



powderlife

VOLUME 9 | 2016



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Editor's Note

I was having a meal recently with a visiting foreign friend at Ebisutei, a tiny izakaya restaurant in an old wooden shack in Lower Hirafu.

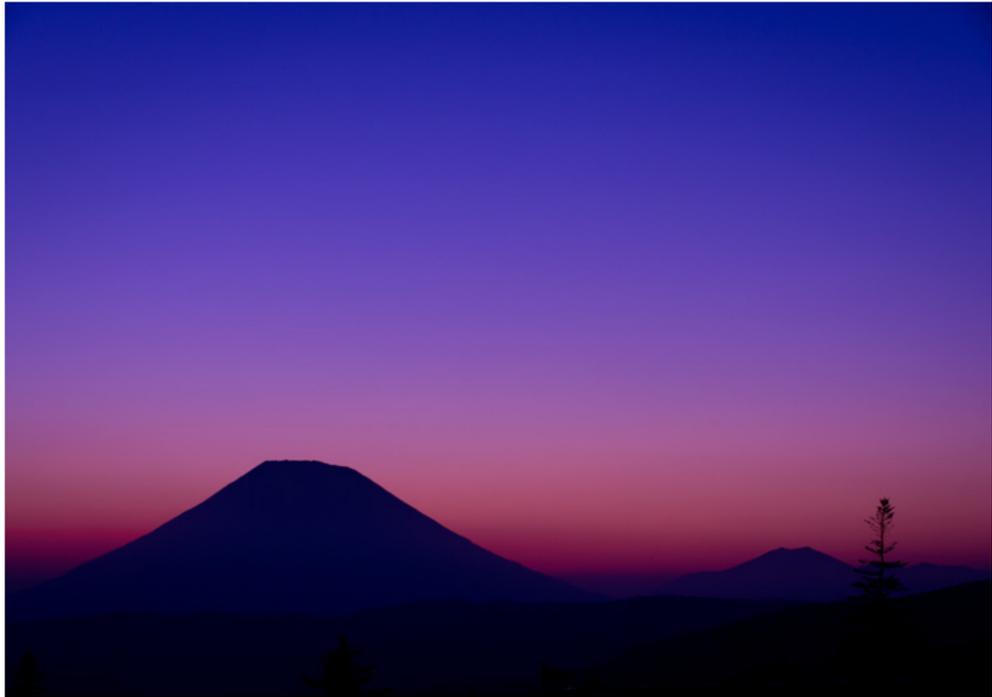


Image: Aaron Jamieson

We were enjoying lots of *sushi* and other traditional Japanese dishes, all washed down with plenty of *atsukan* – hot *sake*. Ebisutei is an intimate, organic space where you'll often start up a conversation with the person sitting next you at the bar counter, or be introduced to someone at an adjacent table. As the only non-Japanese diners on this occasion our exchanges led to plenty of laughs with staff and others as we shared jovial cross-cultural communication in various levels of beginner and intermediate Japanese and English. "I love Japan!" my friend laughed as we swilled another tiny cup of *sake*.

It reminded me of a comment I often read about Hirafu – that there's "no Japanese culture" in Niseko now that there are so many foreigners, and most of the Japanese people speak English. When I hear this I always wonder what these people did to avoid Japanese culture during their visit! Every time you walk into the Seicomart to buy an *onigiri* riceball to the cries of *irasshaimase*; every time you smile as the liftie bows and wipes the powder off your chairlift; every time you ask a local for directions and they walk you right to your destination; every time you strip naked and bathe with a dozen strangers in a snow-surrounded outdoor *onsen* hot spring bath. Japanese culture is literally inescapable, even in "downtown" Hirafu.

While it might seem like every Japanese person here speaks English, in this issue of *Powderlife* we learn about the challenges locals face in this newly multicultural environment. Effective language education opportunities are limited in Japan, especially in rural areas like this. With that situation becoming increasingly obvious to a Japanese-

British wife and husband team, they launched an innovative English language school to help give residents a better opportunity to compete for jobs and communicate with visitors.

In this issue we have several other feature stories, including an inspiring profile on local Patagonia-sponsored chair snowboarder Hiromi Tatsumi, and an article exploring Hokkaido's coastal skiing with some awe-inspiring photos. We'll also fill you in on everything new and happening in Niseko this year – from events and activities, through to restaurant and product reviews.

Regular readers might notice a fresh new look and feel to the magazine this year. This is largely thanks to two new members of the *Powderlife* team. Long-time local photographer Aaron Jamieson comes on board officially as Associate Editor and Image Editor. Aaron arrived in Niseko on the same day as me in 2006 and has been helping me with the magazine since the very first issue. His extensive local photographic experience and intimate knowledge of the area are valuable assets to the magazine. Meanwhile talented designer and recent migrant from Singapore Jacinta Sonja has joined the team as Design Consultant and helped us give the magazine a welcome facelift this year. Thank you guys!

That's enough from me – it's time to go ski some powder! I hope you enjoy reading this edition of *Powderlife*, have a wonderful ski holiday and experience the cultural trip of a lifetime.

- Kristian Lund

:PL



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N Fresh News

Timbersled Snowbikes are the hottest new toy for exploring Niseko's powder this winter. Read more in the article on the next page, or if you don't need any more convincing book now via Explore-Niseko.com.



Timbersled Snowbike



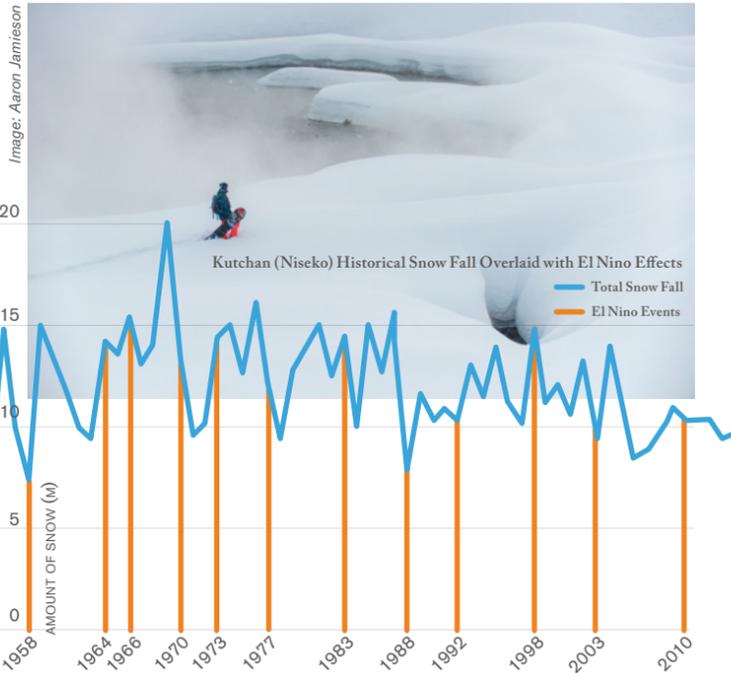
Fat Bike



◀ Le Niseko United Should Defy El Nino

If you keep an eye on the weather or snow media you might have heard the dreaded "El" word being bandied around this year. Yep, it's an El Nino year, and a big one at that, which means weather patterns either side of the Pacific Ocean have been turned on their heads. What does that mean for Niseko? In simple terms, it means there's a good chance it will be warmer and snow less than usual. To put that in perspective, we might only get 12m of cumulative snowfall instead of 15m for the season... drats :) However our buddies at Japan Ski Adventures did some serious number crunching, cross-referencing 50 years of official Japan Meteorological Agency records against El Nino seasons and sent us the results. It turns out Niseko (or specifically Kutchan just down the road) out-performs its historical average snowfall 58 per cent of the time in El Nino years! Honshu resorts might not be as lucky - Hakuba only outperformed its average 17 per cent of the time, and Myoko a flat 50-50. Meanwhile Central Hokkaido outperformed 83 per cent of its average seasons during El Ninos. You could say there's a damn good chance they're going to have a bumper season. The moral of the story? You've made the right decision heading north when our friend El Nino is in town. Only time will tell whether it's going to be a bumper season or not for Niseko, but either way, we're sure none of us will be left disappointed with the amount of snow outside our windows and beneath our skis and boards at any given time this season!

Check out the full analysis at JapanSkiAdventures.com



Note: Records taken at nearby town Kutchan which receives less snowfall than on the mountain

Niseko's new Tokyo-Style Capsule Hotel ▶

The North Face has opened what we believe is the world's first ski resort capsule hotel. Lodge Moiwa 834 has 96 spacious capsules in segregated mens' and ladies' rooms in a beautiful new chalet-style lodge at the foot of the Moiwa ski resort on the outskirts of Niseko. Capsule hotels were born in Tokyo for business people who worked late and didn't have time to head home for the night. Lodge Moiwa 834 was built to cater for budget skiers and snowboarders who just needed a place to rest their heads at night, rather than fancy accommodation. Mind you, the brand new facilities are extremely impressive for "budget accommodation" - not to mention ski-in/ski-out! Each capsule features charging sockets, laptop counter, hanging rack and a passcode safe for valuables. Lodging includes breakfast and dinner, which can be enjoyed in their huge lounge overlooking the ski fields. Then gather round a wood stove fireplace and share stories of deep powder with like-minded travellers. Priceless! **Check it out at Moiwa or thelodgebytnf.com.**



Image: Glen Claydon Photography



Image: Ryan McKay

White Wedding Fever Hits Niseko ▶

Planning on tying the knot? Join a growing number of foreigners getting married in Niseko. Year-round it's a beautiful place for ceremony, reception and honeymoon, but in winter it makes for some of the most unique wedding photos around - see picture by local wedding photographer Hiroyuki Sudo on the right for example. Mind you, you don't need to be able to fly that high on a snowboard to get a unique and beautiful powder snow snap. Niseko Photography director Darren Teasdale says they're experiencing a huge increase in demand from international customers to capture their most special day in Niseko. **Inquire about your wedding via NisekoPhotography.com or email Hiroyuki Sudo on hirosudoweddings@gmail.com.**

◀ Two Wheels Taking Over This Winter

Niseko has thriving summer cycling and mountain-biking communities, so you can only imagine the smiles on faces when they heard about fat biking. Believe it or not these beasts can negotiate even fairly deep powder - although expect a solid workout. However if you want to churn through the powder with the help of horsepower, be among the first to try Timbersled Snowbiking - new to Niseko this year. These are literally converted Kawasaki dirtbikes with a ski on the front and snowmobile track on the back. It's not for the faint-hearted and you'll want to have motorbike experience. If you don't, snowmobile tours are a steadier option that can be tailored for kids to adrenalin junkies. **Book at the Visitor Centre near Seicomart or Explore-Niseko.com.**



Image: Hiroyuki Sudo

◀ Sara Cleyz Kimono Silk Label Takes Off

Sapporo clothing label Sara Cleyz has chosen Niseko to help it expand internationally with a new retail outlet in the main street. Their unique mens' and ladies' fashion pieces are 100 per cent hand made in Japan from new and recycled *kimono* silk. Each piece comes with an individual identifying number ensuring each article is one of a kind. Sara Cleyz's super cool designer Kenji Midorikawa (pictured) says he wanted to take traditional Japanese material and turn it into modern, stylish fashion. More than that, he wants these pieces of Japanese culture to be taken home with visitors and enjoyed in all corners of the globe.

Check it out at their retail shop in Hirafu 188 building - half way between the traffic lights and ski lifts on Hirafu Zaka Street. :PL



Image: Aaron Jamieson

Winter 2015 **16**

What's On This Season

31st DECEMBER

TRY NEW YEAR'S EVE NISEKO STYLE!

The Japanese don't officially celebrate Christmas, so NYE is the biggest event of the season. Watch hundreds of skiers form a giant "16" on the slopes, before skiing down in a huge glowing trail. At the base there's free entertainment and fireworks. The only other thing you need to know is how to say Happy New Year... *Akemashite Omedetou!*

21st to 27th of JANUARY ▼

FESTIVAL OF JAPAN

Real, life-size professional *sumo* wrestlers, traditional artisans, indigenous Ainu ambassadors and *karate* masters – there's more culture at Niseko's Festival of Japan than you can poke a Pocky Stick at! The festival includes live performances, interactive activities and more. Running 21-27 January 2016. Details at FestivalofJapan.com.



5th to 11th of FEBRUARY ▲

SAPPORO SNOW FESTIVAL

Japan's biggest and most famous annual snow festival takes over the centre of Sapporo every February. Catch a bus from Niseko into Sapporo to witness giant multi-storey snow sculptures, cartoon characters, temples and more! Book a bus or tour at the Explore Niseko Visitor Centre next to Seicomart or via Explore-Niseko.com.

27th of FEBRUARY to 2nd of MARCH

JIVAMUKTI YOGA WORKSHOP

Sanctuary Niseko is hosting internationally acclaimed yoga teacher Cat Alip-Douglas for a series of yoga workshops at The Orchards, just outside Hirafu, with one class in Hirafu as well. Not only is yoga great for your mind and body, it will also help your skiing! More details at sanctuaryniseko.com/yoga or email yoga@sanctuaryniseko.com.

ALL SEASON

ACTION Keep an eye out for *taiko* drum performances, rail jams and big jumps, and Hanazono's park and jump competitions.

APRÈS DRINKS Try Yurtz Umbrella Bar, the Vale Bar & Grill, Gyu Bar and IKI Niseko in Hirafu, or the Hilton at Niseko Village.

HIRAFU NIGHTLIFE Live jazz and acoustic nights at Half Note; Jam Bar psychedelic GuruGuru parties; pole dancing and full moon parties at BloBlo; DJs and live music at Wild Bill's; live music at Tamashii Bar.



Image: Paul Malandain

20th to 21st FEBRUARY

KUTCHAN'S YUKITOPIA SNOW FESTIVAL

Yuki (snow) + utopia = Yukitopia, the Niseko region's very own celebration of Hokkaido's snow. Held in the local town Kutchan over two days every year, Yukitopia is the biggest local festival of winter. There's competitions like skiing across a pool of icy water, snow sculptures, giant snow men, snow slides, snowmobile rides, games and "snow" much more. Free buses provided – ask your accommodation provider.



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01

▲ MAYUHANA Pendant Lamp

Designed by Toyo Ito for Yamagiwa
Delicate triple-layered thread-spun pendant lamp that is reminiscent of a cocoon. Available in different sizes and colours.
From 44,600JPY (+ tax). Available at Sanctuary Niseko.



