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powderlife

NISEKO ニセコ

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SAYONARA
UNTIL NEXT SEASON

2008/2009 WRAP
yep, it was a good season

THE AINU PEOPLE
hokkaido's first inhabitants

RESTAURANT YO
hurry slowly on down

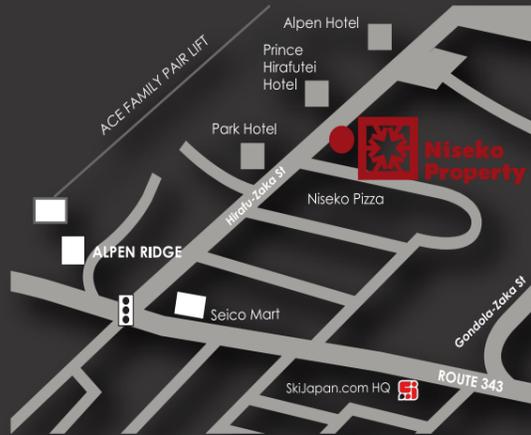
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GROOMERS

NEWS PEOPLE PARTIES ETC

- 11 Page Seven // Village news and happenings
- 12 Niseko News // Be the first to know
- 14 Cross Country // Offbeat news from across Japan
- 16 Snap // Faces and fashion on the mountain
- 17 Flash // Niseko's nightlife and party scene
- 18 Nightlife // The day really begins après
- 19 In The Loop // What's on in Niseko
- 20 Powder Tools // Essentials for Niseko powder
- 22 Meet the Locals // Introducing Niseko locals
- 23 Irasshaimase // Great little local businesses

FEATURES

A WAIST-DEEP LOOK AT NISEKO

- 24 **HOKKAIDO'S AINU**
The little-known Ainu, Hokkaido's first inhabitants, for the most part remain unknown.
- 26 **KURODAKE: BLACK MOUNTAIN**
Dale Riva takes *Powderlife* readers on a journey from the hotels of Hirafu to the canyons of Kurodake.
- 34 **RESTAURANT YO**
Nestled down in the Lower Village, tucked in behind pension Hurry Slowly, is Restaurant Yo.
- 38 **SURVIVING NISEKO**
Powderlife has compiled this 'village survival guide' to keep you safe.
- 40 **IN FOCUS: MASANOBU SAITO**
Masanobu invited *Powderlife* to his cozy restaurant to talk about his love for Niseko, skiing and the community.
- 45 **A HISTORY OF 'K-TOWN'**
A timeline of Kutchan from settlement in 1892 until its present position in the international spotlight.
- 51 **Q&A WITH JONATHAN MARTIN**
Nisade's head honcho and family man gives us his views on Niseko past, present and future.

BACKCOUNTRY

HIKE OUT THE BACK FOR THE REST

- 30 A Thousand Words // Pictures for your wall
- 33 Music Reviews // Nick Jackson
- 36 Japanese Cooking // Salada Udon
- 42 Learning Japanese // Japanese for Powder People
- 44 Kutchan // Introducing Kutchan
- 46 Men Who Ride Mountains // with Stirling Goldman
- 48 Real Estate News // Latest Niseko real estate news
- 52 Course Map // Mountain info
- 54 Walking Map // Must have village directory
- 55 Phone Directory // Your town pages
- 57 Local Information // Essential tips and info on Niseko
- 58 The Last Word On Health // Japan: land of contrasts



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cover Anton Green photo Chris Benny

If you are going to jump off cornices make sure you have checked local avalanche information at <http://niseko.nadare.info/>. Know the dangers of the backcountry and respect the Niseko Local Rules.

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Photo: Jahl Marshall

editor's note...

WE'VE come to the end of another season of *Powderlife*, but the ski season in Niseko is still far from over. Locals and tourists alike will be enjoying the ski slopes of Niseko until early May, almost six months after the lift switches were flicked in late November last year. From here on in, Niseko's famous powder is unlikely to make much of an appearance, but there's still a solid 4m base caking the top of Mt Annupuri, which will take a good six to eight weeks of warmer weather to melt away to the bare earth.

Although I love the powder season, there's a place deep down inside me that that secretly loves spring. After months with only a handful of fine days, the sight of blue skies and the unfamiliar feeling of the sun warming my skin are welcome sensations. Although it must be said that this year, we got the best of both worlds – plenty of powder and more bluebird days than usual. Summer is just around the corner, when it will be time to indulge in all those other pleasures that have been put aside for winter. And for those who haven't seen a Niseko summer, it's still somewhat of a local secret, but there are few nicer places in the world.

In this issue of *Powderlife* we put a bit of a wrap on the season and take a little look at what's ahead. Other than that, it's still winter and we've still got all our regulars, as well as a couple of feature articles: one on Hokkaido's indigenous Ainu people, and long-time local Dale Riva introduces us to Kurodake in central Hokkaido, which is actually closed for most of the winter because of too much snow! Sekka Dining chefs Kat and Kim review local favourite Restaurant Yo, and we've done up a handy guide to help visitors stay safe and on-track off the slopes in Niseko. We hope there's something of interest in there for everyone.

Well, until next season we at *Powderlife* wish you all the best and hope to see you back here happy, healthy and enjoying the powdery slopes of Niseko once again. Happy sliding, and happy spring, summer and autumn... and winter in the southern hemisphere for all you bloody Aussies!!

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

編集者の言葉...

パウダーライフ最終号を迎える時期となりました。ニセコの冬はまだ終わりではありません。地元住民、旅行者の皆さんは5月の初頭（去年の11月下旬のオープンから約6ヶ月後）までスキーを楽しむでしょう。今の時期、ニセコ名物のパウダーを望むのは難しいですが、アンヌプリの頂上付近では4cmの固いベース雪がありますので、雪解けの時期まで6〜8週間は見込めるでしょう。

パウダースノーシーズンは大好きですが、密かに春を待ちわびているのも事実です。冬場の数少ない晴れの日は数ヶ月もすると、青空が広がり、暖かい日光が降り注ぐ春となります。今シーズンは晴天とパウダーの両方を楽しめました。夏はもうすぐです。冬の到来によって脇へとやられた様々な事柄を楽しめる季節ですね。ニセコの夏をまだ経験していない皆さん、世界中にここより素晴らしい所が少ないと思えるくらいニセコの夏もまた格別です。

今号ではシーズン終了と今後の見解について書いています。その他、レギュラー項目、北海道原住民のアイヌ、多量の積雪のためシーズン中ほとんどクローズしている黒岳（テール・リパ寄稿）に関する記事を掲載しています。またセッカ・ダイニングのシェフ（キャットとキム）による地元和風ダイニング「よ」のレストランレビュー、スキー場での安全ガイドなど様々な記事を用意しています。読者の皆さんが思い思いに幣紙を楽しまれる事を願っています。

それでは皆さん、来シーズンまでお元気で！そして来年もパウダーを満喫する元気で健康な皆さんにニセコで会えますように。残り少ない山滑りを楽しみ、そして素晴らしい春、夏、秋を過ごされますように！南半球にいるオージーの仲間達は良い冬を！！

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Craftsmanship, Integrity.



Yep, it was a good season

THERE can be almost no doubting that if one of the main goals on your skiing holiday is to get untracked powder, you should be coming to Niseko. Local weather watcher Mike 'Pow' Richards collates his own snowfall data and has been keeping meticulous record for the past three seasons. According to Mike, at the time of going to print in mid-March, the longest period without any snowfall at village level all season was 10 days. And that was before the lifts started running for the season. In other words, if you were here for a two week holiday at any time this season you would have had your powder fix. Niseko has had more rainy days, more lift closures due to high winds, and more mid-winter warm spells than in previous seasons, but it is still head and shoulders above other resorts in Japan. By mid-March, Niseko had seen 11.4m of snow at village level this season. The heaviest snow month was January with 334cm overall and one whopping overnight dump of 52cm. February chipped in with 262cm and the dark horse, March, served up good falls to date and predictions are for persistent cold weather and more heavy falls in the weeks ahead.



