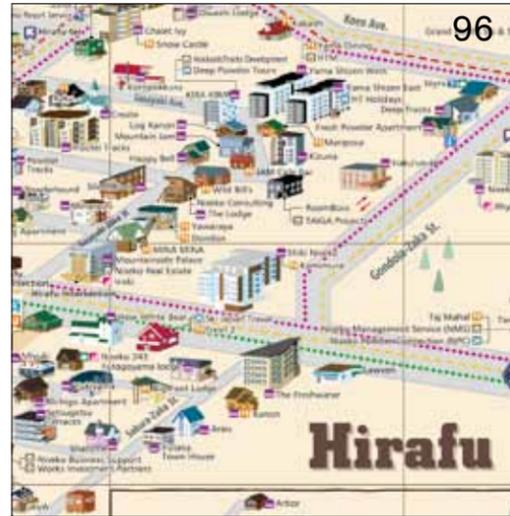
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<p><b>D2</b> A-BU-CHA 2 UPPER HIRAFU Map p86 Try our popular Japanese dishes or hot-pots. Choice of over 400 drinks! Mouth-watering Home-made sweets. Take away menu is available. Authentic Japanese seating. Families are welcome. www.abucha.net A wide variety of meals and drinks – top marks!</p>	<p><b>D2</b> BANG BANG UPPER HIRAFU Map p87 Ramen lunch at Bang 2 again this season! We take great pride in our fresh seafood and look forward to offering you mouthwatering dishes from our wide-ranging menus. www.niseko.or.jp/bangbang We take great pride in our fresh seafood!</p>
<p><b>D3</b> BARUNBA MIDDLE HIRAFU Map p88 Barunba is a little bar situated on Momiji street. Enjoy your time with local skiers and snowboarders. Have a drink with us, and enjoy our kushu, small bar atmosphere here in Niseko!</p>	<p><b>F8</b> BLACK DIAMOND RESTAURANT HIGASHIYAMA Map p94 Offering a wide variety of food and drink from around the world. Delicious original Hokkaido pork spare ribs, Japanese daily specials, and Western Dishes are served here.</p>



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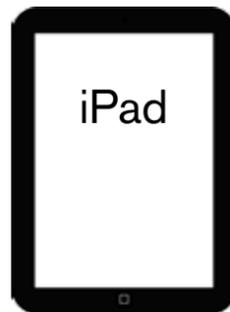
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