

issue 12 Jan 10 – 23 2009

# powderlife

NISEKO ニセコ

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



**WINTER  
KICKS IN**

**BREWS OF JAPAN**  
a beer in review

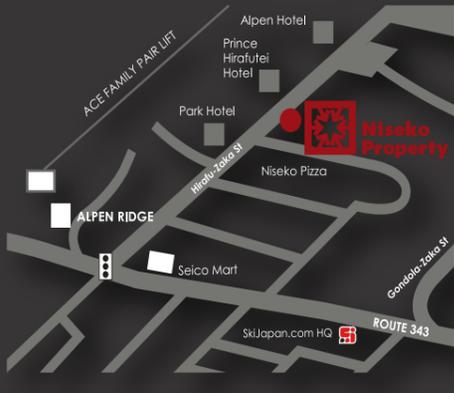
**THE GENTEM CAFE**  
a dining experience

**NISEKO SURVIVAL GUIDE**  
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**LAND 167-32, 55, 56, 57**

**¥70,700,000**



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Land Size: 669 m<sup>2</sup> (approx. 202 tsubo)

**BUNGAN**

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**ALPEN RIDGE 303**

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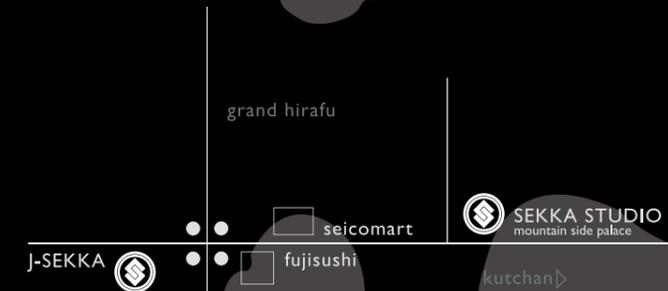


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Niseko's first English language periodical magazine – published every two weeks in Niseko between December and March and once outside winter as *Summerlife*  
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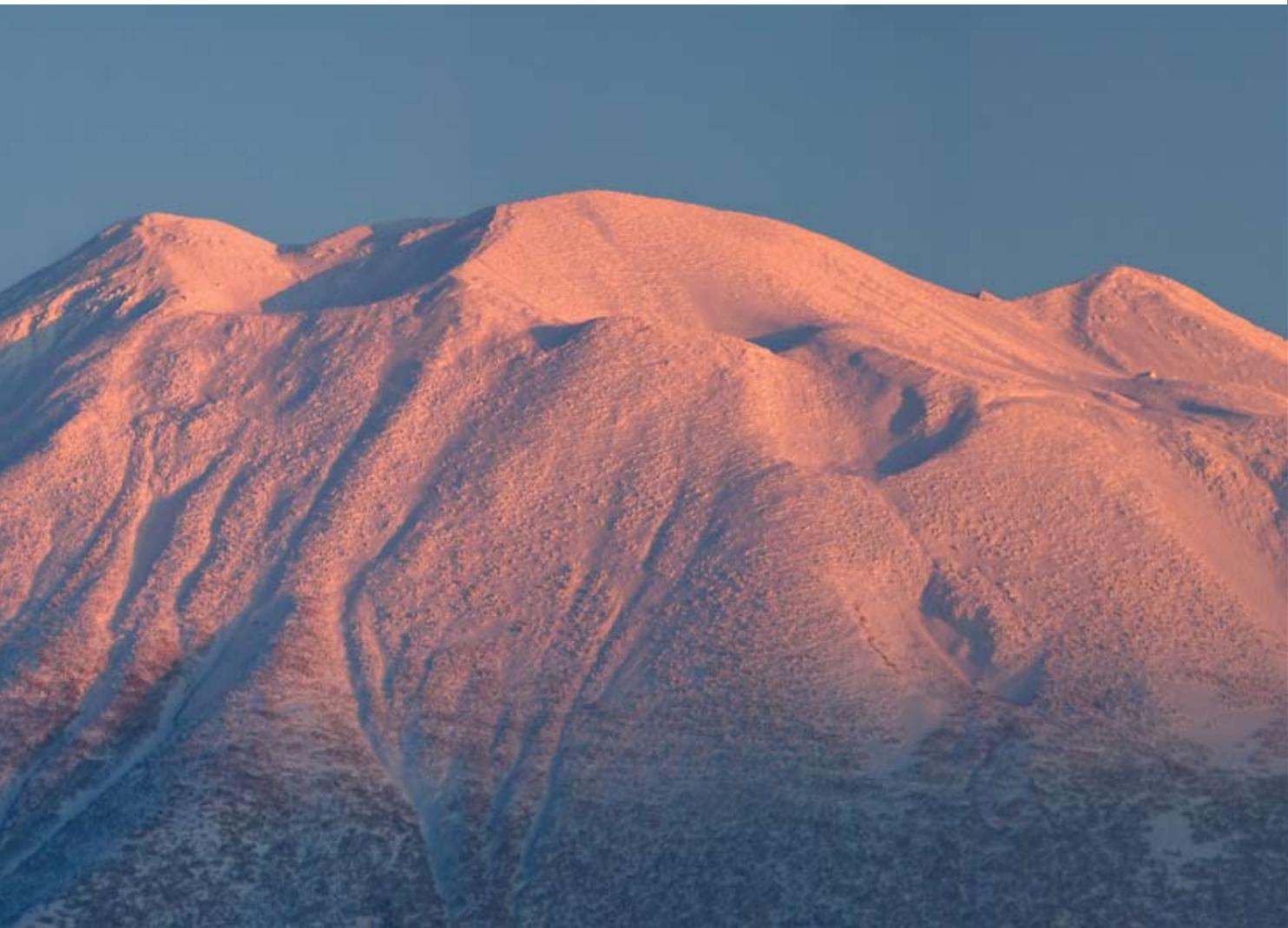
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YOTEI SUNSET... Photo: Mike Richards

### editor's note...

AT the start of every season I go through several bouts of optimism and pessimism about the upcoming season's snowfall – is it going to be another record-breaker? Before the snow has even settled, every little 'sign' I see or offbeat anecdote I hear convinces me it's going to be huge. Then, as often happens after the season has officially started, the snowfall is a bit inconsistent, storms are few and far between, and temperatures warm up to the point where we often get a bit of rain which washes away any of the precious powder that has accumulated. Misguided thoughts that this season might be a dud start crossing my mind.

But as is always the case in Niseko, our blessed winter inevitably returns, just like it did on Christmas Day last month. Whether it's late November or early January, soon enough every season, back-to-back, week-long storms start to rage and dump metres of snow, ensuring almost every morning there's between 10cm and 30cm of fresh powder to float through. It's no joke that many locals won't get out of bed for less than 20cm of fresh. There really is no such thing as a bad season in Niseko, just sometimes there are more mild periods in between the really good ones.

In this issue of *Powderlife* we'll give you a wrap up of the end of '08 storms and all the news and events that have been going on, and will be going on in Niseko this month. We take a look at Japan's beer, take you inside and an avalanche, go on a cultural tour in Kutchan, and have a chat to the head of Grand Hirafu. As well as all our regulars.

Happy New Year and happy sliding!

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

### 編集長注...

毎シーズンの始めに、今年の雪の量について前向きな思いと悲観的な思いが頭をめぐります。今年は記録的な雪の量になるだろうか？雪がちゃんと積もる前なのに、ちょっとした'サイン'を見たり、変わった'兆候'を聞いたりすると、今年の雪の量はすごく多くなるだろうと思ってしまいます。かと言えば、シーズン頭によくあることで、雪の量がまだ少なく、吹雪があるのもまれで、気温が上がり少しの雨が降り、大切なパウダースノーを洗い流してしまいます。このような無駄な心配が頭の中をよぎってしまいます。

しかしニセコでは、当たり前ではありますが、いつもの冬が戻り、去年のクリスマスの日のようになります。11月の終わりから1月の頭からかであっても、何週間も続く吹雪が何メートルもの雪を積もらせます。毎朝10cmから30cmの新雪の中を滑ることができます。多くのローカルは20cm以上新雪が積もってないと、朝は起きて滑りにはいかないそうです。ニセコには悪いシーズンというのはありません。ただ時々すごくいい雪の間に、普通の期間があるだけなのです。

この号のパウダーライフでは、2008年最後の嵐についてのまとめと今月にニセコで行なわれる、イベントやニュースを紹介します。その他に、日本のビールについての特集、雪崩情報、倶知安文化ツアー、グランヒラフ代表者のお話があります。それに加え、いつものページもお楽しみ下さい。

明けましておめでとうございます。今年もよい滑りを！

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



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**December: in like a lamb, out like a lion**

**IN** this column last issue we spoke about the slow start to winter '08/'09 and how a season could go from average to amazing in the space of a week. Well, it happened. Between the December 20 and year's end a storm moved through and dumped more than two metres of powder. Official Kutchan stats said 246cm had fallen for the month, the highest December total of the past three seasons. Mike Richards, a local ski instructor, has been taking daily snowfall measurements at his Hirafu home for the past three winters. Despite the slow start to the month, his recording of 327cm was the most snowfall he had measured in three Decembers, and the third snowiest month he had recorded since coming to the area in November, 2006. "December came in like a lamb and out like a lion," Mike says. "The end-of-December storm saw 12 consecutive days of snowfall with a total accumulation of 203cm at village level, and much more up on the hill." While it may have been good for recent times, a look back through the local records reveals some awe-inspiring stats. There have been plenty of 4-5m Decembers, and looking back at December 1969, Niseko got a whopping 587cm, just shy of the all time record 601cm... the previous January! What a year!? "Oh to have been here as a three-year-old," laments Mike.



DEEP... Mike Richards taking some measurements. Photo: Glen Claydon.



**Sumos and Santas**

**SANTA** wasn't the only fat guy in a suit to visit Niseko on Christmas Day. Aussies Phil and Lorrae Warne (above) hit the slopes in inflatable sumo and santa suits. We reckon even Santa – who calls the North Pole home – would have been impressed with the bumper snowfalls.

IT'S A DOG'S LIFE... sledging guides with three of the Alaskan huskies.



**Barking mad for dog sledding**

**TEN** hard-working huskies are among the newest residents to arrive in Niseko this year.

The '08-'09 winter marks Niseko's dog sledding debut, offering an experience just like you would get in the wilds of Alaska or Siberia – well, almost. The Niseko Dog Sledding Experience boasts a holiday from the usual skiing, boarding or hiking, and is run from the golf course at the foot of the iconic Hilton hotel in Niseko Village. There's not much use for the golf course during the winter – for obvious reasons – so hole No. 10 has been transformed into a 400m dog sledding track. The five-minute rides are for single and tandem riders, with the sled pulled by two to three Alaskan huskies at a time. Niseko Village's marketing coordinator Tomoko Kazama recently tried her hand at dog sledding for the first time, describing her ride as 'speedy and fun'. "It's very interesting, too, because not many people have tried being pulled around in a sled by dogs before," she says. "So it is a new experience for most people."

Tomoko says many people would have already seen, or more likely heard, the cute canines in the village. "You can hear the dogs barking and howling most of the time wherever you are in Niseko Village," she says. "When I first heard them, I thought they were sad, but as soon as they start running they just don't quit – they love pulling people around."

Dog sledding runs from 10am-3pm throughout winter and costs ¥3675. For more information visit [www.niseko-village.com](http://www.niseko-village.com).



**PowderLIVE**

**POWDERLIFE** has launched its new daily internet video news report, 'Powderlive', giving Niseko a comprehensive, up-to-date and succinct all-mountain news source at [www.powderlife.com](http://www.powderlife.com).

Predicting the snow and weather can be a tough game. But if you want the best chance at the best powder, log into the *Powderlife* website first thing at 8am, seven days a week. There you can get the latest on snowfall, which lifts and gates are scheduled to open, the forecast for coming days and much more – all collated from a variety of trusted sources.

Introducing you to *Powderlife* associate editor Matthew Thomas (pictured above), who will be the main online reporter – joined by an international team of local identities that all now live in, or near, Niseko.

*Powderlife.com* also provides local online information on accommodation with an availability search engine, along with wide-ranging links to restaurants, bars and cafés, real estate, Niseko events, photo galleries, noticeboards, forums and more.

*Powderlife* looks forward to bringing Niseko, and the world, all there is to know about the snow conditions, so you can just concentrate on getting up there and enjoying the best of Niseko's famous powder.

[www.powderlife.com/snow-report/](http://www.powderlife.com/snow-report/)

**Niseko's four seasons covered**

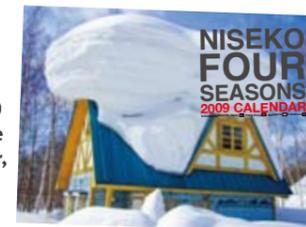
**DEEEEP** powder snow, lush green forests, mild summer days, and spectacular autumn colours – a year in the life of Niseko. Until recently, only locals really ever knew there was much more to Niseko than just winter. But that's rapidly starting to change. It's been discovered that Niseko is an amazing place to visit year-round and a thriving international summer tourism market is beginning to develop.

Spring brings melting snow which floods rivers offering world-class rafting, and golf, road cycling, mountain biking and horse riding take over from skiing and snowboarding. Mid-summer is like a pleasant spring or autumn day anywhere else in the world – it's like enjoying the best Asia has to offer with the air-conditioning set to medium. Autumn is perhaps the most unique and spectacular season in Niseko, when the mountains become a patchwork of yellow, brown and red autumn colours.

To help spread the word, *Powderlife*, in association with Niseko Photography and J-Build, has created a calendar that showcases the beauty of every one of Niseko's four dramatic seasons (pictured right). Now visitors can take home memories of their Niseko ski holiday and experience a year in Niseko from wherever they are in the world.

**\*\*\*Includes national holidays for Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Australia.\*\*\***

**We've got calendars to give away to the first 10 people who email [ed@powderlife.com](mailto:ed@powderlife.com). They're likely to go fast so if you miss out don't despair, they're available at supporting businesses across town for ¥1000.**



**What's in a name?**

THE most popular name for baby girls born in 2008 was Aoi, while Hiroto maintained top position for little boys, according to publisher Benesse. Hina had been the most popular name for girls for three straight years, but dropped to third place this year.

The popularity of the name Aoi has been linked to NHK's popular period drama *Atsuhime*, which stars actress Aoi Miyazaki. The show grabbed a viewer rating of 28.7 per cent in Kanto region for its final episode in December.

For the second straight Olympics, Japanese hammer-thrower Koji Murofushi benefited when two athletes who finished above him were disqualified for doping. Murofushi got bumped up to the bronze medal for his efforts in Beijing, and four years ago he was awarded the gold in the Athens Olympics because the initial winner later failed a drug test.

A research institute called CM Databank announced that, for the second straight year, Softbank Mobile ads starring a white dog as the father of a human family were the most popular TV commercials.

**Milestones**

The Cambodia Mines-Remove Campaign, an NGO based in Fukuoka working to remove landmines in Cambodia for the past 10 years, was selected to receive the 10th Asia Human Rights Award.

The Series 0, Japan's first bullet train, made its final run between Shin-Osaka and Hakata stations. The train was given the name Hikari 347 (san-yon-nana), a play on words on 'sayonara'... get it?

An elementary school student in Wakayama found fossils of a previously unknown species of shrimp in a layer of the earth's crust about 130 million years old.

Japan slipped one spot to seventh in world beer consumption after having quaffed only 6.28 million kiloliters in 2007 – a 0.3 per cent drop from 2006. China retained the top spot with 39.13 million kiloliters chugged.

JAL will conduct Asia's first test flight using biofuel when a 747 loaded with a 50-50 mix of jet fuel and Camelina plant seed oil takes off from Haneda.

**Moving forward**

Members of a local group conducting anti-suicide patrols along the coast of Fukui Prefecture claim to have saved six people from taking their lives in November. About 25 people commit suicide every year along the sharp Tojinbo cliffs that run along the coast from Ishikawa Prefecture.



**Whatever floats your boat**

A Sendai man who was busted for distributing Hollywood movies via the Winny filesharing network said he did it because he 'found subtitling satisfying'.

It was reported that increasing numbers of Japanese tourists are traveling to the Palestinian village of Bil'in to participate in demonstrations against Israel 'out of curiosity'.

Cops in Chiba busted a postal employee who tried to ensnare potential fraudsters by pretending he was selling bank accounts, keitai and ID cards online.

It was reported that a Tokyo-based company called Dobutsu Kempo charges ¥27,000 a year for a health insurance premium on pets, and that some 110,000 owners have signed their animals up.

**Ouch!**

The family of a 60-year-old Shiga man who suffered fatal injuries after being tossed into the air by colleagues celebrating his retirement party filed a criminal complaint alleging gross negligence.

What is this world coming to? A survey by a greengrocers association in Aomori found that 35 per cent of parents can't cut slices of apples in the shape of rabbit ears—a staple bento (lunchbox) item for generations of Japanese schoolkids.

**Here & there**

A 15-year-old boy in Tochigi defrauded a jobless man out of ¥500,000 by claiming he was a soccer player about to sign a ¥60 million contract.

A one-year-old female crested ibis died in a mountainous area of Niigata Prefecture after it was returned to the wild with nine other artificially bred birds in September.

**STATS**

**12**  
F-22 stealth fighter jets the US will deploy to Okinawa this month

**26**  
Municipalities throughout Japan that have asked the government for help in protecting the jobs of foreigners during the economic downturn

**3,000**  
Tons of tuna sold at Tsukiji market in October, a 19 percent decrease from a year earlier

**1,000**  
Bridges around the country deemed to be in "dangerous condition," according to the Construction and Transport Ministry

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

**Multicultural market is hot stuff for winter**

FLAVOURS from around the globe have converged on Niseko with the newly-opened Niseko Food Market.

LOCATED smack-bang in the Middle Village, alongside Australia House on Shirakaba-Zaka (just look for the red and white lanterns out front), the take away hotspot, made up of several adjoining demountables, brings a delicious and multicultural menu to Hirafu. The tempting smells of kebabs, Nepalese curry, roast chicken, crepes and South American barbecue spare ribs have been wafting around town for the past few weeks. Hot food when it's snowy outside – what's not to like?