LAYER CAKE... Layer upon layer of winter goodness. Photo: Mike Richards.



Deadly sauce

RATE yourself as someone who can handle a bit of spice? Then we dare you to wander into Jam Bar in Niseko's Upper Village and ask the friendly staff for some 'Death Sauce' to splash on your burger or pizza. This stuff makes Tabasco Sauce taste like golden syrup. But it comes with fair warning on the bottle, emblazoned with skeletons, fire, chillies and other symbols synonymous with pain. However, be warned: it goes out as spicy as it goes in, if you get our drift?

Swedish pros film latest movie in Niseko



Photo: Glen Claydon

FEMALE Swedish pro skiers Janette Hargin and Sara Orrensjö (pictured left) recently spent 10 days in Niseko filming for a segment of their new all-girl freeskiiing movie, *Catch Us If U Can*. It will be the first all-girl freeskiiing movie ever produced, and has received a lot of press in Sweden, where its release later this year is eagerly anticipated.

The girls, a dual GS Olympian and a Freeskiiing World Tour competitor, are the latest on a long list of pro skiers and boarders to visit Niseko this season, also including skier Pep Fugas, among many others.

As the global shift to powder freeskiiing gathers momentum, Niseko is becoming a must have on the shooting list for snow videos.

The girls got some great footage while they were here, and hit some massive jumps during a tour with Niseko Snowcat Adventures in the deep backcountry, and in Hanazono's Strawberry Fields.

"Niseko will be a big part of the movie, and since we also are making a documentary of the trip, we will include footage from Tokyo, and some temples and onsens," Sara says.

So, how did they enjoy their time here? "We had a fantastic stay," Sara says. "Cliff at Freedom Inn was an angel and helped us with so many things. Jessica Geldart from the Niseko Promotion Board was also a big help. We got lots of light fluffy powder that you almost never get in Europe. The onsens and food were a favourite. We'd love to come back!"



Best of Niseko

HOW can you possibly choose a favourite restaurant in Niseko?! You can't, so you have to ask the public to vote for their's in the Best of Niseko Awards. The people have spoken, the votes have been counted... it's time to announce Niseko's most popular businesses for season 2008/09.

Best of Niseko 2008/09

Restaurant – Sekka
New chefs Kat and Kim's passion is obvious, and obviously impressed.

Izakaya – Rin
Nestled in the Lower Village, this unassuming izakaya is a winner.

Bar – Yuki Bar
Spacious, smoke-free, international party atmosphere. Good times!!

Onsen – Hilton
Looking out across the carp pond, this is a classic onsen experience.

Café – Downtown Café
Great location, great atmosphere, love the couches... (and cute staff)

Convenience store – Lawson
Seicomart still gets more business, but the long lines are a killer.

Souvenir shop – Sakura
Authentic Japanese souvenirs, kimono photos, culture in Hirafu.

Resort – Niseko Village
Groovy groomers, amazing off-piste, something for everyone.

Activity – Snowmobiling
Roaring through Niseko's snowy countryside – oh, what a feeling!

Ski dunnies make a splash

TALK about best seat in the house!

In yet another Japanese stroke of genius, several ski resorts throughout the country have decorated the toilet walls, door and floor with a vision from a ski jumper's point-of-view. So even when you're caught short in the loo, you still aren't missing out on any of the on-mountain action. With interactivity in mind, from the seated position you can look down at your feet in skis, and the intimidatingly steep ski jump ahead.

Japan's toilet facilities are infamous for their high-tech gadgetry ranging from seat warmers and air deodorisers to jet-washers.

Energy drink company Georgia Max Coffee came up with the idea to advertise their product in the WCs with the artwork. The toilet paper holder carried the only 'Engrish' subtle brand messaging in the cubicle:

'Seriously kick-ass intensely sweet for the real coffee super-zinging unstoppable Max! Taste-explosion!'

These artistic, snow-themed innovations are truly all about piste and big dumps in every sense of the words!



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2020 vision for a shot at bullet train

THIS time next year it will be known whether Niseko will be serviced by Shinkansen (bullet train) from Tokyo, according to local officials.

If it goes ahead, the service would be completed by 2020 and make it much quicker and easier for international visitors to transfer from Narita, Japan's busiest international hub in Tokyo.

Local government believes the ease with which domestic and international tourists could travel to Niseko, and the resulting increase in associated economic benefits and infrastructure, could greatly enhance tourism and associated benefits in the area.

The trip from Tokyo to the local Kutchan Station would take three-and-a-half hours. Kutchan to Sapporo would take just 15 minutes, as opposed to two-to-three hours by road.

Prices have not yet been confirmed, but based on the cost of the 630km bullet train trip to Aomori at the northern tip of the mainland (¥15,350), it could be estimated the remaining 360km could bring the total to about ¥20,000-25,000.

In comparison, the trip from Tokyo's international airport Narita to Niseko, including ground transfers, can take between five and eight hours, and cost between ¥15,000 and ¥30,000.

In 2004 the Japanese government confirmed the train would link Hokkaido to the mainland with a station at Hakodate, on the southern tip of the island, by 2015, and work began in 2005.

Environmental impact studies and economic assessments are currently being undertaken and the government is expected to make an announcement about whether the line will extend to Sapporo, via Kutchan, in March next year.

Youko Tanaka, spokesperson for the Kutchan Town Office, is confident the train line will go ahead, and said there would be many positives for Niseko and Kutchan if it did.

Ultimately the region would grow in local population and tourism numbers, she said.

Given the short commute time between Sapporo and Niseko, more people from Sapporo could live in the unpopulated region of Niseko while working in Sapporo, Japan's fifth largest city with a population of about 1.9 million.



FUJI-SAN... A Shinkansen passes in front of Mt Yotei's big brother.

It would also give all the people in northern Honshu (on the mainland) the ability to easily access the area, where they previously would have had to travel by slow local train, or via Tokyo.

While planes are often disrupted by snow storms in winter, a train service would rarely be delayed by weather.

On the bullet train, skiers from Sapporo would also be able to access Niseko more easily, as previously the easiest way to get there was by car on slow, icy roads.

The associated economic benefits would probably ensure Eki Mae Dori, Kutchan's main street, would be redeveloped.

Ms Tanaka said a possible negative may be the disruption of local train services, which may inconvenience locals and those from surrounding districts looking to access Kutchan.

According to current plans, 80 per cent of the track from Hakodate to Sapporo would be tunnels, with plans to bring the line above ground around the Niseko region to allow the view of Mt Yotei and Niseko's famous countryside.

The train that would run the route, to be operated by JR Hokkaido, would be the fastest in the world with a top speed of 360km/h.

Getting to Niseko... by helicopter

HELICOPTER transfers are now available for Hilton Niseko Village guests for ¥189,000 per person for the one-way flight from Sapporo's New Chitose Airport. Patrons can be picked up at the airport and driven to a nearby helipad where they take off in an Aero Asahi chopper, then land in a field near the Hilton about 30 minutes later. It is said well-healed passengers can be sitting in the Niseko Village gondola an hour after landing at Chitose. 'Hilton Niseko Village general manager Daniel Welk said the new service was for extremely high-end clients who believed money just wasn't an option. "There are some who will pay anything for a high-quality ski experience," he said. "A two-hour commute is fine for most people, but some aren't interested and just don't want to wait." There's even some talk of a Hong Kong to Hilton Niseko Village door-to-door, Welk said. "Within six hours you can leave hot and humid Hong Kong and be in sub-zero, powdery conditions riding Niseko Village's natural half-pipe," he said.