02

▲ XTAL Cordless Lamp

Designed by Ryu Kozeki for AmbienTec
Solid glass, cordless LED crystal table lamp with USB charging stand
18,000JPY (+ tax). Available at Sanctuary Niseko.



05

▲ CAMOMILLE No.5 Teapot and CAMOMILLE GRAND Stand (white)

Enchan-Thé Japon
White and gold Nambu Cast Iron Colores Teapot and Stand from Morioka, Japan.
Teapot 7,600JPY (+ tax); stand ¥ 2,000 (+ tax). Available online at www.enchan-the.com



06

◀ WELCOME Soap

Tamanohada
Japanese snapper soap-on-a-rope. Available in white, red and black.
2,400JPY (+ tax). Available online at www.tamanohada.co.jp

03

▲ KASHIWAN Oak Bowl

Analogue Life
Beautifully-shaped hand turned bowls in natural oak by Kihachi studio in Yamanaka, Japan.
3,500JPY (+ tax). Available online at www.analoguelife.com



07

▶ KIMONO Silk Neck Ties

Sara Cleyz
One-of-a-kind neck ties made with authentic Japanese *kimono obi* silk.
18,000JPY (+ tax). Available at Sara Cleyz.

08

◀ TRICO S Green and TRICO L Natural Bowls Hatashikki

Natural timber bowls that come in different sizes and colours.
4,104 JPY (Small); 8,424JPY (Large). Available at Green Saso



09

◀ THREE-MOONS, FOUR-MOONS, FIVE-MOONS Chopsticks Rests Futagami

Moon-shaped, solid brass chopsticks rests. Each set comes with its own wooden storage box.
Three-Moons 3,750JPY (+ tax), Four Moons ¥4,750JPY (+ tax), Five-Moons 5,750JPY (+ tax). Available at Sanctuary Niseko.



10

◀ TAKASHI ENDO Square Vase

Analogue Life
Monochromatic, cube-shaped vase by Kanagawa-based ceramic artist Takashi Endo.
4,600JPY (+ tax). Available online at www.analoguelife.com



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▲ **HERO 4 SESSION Action Camera**
GoPro
An action cam is essential kit for Niseko these days. The tiny new HERO4 Session takes 1080p60 video and 8MP photos for evidence of that epic powder.
45,150JPY. Available at Rhythm.

Niseko Powder Essentials

Gear to get you going when it's been snowing

We went shopping at all the best Niseko retail stores to come up with the ultimate powder arsenal for winter 2016. Try these on for starters.



▲ **BARRACUDA Powder Board**
Gentemstick
Legendary local company Gentemstick has been focusing on perfecting super short powder boards over the past few years, and now bring that know-how to the most important 150s length shapes. The 158cm Barracuda is their most versatile fish that will perform in all conditions.
136,080JPY. Available at Gentemstick Showroom.

▶ **MERINO Beanie**
Mammut
Merino wool is so warm you won't want to take it off! Also lined with micro fleece for extra comfort and warmth.
5,400JPY. Available at iGATE IKEUCHI Niseko Hirafu.



▶ **SOUL 7 Skis**
Rossignol
This lightweight ski is a powder-biased, all-mountain ski that shines in soft and variable conditions.
82,080JPY. Available at Rhythm.



◀ **FIRE + ICE Jacket & Pants**
Bogner
The eye-catching Sale-D jacket offers style on the slopes and après. Complete the picture with the Lita pants in white or black.
Jacket 74,900JPY / Pants 44,900JPY.
Available at Larry Adler.



◀ **BASE LAYERS**
Oyuki
The temperature regulating properties of these merino wool layers expel moisture while trapping heat, leaving you warm and dry for hours out on the hill.
9,900JPY. Available at Rhythm and Beats.

▶ **HELI GRAVITY 7 Jacket & Pants**
Peak Performance
As much about style as functionality, with protective technical features such as phone pocket, fixed hood that can fit a helmet, and three-layer Gore Tex®.
Jacket 79,920JPY / Pants 69,120JPY. Available at iGATE IKEUCHI Niseko Village.



▼ **BACKSIDE 24L Kitted Pack**
K2
This backpack-shovel-probe kit was designed as one package ensuring the system works together for added comfort, style and user-friendliness.
32,400JPY. Available at Niseko Sports.



▶ **M3 MFI Goggle & Mask**
Anon
Full magnetic facemask system that allows you to pop lenses off and on within seconds, and snaps the facemask snugly under the frame.
32,400JPY. Available at Niseko Sports.



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Boot Camp

For most of us, picking ski boots is one of the least exciting parts of putting together a ski outfit. But for podiatrist and master bootfitter Ned Buckley, properly fitting boots that do the job they were intended to is what dreams are made of!

Chances are when you chose your ski boots, you paid more importance to how they matched your skis and new outfit, rather than what they were designed for. And there's such a variety of skiing options in Niseko, there's more to it than just a snug fit. So we asked Ned to recommend the best boots for your choice of Niseko powder adventure.



If you've got sore feet after your first day on the mountain, all is not lost. Boot Solutions sells these boots and plenty more. They also know every trick in the trade to make your current boots much more comfortable. They might just save your Niseko holiday! Boot Solutions is located on Hirafu's main street, Hirafu Zaka - head up the hill from the traffic lights and it's in the Nozomi Views building, just above the Rhythm Mothershop.

Ducking off for a taste of pow pow?

Whether you dabble in knee-deep powder off to the side of the groomed runs, or attack the deep stuff further out, you'll want a freeride boot. They tend to have lower ramp angles to facilitate the occasional backseat position, as well as allow good close feel of ski underfoot. They'll also have some inbuilt shock absorbing material underfoot to dampen the jarring forces of rough terrain and variable snow.



NED'S PICK: K2 Spyne

- Low ramp angle boot board facilitates better weight position for powder skiing
- Rear cuff is forgiving in the backseat (powder seat)
- Rivet free cuff lock allows smoother ride in varied terrain and snow conditions

Planning to hike to the best spots?

On a good clear day, a hike to the peak is a must, not to mention the terrain on offer after you descend. Skiing these areas will require some extra traversing and a decent hike in and out of some places. For this you're going to want a ski boot with a "hike mode". This allows the upper cuff of the ski boot to unlock and the ankle to move more freely, for a more natural walking gait.



NED'S PICK: Dalbello Panterra/Kyra

- Hike mode is easy to engage/disengage
- Centre balanced rocker stance: optimum control of wider skis and easy balance in powder (less backseat)
- High grip rubber soles allow easy grip on packed powder and steep hike ascents

Going deeper into the backcountry?

If you plan to spend a majority of your time skinning up mountains and hiking from the roadside, then a backcountry-touring style boot is essential. There is a vast range of boots on offer in this category that are really lightweight with plenty of cuff range in hike mode. However, be aware that many of these lightweight, easy-hike models don't perform as well downhill as traditional boots.



NED'S PICK: Dynafit Vulcan

- Designed for freeriders, this super light (only 1600gms) boot hikes well and skis beautifully
- Handles fat skis with ease, and skis varied powder terrain with good responsiveness
- Overall a great compromise between powder performance & weight

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10 Other Awesome Things To Do In Niseko



▲ 02. Snowshoeing

Get up close to nature to enjoy the snow and fantastic scenery on a snowshoe adventure. Guided tours including lunch available, based on your fitness level. Choose a tour to suit your fitness level: Half Moon Lake plus lunch at an *udon* noodle restaurant; forest walk to Niseko Village; and Japanese lunch or scenic tour only.

From 5,500JPY per person including top of the range snowshoes and poles.



▲ 04. Japanese Cooking Class

If you weren't a Japanese food convert before you came to Niseko, our guess is you will be by the time you leave. A good Japanese feed might not be as cheap back home, so while you're here it's a perfect opportunity to learn how to cook with an authentic Japanese master of the art. Some classes even include a supermarket tour.

From 8,000JPY.

◀ 01. Green Saso Green Tea Experience

New to Niseko this season, make your own traditional and modern Japanese tea variations of your choice under the guidance of Japanese and Canadian couple Jun and Stephanie. We were lucky enough to be among the first to try it and we can assure you – this is an experience not to be missed. Our tip: try the *matcha latte* (pictured left). Café open from 11 January. From 600JPY.



▲ 03. Onsen Tour

Get away from the bustle of the resort and enjoy one of the outlying traditional hot springs in Niseko. Choose from Goshiki, Yuki Chichibu and many others, all offering a unique Japanese mountain *onsen* experience. After soaking away your aches, enjoy a traditional Hokkaido BBQ dinner or a cold beer at the local Niseko Brewery.

From 4,000JPY per person for the tour. Running up to two times per week.



▲ 05. Sightseeing Tours

Jump on a bus and get out and about to see more of Hokkaido while you've got the opportunity. Choose from the local towns of Kutchan or Niseko, or a little further afield try beautiful Lake Toya, Sapporo (especially in February when the snow festival is on) or one of the local favourites Otaru, a port town famous for its seafood and architecture.

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Odin Place

Seicomart

Route 343

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Do you ever wake up at night in a cold sweat, thinking about all the virgin powder that is going untracked in Hokkaido every single day? Us too! After you've had a taste in-resort, try these gas-guzzling, powder-churning options to truly satiate your hunger.



▲ 07. Cat Skiing

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▲ 09. Snowmobile Assisted Backcountry

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◀ 06. Timbersled Snowbiking

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25,000JPY per 60 minutes per person.



▲ 08. Snowmobile Adventure

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▲ 10. Tow-in Boarding and Skiing

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15,000JPY per person per session of up to 45 minutes.



Explore Niseko can book all these activities and plenty more. Go to EXPLORE-NISEKO.COM, drop into their booking office next to Seicomart, or call 0136 55 8848 to book now.



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BISTROT le cochon

TEXT KRISTIAN LUND

WHERE YAMA SHIZEN BLDG, UPPER HIRAFU
WHEN 6PM TO 11.30PM
PHONE +81 (0)136 23 2312



Braised Tokachi Beef Cheeks in Red Wine Sauce

Images: Glen Claydon

Kazuhiko Kojima grew up in Niigata, another snow-bound area on the west coast of Japan's mainland island of Honshu.

Now head chef at Hokkaido French favourite BISTROT le cochon, his mother taught him to cook when he was growing up. After finishing school, however, he trained as a car mechanic, before deciding to follow his passion. He worked at many restaurants and hotels in Tokyo before deciding he wanted to master Gallic cuisine. He packed his bags and headed for France, knocking on hundreds of doors asking to apprentice under a true French chef. Eventually the young Japanese man was invited to work at a traditional bistro under an old lady in Lyon.

In 2008, he moved to Kutchan and started a restaurant in a non-descript hole in the wall opposite the train station. Within weeks, curious local foodies had discovered it and BISTROT le cochon became one of Niseko's must-try dining experiences. Last year Kazu teamed up with a couple of well-known local restaurateurs and reopened under the same name in a new location in Hirafu, in order to bring his unique brand of "grandmother'sFrench" to the visitors of Hirafu.

The restaurant's atmosphere is warm and welcoming and suits intimate meals or quiet gatherings. The meal starts with a choice of wine, with a



Tasmanian Salmon Confit with Seaweed Sauce



Crème Brûlée with Orange Flower Honey

pinot noir recommended. We ordered our entrées and were alerted to a plump quenelle of truffle oil-infused butter in the middle of the table, which soon melted into the pores of Kazu's house-made bread. A warm leek potage served in a small mug was a welcome surprise.

Our entrees soon arrived. Tasmanian Salmon Confit with Hokkaido Seaweed Sauce; and Hokkaido Mugibuta Pork Rilette, made with wheat-fed pork from nearby Makkari. Both were presented with a healthy serving of salad, lightly flavoured by a subtle balsamic vinaigrette. A carotte râpées and single sultana added a sweet flavour injection.

Our main courses arrived, striking and bold first in appearance, and second in flavour. Braised Tokachi Beef Cheeks in Red Wine Sauce rose from a potato puree and vegetables. The beef fell apart with a push of a knife, and delicately worked its way to the back of the palette. After enjoying this rich red meat, and swilling some wine, the creamy potato puree offered a contrasting flavour sensation. After the second mouthful we noticed some familiarity with the return of a subtle hint of truffle.

The other dish was a huge leg of French Duck Confit with Whole-Grain Mustard. Under a crispy skin, juicy, tender, dark meat fell off the bone. I turned my attention to a wilted, boiled snow pea lying across the potato puree. Then thick sticks of purple and white daikon radish, and small pieces of broccoli, cauliflower and carrot. In all you could taste the earthiness of the rich Hokkaido produce.

Desserts were a Warm Gâteau au Chocolat with Framboise Sorbet, and Crème Brûlée with Orange Flower Honey Ice Cream. Served in a shallow dish, the coating cracked with the touch of a spoon. The brûlée had hints of vanilla bean, fused with the accompanying caramel ice cream quenelle, reminding us once again of that truffle butter that began the evening's journey. :PL

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Images: Niseko Photography

Jam Restaurant Bar

TEXT MAGNUS ALEXANDER

WHERE SASAYAKI AVENUE, UPPER HIRAFU
WHEN 11AM TO 2AM (Last food order 11pm)
PHONE +81 (0)136 23 0700

Whether you're after a drink, après nibbles or a belly full of food, one little joint you must try is Jam Restaurant Bar.

Located in one of Hirafu's busiest little bar and pub streets, across the way from Wild Bill's, the drinks menu is extensive, offering more than 200 cocktails and a chalkboard menu choice of over 30 shots.

The next most important thing you need to know is that Jam Restaurant Bar's alter ego is as one of Hirafu's most memorable dining experiences. Festooned with colourful lights, handmade furniture and quirky fixtures, Jam's *izakaya* menu caters for all tastes and levels of hunger with a hearty mix of traditional Japanese *yakitori*, rice and noodle dishes, as well as stylised pizzas and burgers.

It's an eclectic mix of cuisines and cooking styles, taking influence from a range of Western and Eastern cultures. Take a group of friends and you will soon discover that no matter how diverse your tastes, somehow it always just works.

As with all good *izakaya*, it's generally expected a table chooses a range of dishes to share between everyone. We recommend kicking off the evening with some traditional entrees such as *shirasu oroshi* (freshly grated Japanese radish topped with whitebait), tuna *poki* (raw tuna mixed with soy sauce), *yakitori* (grilled meat skewers) and *yuudofu* – fresh, soft *tofu* boiled lightly and dipped in a Japanese *ponzu* sauce.