And the important thing is it's cheap, say the organisers, so even snow bums and seasonal workers can afford it. The market is the brainchild of Niseko Pizza owner Cezar Constantin, who came up with the idea while working around food outlets at Hokkaido's premiere summer music festival, The Rising Sun. The hard-working businessman almost gave up on the food market due to rolls and rolls of red tape, but in the end it all worked out and the six stalls are now open for business.

Cezar – who has lived in Japan for nine years, and famously operated from a big red bus last season (which will return this year selling pizza, coffee and bacon and egg rolls) – says the food market will offer something new to thriving Niseko. "It will definitely be good for Niseko," he says. "The food market will give that variety of food and flavours and something new for the area, because there are not many takeaway places in the area – often you have to dine-in. It adds a real multicultural atmosphere and feel to Niseko as well. It's something very interesting and original, having a takeaway market for people to enjoy in the snow."

Cezar, whose father also works in a pizzeria, is a graduate of a mathematics degree, and believes there is a science to making food a sure-fire hit – good food, cleanliness and exceptional customer service are the key ingredients. It seems Cezar has definitely done the correct math here. Tasty food + affordable prices = success in everyone's book.



WORLD FLAVOURS... the team behind the new food market celebrate the opening (above), while skiers enjoy some hot food (below).



**New food district adds international flavour**



DEEP... Bhozan staff outside their new yurt restaurant.

TWO Mongolian yurts, a couple of new restaurants and the Niseko Food Market have created a bustling international food, restaurant and bar district in Hirafu. Up until this season, the street, which is home to the new venues (opposite Seicomart and running down alongside the big yellow building Australia House), was all apartments, houses and car parking.

Long-time Hirafu business owner Scott Walker is behind the yurts (one housing Bhozan Nepalese Restaurant and one

the all new Samurai Bar) and one of the restaurants, Kabuki Okonomiyaki, Hirafu's first dedicated okonomiyaki restaurant. The other restaurant is the relocated Niseko Genghis Kahn Lamb Barbecue restaurant that was just above the traffic lights on the main hill leading to the ski slopes until last year.

Scott says he was inspired by the original Gentem Café Yurt Restaurant just outside Hirafu Village in St Moritz. "I saw how fantastic the Gentem Café was – the space was amazing, the feeling

overcomes you, it's such a nice place to relax. So I thought it would be great to have some in the village," Scott says.

Bhozan is run by Scott's Nepalese staff who serve up authentic Nepalese curries, while the Samurai Bar is a relaxing ¥500 bar complete with open fire and samurai armour on display. Kabuki is make-it-yourself okonomiyaki, served on a Teppanyaki grill in front of your table. Genghis Kahn is a Hokkaido-specialty that involves grilling strips of lamb on a small coal-heated grill at your own table.

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SKIER JP AUCLAIR PHOTO: DAVID LEVIN

# Rail Jam slides into Niseko

By Matthew Thomas

**THE** ladies were the talk of Niseko at the first amateur Après Bar Rail Jam of the year, with the women raising the bar – or rail, as it were – stepping it up and stomping some of the tricks of the day.

Three Japanese female boarders confirmed what many of us have known for a long time – the girls can shred it up with the best of the blokes. The December 28 competition in upper Hirafu, held under King Pair Lift 1, even sparked talk of the women taking on the men in future contests later in the season. Both Japanese and foreign boarders and skiers worked together side-by-side to put on the Rail Jam, then enjoyed some heated competition. The womens' boarding was won by Shimiza Mina, who also took out the 'Sickest Style' prize. Following Shimiza was second placegetter Sayaka Nagao, and in third, Ayah Izuki. Seasonal Niseko local, professional skier and one of three judges on the day, Frenchman Nicolas Cruz, says he was very impressed with such skills at an amateur level. "For the best of the girls, I would say yes, they could stand up against guys," he says.

But that's not to forget the fellers, who put on an impressive show of their own. After some heated competition, and much judge deliberation, Yuuya Ogasawara from Japan claimed first place, and chomping at his heels fellow countryman Daisuke Akagi in second place (also winner of 'Sickest Style'), followed by Canadian Matthew Caron coming in third.

Men's skiers also fought it out with two independent feet, with an Aussie trio taking out the top three places – in winning order Dre Bennett, James Winfield and Douglas Corrin.

With Niseko turning on its snow machine – 1.5m of snow dumped over the Christmas weekend of competition – 35 competitors battled it out in cold and sticky conditions for about four hours to decide on the master of the rail in front of a tidy crowd turnout. There were 27 men and eight snowboarding women; three of the men skied and the rest boarded. There were no female skiers on the day, prompting calls for ladies to register in this division next time.

Thanks go out to all three judges, and organisers of the event, particularly local snowboard instructor Ross Monaghan, who set up much of the rail and jumps, and organised sponsors and promotions.

Prizes were provided by local store Rhythm and Beats, and the jam was sponsored by Grand Hirafu Resorts, Après Bar, Niseko Photography, Red Bull, K2 and Kirin beer. Ski and snowboard prizes for the series winners will be provided by K2.

There is already word of about 100 competitors and more professionals for the next contest, a Big Air competition on January 25. Whispers around the village are the plan is to grow the competitions from the current grassroots level to bigger and better things. If these rumours are true, this can only be a good thing for putting Niseko on the world snowboarding and skiing map, says organiser Shisei Oka. "Our aim is to build this thing bigger than the Tokyo X-Trail, which is the biggest of its kind in Japan and packs out the Tokyo Dome," he says.

Register for the first Big Air competition online at [www.powderlife.com](http://www.powderlife.com). Entry forms will also be available at businesses across Niseko.



JAMMING IT... contestants versus the rail in last month's Rail Jam. Photos: Niseko Photography.



# nsw

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A free shuttle bus to Hanazono services the upper and lower Hirafu village, with pick-ups and drop-offs every 20 minutes.

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**There are three more major competitions this winter in Niseko...**

- Big Air Comp I, January 25, 2pm-8pm.
- Rail Jam II, February 15, 12pm-6pm.
- Big Air Comp II, March 1, 2pm-8pm.

Details may be subject to change, so check local guides for details closer to the dates.

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# SNAP

Powderlife asked Niseko night skiers what their New Year's resolution was.

Powderlife hit the town on NYE to document the last few hours of 2008.

# FLASH



Stylish little Shuntaro dragged dad Ken and mum Ikumi up from yakitori (skewered chicken) town Muroran, south of Niseko. Shuntaro starts school this year, so his New Year's resolution is to make lots of new friends.



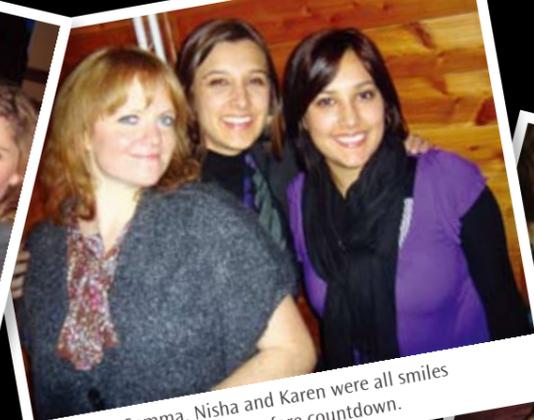
Taichi and Yuka from Chiba, the surfing capital of Japan, came to do some boarding of a different kind here in Niseko. In the New Year they want to spend more time enjoying each other's company.



Mother and sons Leah, Angus and Max came from Australia's Sunshine Coast to Hokkaido's snowy western coast for Christmas-New Year. Their resolutions heading into '09 are to: watch more football (Max), try to be good (Angus), and play more golf (mum).



Shannon, Arian, Joel and Elise drinking and dancing in the wee hours at Red Bar.



Gemma, Nisha and Karen were all smiles in Java Bar just before countdown.



Mandii, Peta and Sarah get up close and personal for the Powderlife photographer.



Azusa and Noriko were up from Osaka (Japan's second biggest city) and after blowing a bit of cash on this trip they plan to save some money this year!



Aussies Roy (aka 'Hyp', short for hyperactive) and Kristy made sure they wouldn't get lost in the Christmas holiday crowds by embroidering their names on their jackets. Roy's resolution was to survive Niseko after crashing so many times, while Kristy wants to trek through Nepal.



Mother and daughter Lut and Aurélia from Belgium usually ski Austria but decided to opt for some of Niseko's famous powder instead. In the New Year they simply aim to continue being happy and healthy.



Ruth rugged up with beanie and jacket while Zillan stayed warm on the dance floor.



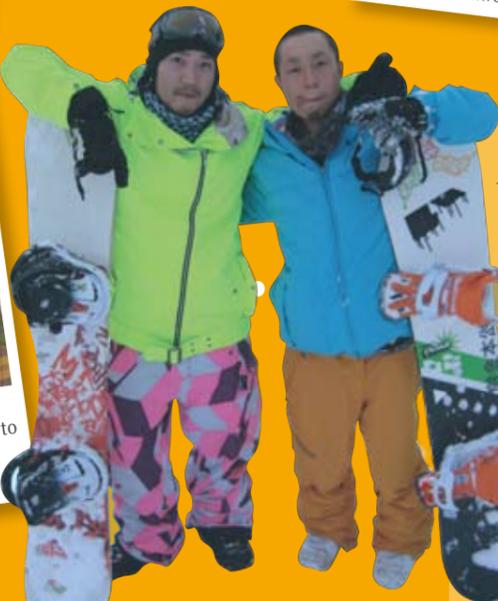
A thorn between two roses – Michiko and Emma try and squeeze Nick out of the picture.



Puerto Rican Jessie saw in the NY in Niseko with old Aussie friends James, Andrea and Jack.



Hirohito and Shunsuke were up from Muroran in southern Hokkaido, here to kick back in the snow. Shunsuke is hoping to get married to his girlfriend in the New Year, while Hirohito hopes for many more hot dates with the snow.



## Mountain style

THIS pair of Tokyo thrashers are two-of-six boarders in a colourful crew that all style-up when they shred mountain. Most of their wardrobes are bright like beacons, which apparently come in quite handy when finding each other on the slopes. And they just plain and simple like to stand out. These two fellers, who usually join their crew in Niigata (the closest ski resort to Tokyo), are showing off funky, fluorescent Escape and Volcom jackets, with equally bright Special Blend and Burton AK pants. The clothes may maketh the man, but looks aren't everything; these guys are armed with BTM and Rossignol decks, and locked into Burton's Cartel and P1SZ bindings.



Well and truly in party mode, Mimi, Mandy and Sam work it for the camera.



Having to work on NYE didn't dampen Red Bar staff Glen, Amy and Resham's spirits.

# 2009

**Saturday, January 10**  
 \* **Java Bar 80s Night 8pm**  
 Fancy dress gets one free drink. Free entry. 8pm  
 \* **Blo Blo Peace Day Rally 6pm**  
 Celebrate the day World War I ended. Dress in your best hippy gear and bring down your djembe drum or instrument for a random music collaboration.

**Sunday, January 11**  
 \* **Jazz Night @ Half Note From 9pm**  
 Welcoming jazz pianist Kuniko Kanno from Sapporo, accompanied by jazz vocalist Mami Motoi. Free entry.  
 \* **Jam Bar 9pm**  
 Trance, Psyche Party. ¥1500 includes one drink.  
 \* **Java Bar Sunday Session**  
 Live acoustic session with Christian.



**Monday, January 12**  
 \* **Java Bar Ladies Night 9pm**  
 Half price drinks for the ladies from 9-11pm.

**Tuesday, January 13**  
 \* **Java Bar Mountain Staff Night 8pm**  
 Chillout night. ¥300 beer for resort staff 8-9pm.

**Wednesday, January 14**  
 \* **Java Bar Mid-Week Madness 9pm**  
 ¥2000 Nomihodai (all you can drink) beer and basic spirits from 9-11pm.

**Thursday, January 15**  
 \* **Java Bar Djembe Night**  
 Djembe drumming with Bontak, Yo, Toro and guests.

**Friday, January 16**  
 \* **Java Bar DJ Night 10pm**  
 House, dance, funk from 10pm. Free entry.  
 \* **Blo Blo Prohibition Booze Up 6pm**  
 The First day of US prohibition... a sad day for bars everywhere but dont worry, the booze will be flowing at blo\*blo!! Gangster theme party – hip hop or mafia, the choice is yours.

**Friday, January 16**  
 \* **Red Bar Beats Party 10.30pm**  
 Music by Koji Eguchi (Sounds Discovery, Tokyo), Yuichiro (Soul Movement). ¥1000 (includes one free drink).

**Sunday January 18**  
 \* **Jazz Night @ Half Note from 9pm**  
 Famous Japanese jazz musician Kenji Matsumoto from Sapporo performing cool sounds. Enjoy Japanese jazz with a few drinks at Jazz Bar Half Note!  
 \* **Java Bar**  
 Sunday session with Christian-Live music.

**Monday, January 19**  
 \* **Java Bar Ladies Night 9pm**  
 Half price drinks for the from 9-11pm.

**Tuesday, January 20**  
 \* **Java Bar Mountain Staff Night 8pm**  
 Chillout night. ¥300 beer for resort staff 8-9pm.

**Wednesday, January 21**  
 \* **Blo Blo National Hugging Day Party 6pm**  
 Come down and hug the bartender for a free shot.  
 \* **Java Bar Mid-Week Madness 9pm**  
 ¥2000 Nomihodai (all you can drink) beer and basic spirits from 9-11pm.

**Thursday, January 22**  
 \* **Java Bar Djembe Night**  
 Djembe drumming with Bontak, Yo, Toro and guests.

**Friday, January 23**  
 \* **Red Bar DJ Night 10pm**  
 Every Friday is DJ Night at Java. ¥1,000.



**Saturday, January 24**  
 \* **Yuki Bar**  
 Kutchan Rockers, local reggae group, perform live at Yuki Bar. Free entry.  
 \* **Loaf Lounge 8pm**  
 Chihiro acoustic live.

Got an event on between January 24 and February 6? Get it on this page in the next edition of Powderlife – input it in to the events page on our website by January 14.

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

**Saturday, January 11**  
**Culture Tour in Kutchan**  
 Tea ceremony, Natural History museum, Niseko Sake Brewery. From 3-6pm. Bus leaves from Seicomart. ¥1,000. Bookings 0136-23-0222  
 1月11日(日)  
 カルチャーツアーイン倶知安お茶会、風土館、ニセコ酒造に行きます。15:00-18:00。バスはセイコーマート前から出発します。要予約:0136-23-0222費用は1,000円です。

**Saturday, January 11**  
**Free Hot Milk Service**  
 On the slopes at Annupuri ski resort.  
 1月11日(日)  
 無料ホットミルク配布  
 アンヌプリスキーリゾート

**Sunday, January 11**  
**Taiko Drum Performance**  
 Free traditional Japanese drum performances. Every Sunday outside Hokkaido Tracks office (next to Seicomart) 3.30 pm for 30min.  
 1月11日18日(日)  
 太鼓演奏会  
 場所はセイコーマートの横、北海道トラックス前にて地元太鼓グループによる演奏会があります。時間は3時半から30分ほどの演奏です。

**Saturday–Sunday, January 11-12**  
**Annupuri First Run**  
 First Gondola starts at 7am at Annupuri ski resort. Be the first one to ski down Niseko's mountain. ¥1,000 for lift ticket.  
 1月11日12日(日、月)  
 アンヌプリ早朝滑走  
 ゴンドラが7時から営業しています。リフト料金1,000円。

**Tuesday–Friday, January 13-23**  
**Good Sports Shop Sale**  
 GIRO helmets and goggles five per cent off. PHENIX, Xnix, Marvel Peak five per cent off when you spend less than ¥10,000 or 10 per cent off when you spend more than ¥10,000.  
 1月13日(火)–23日(金)  
 グッドスポーツ セール  
 GIRO(ヘルメット&ゴーグル)、表示価格より5%OFF、PHENIX,Xnix,Marvel Peakの商品をお買い上げ1万円未満は5%OFF、1万円以上は10%OFF。

**Thursday–Friday, January 15–16**  
**Avalanche Safety Course**  
 The AST course will run over 2 full days in the field and classroom session on the first night. ¥23,000(2manuals included) For more information go to [www.hokkaidopowderguides.com/avalanche.html](http://www.hokkaidopowderguides.com/avalanche.html).  
 1月15日16日(木、金)1月28日29日(水、木)  
 雪崩講習会  
 北海道パウダーガイドが主催する2日

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 1月18日(日)  
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 場所はセイコーマートの横、北海道トラックス前にて地元太鼓グループによる演奏会があります。時間は3時半から30分ほどの演奏です。

**Tuesday, January 20**  
**Singing Contest @ Hanazono 308**  
 Pick from song list to win. From 1pm.  
 1月20日(火)  
 シンギングコンテスト 生演奏にあわせて歌おう! 花園スキー場308で午後1時から行われます。

**Saturday, January 24**  
**Skiing/Boarding Costume Day**  
 Dress up and win. Fashion parade final 1pm @ Hanazono 308.  
 1月24日(土)  
 スキー/スノーボード コスチュームファッションパレードが花園スキー場308で午後1時からはじまります。参加して景品を当てよう!

**Saturday, January 24**  
**Culture Tour in Kutchan**  
 Tea ceremony, Natural History Museum, Taiko drum performance. From 3-6pm. Bus leaves from Seicomart. ¥1,000. Bookings 0136-23-0222.  
 1月24日(日)  
 カルチャーツアーイン倶知安お茶会、風土館、ニセコ酒造に行きます。15:00-18:00。バスはセイコーマート前から出発します。要予約:0136-23-0222費用は1,000円です。

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ホテル発 Hotel Dep	10:20	12:20	14:30	16:30	17:30	19:00	20:30	21:30	23:00	0:00	1:40
JRニセコ駅 Niseko Stn. Dep	↓	↓	↓	17:00	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
JR倶知安駅 Kutchan Stn. Dep	11:00	13:00	15:05	↓	18:10	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
ヒラフ・ウェルカムセンター Hirafu Welcome Center	↓	↓	↓	↓	18:30	19:30	21:00	22:00	23:30	0:30	2:10
ヒラフ交差点 Hirafu Crossing	↓	↓	↓	↓	18:35	19:35	21:05	22:05	23:35	0:35	2:15
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### Salomon Gun

Salomon keeps at the top of their field in whatever it is they decide to make, and have done for decades. A dedication to research and excellence is a company doctrine. The Gun is their wood-core big mountain skis and are super light and built for top performance in powder. Its 96mm under foot, so it'll float through the flatter sections of pow in the Annapuri bowls, but is also sturdy enough to tackle the bumps and crud at speed. The twin tip is not always so handy in the backcountry elements, but if that's how you roll, you may enjoy them for your showboating. The Gun is a great weapon of choice in Niseko. Available from Takiguchi Sports, Kutchan. Call: 013-622-0128. RRP: ¥75,000, on sale for ¥45,000.