Hokkaido-filmed movie a hit with Chinese

A BLOCKBUSTER Chinese romantic comedy has put Hokkaido on the map, making Japan's northern island an instant tourism hotspot for Chinese travellers.

Tourism operators are already offering weekly trips to locations featured in the Feng Xiaogan-directed movie If You Are The One, a coup for Niseko ski resorts, which have China in their sights as a future market demographic.

The movie is a love story involving two young Chinese and their Hokkaido sightseeing romance.

Hokkaido is known for its natural beauty and the pristine scenery of the eastern part of the island, including the Okhotsk Sea coast, the World Natural Heritage site of Shiretoko, and the wetlands of Kushiro, all of which feature in If You Are The One.

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Getting Plastered

BAD news for criminals in resort areas everywhere: an Aomori police officer has come up with a spray that lets **crime scene investigators make better plaster casts of footprints** left in snow or sand.

The **consumer point-card craze** in Japan—and the complaints that have come with it—prompted the Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry to develop guidelines concerning their use.

Expect to see **carbon-emissions labels attached to products** as diverse as stationery, beer, rice and batteries this summer, so consumers can tell just how much CO2 is released during the production, distribution and disposal of the items.

TV viewer ratings just became more accurate thanks to Tokyo-based Video Research, which developed technologies that will also monitor folks who watch broadcasts on personal computers or recordings of TV shows.

Scientists say **baby coral transplanted in Okinawa's Sekisei Lagoon** as part of a reef regeneration program are continuing their robust growth.

Team Players

Reports out of Seattle claim that **Mariners superstar Ichiro Suzuki is not a team player**. The floundering M's could probably use a few more "selfish" players hitting .310 with 200-plus hits, as Ichi did last year.

A 74-year-old man delivering noodles in Shinjuku was killed after **falling down an open elevator shaft**.

A clerk at a credit union in Osaka Prefecture was **robbed of ¥3 million at knifepoint**. Other staff tossed a paint ball at the robber as he fled the scene on a motorcycle, but they missed.

"Hotsui, Des Ney!?"

After a freak "summer day" during which the **mercury rose above 25C** throughout Japan, officials warned of avalanches due to melting snow.

The unseasonably warm temperatures in Kyoto and Osaka were **suspected of setting off fire alarms**, with firefighters responding to 88 false calls on a single day.

A suspicious **fire gutted a vacant Western-style house** in Tokyo's Suginami Ward that was believed to be the inspiration for popular anime character Totoro, a forest-dwelling spirit.



An errant sea otter christened "Kuchan" by adoring locals

entertained more than 100 onlookers on the Nusamaibashi Bridge on the Kushirogawa river in Hokkaido. High-pitched squeals of "Kawaiiiiiiii!" could be heard as far south as Tokyo.

Anxious gamers were saddened to hear that the latest version of the video game **Dragon Quest was delayed again** due to "grave problems" in the software. New release date: July 11.

The National Police Agency says that the **6.6 percent increase in the arrests of bosozoku bike gang members** last year was due to new traffic laws targeting the groups.

A revision of the Road Traffic Law has enabled manufacturers of power-assisted bicycles to **double the maximum motor output**. Sanyo's newly released Eneloop model, for example, has a 2-to-1 motor power to human power ratio.

Mopping up

Workers from the environment ministry drained **90 percent of the water from the Imperial Palace's Ushigafuchi moat**. Because the moat is a "closed water area," it is prone to the growth of blue-green algae, whose stench has become a "serious problem."

It was announced that the **cost of cleaning soil contaminants** at the site where the Tsukiji fish market is to be relocated will be over ¥58 billion.

Nineteen-year-old jockey Kosei Miura set a record when he **notched his 100th career victory** just 11 months and seven days after his debut race.

Panasonic ordered family members of employees living in Russia, Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Central and South America to return to Japan because of **"concerns about a potential new influenza pandemic."**

It was announced that 76-year-old jurist Hisashi Owada has become the **first Japanese to be elected president of the International Court of Justice**, otherwise known as the World Court. Owada is the father of Crown Princess Masako.

Urine Space

Japanese astronaut Koichi Wakata will spend three months in space "involved in experiments to **stop skeletal deterioration in zero gravity** and the formation of stones in the urinary tract," according to The Asahi Shimbun. Sounds like fun!

A man in Shimane Prefecture applying for a marriage license **got a bit of a shock** when he discovered that he had been errantly registered in official records as his parents' eldest daughter.

A **US destroyer collided with a leisure boat** near Yokosuka, scratching the paint on both boats but otherwise doing no harm.

Mitsubishi and Chrysler may go their separate ways when their original equipment manufacturing contract comes up for renewal in 2010.

STATS

56
Percent of people around the globe who say that "Japan has a positive influence in the world," according to a survey by the BBC the Yomiuri Shimbun

61
Percent who say so about Germany, which topped the list

¥665 billion
Value of point-card points issued by Japanese retailers in 2006, according to the Nomura Research Institute

289
Stolen door nameplates found "arranged in a circle" in the apartment of a 42-year-old man in Saitama

130,000
Illegal foreign residents in Japan at the beginning of this year, according to the Justice Ministry

250,000
Number of illegals in 2004

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

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SNAP

Powderlife went to ask skiers and boarders what is their favourite thing about Niseko in March.

Mountain style

HOW about this for colour coordination! Pretty in pink...and brown, Erina and Motomi, from Tokyo, like showing off their matching tops and bottoms. But they tell us it was pure coincidence having matching opposite colours, and only realised when they got here. Erina says she 'just loves pink' because it's 'kawaii' (cute), and Motomi adds that chocolate brown compliments pink perfectly. These colourful cuties sport matching ESTV jackets, and also show off their favourite colour pink on their pants, beanies, gloves, boards and mobile phone straps. I hope they don't expect us to believe that is all an accident, too!



Yuki, Maiko and Natsumi from Sapporo like snowboarding in March because the snow is nice and soft during the day... although they said be careful at night when it freezes back up!



International mixed bag David from France, Matt from the UK, and Deliana from Bulgaria, like that there are fewer people here in spring, which means more mountain for them!



Wild Bill's Tracey and Dave like being here later in the season because it means more days off work (thanks, sunny skies and soft snow.



Eri, little Akane and Ikuya, up from the mainland's Nagasaki, like skiing in Niseko in March because the weather's better suited for family skiing.



Valeriya and Evgenia from Russia's Sakhalin Island, just north of Hokkaido, say it's easier to book accommodation in March and it's warmer, but the snow is still great.



German local Simon shouted dad Günter a spring ski holiday for his birthday because he wanted to let him in on how beautiful it is here in Niseko.

Inski's Stack of the Week

LESS than one second after this photo was taken, French skier Christophe went crashing into the poor photographer. For some, like this Chamonix skier, Niseko's powder is an open licence to do some pretty crazy things. Even better if those crazy things are caught on film, says Christophe, who recently emailed this cracking shot to *Powderlife*. "I couldn't resist the temptation to jump over the trees," he admits. "There's just so much snow!" In spite of Niseko's pillowy powder, Christophe still understands there are plenty of risks when enjoying some 'super-great tree skiing' at Grand Hirafu. But he believes it's worth taking chances for a happy snap like this. "You can see how uncontrolled my landing was, and I know that sometimes wood can be hard to bend," he jokes. "But anyway, no injuries, and we saved the pictures for your magazine - that's the most important point!" Thanks for that, Christophe. For your troubles you've won a Salomon Ranger helmet, courtesy of Inski Skis, Boards and Snow Wear. Stack of the Week will be back next season, so keep the photos coming and we may just publish them in the 2009/10. Email hi-res photos with a short blurb to ed@powderlife.com. Oh, and happy stacking!



INSKI

Powderlife was fortunate enough to be invited to two of the craziest parties of the season.

FLASH



Jahl gives the camera some 'blue steel', alongside his feline friends Georgina the cat burglar, and pussycat Kelly.