Cue a change of course with a hit of cheese and flavour-laden pizza, and a *teriyaki* chicken burger to really give that second beer a kick. The burgers are served with thick potato wedges made from local potatoes.

If a third of your belly still needs filling, get back into the menu and choose another few dishes – it can all be shared between everyone in your party so indulge your curiosity. A few of the options include *yakisoba* (fried noodles in a Worcestershire-style sauce), marinated chicken wings, Jam's special rice balls, or Korean *bibimbap* – rice topped with mixed vegetables, pork and Korean *kimchee*, served in a hot-stone bowl.

Jam Restaurant Bar is one of those never-fail places to eat in Niseko – somewhere you can go with any mix of family or friends and know everyone will enjoy their meal and the price will be reasonable. After dinner, choose your own adventure: kick on at Jam or another bar nearby, or call it a day ready for first lifts in the morning. **:PL**



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Ryu Nabe

TEXT EMMA LEE

WHERE SASAYAKI AVENUE, UPPER HIRAFU
WHEN 5.30PM TO 1AM
PHONE +81 (0)136 55 5304 / +81 (0)90 5953 5168

The Japanese love their hotpots and so do visitors to Niseko – and rightly so. These belly-warming bowls of simmering meat and vegetables – called nabe in Japanese – are the perfect end to a day in the snow, and healthy to boot.

Nabe is easy to come by in Niseko, but Ryu Nabe offers a hotpot experience that turns this traditional favourite into a fine-dining spectacular. There is a good chance that restaurant hall manager Vivien will greet you as you walk in the door, whether it be in Japanese, English or Chinese – all of which she speaks fluently. Together with the expertise of renowned chef Alex Chan, Vivien and her team bring us the delectable secrets of Cantonese cooking with a quiet pride and passion.

The menu is deceptively basic, and offers guests a choice of set menus and à la carte options. Diners then select their soup base, all of which are home-made on the premises and slow cooked for so long that the gas company had trouble keeping the kitchen supplied.

“They couldn’t keep up with us,” Vivien jokes. “They just couldn’t understand why anyone would be cooking for 36 hours straight!?”

The answer is Fresh Seafood Tomato Soup, Hokkaido Fresh Fish Thick Soup prepared with Hokkaido Milk, and Chinese Traditional Dried Fish Maw with Chicken Soup. Each soup provides a delicious base for your

nabe feast, but the Chinese Traditional Dried Fish Maw also offers celebrated age-defying properties and is wildly popular in China for its nutritional benefits.

First up in your set course is a selection of tender Hokkaido *sashimi*, including delights such as salmon belly and hairy crab. While you’re enjoying these succulent morsels the *nabe* is set to boil before your eyes, and then things really start to get interesting. *Wagyu* beef cuts, Spanish Iberico pork, and whole Hokkaido *kinki* fish are just a few in a parade of platters that grace your table, ready to be braised in the tasty broth and dipped in special sauces, some of which you get to make yourself. Staff members are highly knowledgeable and explain every course at length, including recommended cooking time so you don’t over-do your Hokkaido clam or undercook your spinach and truffle dumplings.

The A5 *wagyu* beef defines the cliché of ‘melt in your mouth’, and another special mention goes to the homemade Kurobuta fish roe wonton, a flavour sensation truly unique to this remarkable restaurant. Accompanying this feast are plates of fresh local vegetables, *tofu* and *udon*.

Expect to loosen your belt and pat your belly with deep contentment after dinner at Ryu Nabe, an enjoyable night out as well as a divine dining experience. The care that has been taken with each detail is genuine and humbling, and will ensure you leave with a smile on your face and a warm feeling that has to do with more than just your satisfied belly. **:PL**

Emma Lee is Niseko’s most prolific food writer. If there’s a restaurant she hasn’t tried, she’ll be trying it soon! Keep up to date with all her Niseko culinary adventures by signing up to the blog at nisekoalpineaccommodation.com.



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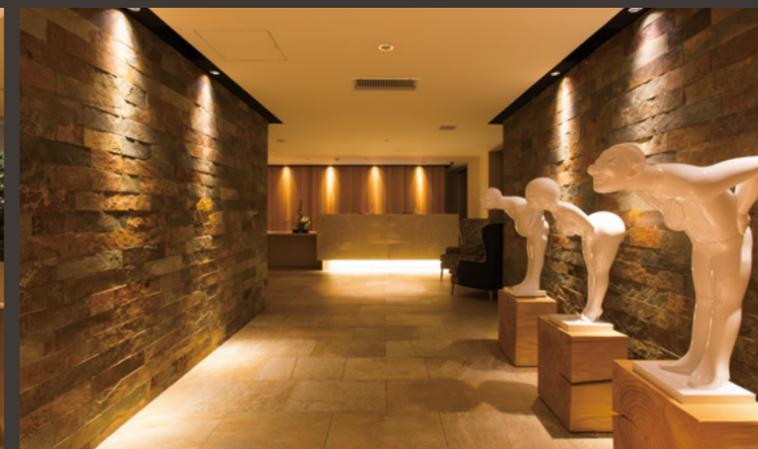
Images: Nacasa & Partners

Terrazze

WHERE MIDDLE HIRAFU VILLAGE
MANAGED BY NISADE

Terrazze was completed in December 2014, bringing a new level of luxury to the Niseko accommodation landscape. The three-storey Summit Properties condominium showcases a signature style, blending the familiar elements of a modern luxury apartment with stylish colours and high-end finishes. Sleek, contemporary furnishings are warmed by natural materials, sunshine and spectacular mountain views filtering in from large picture windows.

No expense has been spared in invoking the ambience of opulence, and touches such as special order Cassina beds, Fabbian lamps, B&B Italia sofas and gleaming marble Maxalto coffee tables are just the beginning. The building was nominated for World's Best New Ski Chalet at the 2015 World Ski Awards. :PL



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URL : www.chaletivy.com



Images: Glen Claydon Photography



Muse

WHERE MIDDLE HIRAFU VILLAGE
MANAGED BY VACATION NISEKO

Muse was completed in February 2015. Designed by prominent Niseko architect Riccardo Tossani and owned largely by high-profile international identities, Muse aims to add to the cultural development of Niseko. The property features commissioned public art and internal mural installations, including calligraphy by artist Rieko Kawabe in the lobby and selected apartments.

Stone, wood, leather and natural and traditional Japanese textures characterise the apartments, which also benefit from high ceilings and an abundance of natural light and views. Its form and materials are derived from the raw character of Japan's mountain geology. Colours recall the bronze highlights of alpine autumn, and textures change with the passage of the sun, shadows, and falling snow. :PL

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a thousand words

Local photographers encapsulate the essence of
the Niseko powder experience.

Takuhiro Shinomoto playing shadow puppets in the backcountry. Image: Naoki Fujimura.



*Above: Local shredder Ayae banks a stylish turn off a gully wall on Mt Yotei.
Left: Shizuto Nakazawa scores the first line down an untouched Annupuri ridge.*

Images: Naoki Fujimura.



Top: Phwooooooar! Will Jackwayslides a heal-side turn into an open field of blower pow.

Above: Kiwi Jake Koia dropping the famous five-stack pillow line in style.

Right: US Olympic Gold Medallist Seth Wescott throws the rule book out the window on Mt Shiribetsu.

Images: Glen Claydon Photography



Left: Scotty Bolts about to throw the fins out Niseko snow-surf style near Goshiki Onsen.

Above: A bird's eye view of Australian "Snowy" soaring like an eagle through the silver birch.

Right: Swedish pro skier Evelina Nilsson charges into a big line in the backcountry.

Images: Aaron Jamieson



Those lights around the King Hooded Triple always make for magical evening light.

Top: Trekking into "The Playground of the Gods". Tokachi, Central Hokkaido.

Right: Olympian and X-Games Gold medallist Anna Segal takes the high road en route to Sapporo.

Images: Darren Teasdale, Niseko Photography





Just under an hour's drive from Niseko, through the potato fields of Kutchan and just over the other side of Mt Ponkutosan, Kiroro is one of the most exciting skiing stories in South West Hokkaido, if not Japan. Already a heavenly powder snow resort, a Thai company recently bought the resort and is working with local and foreign ski industry specialists to turn it into "Asia's premier ski experience".

Savvy private instructors have long been bringing their clients to Kiroro for the perfect teaching terrain and uncongested, wide-open groomers. Future plans include growing the largest dedicated ski school space in Japan; a ski-in/ski-out village designed by the masterplan architects of Colorado's Beaver Creek; while one of the world's biggest hotel brands Starwood has rebranded and revitalised two of Kiroro's existing buildings as Sheraton and Tribute Portfolio hotels.

This is all well and good for those who want the five-star luxury ski holiday experience, but what about those who are more interested in the five-star deep powder experience? Within 10 years Kiroro hopes to undertake three major lift expansions, effectively quadrupling the area of ski-accessed terrain. From this season they're also offering a range of premium backcountry skiing options including limited backcountry access and cat-assisted touring. And this is just the beginning. Stay tuned and keep an eye on Kiroro as it develops over the next few years.

Above: Lena Stoffel feasting on fresh pow inbounds at Kiroro. Image: Aaron Jamieson.

Right: Pip Hunt taking on the full might of Kiroro's backcountry. Image: Will Wissman, Stellar Media.





Salomon's Chris Rubens demonstrates optimum use of Rusutsu's Side Country Park. Images: Grant Gunderson

Right: Rusutsu's summer fun park and West Mountain. Image: Darren Teasdale, Niseko Photography



Another exciting resort in the region is Rusutsu. About 45 minutes drive from the Niseko resorts, it gained popularity by word of mouth as Mt Annupuri started tracking out earlier and earlier in the day. And boy, on the right day does Rusutsu deliver, with vast amounts of terrain offering almost limitless untracked tree runs, not to mention plenty of long, wide-open groomed runs.

Rusutsu is also home to a fun park in summer. While that's buried in snow in winter, a couple of staff came up with a genius idea to keep the fun-park theme going year round. Inspired by Travis Rice's Supernatural terrain park, they built a range of features that capture the magnificent amounts of powder that build up on anything sticking out of the ground here. Unlike Supernatural which requires cat or heli assistance, Rusutsu's Side Country Park is lift accessible. Starting with four features two years ago, last year they added three more, and this year another five. Give it another few years and Rusutsu's Side Country Park is going to be the Disneyland of powder skiing. **:PL**



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LIKE MOST NISEKO RESIDENTS, HIROMI TATSUMI CAME TO HOKKAIDO FROM A VASTLY DIFFERENT CLIMATE AND FELL IN LOVE WITH THE NISEKO POWDER LIFESTYLE.

While gorging himself on perfect powder for four months in 1998, he started dreaming of an eternal winter. At the end of that season he headed south to New Zealand for a three-month working/snowboarding holiday, with another month surfing in Australia. After this adventure, life going back to his hometown Tokushima – a small city on Japan’s second southern-most island Shikoku – to help at his father’s iron factory was no longer enough. He needed more from this life. Tatsumi-san’s passion for snowboarding once again led him back to Niseko in 2003.

On 10 March – early spring – in 2008, a fateful set of circumstances changed the course of Tatsumi’s life. He had planned to snowboard at Hanazono’s park but it was closed. Instead, he spent the morning riding in Hirafu, before heading back to check if Hanazono had opened for one last run. It had opened and he headed for the park. He hit one jump, then another. As he approached the third, he matched his speed to the rider in front of him and went for it, heading towards a jump he’d been over

1000 times. Today though, the snow was soft, the lip was soft. He went for a backside turn completely clearing the landing. He slammed into the flat, landing on his back on rock-solid snow – not the powder he loved.

“I wanted to lose consciousness,” Tatsumi says. “An electric shock-like pain went through my body and the next thing I knew, I couldn’t move my legs. My wife was riding with me and I called her for help. While she went to get somebody, I was thinking, ‘This isn’t good. This is really bad.’”

Mountain patrol also sensed this was bad. An ambulance took him to the nearby army base, from where he was airlifted by helicopter to a hospital in Bibai, just north of Sapporo. Tatsumi fought against pain and fear before arriving in hospital where he would spend the next four months.

“It was a long four months!” he now laughs.

These days Tatsumi has a constant smile on his face. His dark Japanese tan hints at his love for the outdoors. His friends and family can still see the old Tatsumi.



But what he went through following that fateful instant was nothing many of us could imagine. A few hours after he was airlifted to hospital, and one hour before his surgery, a doctor told Tatsumi that he may not be able to walk again. He would probably need a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

The official diagnosis was that he had a fracture-dislocation of the spine. It was bad.

Usually doctors wait some time to tell patients about the potential ramifications of this injury. Time and care is important. The nurse that spent so much time with Tatsumi in the days and weeks after his accident couldn’t bear to discuss it.

But for some reason, his doctor decided not to withhold the inevitable news for too long. Perhaps he saw Tatsumi’s inner strength. And it was exactly what Tatsumi needed to hear.

Hearing the truth freed his mind from fear. Fear of not knowing. Fear of never-ending pain. Fear of losing something precious.

“My doc did the right thing,” Tatsumi says with a glint in his eyes.

“Reset. I switched my frame of mind. I decided to be positive, to go forward, and to challenge myself to do whatever was possible. If this had been a car accident, I might have still been angry. But in my case, it was me who caused this accident. Everything was my responsibility. Besides, the hospital I was at, Bibai Rosai, was located near a coal mine, meaning the doctors who treated me were the best in the field of spinal cord damage. I was glad to be sent to such a great hospital with such great staff.

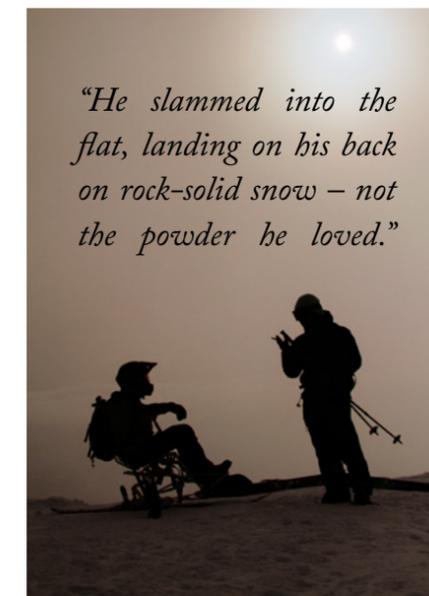
“I’m so thankful for my family, too. Without them and their help, I wouldn’t be here today.