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GROOMER MAINTENANCE Tomo



LIFTIE/MASCOT Matsu-chan

**name** Takeshi Ootomo  
**age** 33 **hometown** Rankoshi  
**how long have you been in Niseko?** 15years  
**do you like powder?** Yes  
**ski/board?** Skier, sometimes snowboarder, telemarker  
**how long have you been skiing?** 30 years (ski)  
**why did you come to Niseko?** Because it's close to home  
**what did you do in summer time?** Farmer  
**what languages do you speak?** Japanese  
**trips overseas?** New Zealand  
**where do you want to go next?** Anywhere!  
**favorite...**  
**color** Green  
**brand** Elan  
**food** Rice (onigiri rice balls)  
**restaurant** Café Grove  
**bar** Karabina  
**onsen** Niimi Onsen  
**ski run** Dynamic Course  
**where else do you want to go skiing** Jackson Hole  
**what does niseko need?** Internet Cafe  
**niseko secret?** Take's powder course  
**what's your life philosophy?** Better to try than not to try

**名前** オオトモ タケシ  
**年齢** 33 **出身地** 蘭越町  
**ニセコに来てどのくらいですか?** 15年  
**パウダースノーは好きですか?** はい  
**スキーヤー?スノーボーダー?** スキーヤー、たまにスノーボーダー、テレマーカ  
**スキー歴・スノーボード歴** 30年  
**なぜニセコに来たのですか?** 近いから  
**夏には何をしましたか?** 農業  
**話す言語は?** 日本語  
**海外には行った事ありますか?** はい、ニュージーランド  
**次はどこに行きたいですか?** どこでも!  
**好きな...色は?** 緑  
**ブランドは?** Elan  
**食べ物**は? 米(おにぎり)  
**レストランは?** カフェグロブ  
**バー**は? 唐火七  
**温泉**は? 新見温泉  
**コース**は? ダイナミックコース  
**海外のスキー場で一度行ってみたいスキー場**は? ジャクソンホール  
**ニセコにはどのくらいいる予定ですか?** たぶんずっと  
**ニセコに今無い物で、必要だと思**うものは? ネットカフェ  
**ニセコの秘密**は? オレしか知らないパウダーコース  
**あなたの人生観**は? やらなかつた後悔より、やっちゃった後悔

**name** Tomokazu Sato  
**age** 45  
**hometown** Otaru  
**do you like powder?** Yes  
**ski/board?** Ski  
**how long have you been skiing for?** 40 years  
**why did you come to Niseko?** For job relocation  
**what did you do in summer time?** Drive cable car in Otaru  
**what languages do you speak?** Japanese  
**trips overseas?** none  
**where do you want to go next?** I haven't decided  
**favourite**  
**colour** Red  
**brand** nothing in particular  
**food** Edamame, soy beans  
**restaurant** Nook Annapuri  
**bar** nothing in particular  
**onsen** Ikoi No Mura  
**ski run** Downhill course  
**where else do you want to go skiing overseas?** nowhere  
**what does niseko need?** A place to hang out with foreigners  
**niseko secret?** I haven't found one yet  
**what's your life philosophy?** Leave good things for the next generation.

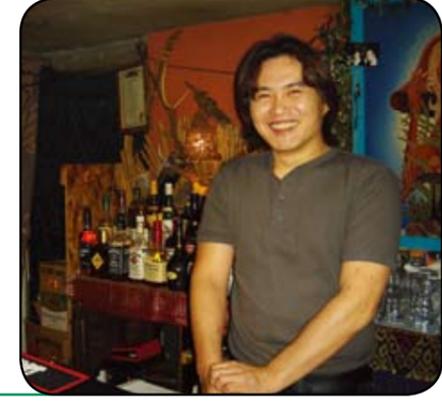
**名前** サトウ トモカズ  
**年齢** 45 **出身地** 小樽  
**ニセコに来てどのくらいですか?** 2年  
**パウダースノーは好きですか?** はい  
**スキーヤー?スノーボーダー?** スキーヤー  
**スキー歴・スノーボード歴** 40年  
**なぜニセコに来たのですか?** 転職のため  
**夏には何をしましたか?** 小樽でロープウェイの運転  
**話す言語は?** 日本語  
**海外には行った事ありますか?** はい  
**次はどこに行きたいですか?** 決めてない  
**好きな...色は?** 赤  
**ブランド**は? 決めてない  
**食べ物**は? 枝豆  
**レストラン**は? ヌックアヌプリ  
**バー**は? 無し  
**温泉**は? いこいの村  
**コース**は? ダウンヒルコース  
**海外のスキー場で一度行ってみたいスキー場**は? なし  
**ニセコにはどのくらいいる予定ですか?** 未定  
**ニセコに今無い物で、必要だと思**うものは? 外国人との交流の場  
**ニセコの秘密**は? わかりません  
**あなたの人生観**は? 後に続く人のために必要なものを残してあげたい。

**name** Takashi Matsumoto  
**age** 28 **hometown** Kyoto  
**time in Niseko** Five years  
**do you like powder?** Yes  
**ski/board?** Snowboard  
**how long have you been snowboarding?** 10 years  
**why did you come to Niseko?** To enjoy powder snow  
**what did you do in summer time?** Work for golf course  
**what languages do you speak?** Japanese  
**trips overseas?** Los Angeles  
**where do you want to go next?** Greece  
**favourite...**  
**colour** White  
**brand** Nothing in particular  
**food** Sushi  
**restaurant** Waraji Tei  
**bar** None in particular  
**onsen** Yugokoro Tei  
**ski run** Annapuri Quad  
**where else do you want to go skiing?** Whistler  
**how long will you be in Niseko?** For the rest of my life  
**what does niseko need?** Pizza delivery, McDonalds  
**niseko secret?** Ostrich farm  
**what's your life philosophy?** Do whatever you want, do not look back, have fun!

**名前** マツモト タカシ  
**年齢** 28 **出身地** 京都  
**ニセコに来てどのくらいですか?** 5年  
**パウダースノーは好きですか?** 好き  
**スキーヤー?スノーボーダー?** スキー歴/ボード歴 10年  
**なぜニセコに来たのですか?** パウダースノーを堪能するため  
**夏には何をしましたか?** ゴルフ場で働いた  
**話す言語は?** 日本語  
**海外には行った事ありますか?** ロサンゼルス  
**次はどこに行きたいですか?** ギリシャ  
**好きな...色は?** 白色  
**ブランド**は? 特に無し  
**食べ物**は? すし  
**レストラン**は? わらじ亭  
**バー**は? なし  
**温泉**は? 湯心亭  
**コース**は? アンヌプリクウッド  
**海外のスキー場で一度行ってみたいスキー場**は? ウィスラー  
**ニセコにはどのくらいいる予定**ですか? 一生?  
**ニセコに今無い物で、必要だと思**うものは? 宅配ピザ/マック  
**ニセコの秘密**は? ダチョウがいる  
**あなたの人生観**は? やりたい事はする。後悔しない。遊ぶ。

**Barunba**  
 One of Niseko's most popular bars is a small hole in the wall in Hirafu Middle Village, just below the main street. While it's also an Indonesian restaurant, it's famous for being one of the latest open bars in Niseko and is generally where the crowds that want to party on go after midnight. The interior is truly unique, with its low ceilings and tropical jungle theme. Barunba means 'good wave' in Indonesian and was given to the bar by its original owner who loved to surf. Current owner Hitoshi Kawanaka doesn't surf himself, but loves snowboarding, and 10 years ago started a search for the perfect mountain. He found Niseko seven years ago and has been here ever since.

**バルンバ**  
 ヒラフのミドルビレッジに、壁に小さな穴があいたニセコではやっているバーがあります。インドネシアの料理があり、バーは遅い時間でもいつもたくさんの人で混んでいます。内装はとても面白くて、天井が低く、熱帯のジャングルのような雰囲気です。店名の「バルンバ」はインドネシアの言葉で「いい波」という意味です。前オーナーがサーフィン好きということでこの名前になりました。現在のオーナーである川中仁志さんはサーフィンはしませんが、スノーボードが大好きで、いい雪を求めてニセコにやってきて7年になります。1月に新しいフードメニューができるのでどうぞおためしください。



**Pension Kisara**  
 Yoshitomi Kisara, the owner of Pension Kisara in Hirafu Middle Village, was born in Sapporo and when he was 14 moved to Niseko with his family to start the pension. After university he moved to Tokyo and became a businessman, but always dreamed of taking over his father's business back in beautiful Niseko. He's been back for 10 years now and he and his wife recently had their first child, who is almost one-year-old. He says although there are a lot of foreign companies now building modern accommodation in Hirafu, he wants to continue the tradition of Japanese-style pensions, and has renovated Pension Kisara to suit customers' needs. The pension also offers massage and beauty salon treatments. Visit [www.p-kisara.com](http://www.p-kisara.com) or call 0136-23-3654 or 090 3899 0983

**ペンション キサラ**  
 ヒラフのミドルビレッジにあるペンションKISARAオーナー、木皿佳臣さんは札幌に生まれ、14歳のときにニセコにペンションを開くために家族で移り住んできました。大学の後、東京に移り、ビジネスマンとして働いた後に、お父さんの仕事を手伝えるためにニセコに戻ってきました。(戻ってきて今では10年になります。)奥さんともうすぐ1歳になる娘さんと家族で、ペンションを運営しています。現在のニセコは海外資本の会社がたくさんの建物を建てて、日本人のペンションが少なくなっていますが、今季はペンションを改装して、お客様のニーズにあった将来を見据えたペンション作りをしていきたいと思っています。ペンションKISARAではマッサージ&エステもやっています。お問い合わせは: マッサージ 090-3899-0983ペンションKISARA [www.p-kisara.com](http://www.p-kisara.com) 0136-23-3654

**Kokoroya**  
 Kokoroya owner Chizuko-san has always been fascinated with kimonos. One day, she saw a box filled with Kimono in the garbage and thought what a waste that such a beautiful thing should be thrown away. So she decided she would start using this traditional material to make modern clothes and accessories. She hopes to encourage people not to throw away old things that can still be of use to others. Chizuko-san opened Kokoroya in Kutchan four years ago and last year she also opened Kokoroya Hirafu in the Dragon Restaurant and Bar building, just below the traffic lights. One of the most popular items among foreigners is obi (kimono belts) for ornamental display. Every Sunday, Obi and Kimono are 10 per cent off (not inc. items on sale).

**こころ屋**  
 こころ屋オーナーの知寿子さんは子供の頃から着物が好きで慣れ親しんできました。ある日、着物がごみに捨てられているのを見て、こんなにきれいなものが捨てられるなんて勿体ないとおもい、着物を現代風の服やアクセサリーにリメイクすることを思いつきました。古くから捨てるのではなく、リメイクして物に別の命を吹き込みます。彼女はみんなに古きよきものを捨てないで、とメッセージを送りたいと思っています。千寿子さんは4年前にこころ屋を倶知安にオープンしました。そして去年こころ屋比羅夫店がヒラフ十字路のそばにある、ドラゴンレストランとバーの建物にオープンしました。外国人のお客様に人気の商品は帯です。皆さんアートとして飾るそうです。毎週日曜日は帯と着物の10%OFFのセールを行っています。(セール商品は除く。)



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Wakka Spa

# Trapped in an avalanche

By Matthew Thomas

## IMAGINE this.

You can't move an inch. It feels like tonnes of cement have instantly solidified around your entire body.

AS you struggle to keep the snow at bay and away from your face, it relentlessly keeps filling your mouth and nose, blocking your airway as you gasp for precious oxygen. All you can hear, besides deathly silence, is yourself trying to breathe; inhaling and exhaling become closer together and more varied the more you panic. Although surrounded with the whitest of white snow, all you can see is black darkness. You don't know what way is up and what way is down. It's bitter cold because your body is entombed in a giant freezer, also causing your breaths to become faster and more erratic. Perhaps the most frightening thing of all is that you don't know if anyone will pull you from this frozen hell in time. This is the reality of being trapped in an avalanche, a powerful and unforgiving force of Mother Nature.

Niseko local and former patroller Ross Carty has been called out to somewhere between 20 or 30 avalanche rescues in his long tenure at Hirafu, Annupuri, and Sahoro in central Hokkaido. Also, in the late '80s, Ross says that he may have even been the first patroller at Australia's Thredbo to do his patrols on a snowboard. Some of his calls to avalanche emergency sites haven't been so serious. However, in others, people have died. Perhaps most recently, and seriously, was in 1999, when Ross went to the rescue of three snowshoers and two mountain guides trapped in an avalanche at Niseko's Haru no Taki (summer waterfall) bowl, the out of bounds area to the viewer's left of Hirafu. After being trapped under snow for an hour and 20 minutes, one of the snowshoers died. The other, and the two guides, were all lucky to survive.

When asked to describe what it is like being trapped in an avalanche, Ross drew on the many testimonials he has heard over the years from people he has spoken to after pulling them to safety. "I would call it scary as hell," says Ross, owner of NOASC Outdoor Adventures in Niseko. "I can't really describe it in words, all I know is it isn't an experience you want to get into." One recurring theme in all Ross' descriptions is a feeling of hopelessness – being completely out of control. "In an avalanche, you don't know if you are going to hit something like a rock or a tree, or whether you are going to end up on top or underneath the snow," he



HIRAFU AVALANCHE... Haru no Taki after a spring slide.



POWDERFUL STUFF... you don't want to be in the way of this force of nature.

“When you finally come to a halt you are left wondering do I still have my legs and arms, can I feel them, am I bruised or broken? If people arrive you can sometimes hear voices of people calling out, or the sound of people digging, but mostly you can just hear nothing.”

says. "People say try to swim in the avalanche, but you can only really do that in dry and fluffy snow. The wet snow is just too powerful and you can get flung around like a rag doll. When you finally come to a halt you are left wondering do I still have my legs and arms, can I feel them, am I bruised or broken? If people arrive you can sometimes hear voices of people calling out, or the sound of people digging, but mostly you can just hear nothing."

Highlighting the local dangers, Ross says Niseko's generally modest vertical rise is cause for concern and can be quite deceiving. "Most of the slopes here range from between 25 and 40 degrees, which is in the most dangerous range, because anything over 45 degrees tends to shed itself, and anything under 25 degrees means snow won't often fall at a threatening speed, or at all," he says. "Niseko's slopes sit between 25 and 35 degrees, the most dangerous range. It is common for snow to build up in areas and for cornices to break off in Niseko as well."

Although Ross has performed many rescues, he has only been trapped in one avalanche himself on his own time. It wasn't a bad one, but it could have been worse. Knowledge and experience meant Ross could make the best out of a bad situation, just outside Queenstown in New Zealand. This is proof, though, that even with about 30 years of experience in the snow on skis, snowboards and telemarking – many of those years as a patroller – things can still go wrong. "I was at the Remarkables," recounts Ross. "I dropped in around a back chute and jumped in off a cornice. The snow broke down, funnelled down the chute and spread about 20m below. I was half-buried up to my chest, but didn't sink under because I knew to try and stay on top of the avalanche. I'm lucky that in all my years in the back country, that was my worst personal experience"

**Chances are you will never be caught in an avalanche. But, if you plan to venture out into avalanche-prone areas, take a read of this. It may just save your life...**

### What to do in an avalanche

1. First of all, try to ski or ride out of the path of the fall.
2. If you can't get out of its way, seek shelter behind a rock, tree or shelf.
3. If you get swept up in the avalanche, try to stay above the snow. There is more chance than not you will be buried under two or three metres of snow, so try your best not to get buried.
4. If caught up beneath the avalanche, try to protect your head and face with your hands. About half of those who have died in Niseko avalanches did so through impact injuries by hitting rocks or trees.
5. Also cover your mouth and nose and try to keep your airways clear of snow.
6. Try to stay as warm as possible.
7. Don't panic. Stay calm and concentrate on breathing steadily. If you are injured and bleeding, panicking will cause your heart to beat faster, meaning you will bleed out easier.
8. If it is a soft, powdery avalanche, try swimming out of it or yelling for help. However, if it is a more dangerous wet pack avalanche, it usually sets like concrete and you can't move, make a sound or hear anything outside.
9. If you have done all these things correctly, and made the right preparations and precautions before heading out, Ross says just try to sit tight, gather yourself, relax and wait to be rescued.



HEADING UP... Hirafu GM Kensaku Kuno

## Hirafu honcho

Interview by Chika Matsuda

**Kensaku Kuno is the general manager of Tokyu Resort Group, the owner and operator of Grand Hirafu. We asked Kuno-san to reflect on the past, present and future of Hirafu.**

### How long have you been in Niseko?

Since I became general manager of Tokyu – this is my fifth season. Before that I had worked as the administration manager for three years. I also did a part-time job for one season here when I was in university, working at the front desk at Niseko Annupuri Hotel, which is now the Yugokurotei Onsen (also known as the Annupuri Onsen). But the first time I came to Niseko was when I was a child to ski. So it's been about 10 years I've been in Niseko in altogether.

### How has Hirafu changed since then?

When I was here during university doing the part-time job, only Hirafu Weiss (now a cat-skiing only resort, past

Hanazono), Annupuri, and Moiwai ski resorts existed. There was no Niseko Village or Hanazono and each ski resort only had 1000m-high lifts. Generally, skiing powder snow wasn't popular and people didn't even think about it, but the snow at the time was very dry so for people who like powder it would have been like heaven. For the past three or four years there's been a rush to develop condominiums, but besides that, it hasn't actually changed a lot in this ski resort. Of course, the people's smiles after skiing haven't changed at all.