WTF?! We just have no idea how to caption this one! Whatever, go hard, fellas - just keep it clean!



The big wigs of Dragon, Fumie and Noriko, were schmoozing with all the local gangsters.

Dragon's

End Of Season Insano-Psychedelic Get Your Funk On Party



This Mongolian yak herdsman was passing through Niseko, stopping in for a bit of random insanity at Dragon.



This is no trick of the lens. We're sure everyone were seeing all the colours of the rainbow that night!



Bartender, there may be some acid in my drink! That would explain all the wiggins' out!



Tight and Bright @ Samurai Bar



Jared gets all the attention from Yuri, Takako and Maki, and Richard and Dan want in on some of that action.



Ryan leads with the loins, Richard gets raunchy and Slingo pops his nipple out.



Sporting some hot leggings, Billeigh and Kelly couldn't resist the temptation to show off their pins.



Anna, Hannah and Morgan get high and reach for the sky in an 'oh, what a feeling' moment.



Trippers Tim and Morgan finally have an excuse for being perpetually stuck in the '70s.



With Takako, Maki and Yuri all tight and bright, is it any wonder all the fellas flocked to the Samuri Bar on this particular night?

Saturday, March 21
 * **Loaf Lounge, 6pm**
 "Chihiro" from Yokohama plays acoustic reggae
 Cover charge ¥2000 with one drink

Tuesday, March 31
 * **10th anniversary party @ Gyu, 7pm**
 Cover charge ¥2000 with one drink
 0136-23-1432

Saturday, March 21
 * **Half Note Jazz Live, 9pm**
 Mark "Slingo" Slingsby from Australia plays acoustic.
 No cover charge

Thursday, April 2
 * **Half Note Jazz Live, 9pm**
 Mark "Slingo" Slingsby from Australia plays acoustic.
 No cover charge

Wednesday, March 25
 * **Ping Pong Night @ Loaf Lounge, 6pm**
 Tournament registration fee ¥500
 Play for the prize

Saturday, April 4
 * **Half Note Jazz Live, 9pm**
 Mark "Slingo" Slingsby from Australia plays acoustic
 No cover charge

Thursday, March 26
 * **Half Note Jazz Live, 9pm**
 Mark "Slingo" Slingsby from Australia plays acoustic.
 No cover charge

Thursday, April 9
 * **Half Note Jazz Live, 9pm**
 Mark "Slingo" Slingsby from Australia plays acoustic
 No cover charge

Friday, March 27
 * **Après Bar Nomihodai, 7pm-9pm**
 ¥2000
 Happy hour, everyday from 3pm

Saturday, March 28
 * **Half Note Jazz Live, 9pm**
 Mark Slingsby "Slingo" from Australia plays acoustic
 No cover charge



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

ezo

PUB

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from 18:00 - 19:00

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	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
ホテル発 Hotel Dep	19:00	20:30	21:30	23:00	0:00	1:40
ヒラフ・カイルムセンター Hirafu Welcome Center	19:30	21:00	22:00	23:30	0:30	2:10
ヒラフ交差点 Hirafu Crossing	19:35	21:05	22:05	23:35	0:35	2:15
ホテル着 Hotel Arr	19:50	21:20	22:20	23:50	0:50	2:30

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 Hokkaido, 048-1592 Japan
 Tel: 0136-44-1111 Fax: 0136-44-3224
 hilton.co.jp hilton.com hilton.com/worldwideresorts

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

Thursday, March 26
 * **The 27th Hokkaido Junior Ski Technique Competition @ Grand-Hirafu, 9am**
 Come cheer on the local kids from grades three to 12 as they show off their skills on the slopes.
 For more information, please visit www.grand-hirafu.jp
 3月26日(木)
 第27回北海道ジュニアスキー技術選手権大会
 ジュニア選手による基礎スキー技術の演技を競い、スキー技術の向上を図る大会。
 時間: 9am
 場所: ヒラフスキー場 (エース、キング)
 詳細は0136-1104またはwww.grand-hirafu.jpまで

Wednesday, February 18 - Sunday, March 29
 * **Kutchan Art Exhibition at Shu Ogawara Museum of Art, 9am-5pm (closed on Tuesdays)**
 Feast your eyes on some local paintings.
 Admission: ¥500 (adult), ¥300 (high school students), ¥100 (elementary and junior high school students)
 For more information, please contact 0136-21-4141.
 2月18日(水)から3月29日(日)
 くつちゃん Art展
 地元アーティストや倶知安に関わりのあるアーティストによる合同展
 時間: 9:00am - 5:00pm (毎週火曜日休館)
 場所: 小川原脩記念美術館
 料金: 大人500円、高校生300円、小中高生100円
 詳細は0136-21-4141まで

Sunday, March 29
 * **Hirafu Old Boys Giant Slalom @ Grand-Hirafu, 9.30am**
 Watch skiers who are over the hill race down the hill!
 For more information, please contact 0136-23-0104
 3月29日(日)
 全道オールドボーイ大回転競技大会
 50歳以上のスキーヤーによる大回転競技会
 時間: 9:30am
 場所: ヒラフスキー場
 詳細は0136-23-0104まで

Saturday, March 28
 * **Hirafu March weekend fireworks premiere, 9.30pm**
 Fireworks every Saturday in March on the slopes outside the Alpen Hotel.
 3月28日(土)
 ウィークエンド花火
 3月の毎週土曜日は花火の日。ナイターの後は夜景に広がる花火を堪能しよう。
 時間: 9:30pm
 場所: アルペンホテル外のスキースロープ
 詳細は0136-1104またはwww.grand-hirafu.jpまで

Saturday, March 21
 * **Hirafu March weekend fireworks premiere, 9.30pm**
 Fireworks every Saturday in March on the slopes outside the Alpen Hotel.
 3月21日(土)
 ウィークエンド花火
 3月の毎週土曜日は花火の日。ナイターの後は夜景に広がる花火を堪能しよう。
 時間: 9:30pm
 場所: アルペンホテル外のスキースロープ

in the loop

Friday, April 3 - Sunday, April 5
 * **Niseko Pleasure Camp @ Grand-Hirafu**
 Park board lessons with the pros!
 Registration fee: ¥39000
 For more information, please contact 0136-44-2120. Registration form available at www.grand-hirafu.jp
 4月3日(金)~4月5日(土)
 ニセコプレジャーキャンプ
 パーク初心者から上級者向けの練習キャンプ。講師はプロスノーボーダーなのでこれを機会にいろいろなテクニックを学ぼう!
 場所: ヒラフスキー場
 料金: ¥39000
 詳細は0136-44-2120まで。受付用紙はwww.grand-hirafu.jpにてダウンロード可能。

Saturday, April 4
 * **NFS-The 9th Radical Air Contest, 10am**
 Preliminary jam session before the top 8 in each category battle it out on the tabletops and spine at the park around King Pair Lift #1
 Registration fee: ¥3000
 For more information, please contact Mr. Ito at 0136-23-0343. Registration form available at www.yukiasobi.net
 4月4日(土)
 第9回ラジカルエアコンテスト
 時間: 10am
 場所: ヒラフスキー場 (キングエリア)
 詳細は0136-23-0343 (伊藤) まで。
 受付用紙はwww.yukiasobi.netにてダウンロード可能。

Friday, April 3
 * **Niseko Freestyle Sessions (NFS) -The 7th Junior Mogul Lesson, 10am-12pm**
 Free mogul practice session around King Pair Lift #1. Free to enter.
 For more information, please contact Mr. Ito at 0136-23-0343. Registration form available at www.yukiasobi.net
 4月3日(金)
 第7回ジュニアモーグルレッスン (ニセコフリースタイルセッション)
 参加無料のジュニアモーグル公開練習
 時間: 10am - 12pm
 場所: ヒラフスキー場 (キングエリア)
 詳細は0136-23-0343 (伊藤) まで。受付用紙はwww.yukiasobi.netにてダウンロード可能。