“People often asked me how I could be this positive. But it’s the other way around – I wonder how people could ever reach their goals with a negative mind! I don’t want to look back at what I did. Instead of regret, I want to go forward. I want to go forward even if that means taking a detour.

“If my doctor tells me to cry for two straight years so I can walk, I’ll do that! But in reality it’s not like that, it’s not that easy. I guess I was always positive at heart.

“You know, when you take a detour – a winding road – you still have to make choices along the way. Sometimes it will take a long time to reach where you want to be, life being what it is. Interestingly, you might stumble over the finish line, find yourself just over the destination, or simply time warp.”

Time warp. That’s exactly what he did.



“He slammed into the flat, landing on his back on rock-solid snow – not the powder he loved.”



Right: That's what friends are for... Tatsumi's buddies make sure he doesn't just sit back and watch :) Images: Naoki Fujimura

Below: Tatsumi-san introducing Yotei Outdoor customers to the water in summer.



Images: Supplied



"I just did what I loved. I searched for what was possible. When I found something, I didn't stop. I continued whatever I started."



Fast forward seven years and Tatsumi Hiromi is now a brand ambassador for multinational outdoor clothing label Patagonia, as well as a host of other sponsors who are helping him pursue his dreams.

He has started a rafting company – Yotei Outdoor – which focuses on introducing physically or mentally challenged people to rafting in Niseko. There's a link on his website to a documentary that Japan's national broadcaster NHK produced, in which you can witness the happiness Tatsumi now brings to so many people by personally introducing them to the water and Niseko's great outdoors.

How did he do it all? "I just did what I loved," he smiles.

"I searched for what was possible. When I found something, I didn't stop. I continued whatever I started. First, chair-skiing. I could do it, but something was missing. I couldn't get snowboarding out of my head. I used what I had to build my own chair-snowboard.

"The more I rode, the more people noticed, including Taro Tamai (founder of world-famous Niseko powder snowboard company Gentemstick). One thing led to another, and my friend, Sheesa (Gentemstick pro Tomomi Kuwahara) set up a dinner meeting."

Tatsumi still remembers the first time he met Tamai-san, and the first words he spoke:

"I've been watching you chair-snowboarding for a long time," Tatsumi remembers hearing.

"Yes, I was watching you, Hiromi. I thought how wonderful it would be if you rode with Gentem. And then you came to me. Finally."

After the two met, they quickly came to an understanding, collaboratively making the perfect chair-snowboard. After five years of trial and error, "Impossible" was born.

"Tamai-san and I would ride together and he would come up with a new design just by watching how I move. He is incredible!

"My father owns an iron factory so I'm a pretty handy guy. I first made a chair-snowboard by myself before I met Tamai-san. But it didn't really work. I used my old snowboard and attached a 10mm aluminum plate to it and put a chair on it.

"I could ride on it but it had a lot of faults – it wasn't fun. Most of all, I didn't have the energy and time to make the real thing.

"The real thing is the one I have now – the one from Gentem. It's amazing! The design, its durability and the material; everything is perfect. Gentem really changed how I snowboard; it changed my mind."

Tatsumi says he was satisfied with his life before the accident. Like many Niseko locals, he rode powder every day, had good jobs as a backcountry guide for the winter and as a rafting guide for the summer. He says he was "a regular Niseko rider – not good, not bad".

Not good not bad? He was being modest. He took out the Fox Japan Boardercross in 2003, placed second in Snowboardcross Hokkaido region in 2004, and went on to compete

and place well in All Japan Snowboarding Championships several times. It's safe to say he was very good. Obviously a natural talent.

Beyond the snow, Tatsumi enjoyed Hokkaido as much as he could, kayaking in the spring and fall, surfing in the summer, and, of course, snowboarding throughout the winter.

Tatsumi says after moving to Hokkaido, he enjoyed more of what life has to offer. Along with the four seasons, and the seasons of his life, Tatsumi always found fun activities to fill his days and made time for what he loved. He truly enjoyed life. That's why even after his accident Tatsumi's words to his wife were, "Please let me do as I like. I need three years!"

After four months in hospital, in the summer of 2008, Tatsumi began kayaking, and by the following winter he was back in the mountains. Yes, this was the very same year of his fateful accident.

It was his strong mind and iron will that led to his quick recovery and presence on the mountain. But it was one photo that kept him moving forward...

While resetting his life in hospital, he saw a picture in a foreign magazine – a photo of someone chair-skiing in powder. From that moment until now, his courage never subsided.



Image: Katsuhide FUJIO

Tatsumi feels enthusiastic about his life and speaks passionately about his family, his hopes and his dreams. "Now anything I do, people will say, 'Wow!' Because I'm different. I'm in a wheelchair and I do all kinds of different things. Of course, I get nervous when I first try. With my heart pounding I get scared, but I don't stop. I don't want to stop anything I start. Although I've lost the ability to walk, my confidence still remains in my heart. My confidence helps a lot. With confidence, things that are possible multiply!"

"Oh, and I love snowboarding, kayaking, surfing and my life! When people hear this, they admire my patience and hard work. And then they help me grow, as a person, as an athlete. Through their support I have what I have now. What I do gives me the chance to share my thoughts. I want people to know that somebody like me can do so many things. I want people to know that finding and chasing goals is fun but hard, and that's okay. I want people to know that things I do are precious because of the love and support I receive."

"You know, recently my wife asked me something. She asked me if I still want to walk again. She loves me dearly but worries if I'm satisfied with my current situation. Without a doubt, I still have hope to walk again and I believe I will. But meanwhile, I want to use my opportunity to share my abilities and hopes. One of my hopes is that someday Niseko could offer chair-ski and snowboard rental at a reasonable price, giving many people the chance to try something new."

"Yes, my accident was something I never planned to have – it changed my life dramatically. But it widened my perspective on life. I used to think the speed, the trees, the crashing waves were the things that made sport fun. But now, when I see my customers try rafting for the first time on calm waves, I realise those other things don't matter. Giving people the chance to experience pure joy is what matters. What I want to do is break down the barriers for people with physical challenges, allowing them to enjoy what they love by searching for what they love."

Since 2012, Tatsumi has been selected as a member of the national Paracanoe and Sprint Team (TA class) four years in a row. In 2012, he ranked 10th in Paracanoe and Canoe Sprint World Championships. He also competes in chair-skiing, finishing 3rd and 2nd respectively in 2013 and 2014 at Dirksen Derby at Oregon's Mt Bachelor.

Tatsumi says his ability is infinite. He is who he is because of others, a person with nerves of steel who keeps showing us stories of courage.

Gentemstick Impossible, 186cm. In winter, Hiromi Tatsumi goes riding on Impossible every morning from 8.30 to 10. He does backcountry, sidecountry and half-pipe. But more importantly, he's able to snowboard independently. Maybe some day, some of you might spot him at his favourite spot – Fujiwara Gate. Tatsumi says, in the end: "Life is good." :PL



"I love snowboarding, kayaking, surfing and my life!"



Images: Supplied

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miracle bay

Hokkaido's rugged 2700km coastline holds just as many adventures as its mountainous interior. To find them, it's not so much a matter of knowing where to look, as just getting out there and pursuing your own brand of thrill. For adventure photographer, mountain guide and long-time Niseko resident Aaron Jamieson, a perfect combination of weather allowed him and two friends to achieve a long-held dream – a snow/surf camping expedition.

  | AARON JAMIESON



OUR SEARCH FOR POWDER HAD TAKEN US FAR AND WIDE ACROSS HOKKAIDO. IN TWO WEEKS WE'D COVERED MORE THAN 3000KM, SCOUTING FOR HIDDEN CORNERS OF BACKCOUNTRY AND CHASING COLD WATER WAVES, SURFING WHEN WE COULDN'T FIND SNOW.

Setting out from Hirafu the sun was beaming down and the bitumen of the roads starting to peek through, as the air had the scent of an early spring.

For the last decade I've scoured the entire Hokkaido coastline, north to south, east to west. I've driven around the island half a dozen times and made repeat visits to many locations that I thought might bring the conditions to capture one image that has fuelled my passion for exploration.

Surfing and snowboarding in the same day is not unheard of. In fact, in Hokkaido there are plenty of local ski-surf-bum hybrids that do it all the time. But riding mountains to the beach and surfing waves looking up at your lines from earlier that day – I'd never seen done before.

With a photographic archive of locations, topographic maps of the entire island, and a disproportionate amount of time researching using Google Earth and a myriad of Japanese websites, I had marked about six locations that I thought could one day work to achieve something of a snow-surf synergy project. We'd spent the entire winter constantly checking conditions and waiting for the

winds and snow to align. With an inkling that the coming week might just produce the perfect conditions, we loaded the car with all the camping, surfing and snowboarding equipment we could fit and set off for what would become a true winter adventure.

We were a streamlined team of three and well equipped with gear, but my companions had never snow camped before – let alone hiked to a remote location to do so. A hot coffee from Lawson before we hit the open road mixed with anticipation, excitement and nerves in our bellies.

After a long day of driving and searching for the location we had picked out using trusty old Google Earth and some topographic maps, we finally arrived at the trail head. We parked the car and loaded our packs with enough gear for three nights in the snow. Sluggishly we headed off into the wilderness – snowshoes on our feet and 20kgs on our backs.

Making our way into the coastal mountains and towards an area we'd earmarked as a potential campsite, the tranquillity of our surroundings started to settle on our psyche. The uniqueness of our surrounding



"There was no sound but for the gentle wash of waves on the rocks and the crackle of the fire. Our night slipped into a cold, dark blue, fading to give way to a sky speckled with stars, blinking between an intermittent cloud cover drifting through the higher atmosphere."

was fantastic. I had stood on the peaks of Annapuri range and seen the Sea of Japan on one side and the Pacific Ocean on the other, but this was the first time I'd hiked in boot-deep snow with the smell of the ocean filling my nostrils.

The view opened wider and we could see snow-covered peaks, cliffs coated with ice, the ocean reaching one horizon on our right, with the mountains obscuring the sky on our left. The sound of waves provided a consistent percussive beat broken only by the tramp of our snow shoes crunching through the spring snow.

Arriving at the "X" on our map, we stood atop a flattened plateau of snow overlooking the ocean just 50m from our tent. I laughed that this would be the ultimate beach camp site – if it were only about 40 degrees warmer!

Setting up camp, preparing our fire pit and getting settled for the approaching evening, we were in high spirits.

Completely cut off from the modern world, it was just the three of us sharing stories around a crackling fire, which slowly burrowed itself into the snow. Bliss. We watched the sun slide below the Sea of Japan as the last warmth of the day was extinguished. The cold blue light of dusk settled upon us and we scurried about for additional layers and extra wood for the fire.

We were enveloped in the elements of Hokkaido. There were no lights from the ski resort washing the clouds above us with glow. No sounds of cars or buses, nor the buzz of people bustling through the village. There was almost no sound at all but for the gentle wash of waves on the rocks below us, and the

crackle of the fire eating its way through the dry *itadori* stalks and logs we'd managed to gather from the surrounding forest.

Our night slipped into a cold, dark blue, fading to give way to a sky speckled with stars blinking between an intermittent cloud cover drifting through the higher atmosphere. The weather was unusually stable and pleasant for a winter's evening in Hokkaido and the anticipation of the morning was building with snow conditions looking great for the ocean side.

We slowly rotated ourselves in front of the fire, warming our front sides, then our backs. This continued through dinner and finished with the three of us sharing snow stories over a special whisky-hot-chocolate dessert – a gourmet mix of milk powder, powdered hot chocolate, a generous dash of whisky and

boiling water. More like drinking a whisky flavoured hot chocolate thick shake.

We crept into our tent as the fire extinguished itself into the snow, and we fell asleep with dreams of snow and the sound of the surf all around us.





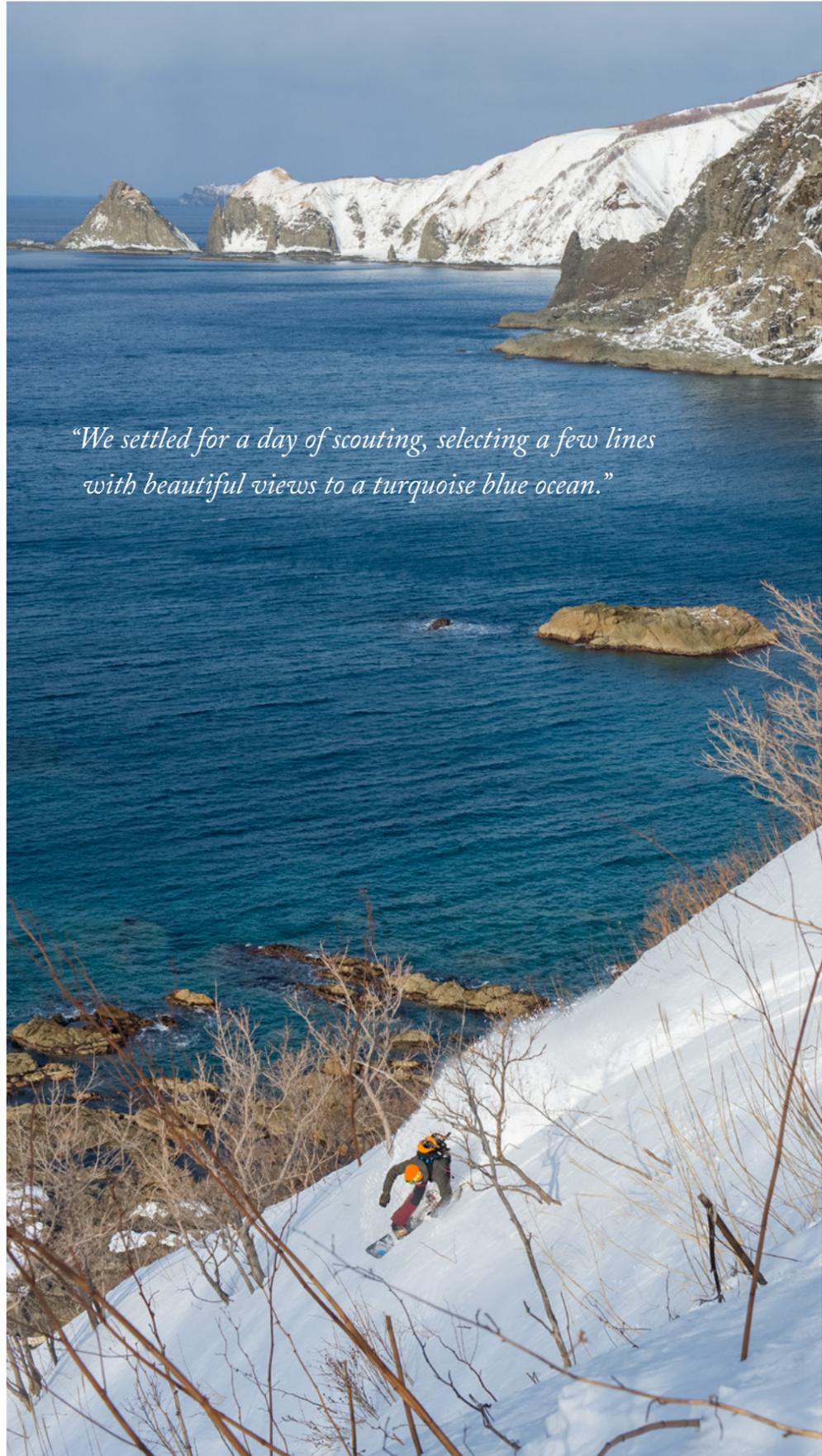
Waking late to the sound of seagulls, I dragged the zip of the tent open and slipped my feet into my semi-frozen snowboard boots. Poking my head out and blinking as my eyes adjusted, I looked out across an almost still ocean and a fresh sprinkling of 5cm of snow. The sun was just powering up behind the clouds and it looked promising with a milky blue sky looking to clear as the warmth of the day burnt off the straggling snow clouds.