### Why is Hirafu the busiest resort within the Niseko United resort group now?

If I had to choose one reason, I think it's because it was easy for outside businesses to come in to Hirafu. A lot of business owners in Hirafu were from outside Hokkaido in the beginning. When skiing started to decrease in popularity (during the '90s) running a pension business was difficult so people started to rent their pensions to young people very cheaply. A lot of restaurants and bars then started to build up and then foreigners started to visit Niseko and start businesses. Then when the Japanese started to leave, they started bringing foreigners in. Ross Carty and Ross Findlay were the ones who started to spread the word about Niseko to Australians about 10 years ago. The difference between here and other ski resorts in Japan is that we have more foreign-owned businesses. In general, Japanese people like to have foreigners visit, but don't like it when they run a business. But in Hirafu it's different. We already had business owners from outside Hokkaido, so it's just that now they're from outside Japan, so I think it was a little easier for foreigners to run businesses here than other places in Japan.

### There are plans to create a master plan for Hirafu. What would you like to see?

To be honest, making a master plan for Hirafu is difficult because it grew naturally (there wasn't a master plan for the area from the beginning). In places like Chamonix it's already developed in the centre of the ski resort – it's fun to walk around and enjoy because it's designed to be that way. Hirafu is built on a slope already and it's hard for people to walk up and down the hill so for this reason I think making a master plan is very difficult. Unless you build lifts from the very bottom of the lower village, or even from the traffic lights.

### What do you think Niseko needs to do to attract more visitors in summer?

It's well known that Niseko is a very nice place to spend summer. However, Niseko doesn't have one main attraction, like the lavender in Furano (central Hokkaido ski resort and major summer tourist destination). Because of that, people have just started to understand how good Niseko is when they stay long-term. In recent years we made a walkway from Hirafu to Niseko Village. We might have to make a more fun image for people by marketing things like hiking. Thanks to Ross and Ross, rafting is now very popular, but we may have to market the image of enjoying the slow life in Niseko.

### What are your top three tips for visitors?

1. Immerse yourself in the deep powder snow
2. Go to an outdoor onsen (rotenburo) in winter
3. Look at the ski hill lights from a distance – I recommend from Route 5 or the St Moritz Bridge (between Hirafu and Route 5).



NISEKO MOUNTAIN RESORT  
**Grand HIRAFU**



## Dinner at Alpen Hotel

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Restaurant Supur (Chinese Dinner ¥4,300-)

Edelweiss (Stake Dinner ¥5,000-)



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# Brews of Japan: a beer in review

By Matthew Thomas, Bevan Colless and Dwight Gunning

LIKE many countries, Japan takes a great deal of pride in its national beers – or 'biru', in the local dialect. Whilst its wines have not reached the heights of other countries like Australia and New Zealand, Japan's premium beers are often ranked up with the best in the world in their categories. It may be something about the formulaic process of brewing that suits the country that invented and perfected the production line, that sees all its major brewers rolling out near-perfect lagers. Beer plays an integral part in Japanese culture, and there is a prevailing relaxed attitude towards its distribution and consumption. You can crack open a tinny on a train should the desire strike you – indeed many feel a trip on a Shinkansen (bullet train) is incomplete without one. International visitors would have noted with surprise the availability of beers from vending machines. A Japanese business dinner will often see men drinking from small glasses poured from a 750ml bottle of beer, furiously recharging each other's glass as soon as it drops to half-full.

Japanese rarely drink beer on its own, and it is typical to be served some sort of food with a brew. To this end, most establishments serving alcohol place an equal importance on their food. Despite this integration of beer into society, Japan recently fell to seventh place from sixth in a beer drinking survey conducted by Japanese brewery, Kirin. Economic woes, shrinking population of younger people and increasingly diverse consumer tastes were thought to be the cause, according to Kirin. Among the most impressive of the world's beer drinkers are the Czech Republic, Ireland, England, Australia, Germany and Belgium (which has the world's largest number of different brands of beer, at around 400).

Beer is the world's oldest and most widely consumed alcoholic beverage, and the third most popular drink overall, after water and tea. It possibly dates back to as early as the 6000s BC, and is recorded in the written history of ancient Egypt and

Mesopotamia. According to a recent survey, more than 133 billion litres are sold in the world per year, producing total global revenues of \$294.5 billion. Given these statistics, beer could well be considered man's best and longest ever friend.

Niseko itself has a close relationship with beer, having a good quality brew of its own, Niseko Beer, crafted by some passionate locals. Not too far from Niseko is Otaru, a charming coastal town that drips with Germany's Bavarian influences, and a rich history of beer brewing. Otaru Beer is considered one of the finest in Japan. It is the brainchild of Johannes Braun, Otaru's lone German resident, who has a fanatical devotion to his craft and a brewing pedigree going back hundreds of years. Known as one of the finest beers in Japan, and well decorated, it is only available within 100km of Otaru, so if you can track one down in Niseko or Sapporo you should take your chance when you get it. However, the best place to sample one of Otaru's famous Dunkels, Pilsners, Weiss, or a hearty Schwarz is the Warehouse Microbrewery, in the heart of Otaru's canal district. We could rattle on forever about beer, but...

As most of us at *Powderlife* are quite partial to a beer ourselves, we thought we'd roll our sleeves up and dig deep into Japan's beer landscape, review some of the country's best, and attempt to discover a bit about the best beer places to quench one's thirst in Niseko and Hokkaido. We did so to service you, the reader, and in no way, shape or form enjoyed a single moment of it...Kanpai!

“You can't be a real country unless you have a beer and an airline – it helps if you have some kind of football team and some nuclear weapons but at the very least you need a beer.”

– Frank Zappa



## National beers

### Sapporo

**Draft**  
(5% Alcohol)

The Draft is Sapporo's flagship beer. Balanced and full-bodied, it offers a mellow hop aroma and a dry first taste. This is backed by an even maltiness to round out what is a delightful brew. As the label proudly states, it's the beer that's, "great for good times at home, or out the town."

★★★★  
**Classic**  
(5% Alcohol)

The Classic is a little milder than the Draft, while retaining its balance. Before even cracking a beer you know you're on a winner when reading from the can that this is an, "eminently drinkable flavour extravaganza".

★★★★

**Edelpils**  
(5% Alcohol)

**POWDERLIFE RECOMMENDATION**

A *Powderlife* favourite, this genuine pilsener has a strong, hoppy bite with a slight maltiness that's typical of European lagers. We found this beer occupies a lot less shelf space in the stores, but trust us, it's definitely worth tracking down.

★★★★



“He was a wise man who invented beer.”  
– Plato

### Asahi

**Super Dry**  
(5% Alcohol)

Japan's most famous export beer, Asahi Super Dry is the beer this land is famous for...overseas. Moderately dry, it hints of an early hop that runs right through the tasting. Asahi's a refreshing, thirst-quenching beer all-round, and not too dry, as suggested by its namesake.

★★★★



### Kirin

**Ichi-Ban**  
(5.5% Alcohol)

This one's internationally-styled, based on German Bavarian lagers. Hold it up to the light to find the Ichi-Ban quite clear, and take a mouthful to experience a full body and a good hop-malt balance. An extra half-per cent in alcohol slides through untasted.

★★★★

### Suntory

**Malt's Beer**  
(5% Alcohol)

Clear and refreshing, this brew is not too dry, with some sweetness present. Definitely considered a 'session beer', this one may be one to take on up the mountain to enjoy after/during a long day in the pow.

★★★★



### Yebisu

**Malt Traditional (Red)**  
(5.5% Alcohol)

This malty beer from one of Japan's luxury beer labels has a deeper hue, typical of many amber ales. It carries an extra half-percent alcohol, which is more prominent in tasting than one would generally find desirable.

★★★★

**Premium (Gold)**  
(5% Alcohol)

The bright golden can of the Yebisu Premium is certain to catch the eye and will no doubt draw you to sample its tasty contents. A safe balance of hop and malt, this is a refreshing brew with minimal dryness.

★★★★

**The Hop (Green)**  
(5.5% Alcohol)

As you'd expect from its name, this beer offers a fragrant hop aroma that carries throughout each mouthful. The benefit of this enjoyable hop variety is that the extra alcohol becomes undetectable and a pleasant beer is the result.

★★★★

**Dark Ale (Black)**  
(5% Alcohol)

**POWDERLIFE RECOMMENDATION**  
This sleek black can contains a smooth, dark roasted ale. Not too heavy on the palate, it boasts sweet caramel and a hint of coffee. Being back at 5 per cent alcohol, Yebisu have ensured the flavour of this beer remains unhindered. Definitely the dark horse, this beer goes down as the winner in *Powderlife's* book.

★★★★





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# Hokkaido beers

## Niseko beer

**Lager**  
(5% Alcohol)  
Although hoppy, fragrant and sweet, this local Niseko brew goes down easily but doesn't have much of a backbone due to a lack of malt. With a slightly syrupy mouthfeel, it sports a pale, amber hue.



**Canadian Ale**  
(5% Alcohol)  
The local crack at an amber ale, this one is much richer in flavour and very nice on the palate. A subtle sweetness, perhaps honey, is detected by those with keen tastebuds.

**Dark Ale**  
(5% Alcohol)  
With a lighter mouthfeel, compared to some other dark ales, Niseko's black beer is sweeter than the Yebisu dark, and goes down quite smoothly indeed.

## Asahikawa Taisetsu

**Kera Piruka 'Penguin Beer'**  
(5% Alcohol)  
Although quite cloudy and stormy, a nice amber colour prevails. A hint of honey means this one is quite sweet, balanced by a decent hopping. A longer fermentation results in a slightly dry mouthfeel.



**Furano Omugi (Happoshu) 'Seal Beer'**  
(4.8% Alcohol)  
This one's okay for those who don't like much kick to their beers by way of flavour. Only lightly hopped, and with slightly less of an alcohol content, it's more in the style of a cold-filtered crystal malt lager.

**Daisetsu Pilsner 'Polar Bear Beer'**  
(5% Alcohol)  
Clear in colour as the ice this polar bear would lay about on, it starts with a smooth and fruity first taste, into a dry, hoppy bite to finish. Best served colder.

## Abashiri

**Hamanasu Draft**  
(5% Alcohol)  
Quite fruity upon first tasting, an under-hopping and few bubbles mean easy drinking and not much as far as body goes. With Hawaiian-style flower artwork and showing off a peachy pink colour, this could be one for the women.

**Blue Beer**  
(5% Alcohol)  
Apparently the Hokkaido brewer Abashiri likes to get its pastels out when it comes to beer – this one's blue, and perhaps best suited to Smurfs. Without much body, it must be said that thanks to its colour, this beer does have some novelty value



## Otaru Beer

**Pilsner**  
(4.9% Alcohol)  
With a golden colour and the fresh aroma of hops, this lightly flavoured beer is as refreshing as any good pilsner. Otaru Beer has mirrored similar brewing traditions as once used in Pilsen in the Czech Republic, home of the first pilsner at the Urquell brewery.



**Dunkel**  
(5.2% Alcohol)  
Smooth and creamy, this roasted brown beer boasts a rich, creamy taste of malt and caramel. True to old-school tradition, which Otaru brewers take pride in, German brewing methods were closely followed here, and also noted by the palate is a slightly higher alcohol content.

**Weiss**  
(5.4% Alcohol)  
Popularly known as Otaru's 'Banana Beer', the full-flavoured Weiss (Bavarian slang for wheat) is brewed in true German Bavarian style, and uses 50 per cent wheat malt, combined with special yeast, to produce the exquisite banana aroma and a cloudy appearance in the glass. A sweet and bitey brew.

**"An Irishman is the only man in the world who will step over the bodies of a dozen naked women to get to a bottle of stout."**  
- Unknown

## Pirkawakka

**Ale**  
(5.5% Alcohol)  
Hop and wheat ingredients are both balanced particularly well in a beer that manages to be rich in taste at the beginning, then thirst-quenching and refreshing afterwards. No wonder this brewery's source of water is found in Japan's list of purest water sites in the country.



**Pilsner**  
(5% Alcohol)  
A bottle-fermented pilsner, high-quality hops are used here for a balanced combination of bitterness and refreshing characteristics – Hokkaido's formidable try at a Czech pilsner. A moreish flavour and pleasant, full-bodied mouthfeel keeps you coming back for more.

**Stout**  
(5% Alcohol)  
Dark in colour, as stouts tend to be, this top-fermented beer is fresh and refreshing, with a slight bitterness that lingers after your mouthful. 'Pirkawakka' means 'beautiful water' in the indigenous Japanese dialect, which shows in the purity of this brew.

**Weiss**  
(5.5% Alcohol)  
Hokkaido Beer's crack at a German-style Bavarian Weiss beer, a yellow-white in colour, this brew uses plenty of wheat and yeast, to reach a final result that is fruity, mild and sophisticated.

**"Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy."**  
- Benjamin Franklin

**"I feel sorry for people who don't drink. When they wake up in the morning, that's as good as they're going to feel all day."**  
- Frank Sinatra

# Local watering holes

*Powderlife* popped in to a couple of Niseko pubs that specialise in the world's best beers...



CHEERS... Niseko's authentic Belgian beer smith Paul De Coninck.

**BELGIAN** brewmaster Paul De Coninck boasts a mouth-watering menu of 40 different kinds of beer in his quaint yet charming little hole in the wall, Paul's Café & Bar. Tucked away in Hirafu's Middle Village on Momiji-Zafa Street, the bar with an adjoining restaurant is the only place in Niseko where genuine Belgian beers – even Trappist monk brews – are poured with love, passion and their trademark head every day of the week. In fact, Paul, born in Antwerp (one of the world's beer capitals), is the only Belgian beer bar owner in Japan, owning a second watering hole in Hokkaido's capital, Sapporo. "I always tell my customers that sake is to the Japanese what beer is to Belgians – there are just so many different flavours and styles," Paul says. In fact, of the seven Belgian trappist brews available in the world, Paul says he stocks six. Not bad going. Some of the Belgian beers on offer are the fruity Hoegaarden, an 8 per cent Chimay bitter, Leffe's darkly sweet drop, the devilish Duvel, fruity novelty beers from Chapeau, and even a hard-to-get Asahi pilsener draft called Kita Mo Shokunin, only made and sold in Hokkaido. Paul's Café is open daily from 5pm-11pm. He even holds a ¥400 Stella Artois happy hour from 5pm-7pm every day, which is just in time for some après ski refreshment, we reckon.

**PADDY** McGinty's manager Alan Power assures us he would never pour any customer a beer of a quality he wouldn't drink himself. That's probably an easy promise to keep, seeing as though he imports his Irish bar's creamy, genuine Guinness stout direct from James' Gate brewery in Dublin, the home of the legendary beer and its famous brewer. Alan says the only difference between the Guinness at Paddy's and that served in Dublin bars is, oddly, in the physical weight of the beverage itself. It tastes spot-on, he reckons. "Because the Guinness needs to be sent greater distances to get to Japan, the brewing process is different, and to improve shelf life they need to process it slightly more for longevity's sake," he explains. "This means the beer is a little lighter because it loses density in this process." We believe Alan may just know his stuff. Alan, also known as 'Paddy', left Dublin when he was 18 years old, and for the past 14 years has called Japan his home. Alan has seen the advent of the Irish bar really take off in Japan. "The first Irish bar opened in Japan about 75 years ago, and since then have become a staple and pop up everywhere – just like in many other countries in the world," he says. But Guinness isn't the sole attraction at Paddy's, located on Hirafu-Zaka Street, the main road up to the Hirafu lifts. The bar opened its doors in October this year, and the popular, buzzing pub, with assorted Irish paraphernalia on the walls, is the only place in Niseko where fans of creamy heads can get a pint of Kilkenny fresh from the tap.



LUCK OF THE IRISH... Alan enjoys a Guinness at work.



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

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POWDER POSTER

skier Nicolas Cruz photo Rory Gardiner, Niseko Photography

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# A THOUSAND WORDS



BIRD'S EYE VIEW... Kelly MacEwan drawing some lines at Hanazono. Photo: Glen Claydon.



SUPER... Pro Powder's Trevor Dobson finds some steep and deep on Hirafu's Super Ridge. Photo: Glen Claydon.



Photo: Mike Richards



Photo: Jahl Marshall

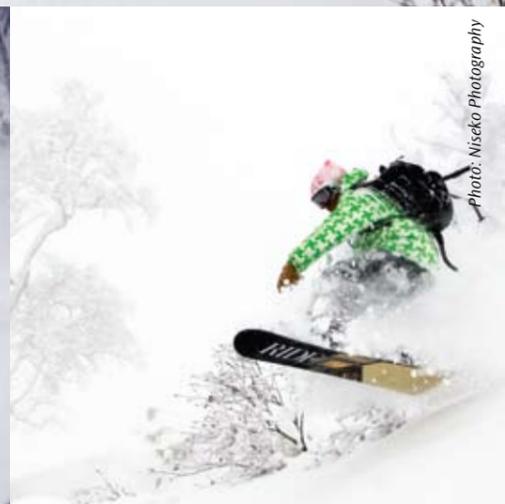


Photo: Niseko Photography



Photo: Jahl Marshall



Photo: Mike Richards



Photo: Glen Claydon

## Koji Furuta

**POWDERLIFE** caught up with Demo staff member Koji 'The Ninja Warrior' Furuta, to find out what tunes he listens to when he is on the hill.

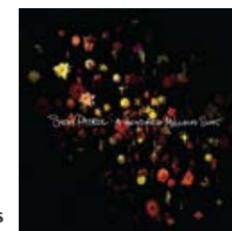


**Name** Koji Furuta  
**Born** November 24, 1980  
**Stance** Goofy. Width/Angles 62cm/front 18°/back 18°.  
**Setup** Board: Burton X8V 151.5cm. Bindings: Burton Triad. Boots: Burton Hail.  
**Favourite terrain** Miharashi of course, but I won't really tell you my real favourite terrain, it's a secret only a ninja knows.  
**Favourite move** Musasabi jump, which is my original ninja jump.  
**Time in Niseko** I have lived in Niseko-cho for three years.  
**Number of ninja assassinations** 7344... maybe 7345 by the time you read this!