Sunday, April 5
 * **NFS-The 19th Kutchan-cho Super Bumps Niseko Cup, 10am**
 Freestyle skiing competition on the Rocks, under King Pair Lift #2. Thrills, spills, flips and tumbles galore!
 Registration fee: ¥4000
 For more information, please contact Mr. Ito at 0136-23-0343. Registration form available at www.yukiasobi.net
 4月5日(日)
 第19回倶知安町長杯スーパーバンブス
 時間: 10am
 場所: ヒラフスキー場 (キングエリア)
 詳細は0136-23-0343 (伊藤) まで。
 受付用紙はwww.yukiasobi.netにてダウンロード可能。



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 tel: 0136-23-0700

Powder tools



K2 Gyrator Snowboard

NOW the big companies are starting to realise what the smaller snow surfing companies knew a long time ago: when making a board to ride camber it's all about camber/rocker. K2 is one of the first of the big boys to cotton onto Gentem's trick of combining flex pattern and sidecut radiuses with some rocker. As camber, reverse camber and rocker are some of those terms more people use than understand, here it is broken down. So are you ready for it? Camber is the bend in a board that makes the centre of the board under the bindings lift slightly off the ground when on a flat deck (concave surface down). Reverse camber and rocker are essentially the same thing, and when laid flat on the floor the tip of the board will lift up (convex surface down). That wasn't so hard, was it? Back in the day, snowboards had rockers just like surfboards. The Gyrator has rocker that provides effortless float in fresh powder, while its carbon Matrix II torsion forks give the Gyrator undeniable ollie pop. This baby has been flying off the shelves in North America and supply is a bit low, but you can pick yourself one up here in Niseko from Fusion on special for ¥72,000. Phone 0136 21 6633.



Black Diamond Carbon Fibre Stocks

WHAT is it about the words 'carbon fibre' that grabs a gear freak's attention like my dog Yuki's when I grab his dinner bowl? One of the best strength-to-weight ratios of any material, that's what. From aeroplane and helicopter components to bicycle frames, and now backcountry ski poles, when you want something ultra-light and super-strong, you want it to be made of carbon fibre. Black Diamond Carbon Fiber FlickLock Ski Poles are the strongest and lightest poles around. A carbon-fibre lower shaft and aluminum upper are secured together by BD's patented FlickLock, a device that opens and closes with the flick of your thumb – streets ahead of the screw-style system of the competitors. BD have smashed Scott out of the ski pole ballpark in recent years, thanks in large part to the user-friendly FlickLock that makes these some of the easiest poles to adjust, which you'll appreciate in the backcountry. Another nifty feature is dual-density grips with a slight corrective angle to maximise your control on steep descents. You'll love the asymmetrical powder baskets, which are perfect for planting on the powder and giving you something to leverage off. Available from NAC ¥15,375 Tel: 0136 23 2093

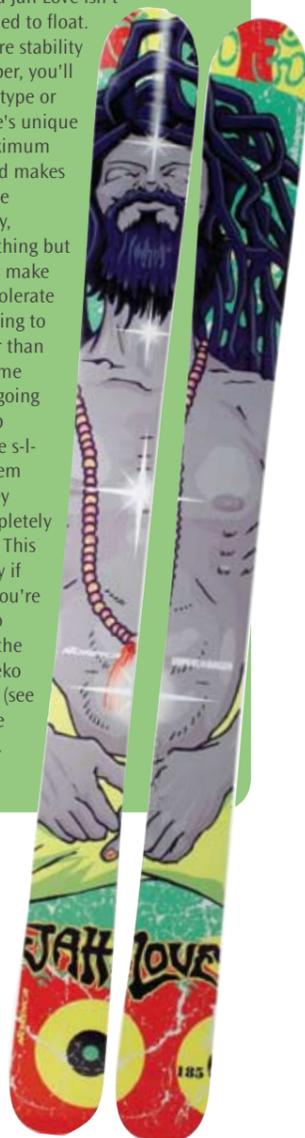
Smart Wool PhD Ski Socks

WHEN it comes to ski and board socks, SmartWool have leapt head and shoulders above the pack in recent years. SmartWool was formed by some American ski instructors tired of so-called 'high-tech' materials leaving them with cold, sweaty feet. They returned to the tried-and-tested natural fibre: wool. While these socks may have been warm, they were itchy and shrank. So they worked on a process to make them soft and easy to care for and formed SmartWool. SmartWool socks stayed dry, soft and comfortable, and awards began to flow in 1995. The most versatile in SmartWool's line is the PhD Ski Light Sock, which has enough cushioning for all-day ripping, is reinforced with Smart yarns, has been padded up with lightweight full cushioning, and includes the 4-Degree Fit System to eliminate bunching and irritation inside your shoes or boots. Rounding out the list, there's innovation in temperature regulation, moisture management and odour control. Gold. Available from Inski ¥3,200. Tel: 0136 22 4199



Nordica Jah Love Alpine Ski

ASIDE from Niseko local Pah Dahlin, I don't know many Rastafarians who ski and there definitely isn't snow in Jamaica. But then, the Nordica Jah Love isn't really made to ski – it's designed to float. With 140mm of solid wood core stability under your feet, and flat camber, you'll surf almost effortlessly in any type or depth of powder. The Jah Love's unique tip-waist design gives you maximum performance in deep snow and makes powder skiing an unforgettable experience, providing a snappy, responsive feel to give you nothing but positive vibrations. They don't make you want to go Mach 10, but tolerate pretty high speeds without trying to force you into going any faster than you normally would. Their name seems very appropriate: easy going and happy, no stress. Lively up yourself! On groomers they are s-l-o-w from edge to edge. Tip them over, wait, wait, wait, here they come, and then the edge completely fails to grip on anything hard. This is not the type of ski you'll buy if you only have one ski, but if you're looking for a fat bow to add to your quiver, it's either this or the K2 Pontoon. Or Toki from Niseko 343's snowboard on each foot (see Page Seven issue 14). Available from Murasaki sports Sapporo. ¥85,000. Tel: 011-219-4231



170-5 Aza Yamada, Kutchan-cho, Abuta-gun, Hokkaido 044-0081
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The perfect remedy to revive your whole body. We can concentrate on any problem areas whilst still ensuring your legs are rejuvenated.

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We will use our extensive experience to revitalize your tired legs. If you are not sure your legs are up to another day on the slopes, pop in for one of these. Fast, affordable and effective.

45 minute, full body massage: ¥7,000

A little bit of everything while still giving you time to make your restaurant reservation.

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All services are available in your hotel for an extra ¥2,000.

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Hirafu – 8.30am – 8.30pm
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(200m up the hill from the intersection)





LIFTIE Shinya



GROOMER Boolee Shingo



SKI INSTRUCTOR Manabu

name Shinya Uehara
age 31 hometown Nagano
do you like powder? I love it so much
ski/board? Snowboard
how long have you been boarding? Ten years
why did you come to Niseko? Found it while traveling
what did you do in summer time? Worked and played slot machines
what languages do you speak? Japanese
trips overseas? Guam, USA
where do you want to go next? Not sure yet
favourite...
colour Black
brand Nothing in particular
food Meat
restaurant Anything cozy with good food
bar Don't drink
onsen Yukichichibu
ski run Anywhere untracked
where else do you want to go skiing overseas? Nowhere
what does niseko need? Nothing, it's perfect
niseko secret? I want to know too!
what's your life philosophy? There's a long way to go!!