Rattling the tent and promising coffee, I roused the others. Blinking their way back into the world, Richie and Ben joined me on the snowy beach for a morning coffee and briefing of what we might attempt today.

Saddling up with our reduced weight packs we set off for a scouting mission and the hope of some perfect ocean-front turns. We ferreted our way through an almost impenetrable forest, climbed high along ridge lines leading us into the mountains from the beach.

Our exploration was difficult and at times irritating as we would make it so far, only to be met with a rock band, picketed by walls of gnarled silver birch, twisted into aggressive shapes by the prevailing ocean gales. Forced to turn back several times we settled for a day of scouting, selecting a few lines with a beautiful view to a turquoise blue ocean on a somewhat clear day.

Trudging back to camp we were happy, but tired and unsatisfied with so much more to explore. Back at camp night fell and the temperatures plummeted with clear skies drawing any residual heat from the earth. Another basic dinner and another chilly night on the snow after a long day hiking started to sap our enthusiasm and our chat in the tent was around perhaps breaking camp in the morning and heading back to a warm shower in Hirafu.



"We settled for a day of scouting, selecting a few lines with beautiful views to a turquoise blue ocean."



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“Eventually, cresting a small peak, I scrambled through shrubs to look out upon one of the most incredible landscapes I had ever seen.”



We awoke to clear, bright-blue skies and a crisp but warming morning as the sun crept higher into the sky.

Starting earlier and armed with the knowledge of the day before we searched a little further and hiked a little higher, pushing ourselves to discover what we'd come looking for – epic turns by the ocean. Eventually, cresting a small peak, I scrambled through some shrubs to look out upon one of the most incredible landscapes I had ever seen. Powerful and magnificent rocks surging from the ocean and forming a beautiful double bay with steep snow covered terrain falling away below me to the ocean. I couldn't believe my eyes. Somewhere deep in my gut I knew it existed, and this was it. We'd discovered what quickly became known as Miracle Bay.

It was a miracle to get consecutive days of perfect weather, a miracle to find the combination of snow and terrain, and the bay itself was miraculous. That miracle was underpinned with a great deal of hard work over a long period of time, and with just a sprinkling of luck, our snow camping trip had come very close to satisfying my desire to realise a dream of true snow surf synergy.

Sitting here now I still find it hard to believe it actually all came together and the weather gods gave us the blessing of sunshine – a rarity at the best of times in Hokkaido. There's nothing better than venturing into the uncharted and successfully challenging yourself to achieve something that you've dreamed of. For me... the search through the pristine wilderness of Hokkaido has only just begun. :PL

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What happens when a booming new international tourism industry develops in a tiny farming town in northern Japan? A whole lot of the local Japanese people need to learn English!

In 2014 Yoshiko and Julian Bailey opened the first independent language school in the Niseko region. Called “SMiLE” – an acronym for Social Mobility is Language Education – the school gives local children and adults the opportunity to learn English. Since a booming international ski resort industry developed rather rapidly over the past 10 years, it became increasingly obvious to the Baileys that many townsfolk wanted to take part in the recreational, business and work opportunities that this new industry had opened up. And that in coming years, today’s primary and high school students would also need to be armed with English education and communication skills – things the Japanese school system wasn’t giving them.

“In the public school system here the focus is on passing written tests for entry to the next school or university,” Julian says. “There’s very little focus on communicative ability, so people don’t really learn to speak and listen to English.”

So began project SMiLE.

Yoshiko grew up in nearby Tokachi and became a junior high school teacher. Julian had a first class education degree from Britain’s prestigious Cambridge University and after qualifying as an English teacher decided to travel, making a living



“There’s very little focus on communicative ability in the education system, so people don’t really learn to speak and listen to English.”

teaching English as a foreign language wherever he went. As fate would have it, he ended up in Tokachi in the late 1990s.

The new couple visited Niseko during that time and decided this was the place they wanted to live. They returned to England, saved some money to

buy a house, and came back permanently in 2006. Julian worked in real estate sales in the area for five years before looking for something else to sink his teeth into... pardon the pun but initially that was bread! He opened a bakery while Yoshiko taught Japanese to the ever-increasing number of foreign residents and seasonal workers keen to pick up the local lingo. After a while they decided to tackle an issue they’d been discussing for some time – how to bridge a gap between the local Japanese and growing foreign community.

“We could see there were lots of new people coming here to fill the English-speaking job vacancies, which had the effect of disempowering local people because they didn’t have the chance to get jobs and get involved. We began to sense there were lots of people who lived here, spoke English, and had good work prospects, and lots of local people who were just spectating and couldn’t get involved.”

In Japan the main English proficiency test is TOEIC. If someone studies hard enough they can get a good TOEIC score and get a great job or promotions in Japanese companies. But Julian says if they go for a job with a foreign company in Niseko, they often learn their TOEIC study didn’t

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really develop any speaking or listening skills. Many times they won’t pass the first stage of an interview with a foreign company here which can be devastating for them.

“All they’ve really done is a pass a very academic hoop-jumping test which is designed for a different purpose,” Julian says. “They come away feeling a bit lousy and like they’ve wasted their time. In Niseko a majority of people don’t need academic vocabulary, they need the ability to listen and understand people, solve problems, help negotiate things, sit in meetings, understand their boss, take phone calls from customers, write a basic email response. None of those kind of skills are addressed by the current system.”

Julian and Yoshiko decided not only would they start an English language school, they would aggressively address a communicative style of teaching. Introducing Cambridge University’s respected English Language Assessment, they now offer a range of practical language courses for different purposes. For example, Julian now delivers an intensive short course in dealing with foreign customers to Hirafu and Kutchan restaurant owners.

“The aim of the course isn’t to have them speaking fluent English – it’s to introduce them to basic vocabulary and interactions, in order to give them a sense of confidence about welcoming and communicating with their customers.”

When local businesses heard about the initiative, eight of the largest foreign-owned companies established the Mountain Scholarship Fund to support SMiLE Young Learners’ tuition fees, which is now supporting 50 students.

Julian and Yoshiko have been approached by an area on mainland Honshu with similar issues and have been asked if they are interested in starting a school down there too.

“If we can do a proof of concept in the Niseko area, then there may well be wider interest in it in other areas of Japan. I like the idea of having a bit of a long-term project that doesn’t just benefit us, but that might leave a bit of legacy for further changes in English education across the country.” **:PL**

“The aim of the course isn’t to have them speaking fluent English, it’s to give them a sense of confidence about communicating with their customers.”





Places Called Home

Niseko is no longer just a ski holiday destination.

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Akatsuki

ARCHITECT
HOP Architects
PROJECT MANAGER
Taiga Projects

While Akatsuki was built by Japanese craftsmen, its heart is distinctly European. Its Belgian owners grew up skiing in the French Alps and wanted the chalet to be filled with the elements and textures of home. Most of the feature materials and furnishings were imported from Europe, including the raw 22mm thick solid French oak flooring. It was so foreign to the local builders that the owner recalls a phone call where she was told the wrong wood had been shipped. “They called me and said, ‘Oh my god, this wood you’ve shipped all the way from Europe is really bad quality – we can’t work with it,’” the owner laughs. “And I thought, ‘What? This is the best wood there is!’ So I asked them to take a picture and send it to me, and I had to explain to them that this is what we like. At first they hated it because it’s very rough and they’re used to something that’s polished and perfect, but now they love it – they said they learned so much from the materials we used.”

The chalet also features a touch of local history, thanks to project manager Keith Rodgers of Taiga Projects. “When they gutted the old J-First Hotel and onsen (at the very top of Hirafu Village) before they demolished it in 2012 everyone was running in and grabbing light bulbs and fittings. I went out to the onsen and grabbed all the old fence wood. The Japanese people were asking me what I was doing because they thought it was just useless old wood. But it had this beautiful silver sheen to it so I gifted it to the owners and incorporated it into a few places in the house.”

Rodgers says this project was very much a collaboration between him and the owner. “I had a lot of fun working with the owner,” he says. “She’s a clothing designer so she’s got a very good sense of fabric and materials and interior design. It was a very fun, creative interaction and the finished product is very much a reflection of who she is.”





The family had a ski chalet in France, and when they built Akatsuki they made sure it had all the things the previous place lacked. One of their favourite features is the huge onsen-style bathroom. They'll often come back from a morning's skiing, jump in the bath to warm up, and then head back out onto the mountain.

The family comes back with friends several times a year, even though they no longer live in Japan. "We planned to sell the house but when we left but none of us wanted to so we kept it," she said. "We're always moving from one country to another so now the kids are teenagers they need somewhere they feel is their own, and this is it. We love to ski and we love the snow here, but why we keep coming back is because this is like our home now – we have our books and our stuff here and we just keep wanting to come back. Even my daughter who is looking at going to university in the US still wants to fly all the way back here for her winter holidays."





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Gustav's Hideaway

ARCHITECT
Hikohito Konishi
Architect & Associates

PROJECT MANAGER
Hokkaido Tracks
Resort Properties

While there are a lot of luxury properties in Niseko now, there aren't any quite like Gustav's Hideaway. It's a different kind of luxury – a fun luxury unlike you will see in any other new property in the area. After visiting Niseko for several years and holidaying in a range of different rental properties, the Hong Kong-based US expat owners knew exactly what they wanted and needed in their dream ski home. It was designed to be a fun family getaway with a dedicated space for kids downstairs, well away from the living space for the adults upstairs.

The most striking thing about the chalet is the colours. It's a wild mix that in theory shouldn't work, but for some reason as a family ski getaway, it's masterful. The owner says they wanted to try something different and new. "We don't have to look at bright colours and funky tree bathrooms every day of our lives – we're going to be here for anywhere between three and four weeks of the ski season every year so we thought we'd make it a bit of fun to make it interesting."





She says perhaps the most shocking colour is the kitchen cabinets. "My husband asked me if I was really sure I wanted it to be that blue! I wasn't sure but now I think it works really well with the red marble. It's a nice feature piece when you walk into the room."

One thing visitors always talk about is the bathroom with the forest wallpaper. It doesn't have any windows and was originally supposed to be just a washroom, but they decided it would be handy to put a shower in there. They were looking for a way to offset the lack of windows and while flicking through wallpaper books, they came across the forest theme. "The kids love it – they think it's the best room in the house!"

One of the owners is half Swedish, hence the chalet's name and the blue and yellow bathrooms. The tiles for these were shipped from the US, along with most of the furniture and woodwork in the house in order to give it more of a feeling of home.



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容積率_300%、価格_23区画30億円、管理費等_8,280千円(年間、税別) 広告有効期限2015年12月末



Kazahana

ARCHITECT
HOP Architects
PROJECT MANAGER
Taiga Projects

Kazahana was built by a Malaysian family living in Hong Kong. First and foremost it's a winter holiday chalet, but they also use it as a year-round retreat from the heat and hustle of the big city. With a large extended family, they wanted somewhere they could come and relax. "We wanted our own place we could call home, away from the city, without having to book 10 different rooms," the owner says.

They designed the house with the living area on the top floor to make the most of the views. "When you go on a ski holiday it's about spending time together. This is where everybody gets to hang out by the fire place or in the jacuzzi (on the veranda outside) and where most of the conversation happens at the end of every day."



Welcome to the neighbourhood



SKYE
NISEKO
NISEKO'S PREMIER
SKI-IN SKI-OUT ADDRESS

At Niseko Realty we take an authentic approach to real estate sales and development that is built on the common ground we share with our clients; a passion for investment in Asia's premier ski destination and a true belief in the long-term investment potential of Niseko. We focus on details and assess investment potential with a realistic, grounded approach backed by our extensive understanding of the Niseko's existing properties and, equally importantly, its upcoming developments.

Led by real estate veteran Craig Meikle, a recognised leader in high-end property transactions in the Niseko area, our clients benefit from over a decade of experience and grass-roots local knowledge.

For enquiries visit us at Level 3, Hirafu 188 Hirafu Zaka.

E craig@nisekorealty.com **W** www.nisekorealty.com **P** +81 (0)8018695066
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“Similarly we wanted to keep a big open-plan kitchen and just keep it a real family feel. My father likes to cook so we invested a little bit in the kitchen in terms of the materials we used and also the plates and the pots.”

Dad appears to love the year-round simple life in Niseko more than anyone else. He wakes up every morning and goes to a local spring to get his water for the day and pick up fresh produce from the farmer’s markets.

His son says the lifestyle is what they love most about Niseko. “Life here is simple, respectful and also ultimately very calming for the soul. It makes you realise there is definitely more to life than the little bubble of Hong Kong.