1. ペガサスファンタジー (Pegasus Fantasy) – Make Up
2. 残酷な天使のテーゼ (Cruel Angel's Thesis) – 高橋洋子 Yoko Takahashi
3. Let Go – Frou Frou
4. I Don't Wanna Be In Love – Good Charlotte
5. Rock 'n' Roll All Night – KISS
6. 公開処刑 (Public Execution) – キングギドラ King Ghidorah
7. Iron Man – Black Sabbath
8. Volare – Gypsy Kings
9. Captain of the Ship – 長渕剛 Tshuyoshi Nagabuchi
10. Continue – Seamo



**Snow Patrol, A Hundred Million Suns, 2008**  
 SNOW Patrol has always been a band with a simple makeup of acoustic guitars, drums and bass. Their last album was massive and you would expect that the four-man band would turn into a stadium-filling band with 19 extras on stage, four drum kits, and a fat dude playing the triangle. No, that didn't happen! The songs are catchy and the melodies are simple, all-in-all a solid return album. **3.5 Irish Buskers Named Shamus out of 5.** Songs to listen for: *Lifeboats, Please Just Take These Photos From My Hands.*



**Ladyhawke, Ladyhawke, 2008**  
 IT'S amazing how the '80s never want to die, and Ladyhawke is the perfect poster child. With her 'raggy' long blonde hair, over-size T-shirts worn as skirts and an obsession with modernism pop art and cask wine, she recorded an album... a good album. This Blondie-esque, Wellingtonian (Kiwi), signed on with Modular in late '07 and instantly recorded 'Paris Is Burning', which became an indie-dance-pop hit. The album is full of super '80s tracks that just make you want to wear knee-high leg warmers and watch *Flashdance* on repeat. **4 Whale Riders Wearing Punk (pink) Spindix (spandex) out of 5** Songs to listen for: *Paris Is Burning, Dusk 'Til Dawn, My Delirium.*



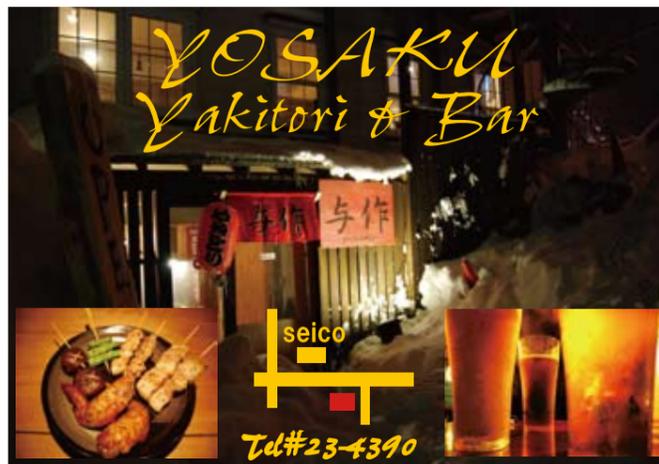
**The Presets, Apocalypse, 2008**  
 DUBBED 'the soundtrack to the end of the world', The Presets' award-winning second release was massive. It's intense and mysterious, and is the polar opposite of their debut. The build up to the breakdown in some songs is so well drawn out and so perfectly timed, that if heard on the right speakers, could make you explode. Some punters may even have to change pants after hearing it. **5 First Real 5 That I've Given Out of 5** Songs to listen for: *My People, Talk Like That, Yippiyo-ay.*



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## Gentem Café: Come on-'board' for a dining experience.

By Matthew Thomas

**EVER** been chauffer-driven to your restaurant by the very same person who brings you your food? Then been dropped home once you're done? If not, then perhaps the Gentem Café, commonly known as the 'Mongolian Tent', could be worth a try.

The traditional Asian restaurant – along Route 343 on the outskirts of Hirafu in the South Village ('B1' on the Hirafu Village map) – is more of a traditional dining experience than simply somewhere to eat. You phone and make a booking, they pick you up, and at the end of the night take you home. Remove your shoes upon entering a Mongolian-style yurt, before lowering yourself onto throw cushions around circular, low-set timber tables. An iron belly burner at the door glows red and keeps the tent warm when it's snowing outside. All the while, just remember to keep your mobile switched off to maintain the ambience and relaxed atmosphere. Then, just order and eat, while listening to tranquil world music being piped around the tent surrounds; but not before reading in the menu about the Japanese custom, 'the charm charge', which affords you a plate of shrimp crisps and, of course, some 'charm'. These are all charming concepts, aren't they? And all the while, this place manages to retain a family atmosphere and is very kid-safe. This unique and memorable experience is precisely what owner and creator Yoshi Onishi was aiming for when he opened the Gentem Café about 10 winters ago. "What we are trying to do is allow people to relax and enjoy themselves with good food, music and atmosphere," says Yoshi, who moved the café from its old home in the Hirafu village, next to the Gondola Chalet, about five years ago.

Yoshi wishes he could claim bragging rights for coming up with the idea for Gentem's points of difference. But in fact that came from his friend and creator of Niseko powder snowboard, the Gentemstick, Taro Tamai, who stayed in many yurts – portable, felt-covered, wood lattice-framed dwellings that are popularly used by nomads – for several years throughout Mongolia and Alaska.

In order to review the Gentem Café for Powderlife, a friend and I ate at the popular Niseko dining icon, and were only able to eat at around 9pm – so it is highly advised that you book in advance...and early. We started proceedings with

entrees Tsukemori (pickled Niseko vegetables, ¥500) (incidentally, we challenge you to eat a soy bean with chopsticks), and Imo-Mochi (deep-fried, soft hashed potatoes with a spicy sweet chilli sauce, ¥500). For mains, we tried the thinly sliced fried sanna, a typical Japanese salmon with a zesty lemon and fish sauce (¥800). Melt in your mouth stuff, it was, but we thought that may be the case, with Hokkaido's reputation for quality seafood. Onto the second main, and we experienced our pick of the night, the Chu-Kara, which is fried chicken with vinegar dipping sauce (¥800). A little on the fatty side, but tender, juicy and good all-round, this one was the more 'Western-friendly' dish of the evening, and had a real Kernal's herbs and spices flavour to it.

We decided to balance up the fish and meat servings with a rice-based dish, the Nashigo, a sweet and slightly spicy Indonesian-style fried rice and vegetables, covered in a fried egg (¥900). These meals were all washed down with a generous jug of Suntory beer (¥2000) (there is a comprehensive drinks menu, also including more beers, sake, liquor, wine, whiskey, cocktails and soft drinks). With the sweet tooth calling, it was soon time for dessert. So, after consulting with the always-friendly Yoshi, we happened upon the interesting zenzai (¥700), a Vietnamese concoction of sweet beans, fruits, coconut milk, tapioca and rice. This dessert may not be everyone's cup of tea, but offers a different after-main course experience nonetheless.

Much of the food at Gentem Café will be considered quite Eastern by most tourist standards – but a change is as good as a holiday. However, there are plenty of 'safe' options on the menu for those who don't wish to venture far from their comfort zones. And considering the quality of food, the service and the chauffer, the prices are right, too.

A nod must go out to the welcoming and on-the-ball staff for the night, Ayako and Ayae. It is obvious, and has been said before, but the West could take several leaves out of the East's book on hospitality and customer service in general; Gentem's was first-class and faultless.

Do yourself a favour and pay a visit to the Gentem Café. We've already established that you don't need to bother getting behind the wheel. And it will offer a more traditional, experimental experience than some other dining spots in the thick of Hirafu's central tourist strip. All in all, it provides a taste of the alternative and other-worldly flavours, which is probably why the Gentem Café attracts so many local Japanese as well. When the locals go there, you just know you're onto a good thing.

For more information on the Gentem Café, or to make a booking, call 0136-23-3154.

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# The ramen stock

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

**RAMEN** originated in China and is widely used in Chinese cuisine, although it's a relative newcomer to Japanese cuisine. Ramen can be broadly categorised by its three main ingredients: noodles, soup and toppings. As you travel from north to south, the flavours dramatically change due to the availability of produce and personal variations by chefs.

Easy lunch: heat your stock, season, add fresh or dry noodles, boiled egg, meat and a few veggies. And you're flying! Perfect for Hokkaido's harsh, snowy winters.



**Ingredients:**

- 1 cup of Chinese rice wine (regular white wine will work)
- 2 medium onions
- 3-6 medium carrots
- 1 head of garlic
- 1 1/2 lbs of assorted bones, pork preferred (I save them in the freezer until I have enough)
- 3 tbsp of vegetable oil (preferably canola)

**Prep:**

If frozen, allow your bones to reach room temperature. Cut the head off the garlic and chop the onion bulbs in half. Wash the carrots. Place your oven rack in the middle setting and heat to 350° F/175° C.

**Method:**

1. Toss your carrots, onions, garlic, and bones in the vegetable oil and spread them out on a roasting pan, placing the onions and garlic cut side up. Roast in the oven at 350° F/175° C, until the bones and vegetables have browned. Some charring is fine. Should take about an hour.
2. Place the bones and vegetables in an even layer along the bottom of a six-quart stock pot. Deglaze the roasting pan with the rice wine and add to the stock pot.
3. Add enough cold water to cover the bones and bring to a simmer making sure never to boil. Add more cold water as needed to keep the liquid about the bones.
4. Simmer for a minimum of three hours. Personally, I do eight hours as to maximise the flavour potential of the bones. If time is an issue, remove from the heat and cool as is. Next day, finish cooking.
5. Carefully strain through a cheese cloth and cool. The faster you cool your stock the longer it will keep. As with any meat product, you want to serve immediately or cool a.s.a.p.
6. Once cool, the stock can be kept frozen for individual use or kept in the fridge for up to a week. If storing in the fridge, you must bring to a boil every two days as to maximise the freshness of the stock.
7. Before use, season with salt and pepper and add it to any recipe that calls for stock.
8. Throw away those instant freeze-dried ramen packs and start cooking like a chef!

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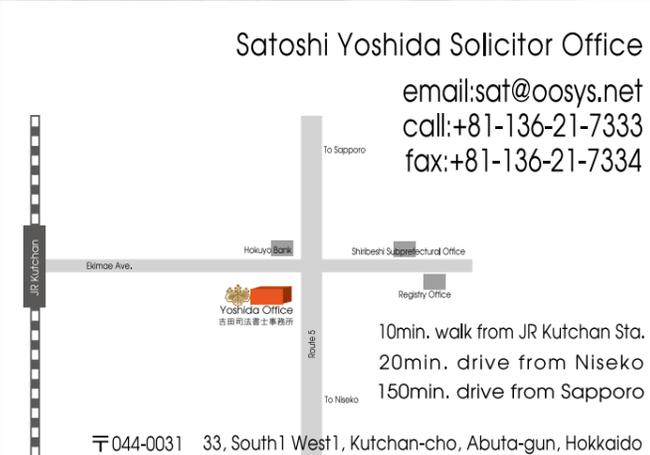


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## Japanese for powder people

by studio tdes

### Lesson 3: Eating and Drinking Out

Your stomach is rumbling after a day on the slopes. Mmm that pizza you had last night was tasty and it was convenient that the staff spoke English ... but, you came all the way to Japan, you can't leave without a few challenges! Why not try eating somewhere tonight where the staff don't speak English and the menu is in Japanese? Here are some phrases to help you.

#### 1. Tabeta? 食べた? Have you eaten?

If someone is thinking of inviting you out for a bite to eat, they might say: *tabeta?* (have you eaten?). If you've already eaten, say: *un, tabeta*. If you haven't, you can say: *mada* (not yet). Other ways of inviting people to eat: *shokuji owatta?* (have you had lunch/dinner?), *shokuji dou suru?* (what shall we do for lunch/dinner?).

#### 2. Koko dou? ここどう? How about this place?

If you walk past a place that looks good, suggest to your friend that you eat there: *koko dou?* If they're keen, they might reply: *ii yo* (OK). If they're not so keen, they might say: *chotto ...* (well ...). You can suggest certain types of restaurant like this: *sushi dou?* (how about sushi?), *soba dou?* (how about soba?).

#### 3. Irasshaimase いらっしゃいませ hello (in a shop)

When you walk in to a restaurant or bar in Japan, the staff greet you with *irasshaimase*. You don't need to say anything back, but, if you'd like to, say *konnichi wa* during the day, or *konban wa* in the evening.



#### 4. Yoyaku ややく booking

The staff might ask you if you have a booking: *go yoyaku saremashita ka?* (do you have a booking?). If you do, say: *hai, Bond de yoyaku shimashita* (yes, the name is Bond). If you don't, say: *iee* (no), or *shitemasen* (I don't have a booking).

#### 5. Nan mei sama desu ka? 何名様ですか? How many people?

The staff will definitely ask you how many people there are in your group. In Japanese, the words for counting are different depending on what you're counting. For people, it's: *hitori* (one person), *futari* (two people), *san nin* (three people), *yo nin* (four people), *go nin* (five people). People often hold up their fingers to display the number – as well as saying it – so, if you can't remember how to say the numbers, just hold up your fingers.

#### 6. Onomimono wa? お飲み物は? What would you like to drink?

After handing out the menus, the waiter will ask you for your drink order: *onomimono wa?* If you need some time to think, say: *chotto matte kudasai* (can you give us a few minutes). If you're ready to order, you might need the counters for drinks: *hitotsu* (one), *futatsu* (two), *mittsu* (three), *yottsu* (four), *itsutsu* (five). For example: *biiru yottsu onegaishimasu* (four beers please). If you'd just like water, say: *toriaezu mizu onegaishimasu* (just water for now, please).



#### 7. Kore onegaishimasu これ、お願いします this please

Menus in Japan often have pictures, which is helpful if you can't read Japanese. If you see something tasty that you'd like to order, point at it and say: *kore onegaishimasu* (this please). If you want to ask what it is first, say: *kore wa nan desu ka?* (what's this?). Pretend you understood their answer by saying: *oishi sou!* (sounds delicious!), then order it by saying: *jya sore onegaishimasu* (OK, then I'd like that please).

#### 8. Onakaippai お腹いっぱい I'm full.

If someone is taking you out for dinner, chances are your friendly hosts will keep offering you food until you convince them you've had enough. You can politely refuse more by saying things like: *kekko desu* (no thanks), *onakaippai* (I'm full), *oishikatta desu* (it was delicious). Just because people keep offering you food, don't feel obliged to stuff yourself full – in Japan it's considered sensible to eat until you are 80% full – this is called: *hara hachibu me*. Luckily, there's a separate stomach reserved for desert, it's called: *betsu bara*.



#### 9. Gochisousama deshita ごちそうさまでした that was great, thank you for the meal

When people finish eating in Japan, they usually say: *gochisousama deshita*. You can say it to nobody in particular; to announce that you've finished eating; to thank the chef; or to the person who just shouted you the meal.



#### 10. Okaikei お会計 bill, check

Someone has to pay for the feast. If it's you, call the waiter: *sumimasen* (excuse me) and ask for the bill: *okaikei onegaishimasu* (can we have the bill, please). If you're with a group of friends, perhaps you'll split the bill: *wari kan*. And if you'd like to shout someone, say: *watashi no ogori desu* (it's my shout).

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

studio tdes produces a daily online English language show, based in Kutchan:  
www.thedailyenglishshow.com

#### Need more practice?

Have fun learning basic Japanese every Sunday afternoon with tdes. We teach useful words and phrases for English-speaking tourists in Niseko.

**Day:** Every Sunday  
**Place:** Samurai Bar, Niseko Yurt Village  
**Time:** 4pm to 5pm  
**Entry:** 1000 yen (includes 1 drink)  
**More info:** thedailyenglishshow.com/nisekojapanese

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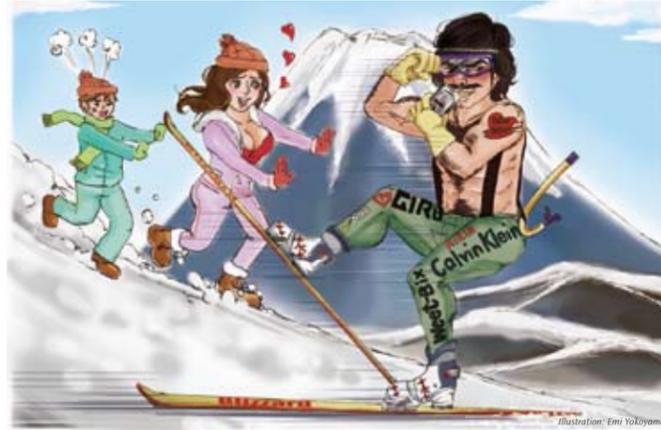
# Men Who Ride Mountains

By Stirling Goldman

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

So, I hope everyone is enjoying the festive season, and is now reflecting on the year that has been. 2008, eh? Yet another vintage year in the Goldman annals. But Stirls doesn't live in reflection or in the past, so he eagerly looks on to 2009.

2009 looks to be a big year for one S. Goldman. I've managed to negotiate a few more contracts and appearances. Some are not my greatest works but unfortunately the global climate has lead to a decrease in budgeting from my regulars such as CK, Nordica and Blizzard. So this year will see me do a few different things. To rival George Foreman's Lean Mean Fat-Reducing Grilling Machine, this year I'll be releasing the Goldman Grill in about March. The beauty of the superior Goldman model is it can be used from -40 degrees to 100 degrees, allowing for a barbecue in the backcountry or in the sauna after a day on the hill. But don't worry ladies the real Goldman Grill will still be available at night (or should I call that the Goldman Drill?). In May we should see the release of *Stirls Gets The Girls*, a real-life documentary made about me in Niseko during the '07/'08 season. It obviously required copious amount of editing for they could not fit all my conquests into a three-hour movie. I don't want to jump the gun but there is already Oscar talk. On top of this, in August I am making my debut in the Top 40 charts. The song *I Just Wanna Ride With Stirl* should be a No. 1 hit and involved me working with quality artists such as Right Said Fred and DJ Bobo. It is also recorded in Japanese for my local buddies. Yes, it's all happening for Stirls this year. Of course there is also the new Warren Miller flick starring a yet to be named superstar. I don't make the rules but I have seen the footage and there is only one guy that skis as well as that on a 90-degree slope in Antarctica, neck-deep with a snorkel on old school skis. No prizes for guessing!



Sorry for giving the secret away, Warren, but let's face it, everyone knows only one human is capable of that.