名前 ウエハラ シンヤ
年齢 31 出身地 長野
ニセコに来てどのくらいですか? 8年 パウダースノーは好きですか? たまに奇声でるくらい好きかも スキーヤー? スノーボーダー? 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? 旅の途中で見つけた
夏には何をしましたか? 仕事、スロット
話す言語は? 日本語
海外には行った事ありますか? グアムだけ
次はどこに行きたいですか? 決めてない
好きな...
色は? 黒系
ブランドは? 決めてない
食べ物? 肉類
レストランは? かつらぎのおいしい店 パーは? 飲まない
温泉は? 雪秩父 コースは? 誰も滑ってないところ 海外のスキー場一度行ってみたいスキー場は? 特にな
ニセコにはどのくらいいる予定ですか? 自分も知りたい
ニセコに今無い物で、必要だと思えるものは? 今のままでいい
ニセコの秘密は? 俺も知りたい
あなたの人生観は? まだまだあ!!

name Shingo Tanaka
age 28 hometown Rankoshi
how long have you been in niseko? Skiing since four years old in Annupuri do you like powder? Yep, I ski every morning ski/board? Skier how long have you been skiing? 24 years
why did you come to niseko? I was here since childhood
what did you do in summer time? Made fresh vegetables and rice
what languages do you speak? Hokkaido dialect
trips overseas? Three countries
where do you want to go next? Canada
favourite... Colour The colour of the sunrise brand Yamaha food Yakimiku (grilled meat)
restaurant Nook Annupuri bar Café Grove onsen
Yusenaku at Rankoshi
ski run Annupuri Junior Course
where else do you want to go skiing overseas? Whistler
what does niseko need? Nothing else, it's got enough as it is in their heart
what's your life philosophy? Pass each year experiencing the four seasons

名前 タナカ シンゴ 年齢 28 出身地 蘭越町ニセコに来てどのくらいですか? アンヌプリスキー場で4歳のころから滑っています
パウダースノーは好きですか? ビステンで毎朝滑っています
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 24年 なぜニセコに来たのですか? 子供の頃からいました
夏には何をしましたか? 新鮮な野菜と、おいしい米を作っています
話す言語は? 北海道の言葉、じょつびん(かぎ)、ハイカラ、かつらぎ(つくり返す) 海外には行った事ありますか? 3カ国い
次はどこに行きたいですか? カナダ 好きな色は... 色は? 朝陽の景色
ブランドは? Yamaha
食べ物? 焼き肉 レストランは? ムックアンヌプリ
パーは? Café Grove 温泉は? 蘭越 泉閣 コースは? アンヌプリ ジュニアコース
ニセコにはどのくらいいる予定ですか? 体力が続くまでニセコ以外でどこかスキー場に行きたいですか? ウィスラー ニセコに今無い物で、必要だと思えるものは? 今あるもので十分です
ニセコの秘密は? みんなの胸のなかにあります
あなたの人生観は? 四季を感じながら1年1年を過ごしていきたいです

name Manabu Doumoto
age 31 hometown Kobe
how long have you been in Niseko? 11 years
do you like powder? Yep
ski/board? Snowboarder
how long have you been snowboarding? 15years
why did you come to niseko? Powder!
what did you do in summer time? Construction
what languages do you speak? Japanese
trips overseas? Yes
where do you want to go next? Hawaii
favourite...
colour Blue
brand Ride
food Meat
restaurant Nakaya bar PeDenki
onsen Kira no yu
ski run Marchen Course
where else do you want to go skiing overseas? Whistler
how long will you be in Niseko? Not sure yet
what does niseko need? McDonalds
niseko secret? Don't know yet
what's your life philosophy? Go through enjoying life

名前 ドウモト マナブ
年齢 31 出身地 神戸
ニセコに来てどのくらいですか? 11年
パウダースノーは好きですか? YES
スキーヤー? スノーボーダー? スノーボーダー
スノーボード歴 15年
なぜニセコに来たのですか? パウダーを滑りたいから
夏には何をしましたか? 建築、建設
話す言語は? 日本語
海外には行った事ありますか? YES
次はどこに行きたいですか? ハワイ
好きな色は? 青
ブランドは? ライド
食べ物? 肉
レストランは? なかやパーは? ペデンキ
温泉は? 綺羅の湯
コースは? メルヘンコース
海外のスキー場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? 未定
ニセコに今無い物で、必要だと思えるものは? マクドナルド
ニセコの秘密は? わからない
あなたの人生観は? たのしみながらなんとなくいきること

Lodge and Restaurant Boyoso
THOUSANDS of people pass over Boyoso every day, but only a lucky few end up inside. Boyoso is the log cabin halfway up the hill under the Hirafu gondola. By day it's one of Niseko's few on-hill restaurants and by night it's Niseko's only on-hill accommodation – you actually have to get the ski lift there! It was built in 1965 as a safety hut for people who were lost. Current owners Toshimi and Hiroko Funaba have been running it since 1986. For lunch they serve a wide range of Japanese ski hill favourites (including Powderlife's favourite ski lunch, katsu curry) in generous portions. Specialties are 'ikura' or crab on rice! www5d.biglobe.ne.jp/~bo-yo-so/.

ロッジ レストラン 望羊荘
毎日何千人の人が望羊荘の上を通り過ぎていますが、レストランを利用するのはその中の一握りの人です。望羊荘はヒラフゴンドラの中腹に位置しています。現在ではニセコの山にある数少ないレストランの一つで、夜には宿泊施設になります。なんとお客さんはスキーリフトを使ってチェックインします。1965年に山の非難小屋として建てられた現在の建物は1986年から船場俊己さんとひろ子さんが支配人をつとめています。日本食メインのランチメニューは、パウダーライフ押しカツカレーをはじめ、どれもボリューム満点です。カニいくら丼もお試しください!! ホームページ www5d.biglobe.ne.jp/~bo-yo-so/



Niseko Cheese Factory
KONDOU Takashi was born in Monbetsu in the very north of Hokkaido. He loves cheese and used to work in the deli section of a supermarket, but eventually became bored of selling somebody else's product, so he decided he'd learn how to make his own. Takashi-san went to school in France for two months to learn how to make cheese. He then spent a whole year looking for a place for his factory – he chose Niseko because it was close to Sapporo, the dairy farms are small and the grass is rich in minerals making for excellent quality milk. He makes a wide range of cheeses and is constantly adding new products, the next being cheese pudding and fromage. The factory is at the T-junction of Routes 343 and 66 near Higashiyama. Closed Tuesdays and Wednesdays. www.niseko-cheese.co.jp.

ニセコチーズ工房
近藤 孝志さんは北海道の北部、紋別市で生まれました。スーパーの乳製品コーナーで働いたこともあり、チーズは大好きだそうです。早期退職した後チーズ作りを勉強するために2ヶ月間フランスに留学しました。その後工房をどこにするかを検討した結果、ニセコを選びました。ニセコは札幌にも近く、酪農家は牛の数が少ないので、牛の顔を覚えていることと、ミネラルを豊富に含んだ草を食べている牛はストレスがなく、チーズ作りには欠かせない、上質の牛乳が取れるそうです。新製品の開発にも積極的に取り組み、土日限定のチーズプリンや、フロマージュなどたくさんのお勧め商品があります。場所は東山の国道343号線と66号線のT字路にあります。火曜日と水曜日がお休みです。ホームページ <http://www.niseko-cheese.co.jp>

Asahikawa Ramen Tozanken
THE Japanese are famous for doing things really well, especially when it comes to food. So you know when they take a great Chinese dish and give it the Japanese touch, it's going to be good. Ramen is Chinese noodles, Japanese style. Cold Hokkaido is famous for its hot ramen – Sapporo for its miso-flavoured variety, while in central Hokkaido, Asahikawa is famous for its soy-sauce version. Hirafu has an authentic Asahikawa ramen restaurant, thanks to Hiroomi Hirokawa, whose parents still run a ramen restaurant in Asahikawa today. Asahikawa Ramen Tozanken is in the big souvenir shop building on Hirafu-Zaka St, just below Paddy McGinty's.