“This is our holiday home away from home. It’s where we go at least once a year to meet as a family and it’s something we don’t have to discuss – we just say let’s go on these dates and let’s meet up then.” **:PL**



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CG IMAGE OF HOUSE F AT ELEVATION BY
KENGO KUMA & ASSOCIATES

Quietly nestled in an idyllic forest below the gondola, Elevation checks all the boxes for those looking to build a super-luxury mountain home in the upper village. This private new estate by Zekkei Properties, an experienced international developer specializing in luxury villas and chalets in Asia, features large land plots, each offering multiple vistas of Mt. Yotei, the ski hills, forest and creek. Whilst highly secluded, Elevation is just a short walk to all of Hirafu's amenities. Only a few buyers will enjoy this rare opportunity to custom build their ski home under a master plan by world renowned architect Kengo Kuma. The architectural language, plot planning, view corridors and landscaping have been carefully designed to ensure that Elevation will be the village's pre-eminent residential community. Infrastructure works have been completed, including underground electrical cables to ensure un-obstructed views for each house, and the first owners will commence construction in the spring.

Limited land lots are available for purchase. Please call your local real estate agent for viewing.

www.elevationhirafu.com



ELEVATION

HIRAFU

Development News

It's been a big year for Niseko with real estate and development interest and action in overdrive. All eyes are well and truly on what is arguably one of the hottest ski resort destinations in the world right now.



CG of AYA Niseko (bottom left) at the base of the soon-to-be-upgraded Ace Family Lift. Completing December 2016. Photo: Glen Claydon



CG: SKYE Niseko – on piste, Upper Hirafu

Major Hotels Stake Claim

Two of the world's largest hotel companies have pulled the trigger on plans for major hotel developments in Niseko.

In November, **Hyatt Hotels** announced it had entered into a management agreement with the owner of the **Hanazono** ski resort, Hong Kong company Pacific Century Premium Developments.

Within a week of this announcement, **Ritz-Carlton** publicised its plans to build one of its boutique "Ritz-Carlton Reserve" resort hotel developments at **Niseko Village**, owned by Malaysian company YTL Hotels.

Earlier in 2015 **Starwood Hotels & Resorts** took over the management of several existing hotels at neighbouring resorts. They've opened **Sheraton** and **Tribute Portfolio** hotels at Kiroro, and a **Westin Hotel** at Rusutsu.

Irenka Village

Tokyu Corporation, which operates the Hirafu ski resort, has developed roads and infrastructure for a massive 25ha community just below Hirafu. **Irenka Village** offers 23 lots for sale, ranging in size from 3400sqm condominium sites, to a 100,000sqm hotel site. Irenka means Utopia in the language of Hokkaido's indigenous Ainu. Contact **Hokkaido Tracks** for more details.

AYA Niseko

Opening December 2016, **AYA Niseko** is a ski-in/ski-out condominium hotel currently under construction on the Ace Family Lift ski slope. Including 74-apartments, 3-penthouses 2-private residences, with ski valet, onsen, spa, gym, dining, retail and more. Managed by Hirafu resort operator **Tokyu**, who have confirmed the Ace Family Lift is to be upgraded shortly.

ELEVATION

The roads and infrastructure have been completed for **ELEVATION** – a luxury gated estate just below the Hirafu Gondola and master planned by one of Japan's most renowned architects, **Kengo Kuma**. Developer **Zekkei** says homes will be built in harmony with nature, integrating a modern aesthetic into the natural surroundings.

Upper Hirafu Project

Plans are underway for **Hirafu's largest condominium-hotel** development, located between the Ace Quad lift and Gondola. **Niseko Property** is project managing the twin-building development, connected by skybridge, with about 180 apartments ranging from entry-level studios to loft-style luxury penthouses. Onsen, entertainment, retail onsite.

SKYE Niseko

SKYE Niseko will be the first development in the national-park-zoned precinct at the main base of the Hirafu ski lifts. Developed by **Summit Properties** (the team behind Terrazze – see p32), the ski-in/ski-out condominium-hotel features 96 premium apartments and penthouses, direct access to the piste and lifts, and incredible views of Mt Yotei and the slopes.

NISADE

Fresh from taking out the World Ski Awards' World's Best Ski Boutique Hotel for **The Vale** for the second year in a row in 2015, developer **NISADE** unveils **Kozue** this season – an exclusive seven-apartment condominium on the edge of central Hirafu. They're currently planning a ski-in/ski-out condo, **The Maples**, in Upper Hirafu.

Premium Homes

Hokkaido Tracks, **West Canada Homes** and **Taiga Projects** are each focussing on developing a number of multi-million dollar private homes in and around Hirafu. **Hokkaido Tracks** says: "What we are seeing architecturally is setting a trend for the area. Niseko is the premier destination for snow investment in Asia right now." **:PL**

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RESIDENCES

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- On-site management office

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Upper Development Site



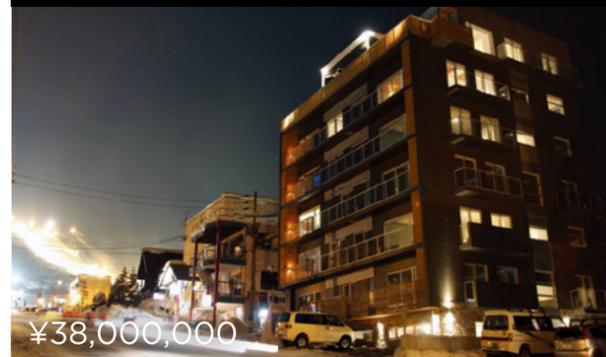
¥315,200,000

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Mountain Guide

Before you hit the slopes, get yourself acquainted with the Mt Annupuri - home of the Niseko United ski resorts.

Mt Annupuri 1309m

ANNUPURI

HANAZONO

NISEKO VILLAGE

GRAND HIRAFU

Image: Glen Claydon Photography

MT ANNUPURI

Home of the Niseko United



Niseko United is the name given to the four independently owned resorts on the south east face of Mt Annupuri.

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 Hanazono is over a few hills and gullies to your right.

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

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

英語/ENGLISH
www.niseko.ne.jp

NISEKO UNITED.

TRAIL MAP 2015-2016

One Mountain Four Resorts

Niseko Annupuri

Niseko Village
Always in Season

Grand HIRAFU

HANAZONO
NISEKO JAPAN

To ensure the safety and quality of snowsports school services in Niseko, please always employ the services of snowsports schools operated by Niseko United, or snowsports schools affiliated under the Niseko United Snowsports & Guiding School Affiliation System.

To ensure safety, those who wish to employ a back country ski guide are advised to employ a member of the Niseko Winter Guide Association.
www.nisekoguide.jp/

▲ Mt. Niseko An'nupuri Altitude 1,308m

CHECK LATEST NEWS & LIFT STATUS AT THE NISEKO UNITED WEBSITE
(Optimized for PC, Smart phone and Tablet)
Scan QR code or go to www.niseko.ne.jp

FOR YOUR SAFETY

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

ALPINE RESPONSIBILITY CODE

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

KNOW THE CODE: IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

NISEKO RULES

[Crossing Boundary ropes is prohibited]

Publishing : Niseko Annapuri Avalanche Prevention Committee

1. OFF LIMIT AREAS are strictly NO ENTRY-AT ALL TIMES.
2. Crossing boundary ropes is prohibited. Those who violate the rules may be refused from using all resorts facilities.
3. No safety control & no patrol beyond resort boundaries.
4. If the gates are CLOSED, do not exit into the terrain beyond.
5. Daily NISEKO AVALANCHE INFORMATION is OFFICIAL Niseko Rules information.
6. Search and Rescue efforts WILL BE CHARGED for incidents outside resort boundaries.
7. Obey Ski patrol's instructions at all times.
8. Children under 12 must refrain from going out of bounds unless accompanied by a proficient adult leader.
9. Niseko Resorts, and the local community respect the freedom of mountain users and place a strong emphasis on THE SAFE USAGE of the mountain.

Lift ticket counter	Restaurant	Rental	Parking lot	ATM	Gate to uncontrolled areas	Mogul run	Easiest	Night course & lift	Number of seats
Rest room	Cafe	Ski school	Ski patrol	Locker	Gate to uncontrolled areas	Wave	More Difficult	Un-groomed Slope	Length-Time required-Number of lift ticket points
Phone	Shop	Onsen(Hot Spring)	AED	Changing room	Gate to uncontrolled areas	Park(Kicker, jib, etc.)	Most Difficult	Name of Slope	Lift operating times and courses are subject to change due to weather, snow and light conditions etc.
Kid's room	Information	Shuttle bus stop	Light				Maximum Gradient		

Mizuno no sawa Avalanche Control Operation Area

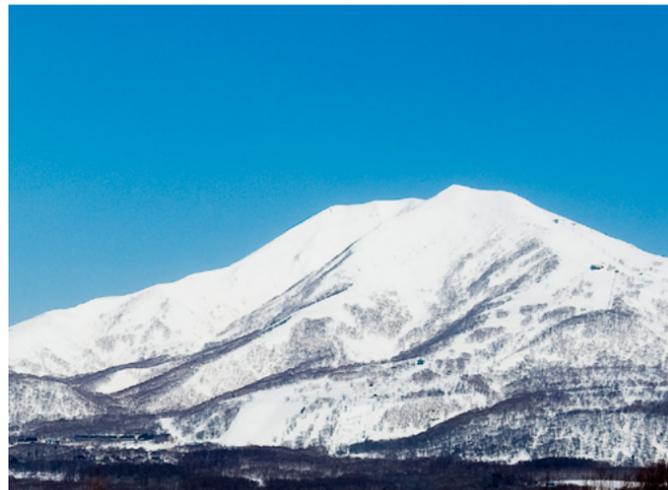
Mizuno no sawa is a specially controlled terrain where various methods of avalanche control are employed in the interest of safety.

Contact: Niseko Village 0136-44-2211

ANNUPURI

Mellow groomers, badass bowls

Wide, cruisy groomers **The bowls**
 Long, deep powder runs Laid
 back **night skiing** Lunchtime
 dining variety Yugokorotei onsen



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 chair lifts provide access to amazing in-bound terrain and connect to all the Niseko United resorts.

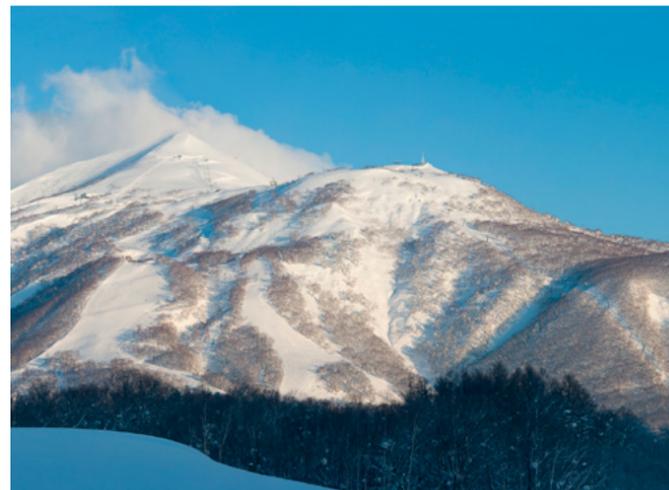
Hiking out from the top gate will get you on top of some seriously steep open faces with beautiful views of the Panorama Mountain Line and Sea of Japan to the west. Skiing out from Annupuri's backcountry gates will give you access to amazing ravines and gullies that funnel you back to the base area. Going out of these gates is not for beginners and most of the area's serious avalanches happen out of bounds here. Backcountry gear, snow pack knowledge and a good riding partner are a good idea when venturing out into Annupuri's massive back bowls.

The in-bound 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.

NISEKO VILLAGE

Your own private resort

Long, fast groomers Flat beginners
 runs **Private resort vibe** **Family**
snow activities Reindeer sledding
The Hilton - eat, drink



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.

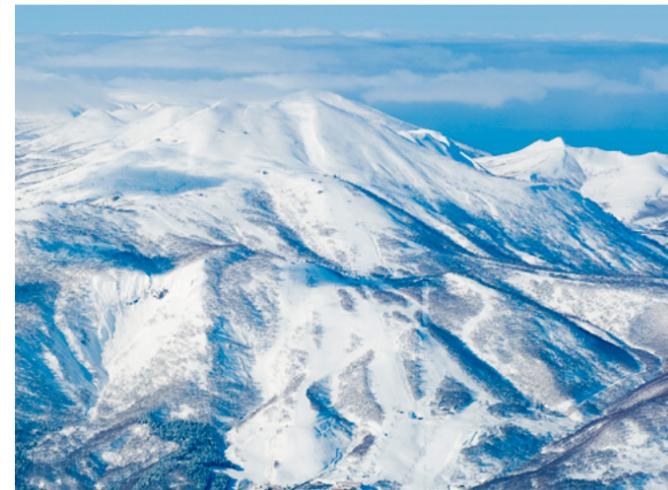
Known to be the sunniest area on the mountain, it's easy to find great skiing and snowboarding all day on the expert, intermediate and beginner slopes. The gondola station is right outside the Hilton hotel and you can enjoy amazing scenery out of the gondy's bubble windows when riding to the top. There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

GRAND HIRAFU

The centre of it all

Central convenience **Kids snow park**
 Terrain for every mood Hike the peak
Ultimate night skiing Après drinks
 and dining Shopping **Nightlife**



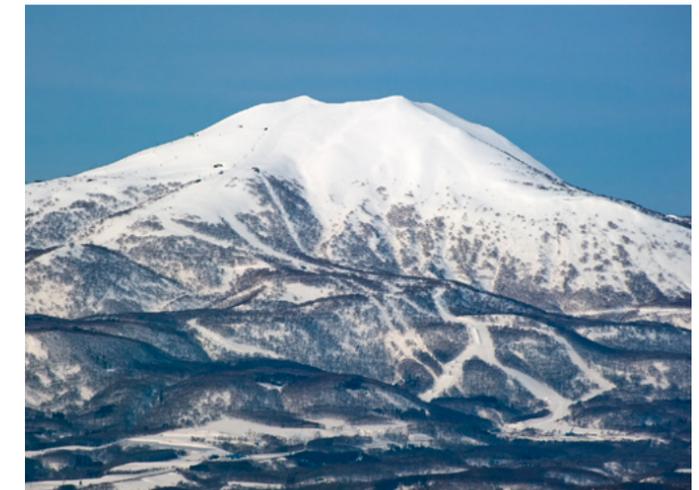
Grand Hirafu's new high-speed, eight-person gondola, 12-chair lift system and ski slopes will fulfil all your skiing and snowboarding dreams. Advanced riders and skiers can cruise the open powder fields from the top lifts to get up to floaty powder speed fast. Hike out of the top access gate to the peak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

HANAZONO

Powder laps and play time

Family fun Mellow groomers
 Strawberry Fields **Full kids snow**
sports program Snow adventure
 activities **Terrain park**



Images: Glen Claydon Photography

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, young and old.