I often get asked what New Year's resolutions I make. Well, the truth is you cannot improve on perfection, so Stirls can only suggest a few for the masses as opposed to himself. They go as follows:  
Ladies: Aim to speak, touch or get near to Stirls. Aim to go home with him if you are good-looking.  
Gents: Aim to be Stirling, or at least die trying.

Happy 2009 everyone and enjoy the snow! By the way try your luck on Facebook with me. Look me up – Stirling@powderlife.com. I've deleted a few imposters so if you're lucky I'll accept you.

**Q: What was in Stirling's Christmas stocking this year? (Penny, Kowloon)**

A: Well, Penny, let's just say this: Stirling doesn't like to have his stocking filled. He is a giver, not a taker. And that is why he likes to fill the stockings of the female variety, you know what I mean, Pen? By the way, is that a ladder in yours, or a stairway for Stirling? If you're a good girl, nought not nice, old Goldy Claus may be coming to your town.

**Q: I want to be able to go hard all day like you. What do you eat for breakfast before a big day on the mountain? (John, San Diego)**

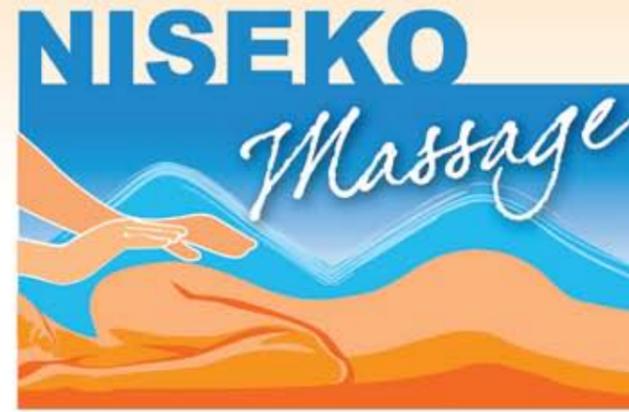
A: Johnny boy, that is a good question. A good question. People are amazed where Goldman gets his energy. I mean, yes I do go hard on the hill, John, very

hard in fact, and that is a good observation by you. But what you fail to ask, John, is how do I consume 48 beers and serenade the ladies until the early hours and still manage to go hard day in day out. Now that, John, is a secret. Just like Colonel Sanders and his secret herbs and spices, the Goldman breakfast will remain a mystery. I do, however, owe a special mention to one of my sponsors, Weetbix. After all I am the face of them within Japan. They wanted me to be the face in Australia too but it just didn't feel right, so I left it to the cricket boys.

**Q: You've skied in all corners of the globe. What languages do you speak and how did you learn them all? (Juri, Tokyo)**

A: Juri, where to start? Yes, I am well-traveled and I have skied on all continents. So much so that I'm essentially a household name in most ski resorts. So, to be honest, I forget what languages I speak. They tend to just come to me naturally – usually when I'm in the bar with a lady by my side. I put it down to life experience as to how I learned them all. But my first language is the international language, in which I am completely fluent. For the uneducated, that is the language of love. And that, Juri, is not learned through speech, more so through action. And Stirls, as everyone knows is a man of action.

**Wanna see if Stirling will accept you as a friend? Look him up on Facebook. Or got a question for a man who knows? Fire it to [stirling@powderlife.com](mailto:stirling@powderlife.com)**



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Our rooms are luxuriously appointed with comfortable massage tables, all with arm rests. We are conveniently located on the second floor of Australia house, opposite the Seicomart.

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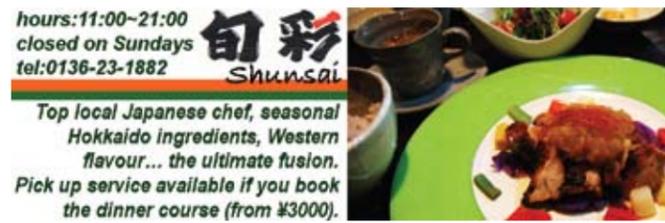
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# Introducing Kutchan

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

hours:11:00-21:00  
closed on Sundays  
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**旬彩 Shunsai**  
Top local Japanese chef, seasonal Hokkaido ingredients, Western flavour... the ultimate fusion.  
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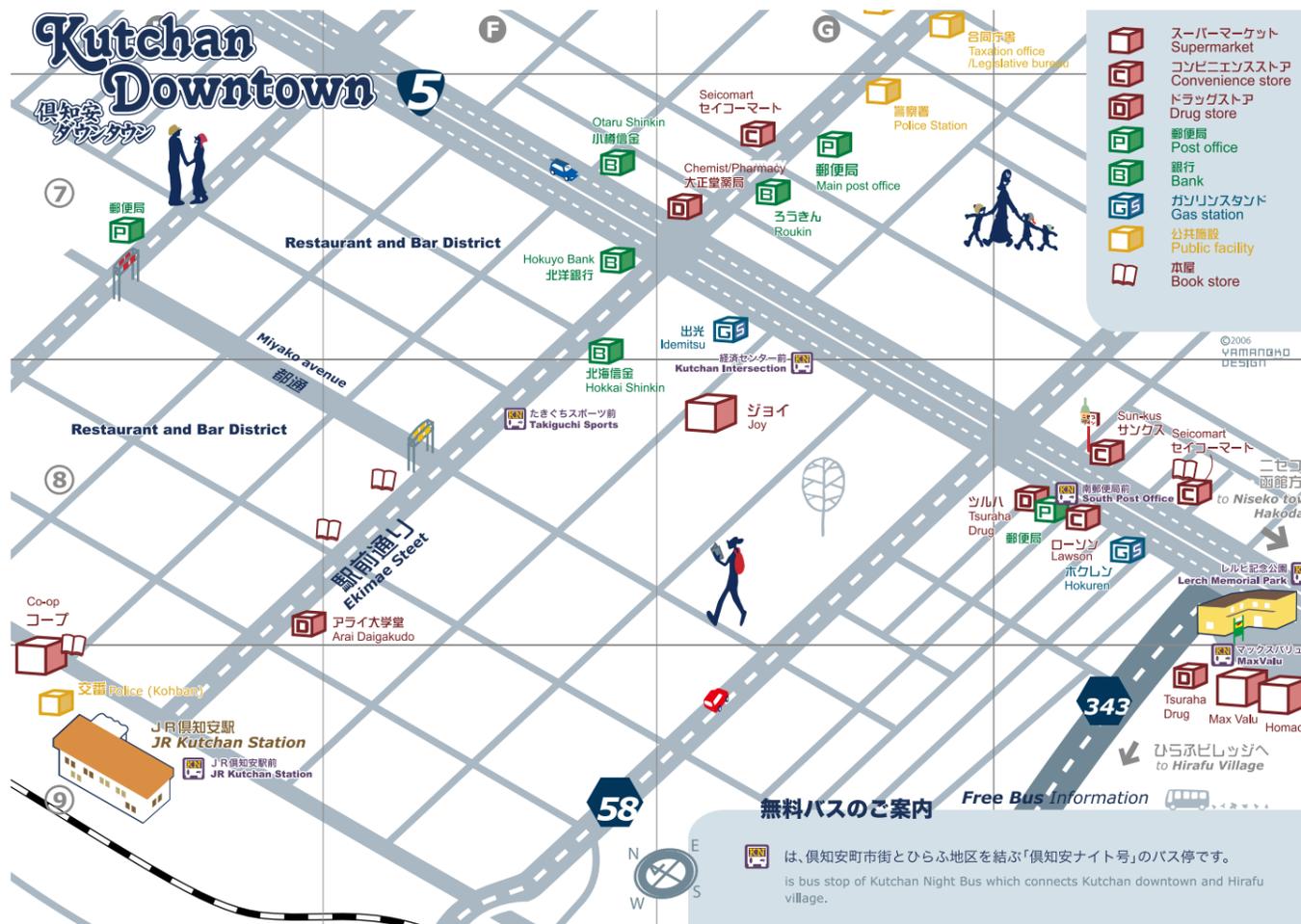


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9	11	5	1
Welcome Center	Seicomart Hirafu intersection	MaxValue	Kutchan JR Train Station
17:00	17:03	17:14	17:20
18:30	18:33	18:44	18:50
09:30	09:33	09:44	09:50
20:15	20:18	20:29	20:35
21:15	21:18	21:29	21:35
22:20	22:23	22:34	22:40
23:20	23:23	23:34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

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

**Kutchan Downtown**

Restaurant and Bar District

Free Bus Information

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

# Culture in Kutchan

By Sarah Latcham

MANY tourists visiting Niseko to explore its reputation as the 'land of powder snow' may be forgiven for thinking they are about to embark on a traditional Japanese holiday experience. The influx of foreigners to the Hirafu area has somewhat pushed the traditional Japanese customs aside to make way for a more westernised culture.

There are, however, many ways in which tourists can experience the prized and respected customs of ancient Japanese culture. For those wishing to develop this insight, Kutchan Machi-no-Eki runs fortnightly Japanese cultural tours in Kutchan. Holidaying in Niseko last season, I thought I had already taken in a wealth of Japanese culture as never previously experienced. Within a few minutes of boarding the bus however, tourists were snowed under with a true Japanese experience that had nothing to do with the weather outside. The three-hour tour takes you to the town of Kutchan and provides the opportunity to participate in traditional Japanese activities beginning with a Japanese tea ceremony, before continuing on to martial arts and taiko drum performances.



CULTURAL EXPERIENCE... Sarah (right) and friend Jodie meeting the locals.

## Traditional Japanese tea ceremony

Precision. Meticulousness. Execution. Sprung from the foundations laid by the 13th Century Samurais, the Japanese Tea Ceremony, or 'Cha-no-yu', is one based on attention, assiduousness and respect. Commencing with the methodical and painstaking preparation of the tea bowl before brewing the tea, all participants are given the opportunity to mix their own bowl of green tea, while being guided through the process by kimono-clad hosts.

## Laido – the sheathing of the sword

Thanks to the popularity of westernised movies such as *The Last Samurai*, the Japanese art of laido and other martial arts have long been viewed as the highlight and epitome of Japanese customs. Around 700AD, Japanese swordsmiths forged the first of what are now considered the finest swords ever made. During this segment of the tour, laido Sensei's present a private performance before tourists become privy to their own attempt at laido, with a sword whose own weight and sharpness is enough to decapitate a full-grown man. This handling of the sword is an honour most Japanese natives have never even experienced.



## Taiko drum performance

After the excitement of the laido demonstration, tourists are ready for the final part of the tour, the highly anticipated taiko drum performance. Mid-way through the performance, the drummers encourage all tourists to have a go at learning this historic Japanese art form.

While the aim of most tourists to Niseko is to hit the slopes as much as possible, it would be a shame to spend a holiday in Hokkaido without experiencing true Japanese culture. The popularity of these tours continues to grow throughout the season, so bookings are essential.

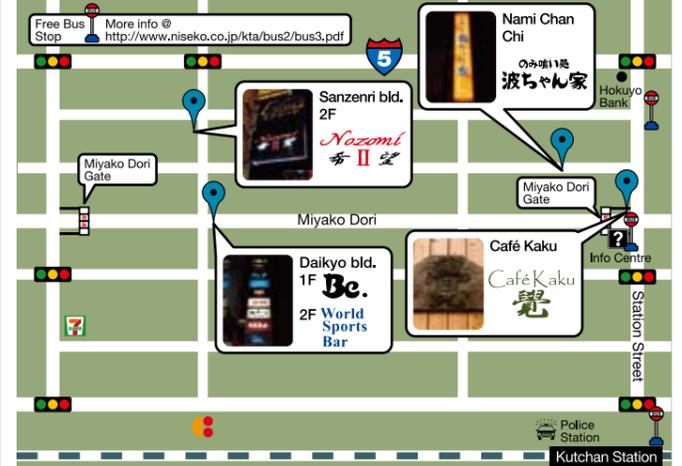
## Tour Dates and Events

Sunday, January 11; Saturday, January 24; Tuesday, February 3; Saturday, February 14; Tuesday, March 3.

Check [www.powderlife.com/niseko/events](http://www.powderlife.com/niseko/events), or contact Kutchan Machi-no-Eki 'Pratto' on 0136-23-022.



# Wine & Dine in Kutchan

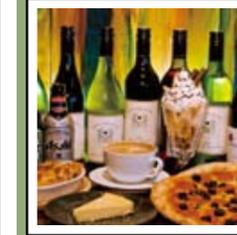


Free Bus Stop More info @ <http://www.niseko.co.jp/cta/bus2/bus3.pdf>

Nami Chan Chi  
Sanzenri bld. 2F  
Nozomi  
Miyako Dori Gate  
Miyako Dori  
Daikyō bld. 1F  
Be.  
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Budget: from ¥1,000  
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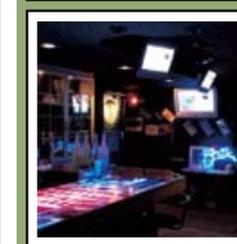
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Budget: from ¥1,500  
Open: 16:00 to 04:00 Close randomly



**Be.**  
Daikyō bld. 1F, N2 W1 TEL: 0136-55-6905  
A cozy bar, complete with pool table, soft darts machines, and a full DJ setup. Relaxing spot where you can hang with friends or mingle with locals. Local DJ/Live parties are often scheduled. Checking in @ [www.powderlife.com/niseko/event](http://www.powderlife.com/niseko/event) s/for upcoming events.  
Budget: from ¥1,000  
Open: 19:00 to 03:00 Close randomly



**Nozomi II**  
Sanzenri bld. 2F, N3 W1 TEL: 0136-22-5478  
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Budget: from ¥1,500 \*after 0:00 ¥1,000 for seat charge  
Open: 21:00 to 06:00 Close randomly

## Wraps off Suiboku

**THE** scaffolding has come off of Suiboku, giving everyone in town a chance to see the latest addition to the Upper Village landscape.

West Canada Homes was chief project manager of Suiboku, Niseko Real Estate's latest development. Its lead designer was the Japan-based company Atelier BNK. The 10-unit apartment is located on the main road up to the lifts.

CJ Wysocki is one of the project's two sponsors, along with Mike Jones.

"BNK took us to this amazing concrete temple in Otaru and as soon as we walked in we knew that it was what we wanted for our apartments," Wysocki said.

"There is one apartment left available. All of the others have been sold to Hong Kong residents.

"The official key handover date is January 30 and we will have A Bu Cha opening up a restaurant on the ground level starting on February 1."



UNMASKED... the first look at Suiboku.

## Hirafu to get ice skating rink

**NISADE** has announced plans to add ice skating to Hirafu's list of activities by including an ice rink next to its Vale project.

The Vale, which is located at the bottom of the Hirafu Ace Family Pair lift, started construction this summer and is due to be completed by December this year.

Nisade chairman Jonathan Martin said the ice rink will be on offer along with the Vale's other amenities including a pool, onsen, café and restaurant.

"Each winter I conduct a street survey to see how Niseko is fairing and a strong theme emerging is the requirement for more non-ski activities – there simply are only so many hours we can endure the powder every day," Martin said.

"It'll be a small outdoor rink just outside the café area allowing parents to watch young ones slip and slide while enjoying a coffee and a snack. With Mt Yotei in the background it will have the camera shutters working in overdrive."

## 'The Forest' back on market

**THE** developers of Panorama, which was to be built on a 3825sqm block of land in Upper Hirafu, have cancelled their plans to build, refunded all deposits received and put the site back on the market.

Panorama was designed to be an all-penthouse luxury development, due to include 55 units, day spa, wellness centre and commercial space.

The site, known as 'The Forest' before the development plans, is located just below the J-First Hotel and a one-minute walk from the Grand Hirafu Gondola in Upper Hirafu Village. The back and left boundaries border onto national parkland and the right boundary is a creek-line.

Ruskin McLennan, managing director of Niseko Property, said the block was back on the market for an asking price of ¥1.05 billion (\$US11.4 million).

"It's a shame Panorama didn't go ahead but The Forest site is the best development site in Hirafu – it's ski in-ski out, unrestricted by national park and has commanding views to Yotei," he said.

## Life Plan opens Hirafu office

**NISEKO** Life Plan has expanded its operations by opening a new information centre in the same building as Black Diamond Tours, between NAC and The Niseko Company in Izumikyō 1.

Niseko Life Plan has been based out of Niseko Village (Higashiyama) for the past four years. Its new information centre in Izumikyō 1 will be open every day from 11am to 7pm.

Andrew Caldwell, another new addition for the company this year, is from Vancouver, but has been living in Japan for the past 13 years. He is the first foreign sales staff to be hired on by Niseko Life Plan. "We felt that opening a property information centre in Hirafu would allow us to be more 'personal' with our clients. For a small agency, we need to adapt to market trends," Caldwell said. "I have a great relationship with other agents in the area which is necessary in the real estate industry. Agents within Niseko as well as in other areas of Hokkaido know that Niseko Life is willing to work together with them."

## Above+Beyond plans major Hirafu development

By Lorne Calhoun

**HONG** Kong-based developer Above+Beyond Hotels and Resorts is on track to build its flagship resort just down the road from the Ace Family Pair lift in Hirafu.

Projected to be completed by the winter of 2010/11, the resort will feature a total of 102 one, two and three-bedroom suites in the hotel, as well as 22 separate four-bedroom residential chalets. Living space sizes will range from 56sqm for a one-bedroom hotel suite to 320sqm for the chalets. Hotel amenities are set to include an international restaurant, après ski bar, wine cellar, onsen, spa retreat, and gymnasium, as well as an indoor heated swimming pool, library, café, children's creche and conference/banqueting facilities. Prices will range from ¥44 million to ¥290 million.

Niseko Alpine Developments have been appointed project managers for Above+Beyond and are the developers of the chalet phase, with Nikken Sekkei Hokkaido as the project architects. Interior design is being done by Peter Silling & Associates Hotel Interior Design, who are also scheduled to be doing the interior design for the Capella Resorts project in Annupuri.

Above+Beyond Niseko is offering a guaranteed rental return of 4 per cent on the purchase of a limited number of one and two-bedroom hotel suites for four years when investors commit a non-refundable deposit of 20 per cent by the end of February this year. Hotel suite owners are granted 28 days of complimentary usage of the unit per annum – two weeks in the winter and two weeks in the summer. Chalet owners will have no restrictions on usage and may choose to appoint Above+Beyond to manage and rent their property



ABOVE+BEYOND... artist's impressions of the upcoming development.

when not in personal use. The chalet 'neighbourhood' is to be designed to wind its way down a natural plateau within the site.