旭川ラーメン登山軒
日本人は技術的水準が高いといわれていますが、とりわけ食べ物となるとそれはなおさらです。もしおいしい中華料理が、日本人の手にかかれればさらにおいしくなります。ラーメンは中国の麺料理で、日本風にアレンジしています。寒い北海道では暖かい食べ物のラーメンが人気です。札幌は一般的に味噌味が有名で、北海道の真ん中、旭川に来ると、それがしょうゆ味になります。ヒラフには旭川ラーメン店があり、廣川博臣さんがご両親のラーメン店を受け継いでいます。旭川ラーメン登山軒はヒラフ坂に面しており、Paddy McGinty'sの下、お土産屋さんベルグブラザの中にあります。



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The Ainu: Hokkaido's hidden indigenous people

THE little-known Ainu, Hokkaido's first inhabitants, for the most part remain unknown, hidden in the shadows of today's Japan. Their existence was even categorically denied by the government until last year. However, these are an indigenous people steeped in history, and remain vastly culturally different to their Japanese neighbours. Guest reporter **Angela Kennewell** writes for *Powderlife*...

The Ainu still leave their mark on Japan - even in today's Niseko

Tourists to Niseko would be forgiven for thinking that names of many places in the area are Japanese in origin. The truth is, many local towns and landmarks have names derived from the language of the Ainu, Hokkaido's little-known indigenous people. Niseko, Annupuri, Kutchan, not to mention many of the local business names, all have their roots in the Ainu language. Take 'Niseko', for example, derived from 'Nisekoan', which means 'river which runs around the bottom of a sheer cliff' in Ainu. Mt Niseko-Annupuri, home to the Niseko United ski resorts, is intimately linked to the name of the town, as 'Nupuri' means 'mountain' in Ainu. Thus, Nisekoan-Nupuri (usually written as Niseko-Annupuri) means, 'mountain with a river which runs around the bottom of a sheer cliff'. Kutchan means, 'where the channel flows', or alternatively, 'stream of a hunting lodge'. And most mountains in the area have names with Ainu origins, including Mt Konbu, Chisenupuri and Iwaonupuri, to name a few. All over Hokkaido there are town and landmark names derived directly, or indirectly, from the language of Hokkaido's first inhabitants.

How did the Ainu arrive in Hokkaido?

Though no one seems able to agree conclusively, the predominant theory indicates that Ainu are descended from a northern mongoloid race estimated to have migrated to Hokkaido and Russia's Sakhalin Islands from around 300 B.C. Recent research involving DNA testing of sample groups of Ainu descendants has confirmed that the Ainu are ethnically distinct from Japanese, holding more in common, at least genetically, with the people of Tibet and Andaman Islanders of the Indian Ocean. There are thought to be only a handful of 'pure' Ainu remaining today, almost all of whom live in Hokkaido. A census conducted in 2006 counted just 26,782 people of Ainu descent. However, the harsh reality is that many Ainu have suffered the indignity of racism and discrimination, at times so severe that it is estimated a significant number

of surviving Ainu descendants conceal their ethnic origins. It's believed some are actually completely unaware of their heritage, due to parents and grandparents concealing their identity from them in order to protect them from discrimination.

The Ainu and their culture

The Ainu of Hokkaido and Sakhalin have a culture that is wholly their own, having lived in relative isolation for hundreds of years prior to the Japanese annexation of Hokkaido. Their customs and animist religious beliefs are quite distinctive, and their language is considered by linguists to be an 'isolate' - that is, a language not related to any other. Unlike Japanese, Ainu do not eat raw meat or fish, preferring to boil, roast or preserve meat for the long, harsh Hokkaido winters through smoking or drying. This author can tell you, deer stew, 'Yuk Ohaw', cooked in the traditional Ainu method, is a delicious experience (even though the meat is admittedly a little tough), and their very tasty potato cakes, 'Munimi-imo', made from the flour of potatoes repeatedly frozen and thawed, is a unique and bizarre flavour sensation. It has been claimed that the flour of these potatoes can be stored for up to 20 years.

The Ainu, similar to many indigenous cultures around the world, hold the natural environment in reverence, with their animist religious beliefs perhaps the clearest indication of the importance of nature in their culture and customs. The word 'Ainu' means 'human', or more specifically, the opposite of 'Kamuy', meaning 'God'. According to the Ainu, Kamuy exist in everything. All plants and creatures have the spirits of Gods in them, and all objects used in daily life also hold 'lesser' Gods. Traditionally, songs and dances are performed for Gods both in ceremonial occasions and also in daily life, for example when hunting, hunters would perform a unique dance and song for any creature they killed, to guide the spirit (Kamuy) of the creature safely back to the 'Mintara' (Home of the Gods). Perhaps the most famous of these such dances is the Bear Dance, which nowadays is regularly performed when Ainu cultural tradition is demonstrated to tourists.



The Japanese invasion

So when, then, did the Japanese come to Hokkaido and how, or why, did they take over? Though there is evidence that Japanese and Ainu traded goods such as salmon and grains for several centuries, there was relatively little contact between the indigenous peoples of Hokkaido and their southern neighbours until late in the 15th Century. Everything changed, however, when the Japanese invaded Hokkaido, laying claim to land and dispossessing the indigenous Ainu, forcing them to submit to Japanese rule and work in near-slavery conditions in the Japanese fishing industry. On the whole, the Ainu were a peaceful people and little resistance was offered; the Japanese movement to take control of Hokkaido and Sakhalin was swift and decisive, and of the three notable battles fought between 1457 and 1789, all were won convincingly by the Japanese forces. This was followed in 1799 with the banning of Ainu language and

cultural traditions, such as ceremonial songs and dances; even their clothing was considered a threat to Japanese rule, culminating in anything related to Ainu identity being strongly suppressed. While official Japanese records state that the annexation of Hokkaido formally declared in 1868 was to further the unity of the Japanese nation and defend against the Russians, the reality is that the desire to control the large tract of land so close to the Japanese mainland island of Honshu, blessed with abundant natural resources and rich fishing grounds, was as much a reason as any desire for Japanese unity.

The Ainu in the modern day

For the Ainu people specifically, 2008 marked a significant historical milestone, as the Japanese government for the first time acknowledged the Ainu as an indigenous group in Japan. For the Ainu, this is an affirmation of not just their right to cultivate and maintain Ainu language, culture and traditions, but an implicit admission by the Japanese government that they were indeed the first inhabitants of Hokkaido; a government that until 1997 had steadfastly claimed that there were no ethnic minority or indigenous groups in Japan at all, denying Ainu culture and ethnicity in its entirety.

Efforts are being made to preserve Ainu culture and traditions for future generations, with gradual softening of official attitudes sparking a revival of Ainu dance and oral tradition. Museums preserving and celebrating Ainu culture have grown to become popular tourist attractions in Hokkaido. However, the Ainu language is considered to be nearly extinct, with only 15 known native speakers surviving today. Ainu advocacy groups such as the Hokkaido Utari (comrade) Association have recently begun campaigns to teach Ainu language and culture to the current generation of Ainu youth, but with limited success. Only time will tell if their efforts will be able to revive this dying language, and keep alive an oral tradition dating back almost 1000 years.

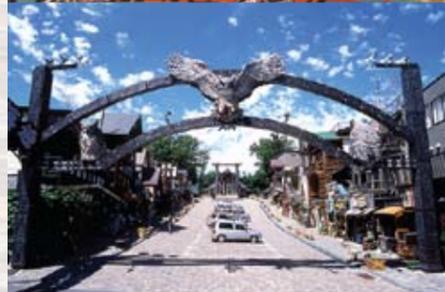
Where can the Ainu be found today?