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

Hanazono has also 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 kids' snowsports school programmes in a specialist children's learning environment.

NIGHT SKIING

Niseko's night skiing is awe inspiring

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.

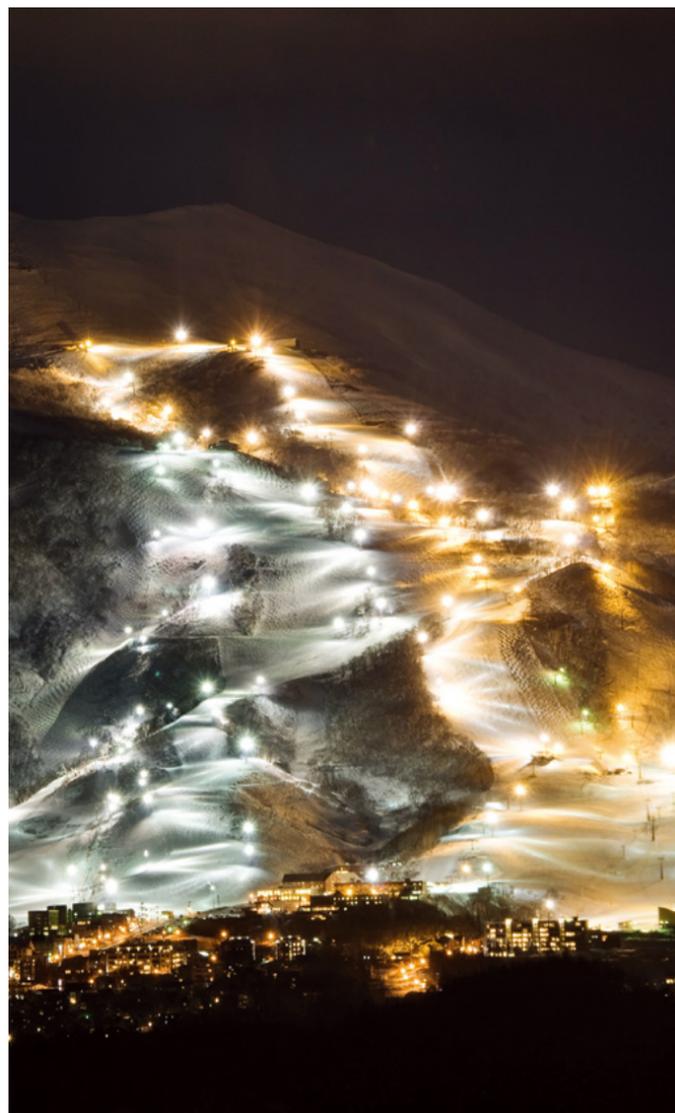
The mountain is a completely different world in the hours of darkness. The flood-lit atmosphere and the way the shadows are cast on the mountain make it a spectacle worth experiencing. With the lights pointing in from all directions, it's like a 3D fantasy land.

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.

Most resorts have selected lifts operating up to 8.30 every night when the weather is cooperating so get out there!



Images: Niseko Photography



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

Intermediates Annupuri's long, wide runs are almost always empty, meaning some nights you can almost have the resort to yourself with a range of terrain and park to enjoy.

Powder Hounds Unless you're happy to cruise 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 very often be filled in by the time you get back up. You haven't experienced all Hirafu has to offer unless you've skied it on a night like this.

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BACKCOUNTRY SAFETY

Know everything about skiing and snowboarding?

So your buddy took a different route down the mountain and now you're both lost and it's getting dark. The waist-deep pow was the greatest thing in the world when you were coming down, but now it doesn't seem very fun at all. You can't hike back up all that way. Where are you? How do you build a snow cave? What's the emergency phone number in Japan? Oh... does your phone even work?

Niseko is one of Japan's most progressive resorts. With a strong group of local skiers, boarders and mountain lovers, Niseko works harder than almost any resort in Japan to allow safe, controlled access to the backcountry and off-piste areas.

Sadly, these efforts are not enough to prevent deaths and injury on the mountain, and every year we are brought stories of accidents and avalanches caused by the actions of skiers and boarders. The good news is that the motivation of the resorts to provide more freedom to ski and ride off piste has never been greater and the drive behind mountain safety is stronger and more widely accepted than ever before.

It's the cooperation of all parties that ensures Niseko continues to expand the skiable off-piste areas. This starts with the weekend warriors and ends with the Niseko locals setting the example for us all to follow.

While every effort is made by the combined resources of the ski patrol, resort operations and avalanche reporting to control the "high-risk" areas, the people most in control of safety is you and me – the skiers and boarders. Our decisions and actions determine our own fate, every day. Quite often it's the actions of one that

triggers an avalanche that causes serious consequences for others. Ducking a rope early before the gate, or traversing further across the face of a bowl are two classic mistakes that constantly endanger the lives of others. The truth is that the individual making the mistake probably just didn't know better... this is an easy fix!

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'. It's important to note that crossing through the open gates does not mean the mountain is safe. It means that the risk is deemed manageable by sensible and informed skiers and boarders.

Stemming from the desire to create freedom for all mountain users, the Niseko Rules have been implemented by the local community thanks largely to local legend Akio Shinya (pictured above). 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.

So, before your powder lust sets in and you find yourself at the bottom of a gully with no idea where you are, take five minutes to set yourself and your friends up for a safe and enjoyable holiday with more powder turns than you can remember.

Black Diamond Tours and Hokkaido Powder Guides run regular avalanche and backcountry courses. Get in touch if you plan to get deep.



We've collected a few tips from local experts to help keep you safe in the side and backcountry.

1. Obey the Niseko Rules

Listed on the course map (p94). Read them and heed them.

2. Check avalanche reports

Know what weather to expect and read 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.

i Check the daily avalanche report <http://niseko.nadare.info>

BACKCOUNTRY
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Download now & Get the Niseko Sticker at Hirafu Welcome-Center, Explore Niseko, Niseko Resort Service, HANAZONO308

Resort Guide

Powderlife is your Niseko travel guide, on the ground in Niseko and online anywhere in the world at Powderlife.com

TOURIST INFO



Niseko Grand Hirafu Welcome Centre

Main bus arrival area. Wide range of brochures from the area and transport information.
Location: Top of the main street (Hirafu Zaka) in Hirafu (map p113/E1). 0136 22 0109.

Kutchan Information Centre

Plenty of brochures and English-speaking staff.
Location: Main Street, Kutchan (map p110/B4). 0136 22 1121.

GETTING HERE AND AWAY

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For departure and arrival times. 0123 23 0111.
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). Hokkaido Resort Liner, Whiteliner Buses, Chuo Bus and Donan Bus. Email info@powderlife.com to book transfers back to Chitose.

Door-to-Door Transfer Skybus offers a door-to-door transfer service to and from the airport to Niseko or Sapporo. 0136 55 5601.
www.skybus.co.jp.



Image: Paul Malandain

Train No direct train from Chitose to Kutchan (closest station to Hirafu). All run through Sapporo and Otaru. Change at Otaru. One way approx ¥3000. www.japanrail.com.

CAR RENTAL

Niseko Auto Rentals

Specialising in large 7-8 passenger 4wd vehicles: Delica Space Gear and Toyota Hiace. (map p110/F8) 0136 44 1144. 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

Sprint Taxi - bilingual taxi service 5am-11pm. Call 0136 55 5400 or use TaxiCaller app.
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 at Hirafu Gondola & Hirafu intersection.
> Free if you have an all-mountain pass
> 1 point if you have a 12-point mountain pass
> ¥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

Shiki Niseko, Hirafu Map p97/E3. Located in the Supermarket & Deli. Available 7am-9pm.
Kutchan Main Post Office Map 110/E3. Accepts all major cards.
All 7 Elevens Accept some international cards.

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 p110/B2.
Hokuyo Bank Map p110/B3).

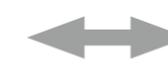
Hokkaido's biggest bus operator.



SAPPORO



AIRPORT



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Tel: +81 (0)11 200 0506
Email: info2@access-n.jp
www.access-n.jp



Operated by Hokkaido Access Network Co., Ltd.

CONVENIENCE SHOPPING

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

Hirafu

Seicomart Map p112/D2
Lawson (24 hours) Map 113/E3
Piz Gloria Map p112/D2
Alpen Hotel Map 113/E1

Kutchan

MaxValu For all your food/drink/grocery needs. Map p110/G3.
Homac For household/hardware.
Best Denki For all your electrical and technical needs. Map p110/B4.
M-Pocket For imported groceries and alcohol. Map p110/B3.
¥100 Shop As the name suggests! Map p110/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 hair dryers 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 p112/D3. 0136 22 0399.

Tsuruha Drug Pharmacy (red sign)

Map p110/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.

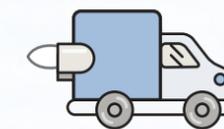
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A-BU-CHA 2
UPPER HIRAFU VILLAGE

A wide variety of meals and drinks – Top marks!

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.

abucha.net



C1
map p112
Lunch 11.30am – 4pm
Dinner 6pm – 1am
(Last order 11.30pm)
0136 22 5620

IZAKAYA KOUGETSU
MIDDLE HIRAFU VILLAGE

Exceptional sashimi, regional dishes and local sake

Warm and intimate, by the wood stove or watching the falling snow from the loft, let our family treat you to exquisite Hokkaido delicacies. Crispy grilled salmon, giant creamy oysters, juicy dumplings, rolled sushi and overflowing vegetable hotpots.

kougetsuniseko.com



A3
map p112
6pm - 12 midnight
(Last order 11.30pm)
Open 7 days
0136 22 6028

KAMIMURA
UPPER HIRAFU VILLAGE

The iconic Michelin-starred French restaurant in Niseko!

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.

kamimura-niseko.com



E3
map p113
From 6pm
Monday to Saturday
0136 21 2288

TUK TUK
MIDDLE HIRAFU VILLAGE

Yummy, tiny Thai restaurant Spicy food makes you warm!

Tuk Tuk's delicious menu uses the finest ingredients from Hokkaido and Thailand. Very spicy, non-spicy, vegetarian or party menu available. Tuk Tuk girls look forward to serving you. Please try our world-famous coconut ice-cream!

tuktukniseko.com



A3
map p112
6pm - 11pm
Open 7 days
Occasionally closed
080 3249 4092

ASPERGES HANAZONO
HANAZONO

French cuisine with a Hokkaido twist

Michelin starred restaurant based in Biei, Central Hokkaido, comes again to Hanazono this winter. Indulge yourself in fine French cuisine and selected beverages. Booking required.

hanazononiseko.com/asperges



G1
map 113
Lunch 12 – 4pm
Dinner 6 – 10pm
Closed Thursdays
0136 55 5632

JAM RESTAURANT BAR
UPPER HIRAFU VILLAGE

The best place to have fun and meet the locals!

Thank you for supporting us for 15 years! We offer over 200 kinds of cocktails and our signature dishes at affordable prices. Our energetic staff are here to serve you! >> HappyHour 3pm-5pm every day! <<

facebook.com/jamcafebar



E2
map p113
Lunch 11am-3pm
Dinner 5pm-2am
Closed Sunday Lunch
0136 23 0700

NISEKO CELLARS & WINE BAR
HIRAFU INTERSECTION

We offer a unique wine experience; Life's too short to drink bad wine!

We stock current release, organic and biodynamic, rare vintage wines from all over the world. Craft beer & rare Japanese whisky. Local cheese, Hokkaido charcuterie and world sundries. Enjoy a bottle or two in-store anytime. Come see us in the J-Sekka building at the Hirafu traffic lights.

nisekocellars.com



A2
map p112
2pm - 10pm
Open 7 days
0136 23 1608

YUMMY'S PIZZA
MIDDLE HIRAFU VILLAGE

Yummy homemade crust pizza and western foods restaurant

Caesar 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!

yummyspizza.jp



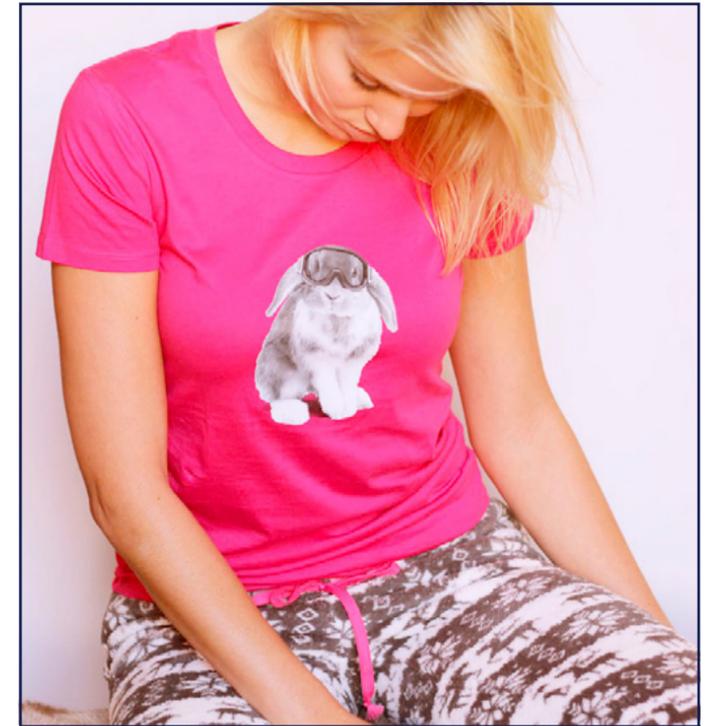
D4
map p112
5-11pm / 7 days
Delivery available in the Hirafu area
0136 21 2239

Visitors, please be mindful:

1. You can set off fireworks until 9pm. More powerful fireworks, however, such as skyrockets, rockets and firecrackers, are prohibited at all times.
2. Please no skiing or snowboarding on streets or risk a ¥50,000 fine. Save your money for sushi and sake!
3. Please no drinking in the streets.
4. Please don't litter - it all shows up in spring.
5. Please follow noise and vibration control laws and regulations of the entertainment and amusement trades, Hokkaido Environmental Pollution Prevention Ordinance and any other related rules.
6. Restaurants are allowed to operate until 2am.