Ginn Lai, executive director of Above+Beyond Hotels and Resorts, says they will bring a new level of serviced accommodation to Niseko. "We want to offer investors and guests something above their expectations and beyond their imagination," Lai says. "Our offering delivers exactly what sophisticated skiers have been looking for, and will change the way travelers look at luxury accommodations in Niseko. There is no longer a need to travel to the Alps or Whistler."

Fourfoursix, concept designer for the project, says:

"A level of intrigue can be found in each and every project, but this is especially true for those with strict brief constraints or harsh climates. This project had both, thus providing the opportunity to design an architecture informed by a very specific use and controls; in essence the possibility to produce something entirely unique."

Jason Cohen, Above+Beyond's executive director of business development, says high and long term aspirations for the company. "We are confident investors will achieve a good rate of return on their Above+Beyond properties and guests will enjoy the service and facilities offered at our resorts," he says.



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# Q&A

## with Beckett Tucker

Interview by Lorne Calhoun

*Powderlife* magazine had a chance to speak with Beckett Tucker, the sales director for Above+Beyond Hotels and Resorts, to get his impressions of its flagship Niseko property.



**Where is the Above+Beyond team located?**

We are all based out of Hong Kong, however, I will be here in Niseko for the next four months. I am working out of the Nisade office. We do have a showroom there, but the main showroom and sales area is located in the Niseko Real Estate office. We also have a very nice office in Hong Kong that is open five days a week. Above+Beyond is the developer for the hotel phase of the project and Nisade is the developer for our residential chalet phase. Above+Beyond will be the appointed operator for both phases of the development upon completion.

**What resorts has Above+Beyond been previously involved with?**

This will be our flagship property. This is the first development for Above+Beyond, but our management team has extensive experience with resorts around the world.

We are trying to bring an international flavor and create the quintessential all-season resort in Niseko. We don't just want to cater to winter. I feel we are filling a void right now in Niseko. There is nothing presently

that really offers proper facilities for conferencing, weddings or banquets, and we aim to plug that gap.

**Where are you focusing your marketing?**

The main focus of our marketing is within Asia. Australia was a big market, but I think that has shifted due to currency changes. We have had a lot of interest from Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia, but the last few qualified buyers that I have been speaking with have actually been from Tokyo.

**It's mentioned that there will be hydro pools in the basement. What is the difference between a hydro pool and a regular pool?**

Hydro pools are like a jacuzzi but made with stronger jets that are meant to help with massaging the body.

**Upon completion what new amenities will be available to the public?**

It is going to be a gated hotel but everyone will be welcome to come in and enjoy the facilities. We will have the second indoor heated swimming pool in Hirafu. There will be private family onsens that are not

really available anywhere else. We also plan on creating an extensive library and lounge where guests can read and order food from the bar and restaurant.

**How many sales are necessary before construction is a go, or are you building regardless?**

We are 100 per cent go. We have already sold half of block A of the hotels and a couple of the chalets. There will be three blocks of hotels totalling 102 units. The three hotel blocks will be connected with covered walkways. Blocks A and B are available now and C will be released at a later date. We have development approval already and building approval is forecast to be granted in the next few months.

**What are some of the future plans of Above+Beyond Hotels and Resorts?**

We have a beach club and retail development in Phuket that were working with, which is not so much a hotel as it is a bar-restaurant project. We are also looking at Bali, Malaysia and maybe somewhere in the Indian Ocean.

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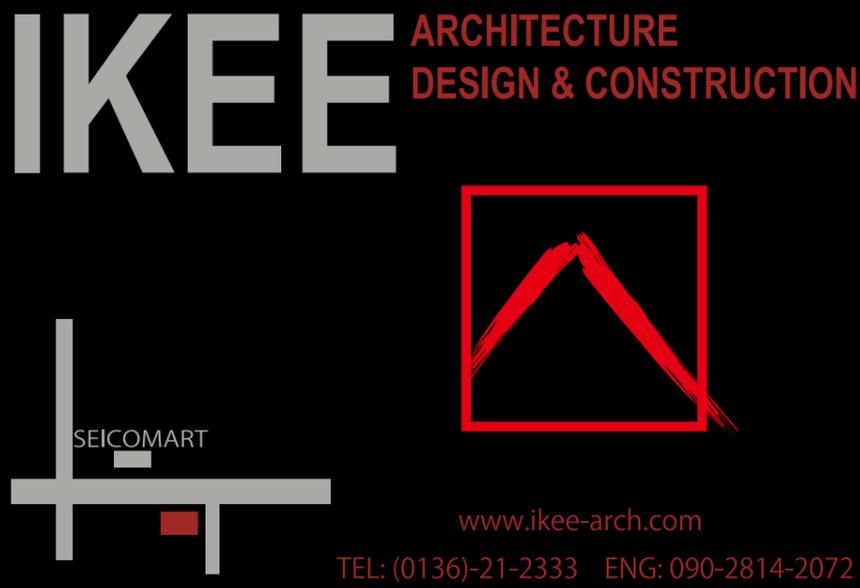
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## Financing in Niseko.

By Ruskin McLennan, managing director of Niseko Property

**THE** Niseko property market continues to mature. Last year saw unprecedented development in the Niseko area with more to come next year, despite the global slowdown. This market is being supported by the first tailor-made financial product.

In early 2008 The Commonwealth Bank of Australia visited Niseko to research the property market in depth. Previously, Niseko property purchases were financed with cash and/or using 100 per cent equity from overseas property. Commonwealth Bank spent a lot of time here talking to local agents and developers and studied sales over the past three years. In July this year the Commonwealth Bank introduced the Japanese Snowfield Loan.

This loan product is specifically targeted at Niseko investors and for the first time in Niseko's short history, investors are able to use their Niseko property as collateral. This loan currently only applies to houses and apartments and the collateral is 50 per cent of the market value. If you wish to finance at a level greater than 50 per cent you can use collateral in the form of property or shares. This product has been well received and the Commonwealth Bank will dominate the market with this product in 2009.

The Commonwealth Bank now provides financing based on interest rates of between 2.75 per cent and 3 per cent. The interest rates are tied to the LIBOR rate. The loan is available only in principle and interest repayments. The maximum loan period is 25 years. It can be denominated in the major international and Asian currencies, and can be switched to any of the currencies above which may assist you in hedging the loan.

The Commonwealth Bank has branch offices in HK and Singapore, which may assist you with the loan, and they may allow you to use property in these countries as collateral.

### Risk and reward

The risk of international finance is that the currency may move against you. Before making any investment you must have a strong understanding of the risks. A sudden movement in currency may benefit you, however, it may also increase your repayments and the collateral required. The ability to switch the loan may assist you in hedging your investment, but it is a sophisticated financial instrument.

### Other loan companies

Interestingly, late last year a number of financing companies were looking at options in Niseko. The National Australia Bank (NAB) had been promising for some time that they would enter the market. The bank introduced a loan in the summer of 2008 at rates 1 per cent below the Commonwealth Bank. NAB withdrew the loan product after the credit crisis in October this year. While this upset a few clients who were progressing their loan applications with the NAB, it had one positive effect. The Commonwealth Bank dropped its rates by 1 per cent to match the NAB.

ANZ Bank is also providing loans to Japan-based expats but you must have a substantial Japanese income, which disqualifies most Niseko investors. As Niseko evolves and the property market becomes global we anticipate that other major banks will enter the market. The major banks may be coerced into the market by the requests of their major clients.

It is still difficult for foreigners to obtain financing through a Japanese bank, particularly without permanent residency. The Japanese banks are unlikely to enter the market.

Financing will help to underpin the market by allowing people to take a longer term approach to the Niseko market. It will allow more people to enter the market. At interest rates of 2-3 per cent, well-managed properties in Niseko will be cashflow positive from day one. This will allow wise investors to pick up some great assets this winter at great prices. It also allows investors to negotiate a great deal on a property now, pay a small deposit and finance the balance when final payment is due in 2009 or 2010.



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## The Berg Apartments

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Each apartment has a loft bedroom that sleeps four people, one bathroom, separate toilet and an open-plan lounge, dining and kitchen area. The apartments are rented year-round and provide a steady annual income stream. As a redevelopment site, the gradient allows for up to seven levels to the maximum height, where as other flat sites will only be approved for six levels. It is also possible to purchase The Sakura House next door, to increase the strategic value of your investment.

The Berg apartments are priced at ¥500,000 per tsubo, and at this price they will sell.

Hirafu Upper Village  
150m to lift  
Contact Ruskin McLennan from Niseko Property for more information at [ruskin@nisekoproperty.com](mailto:ruskin@nisekoproperty.com), or mobile 0806 098 7882.



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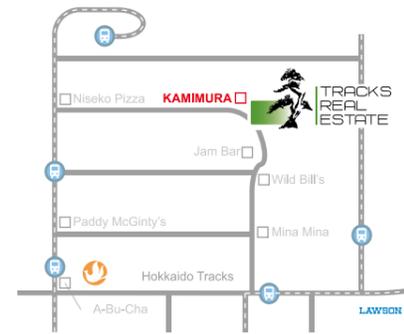
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**Yama Shizen East 404** Open: 14 Jan (Wed) 1.00-1.30  
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**Miharashi 1** Open: 16 Jan (Fri) 1.00-1.30  
 Upper Hirafu **¥35,000,000**



This two bedroom apartment in Hirafu's heart has peaceful surrounds just a short walk to restaurant and shops. Triple-glazed panoramic windows ensure warmth and natural light. This funky, modern unit is at a very accessible price.

**Yama Shizen East 402** Open: 18 Jan (Sun) 12.00-12.30  
 Upper Hirafu **¥92,000,000**



This brand-new luxury apartment enjoys big ski field views and generous 117.3m2 floor area. Built by Hokkaido Tracks, you are assured of quality, a stylish interior and quality furnishings. This is your door into Niseko, open it now.

**Lower Hirafu Land** Open: 16 Jan (Fri) 2.00-2.30  
 Lower Hirafu **¥80,000,000**



With uninterrupted views of Mt Yotei, this luxury residential block can never be built-out. In a private location surrounded by quality homes, my vendor's premium land is arguably the best remaining block in Hirafu village.

**St Moritz Land** Open: 16 Jan (Fri) 2.00-2.30  
 St Moritz Village **From ¥3,450,000**



With prices starting at ¥60,000/tsubo these blocks are your ticket onto the Niseko express. Mt Yotei views and woodland environment just 1 minute to Hirafu, for a fraction of the price. Practice saying "I own property in Niseko".

**Freshwater 403** Open: 16 Jan (Fri) 2.00-2.30  
 Upper Hirafu **¥Price on Application**



Located in central Hirafu Village, this apartment combines a chic design with the atmosphere of a ski chalet. Its 2-key system allows flexible use. Designed by a Japan/Australia team this 2 bedroom unit captures the best of both cultures.

**Yotei Tracks 108** Open: 18 Jan (Sun) 1.00-1.30  
 Upper Hirafu **¥38,000,000**



A comfortable "2-keyed" 2-bedroom apartment with quality construction and stylish interior. Centrally located.

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**Hirafu House 5** Open: 18 Jan (Sun) 2.00-2.30  
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Regardless of how you enjoy your snow sport, always show courtesy to others and be aware that THERE ARE INHERENT RISKS in all snow recreation activities. These risks include rapid changes in weather and surface conditions, collisions with other people as well as natural and artificial hazards such as rocks, trees, stumps, bare spots, life towers and snowmaking equipment. Common sense and personal awareness can reduce such risks. Observe the code below and share with others the responsibility for a great experience.

## ALPINE RESPONSIBILITY CODE

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

## KNOW THE CODE: IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

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



### ATTENTION

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

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



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

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

- Lift ticket counter
  - Rest room
  - Phone
  - Kid's room
  - Restaurants
  - Café
  - Shop
  - Information
  - Rentals
  - Ski school
  - Onsen(Hot Spring)
  - Shuttle bus stop
  - Parking lot
  - Ski patrol
  - AED
  - Light
  - Gate to uncontrolled area
  - Slalom run
  - Mogul run
  - Wave
  - Half Pipe
  - Park(Kicker, jib, etc.)
  - Un-groomed Slope
  - Easiest
  - More Difficult
  - Most Difficult
  - Name of Slope**  
Maximum Gradient / Average Gradient / Run Length
  - Number of seats**
  - Name of Lift**  
Length · Time required · Number of lift ticket points
- \*Lift operating times and courses are subject to change due to weather, snow and light conditions etc.

## Strictly off limits

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

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

## Niseko Rules

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

- 1. CERTAIN CLOSED AREAS WITHIN NISEKO ARE STRICTLY OFF LIMIT AND ARE NOT TO BE ENTERED AT ANY TIME**  
Yu no Sawa(Gully between An'nupuri and Niseko Village area), Mizuno no Sawa (underneath Niseko Gondola) and Haru no Taki (cliff area west of Hirafu) are "STRICTLY off limits areas" as stated by the Niseko Rules. Those riding these areas WILL have their lift pass confiscated.
- 2. DUCKING ROPES IS PROHIBITED**  
Ducking the boundary ropes is prohibited. If you do, your lift pass will be confiscated. Use designated gates to access out of bound areas. These gates access the dangerous back country.

### 3. NO SAFETY CONTROL BEYOND RESORT BOUNDARY

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

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

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

### 5. AVALANCHE CONDITION INFORMATION

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

### 6. BACK COUNTRY RESCUE FEE

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

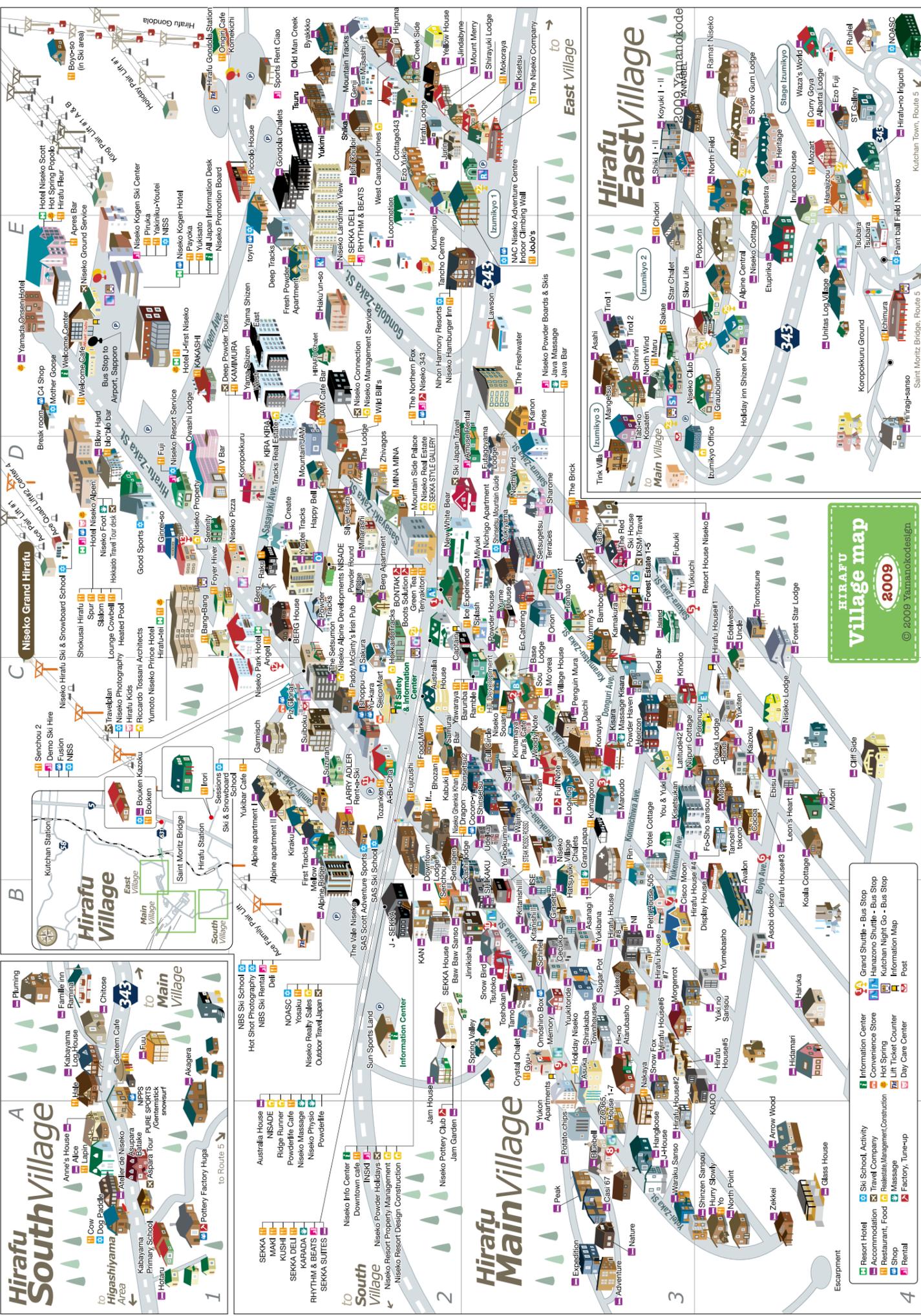
### 7. SKI AND MOUNTAIN PATROL INSTRUCTIONS MUST BE OBEYED

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

### 8. RESPECT EACH OTHER

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

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



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22 5620 [MAP C2]
- B's Café and Bar  
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**Bang Bang**  
バンバン  
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- Barunba  
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- Chidori  
千鳥  
23 2831 [MAP F4]

- Curry Goya  
カレー小屋  
23 3688 [MAP F4]

- Downtown  
ダウンタウン  
23 3354 [MAP B3]

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



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

- Fujizushi Sushi  
ふじ鮎  
23 2661 [MAP B3]

- Gentem Café  
玄天カフェ  
23 3154 [MAP B1]

- Grandpapa  
グランパパ  
0136 23 2244 [MAP B3]

- Graubunden  
グラウブュンデン  
23 3371 [MAP E4]



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

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

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

- if... Café  
カフェ イフ  
22 4770 [MAP B3]

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

- Japanese Kitchen Bouken  
冒険家族  
22 3759

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



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

- Jyuu Okonomiyaki  
じゅう  
44 2336 [Higashiyama]

- Kakashi  
かかし  
23 2622 [MAP D2]

- Kame  
亀  
22 0339 [MAP E3]



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

- Kila  
姫羅  
070 6646 4715 [MAP C2]

- Komekichi Onigiri Café  
米吉(おにぎりかふえ)  
22 1105 [MAP F1]

- Kumagoro  
くまごろう  
23 3381 [MAP B3]

- Landmark Deli  
くまごろう  
23 4285 [MAP E2]

- Loaf Lounge  
ローフラウンジ  
22 1022 [Kutchan]



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

- Mina Mina  
ミナミナ  
23 4471 [MAP D2]

- Mokoraya  
もこらや  
090 8279 0598 [MAP F3]

- Mozart  
モーツァルト  
090 2699 6387 [MAP E4]

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

- Nathan's Hotdogs  
ネイサンズ ホットドッグ  
21 3121 [MAP E3]

- Niseko Gourmet  
ニセコグルメ  
080 5584 1313

- Niseko Pizza  
ニセコ ピザ  
21 6888 [MAP D2]

- Paddy McGintys  
パディーマッキンティーズ  
55 8020 [MAP C2]



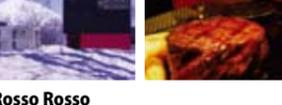
**Paul's Cafe and Bar**  
ポールズカフェ&アンドバー  
090 9083 6764 [MAP C3]  
Specialising in Belgian beer and rotisserie chicken. More than 30 beers on tap or in bottles. Belgian Waffles.