If you have any feedback to help improve Niseko, please go to jnto.go.jp/eng/contact/regional_offices or email webmaster@jnto.go.jp

Thank you and enjoy your stay!
Kutchan Tourism Association



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Located near the Ace Family Pair Chairlift



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ANGEL** 

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40 minutes ¥5,300
60 minutes ¥7,500
90 minutes ¥10,500

65-minute Angel Course....¥8,000
(all body 40min + Foot 25min)
85-minute Gold Course....¥10,500
(all body 65min + Head 20min)

Salon 1 in Hirafu 188 Building,
opposite Niseko Park Hotel
+81 (0)136 23 2004

Oil Massage

40 minutes ¥7,200
60 minutes ¥8,800
90 minutes ¥12,000

Foot 20 minutes ¥3,500
Head 20 minutes ¥3,500

Salon 2 in Serenity Apartments,
opposite Hirafutei Prince Hotel
+81 (0)136 22 0004

¥1,000 for pickup or for us to come to you

Call or visit our salons on Hirafu Zaka Street - the main road up from the traffic lights

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info@inkarebaza.com

BLACK DIAMOND RENTALS
HIGASHIYAMA / NISEKO VILLAGE

8F
map p110

Niseko's backcountry gear specialists

- Top of the line backcountry equipment rentals
- Splitboards, Alpine Touring Skis, Skins, Collapsible Poles & Avalanche Safety Equipment
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jonathanamos.com

jonathan@jonathanamos.com

NISEKO FOOT
UPPER HIRAFU VILLAGE

D1
map p112

Closest healing relaxation therapy spot to Centre 4 lift

Visit this popular relaxation salon and sample our many treatments at Alpen Hotel 1F and B1F. All different styles of massage available for body and feet. 30-minute, 60-minute and 90-minute courses are available. Groups are welcomed. Osteopathy and sports injuries are offered.



11am-10pm
Open daily
Free pickup available

grand-hirafu.jp/nisekfoot

0136 22 1224

BOOT SOLUTIONS
UPPER HIRAFU VILLAGE

C1
map p112

A specialist custom ski boot and snowboard boot fitting operation

Our team of Podiatrists and expert boot fitters will guide you into the perfect fit. Niseko's largest range of ski and snowboard boots and winter footwear for men, ladies and kids. Visit us in store or book your appointment online.



8am - 9pm
Open 7 days

bootsolutionsjapan.com

0136 55 5695

INSKI
UPPER HIRAFU VILLAGE

D3
map p113

Look good and feel great whether you rent or buy

Large selection of skiwear and accessories for your comfort and style. All boots sold with free custom fitting & comfort guarantee - 40 years experience. Free pick-up and drop-off. Call us to arrange.



8am - 9pm
Open 7 days

inski.com.au

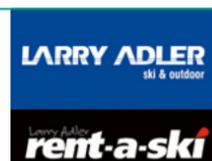
0136 55 8558

LARRY ADLER SKI & OUTDOOR
UPPER HIRAFU VILLAGE

B2
map p112

*Ski & Snowboard Hire
Fashion & Accessories*

- Ski & snowboard hire
- Biggest range - hottest gear
- Exclusive fashion & accessories
- Kids Ski Free (conditions apply)
- Delivery available
- Burton, Volkl, K2, Atomic, Salomon & more



8am - 8pm
Open 7 days

larryadler.com

0136 21 4050

TY MODE CREATIONS
MIDDLE HIRAFU VILLAGE

D4
map p113

Enjoy a drink while you shop!

Ty Mode Creations is located @ Java Bar. Wide range of custom made modern and Japanese style fashion articles for male, female and kids. Come and find unique and original items or choose from a range of fabrics and tailored to suit your needs.



2 - 7pm
Open 7 days

tymode.com

0136 23 0788

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WINTERSTEIGER

RHYTHM

SECOMART

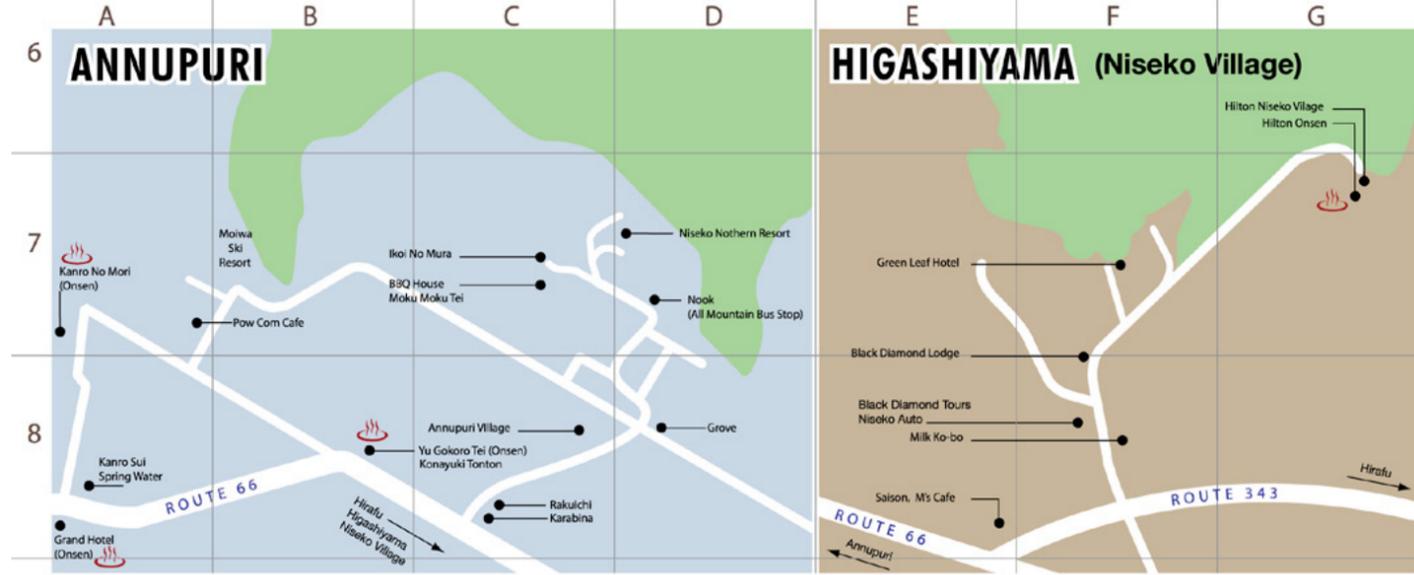
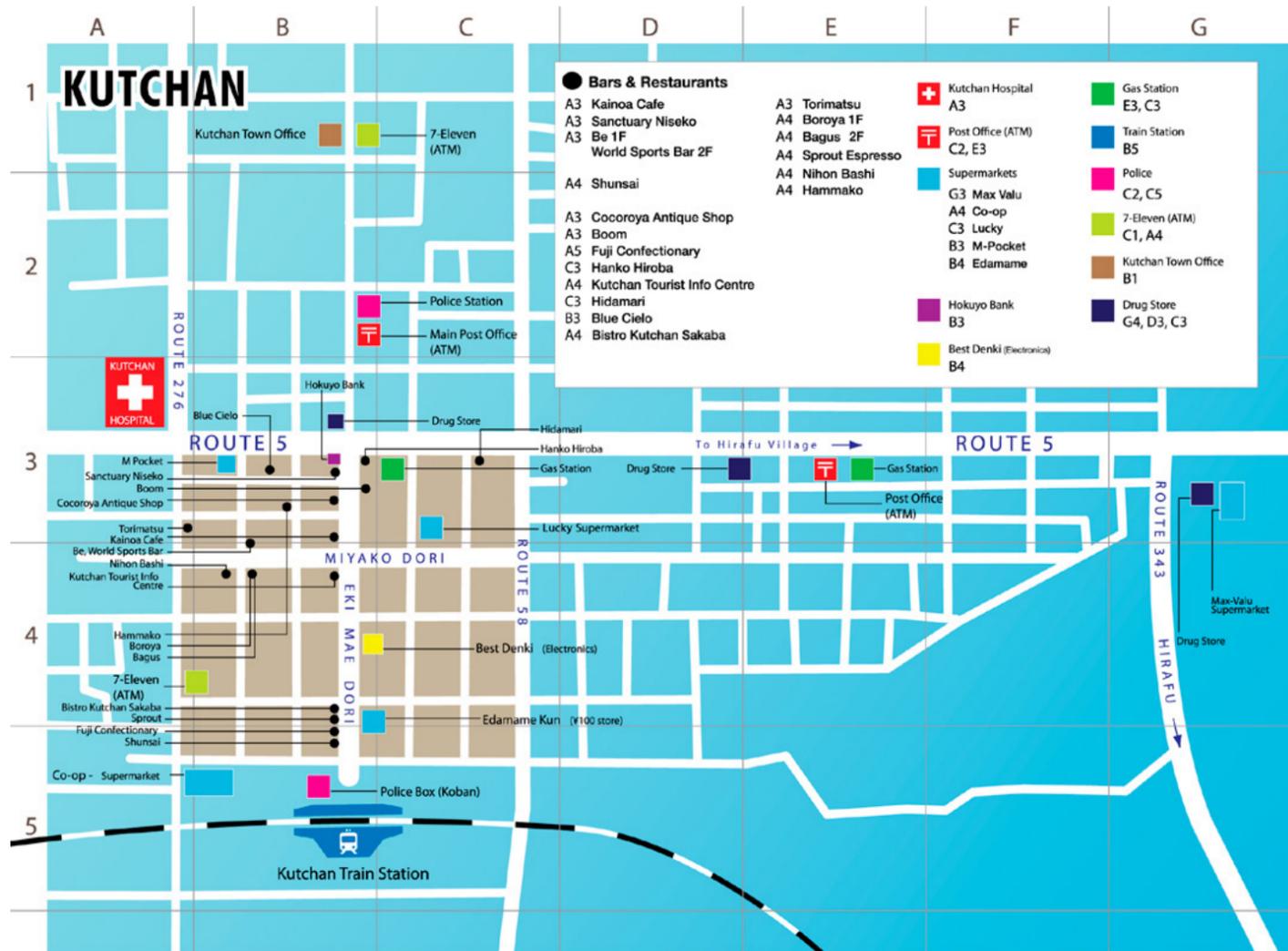
TO NISEKO VILLAGE

TO KUTCHAN

MAIN TRAFFIC LIGHT JUNCTION

beats.

WINTERSTEIGER



- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| A7 Kanro No Mori (Onsen) | C7 BBQ House Moku Moku Tei | A8 Grand Hotel (Onsen) | C8 Karabina | G6 Hilton Niseko Village | E8 Milk Ko-bo | E8 Niseko Auto |
| B7 Moiwai Ski Resort | D7 Niseko Northern Resort | C8 Annupuri Village | D8 Grove | G6 Hilton Onsen | E8 Saison | E8 Black Diamond Tours |
| B7 Pow Com Cafe | D7 Nook | C8 Yu Gokoro Tei (Onsen) | C8 Rakuichi | E7 Green Leaf Hotel | E8 M's Cafe | |
| C7 Iko No Mura | A8 Kanro Sui - Spring Water | C8 Konayuki Tonton | | E7 Black Diamond Lodge | | |

NISEKO JAPAN



**OPENING
1ST DECEMBER
2015**

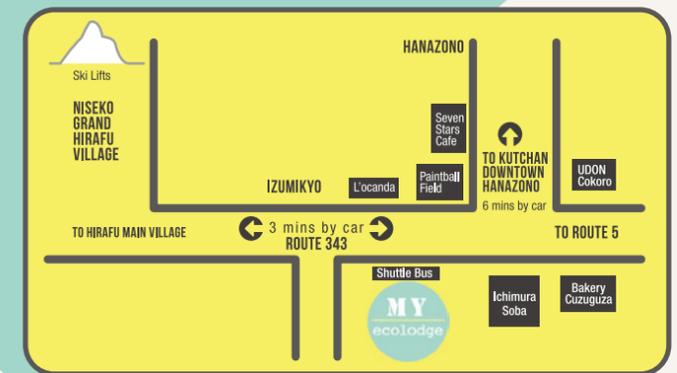


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- FREE WIFI**

BOUTIQUE TRAVELLERS LODGE

A warm welcome to MY ecolodge! Strategically located in the Hirafu area of Niseko, MY ecolodge sets itself apart as the newest, most sustainable lodge in town.

Accommodation that fits the way you travel. We guarantee a hassle free stay. All the facilities you need, a restaurant, ski locker, laundry and convenience store, onsite. Inspired by Nature, inspired by Niseko - Stay, Dine and Play at MY ecolodge.



STAY | DINE | PLAY

www.my-ecolodge.com

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Property Management in Niseko

Niseko Owners first started managing properties in 2008 and we have built a large portfolio of residential, commercial and investment properties. With several years of managing properties in a snowy, cold and dry winter and a damp hot summer, we have established the right way to make sure properties are safely looked after.

Niseko Owners provides high quality property maintenance and owner's support, especially with property-related aspects of owning homes in a foreign country. When you become a Niseko Owners client, we work hard to make owning a property in Niseko easy for you.

Contact us today for a chat!

We take care of everything for owners of second homes in Niseko, Japan



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Real Estate Sales and Projects

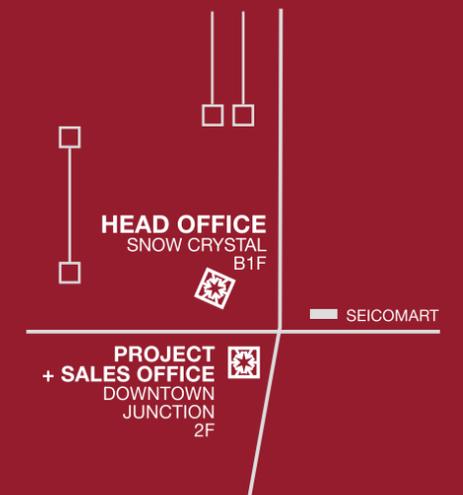
REAL ESTATE SALES

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PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

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