- Payoka  
パヨカ  
22 0117 [MAP E1]

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

- Raku Izakaya  
楽 居酒屋  
22 6638 [MAP C3]

- Rin Izakaya  
りん 居酒屋  
22 1444 [MAP B3]



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



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



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

- Senchou 1 Izakaya  
船長(居酒屋)  
22 2001 [MAP B3]

- Senchou 2 Seafood Izakaya  
海山屋(海鮮居酒屋)  
22 5454 [MAP C2]

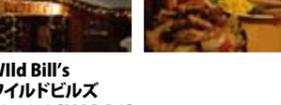
- Shokusai Hirafu  
食彩 比羅夫  
22 1105 [MAP C1]

- Shunsai  
旬彩  
23 1882 [Kutchan]

- Slalom  
スラローム  
22 1105 [MAP C1]

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

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



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

- Yawaraya  
やわらや  
23 3810 [MAP C3]

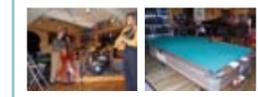
- Youtei Yakiniiku  
焼肉ようてい  
22 0109 [MAP E1]

- Yuki Bar and Café  
雪場カフェ  
22 0234 [MAP D2]

- Yummy's  
ヤミーズ  
21 2239 [MAP C3]

**Bars**

- Angel Karaoke Bar  
エンジェルカラオケバー  
23 1281 [MAP D2]
- Après Bar  
アプレバー  
23 2311 [MAP E1]
- Bar Lair  
バー・レイアー  
22 0588 [MAP D1]
- Barunba  
バルンバ  
090 8907 9399 [MAP C3]
- Be.  
ビー  
556 905
- Blo Blo Bar  
フロフロ・バー  
22 1269 [MAP D1]
- Dragon Wine and Food Bar  
ドラゴン ワイン&フードバー  
21 7700 [MAP B2]
- Fridge Door Bar (Gyu +)  
ギョウタスパー  
23 1432 [MAP B3]



**Full Note  
フルノート**  
090-1307-3792 [MAP C3]  
Only Jazz bar in Hirafu, check out their jazz events. Billiards, table tennis, wireless internet available.

- Jam Café Bar  
ジャムカフェバー  
23 0700 [MAP D2]
- Java Bar and Café  
ジャババー&カフェ  
090 2871 6781 [MAP D3]
- Maki Lounge Bar @ J-SEKKA  
マキラウンジバー@ジェイセッカ  
21 3080 [MAP C2]
- Masukotto  
マスコット  
23 1101 [MAP C2]
- Paddy McGintys  
パディーマッキンティーズ  
55 8020 [MAP C2]
- Paul's Cafe and Bar  
ポールのカフェ&アンドバー  
090 9083 6764 [MAP C3]
- Red Bar  
レッドバー  
22 6687 [MAP C3]
- Splash  
スプラッシュ  
23 1688 [MAP C3]
- The Brick  
ブリック  
22 3444 [MAP D3]
- Wild Bill's  
ワイルドビルズ  
22 5652 [MAP D2]
- Yuki Bar and Café  
ユキカフェ  
22 0234 [MAP B2]

**Tours, activities**



**Black Diamond Tours  
ブラックダイヤモンド ツアー**  
090-2054-8687  
Let us privately guide you through Hokkaido's best powder stashes and out of the way places.

- Deep Powder Tours  
ディープパウダー ツアー  
0136 21 5827 [MAP D2]
- Good Sports  
グッドスポーツ  
23 4560 [MAP C1]
- Fuga Pottery Factory  
陶工房風雅  
22 1731
- IXSM Travel  
イクシム トラベル  
21 5855 [MAP D4]
- Karada Massage @ J-SEKKA  
体マサージ@ジェイセッカ  
21 3088 [MAP B2]



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



**Niseko Massage  
ニセコマサージ**  
22 0399 [MAP B2]  
Professional Sports and Relaxation Massage in Five Star Luxury. Highly qualified massage therapists



**Niseko Physio  
ニセコフジジョ**  
22 0399 [MAP B2]  
Your English speaking sports injury centre in Hirafu. Australian trained winter sports physiotherapists.

- Niseko Pottery Club  
ニセコ陶芸クラブ  
23 4844 [MAP A3]
- Niseko Snowmobile Adventures  
ニセコスノーモービルアドベンチャー  
21 5001
- NOASC  
ノアスク  
23 1688 [MAP C3]
- Paint Ball Field Niseko  
ペイントボールフィールドニセコ  
23 2111 [MAP E4]

**Real estate**

- Hokkaido Tracks Development  
北海道トラックス 開発  
21 7202 [MAP C2]
- Hokkaido Real Estate  
北海道リアルエステート  
080 5587 5052 [MAP C2]
- NISADE  
ニセード  
22 0038 [MAP C2]
- Niseko Life Plan  
ニセコ ライフ プラン  
44 3584 [Higashiyama]
- Niseko Property  
ニセコ プロパティ  
21 5060 [MAP D2]
- NRE Niseko Real Estate  
ニセコ リアルエステート  
21 7722 [MAP D2]
- Niseko Realty Sales  
ニセコ リアルティール セールズ  
23 2221 [MAP C2]
- Niseko RDC  
ニセコ R D C  
23 4844 [MAP B2]
- Ridgerunner  
リッジランナー  
21 6220 [MAP C2]
- Sekka Style Gallery  
セッカ スタイル ギャラリー  
21 7755 [MAP E2]
- Tracks Real Estate  
トラックスリアルエステート  
226 977 [MAP E2]
- West Canada Homes  
ウエストカナダホームズ  
21 2226 [MAP E2]

- Deep powder tours  
ディープパウダーツアーズ  
21 5827 [MAP D2]
- Hokkaido Tracks  
北海道トラックス  
23 3503 [MAP C2]
- Hokkaido Travel  
北海道トラベル  
233 327 [MAP C2]
- Holiday Niseko  
ホリデー ニセコ  
21 6221 [MAP A3]
- Izumikyo  
泉郷  
23 3301 [MAP D4]

**Delis, food outlets**

- Sekka Deli  
セッカデリ  
21 3088 [MAP B2]
- Sekka Landmark Deli  
セッカランドマーク  
23 4285 [MAP E2]
- Sekka Teca Wine Shop  
セッカテカワインショップ  
21 3088 [MAP B2]

**Ski schools**

- NAC Niseko Adventure Centre  
NAC アドベンチャー センター  
23 2093 [MAP E3]
- Niseko Hirafu Ski and Snowboard School  
ニセコヒラフスキー&スノーボードスクール  
22 0921 [MAP D1]
- NISS Niseko International Snowsports School  
ニセコインタナショナルスノースポーツスクール  
21 6688 [MAP F1]
- NBS Niseko Base Sports  
NBS ニセコ ベース スポーツ  
21 5050 [MAP B2]
- Niseko Sessions  
ニセコ セッション  
080 6070 2780 [MAP B2]
- SAS Scott Adventure Sports  
スコットアドベンチャー スポーツ  
21 3333 [MAP B2]
- SAS Scott Adventure Sports  
SASスコットアドベンチャースポーツ  
21 3333 [MAP B2]
- Sun Sports Land  
サン スポーツ ランド  
23 3220 [MAP A3]

**Accommodation providers**



The Australian snowsports club with its own Niseko lodge  
**Australian Alps Club Niseko  
オーストラリアアルプスクラブニセコ**  
223 006 [MAP E4]  
The lodge has eight western style guest rooms Membership is available for A\$6,500 www.aacniseko.com

- J-Sekka Suites  
ジェイセッカスイツ  
21 6133 or 21 7788 [MAP B2]
- NISADE  
ニセード  
22 0038 [MAP C2]
- Niseko Ground Service  
ニセコグランドサービス  
21 2503 [MAP C2]
- Niseko Management Service  
ニセコマネジメントサービス  
21 5020 [MAP D3]
- Niseko Powder Connection  
ニセコパウダーコネクション  
21 2500 [MAP D2]
- Outdoor Travel Japan  
アウトドア トラベル ジャパン  
21 2171 [MAP C3]
- Ski Japan  
スキージャパン  
22 4611 [MAP D3]
- The Niseko Company  
ザ ニセコ カンパニー  
21-7272 [MAP F2]

**Hotels**

- Hotel J-First Niseko  
ホテルJファーストニセコ  
22 2350 [MAP E1]
- Hotel Niseko Alpen  
ホテルニセコアルペン  
22 1105 [MAP D1]
- Hotel Niseko Scot  
ホテルニセコスコット  
23 2311 [MAP E1]
- J-Sekka  
ジェイセッカ  
21 6133 [MAP B2]
- Niseko Kogen Hotel  
ニセコ高原ホテル  
22 0117 [MAP E1]
- Niseko Park Hotel  
ニセコパークホテル  
22 2122 [MAP C2]
- Niseko Prince Hotel Hirafu-tei  
ニセコプリンスホテルひらふ亭  
23 2239 [MAP C1]
- Yamada Onsen Hotel  
山田温泉ホテル  
22 0476 [MAP E1]

**Rental**



short / long term leasing export / import / moving assistance 7 pass 4wd from 45,000yen/wk  
**Niseko Auto Rentals and Sales  
ニセコオートセールズ&アンドレンタル**  
090-2055-6074 [Higashiyama]  
Niseko Auto can assist you with local sales and export. Licensed auction dealer - 4WD and sports vehicles.

- Grand Hirafu Ski Hire  
グランドヒラフスキーハイヤー  
0136 22 0109 [MAP D1]
- Niseko Powder Boards  
ニセコパウダーボード  
0901 384 5772 [MAP D3]
- Niseko 343  
ニセコ 3 4 3  
23 0343 [MAP C3]
- Rhythm & Beats  
リズム&ビーツ  
22-0165 [MAP E2]
- SAS Scott Adventure Sports  
スコットアドベンチャースポーツ  
21 3333 [MAP B2]
- Sports Rent Ciao  
スポーツ レンタル チャオ  
22 5178 [MAP F2]

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

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

**www.powderlife.com**

**AIRPORT**

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

**Getting From New Chitose To Niseko**

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

**BUS**

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

**Whiteline Buses**

www.whitelinebuses.com.....011-242-2040

**Chuo Buses**

www.chuobus.co.jp/kikan/ski...011-231-0500

**Donan buses**

www.donanbus.co.jp/ski.....0123-46-5701

**Hokkaido Resort Liner**

www.access-n.jp/ski\_info.html..011-219-4411

**CAR RENTAL**

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

Mazda Rent a Car : Chitose airport 0123-45-8756, Niseko 011-231-0118 (drop off and pick up in Niseko only available on weekdays)  
Nippon Rent a Car : Chitose airport 0123-26-0919, Niseko 0136-43-2929

Orix Rent a Car : Chitose airport 0123-22-0543, Izumikyo (Hirafu) 0134-25-0543, Black Diamond Lodge : 0136-44-1144

Niseko Powder Boards  
ニセコパウダーボード  
0901 384 5772 [MAP D3]

Niseko 343  
ニセコ 3 4 3  
23 0343 [MAP C3]

Rhythm & Beats  
リズム&ビーツ  
22-0165 [MAP E2]

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

Sports Rent Ciao  
スポーツ レンタル チャオ  
22 5178 [MAP F2]

The train schedules are subject to change so it is best to call the numbers below or visit: www.japanrail.com.  
Airport.....0123-45-7011  
Sapporo.....011-222-7111  
Otaru.....0134-22-0771  
Kutchan station.....0136-22-1310  
Niseko station.....0135-44-2104

**INTER-RESORT TRANSPORT**

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

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

**Kutchan Night Bus**

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

**Taxis**

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

**AIRLINES**

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

**BANKING**

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

**CREDIT CARDS**

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

**CURRENCY**

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

**DRIVING**

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

**ELECTRICITY**

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

**EARTHQUAKES**

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

**EMERGENCIES**

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

**ETIQUETTE**

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

**EATING**

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

**DRINKING**

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

**TIPPING**

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

**GARBAGE**

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

**ONSEN (HOT SPRING BATH)**

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

**MEDICAL SERVICES**

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

**Niseko Physio**

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

**Kutchan Kousei Hospital**

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

**Ueda Orthopedic Clinic**

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

**INTERNET**

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

**MOBILE PHONES**

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

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

**Domestic Calls**

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

**Directory Assistance**

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

**International Calls**

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

**Calling Cards**

**Brastel**

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

**Kazak**

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

**POST OFFICES**

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

**TOURIST INFORMATION**

**Kutchan Tourism Information centre**

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

**The Niseko Grand Hirafu Welcome Centre**

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

**WALKING ON ICY ROADS**

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

# Headaches

By Bevan Colless



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



WHILE the most trouble most visitors to Niseko are likely to have with headaches in Niseko are caused by either a well executed face-plant or a couple too many of Brett and Takeo's concoctions at Wild Bills, there is a large percentage of the population who suffer from headaches of causes far less obvious.

One in 20 people suffer from severe or frequent headaches or migraines, which reduce their level of functioning and quality of life. Those who have seen a health professional for headaches will know that they are complex and, to a large extent, poorly understood by the greater medical community. For thousands of years the standard medical treatment was Trepanation, which is to drill or scrape a hole in the brain to let the demons causing the headaches to escape; a further testament that just because something has been practiced or believed in for a very long time is not proof of its effectiveness, or truth.

Although doctors seeing a headache patient these days are more likely to reach for the prescription pad than the drill bit, there is not a great deal of understanding of how the medications work, or what is actually causing the headaches. Currently Sumatriptan (Imigran) is the most studied and effective migraine medication; however, how it stops an attack is still not clearly understood.

Traditionally, chronic benign headache has been divided into tension headaches and migraines. However, there is a growing body of evidence that the two do not exist as separate entities, but are at different points of a continuum, underpinned by the same factors. There is continued spirited debate in the medical community on

the difference between a headache and a migraine. The way that the brain interprets responses from the body to create a headache is quite complicated, but I also reckon it's very interesting – so if you're up for it, I am I, so here goes...please hang in there with me.

There is a point in the upper spinal cord (the Trigemino-cervical nucleus), which receives input from muscles and joints in the upper neck and from a cranial nerve called the trigeminal nerve, which receives inputs from a number of factors: smell, taste, hormonal and others. Once these factors combine to push the stimulus on the nucleus over a certain level, a headache signal is sent to the head and hey presto!... a headache is felt. To make this a little simpler, imagine at that a combined input of over 100 stimulus points on the nucleus causes the headache signal to be transmitted to the head. For example, consider a headache sufferer who gets 50 points from hormonal, 40 points from the neck, 20 points from blood vessels and 20 points from the smell or taste of garlic. As they are going along with their day, unbeknown to them their nucleus is at 90 points and then they chow down on a zesty pesto – and the headache is triggered. Hopefully this poor blighter is not Italian.

As manual therapists, we are very interested in the extent that the upper neck plays in headaches (the 40 points in Mario's case above) some physiotherapists are producing the most groundbreaking research in the treatment of headaches, but are still struggling for acceptance in some sectors of the medical community. (excuse me while I leverage onto my soap box for a minute). Australian physiotherapist Dean Watson treats exclusively patients with headaches (after an eight-month waiting list) in his Adelaide headache clinic. He has a PhD on headaches and extensively researched

both muscular and other causes of headaches. He has performed over 12,000 headache treatments, and decreases the headache symptoms in almost all of the patients he decides are treatable with manual therapy. Despite cervicogenic headaches (from the neck) being recognised by the International Headache Society and the International Association for the Study of Pain, their existence is still debated in some orthodox medical circles. There is currently more scientific evidence to prove headaches can be caused from the neck than there is for migraines. In this environment of uncertainty as to the cause of tension headaches and migraines the continued reluctance to accept that disorders of the neck can produce headaches is, well, a bit of a headache for the manual therapy community. It is our opinion that the involvement of the upper cervical spine in headaches and migraines is underestimated. OK I'll get down from my box now.

As manual therapists, we're in the ideal position to confirm or rule out the contribution of the cervical spine in headaches. 'How do you know?', I hear the skeptics ask – and so you should – I'm a life member of the skeptics society myself. If we can reproduce the headache by stretching the joints in the neck and then decrease the symptoms through the same techniques we can confirm or rule out the connection. Oila. Repeating these techniques if successful will almost certainly decrease headaches symptoms.

Please remember that there are a number of very serious causes of headaches that are not related to the neck and these must be considered and are best ruled out by a doctor. Hopefully you can take care of you neck, stay away from face-plants and stick to Campari Sodas at 'Bill's (25% alcohol and no calories!) and enjoy your time in Niseko completely headache-free.



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