When the Russians (re)claimed the islands of Sakhalin, situated off the north coast of Hokkaido, at the end of World War II, all indigenous Ainu and Japanese living there were forcibly 'repatriated' to Hokkaido on the grounds that they had come from there originally. This was done despite there being little evidence that the Ainu living on Sakhalin had migrated there in recent times -

quite the contrary, with evidence many of Sakhalin's Ainu had lived there for centuries. While some Ainu removed from Sakhalin have returned over the past 50 years, the majority did not. As such, almost all Ainu today live in Hokkaido, predominantly in the eastern areas of Hidaka and around Akan. The tiny town of Nibutani, in the Hidaka region, is home to the majority of Hokkaido's Ainu population, and until recently was also host to an Ainu Culture Festival. But the tourist town of Akan in eastern Hokkaido is perhaps the most well-known place tourists can go to observe and experience Ainu culture and food.

Learning more about the Ainu

Interest in Ainu culture and traditions has been growing steadily over the past two decades, with something of a renaissance beginning in just the last few years as Ainu begin to feel more comfortable about embracing their history and culture. Museums in Nopporo (on the eastern outskirts of Sapporo), Shiraoi and Nibutani attempt to preserve Ainu historical artifacts and promote further understanding of Ainu culture and history, holding regular workshops where tourists can experience Ainu handicrafts, singing and dancing. Encouragingly, a greater interest in incorporating Ainu song and dance into local events is underway, such as the Ainu-influenced Fashion in the Forest event held at Niseko Kanromori Hotel last summer, and the Kutchan Ainu Museum Fair in January each year. If you're really lucky you may even get to see unofficial ambassador for Ainu musical tradition, Oki Kano of the Oki Dub Ainu band, play his unique blend of western blues and Ainu instrumental folk music at a local event or festival. If you are interested in experiencing Ainu culture for yourself, why not pop into the Ainu Museum in Nopporo, easily accessible by public transport from the Shin-Sapporo Train Station in Sapporo, or head along to the Kutchan Ainu Museum Fair next January.



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BLACK DIAMOND TOURS

Black Mountain Calling

By Dale Riva



WHILE Niseko offers a dream-like landscape of lift-accessed, fluffy powder runs for the masses, beyond the bright lights there are mountains of consequence to be found in Hokkaido. Standing above them all is Kurodake – Black Mountain. Long-time Niseko and Hokkaido local **Dale Riva** is one of many die-hard mountain men who has been seduced by the lure of The Mountain. Dale takes *Powderlife* readers on a journey from the hotels of Hirafu to the canyons of Kurodake.

Thursday, 4pm. The bank reconciles with the books. Road trip starts. Packed the night before. Avy gear? Check. Boots? Check. Captain Morgan rum? Check. Stanley Cup? Check. Pick the boys up. Time to go. We've got a long road ahead, but with a few iPods, a tight Kurodake crew and dry roads, we'll be there before we know it. Destination: Kurodake. Four hours from Niseko if the navigator is on top of it, the weather co-operates, and you make sure you don't put diesel into your gasoline engine at the self-service gas station. If this happens, add on another four hours and ¥12,575 to your journey (spoken from experience).

It's tough to leave Niseko, especially between January and February when it snows almost every night. The bars are going off, your work inbox is full and you don't want it to overflow, and nightly calls from friends planning the next day's excursion to Rusutsu or The Gash keep coming in. But, as you head out from Kutchan, the lights of Hirafu, the beats of the bar, the phone calls, the accents of the tourists, and the pressures of work slowly start fading away. A few sips from The Captain and they really start fading quickly.

Looking at the 3m-high snow banks as you pass Kiroro makes you wonder why you are traveling so far to get pow when it's right there all around you. Maybe it isn't only the pow we are looking for, maybe something else is beckoning us? Descending into Otaru from high above, we jump onto the expressway. The toll does cost an arm and two legs, but to me, is something that I gladly lose limbs for, especially with three other willing contributors on board. The only time I didn't take the expressway almost resulted in divorce. Trust me, it's worth the coin!

Suddenly, we are racing past Sapporo, the lights of pachinko parlours, fast food shops, and housing complexes all a blur. The temptation of both Susu and Kino (ie Sapporo party central) are calling our names. Calls to hit the Daimaru Buffet for a quick 'houdai' (all you can eat) are heard from the back of the van. If that happened, there was no way we'd make it any further that day. The passengers were pacified by the bottle of Captain and soon the temptation and bright lights were a distant memory. There would be time later. We move on.

As we follow Hokkaido's longest river, the Ishikari, to its source, we pass by all the of cities with the suffix meaning river – 'kawa' or 'gawa' – tacked on to them: Sunagawa (sand river), Takikawa (waterfall river), Fukagawa (deep river), Asahikawa (beer river :)), and finally Kamikawa (above river). The time rolls by. We pass open plains, farming towns, numerous tunnels, and then some smaller mountains. The mini-Stanley Cup comes out, the Captain is finished, the tunes get louder, the van party is now in full effect. Our destination is within reach. The air becomes colder, the snow starts falling, the wind picks up, the smaller mountains give way to a deep gorge. Heading up into the darkness, we are being guided by moonlight and the almost gravitational pull of... that mountain.

Finally, the hot spring hotels come into view, just like any other hot spring town in Japan. But, as you turn the corner, there is something different – an ice festival is on, people are milling around, a small town with an actual main, walking street is there. This is the hot spring town of Sounkyo. And, right across from the lodge that we are soon to dig out and heat up, is the cable car station. And there above it all looms Black Mountain. 10km north of us is the source of the river. We have arrived. But tomorrow morning our journey continues.

The next morning left us with sore heads, the Captain has definitely done his damage. We shook off the cobwebs, while Seicomart breakfasts and canned coffees got us going. Blue skies and low winds had us feeling even better. We were geared up and ready to go. At Kurodake, the ropeway whisks you up to 1300m, then the chairlift takes you up to 1520m. The

rest you have to earn. On this day, we wanted to get to the top in order to complete the journey. Going up the chairlift, the summit was in view, but the clouds were moving a bit faster than we would've liked. The winds started to pick up, but we had done it before. Maybe they would ease?

It is a good, steep, 90-minute hike to the 1984m peak. The last 40 minutes forces you to traverse a harrowing ridge line where more than one person has perished in the past. About an hour in, the winds really started cranking. White out conditions were impending. The skins were no longer sticking to the icy crust. Conditions were rapidly deteriorating. I slipped and caught myself. We all looked at each other. The answer was in our eyes – the mountain had won today. However, this is a mountain where defeat is not a loss. The lingering hangover combined with the conditions caused us to take a few extra minutes to transfer to riding mode, but we did it. So, we headed down, enjoying the deep pow we had earned, the sweet turns through the trees, the natural half pipe hits, and steep chute at the bottom below the ropeway, ending at the run-out to a temple signifying our safe arrival at the bottom. We run into friends who are lapping the ropeway runs, or taking lifestyle shots within the town. Home (Black Mountain Lodge) was across the street. The onsen, and an after beer at Beer Grill Canyon were waiting for us. The mountain would be there for tomorrow, and the next day.

Fast forward to Sunday, 1pm. Time to go home. Cabin fever. Convenience store foods. Tired limbs. Sticky party van. Mellow tunes. The cafes, friends and even work in Niseko feel somewhat comforting. We descend from the source back to our destination. As we come back over the pass from Otaru, the snow picks up. The lights of Hirafu appear in the distance. We slip silently back into town, road-weary but pleasantly satisfied. A deep sleep awaits. Sunday, 7pm. Mission complete.

Do's

- Expect to get a few odd looks – you are in the wild, wild east!
- Check out the ice festival (from the end of January until the end of March).
- Get the 'Onsen/Dinner Ticket' for ¥980 from Beer Grill Canyon, on the main walking street. Order the rainbow trout at Beer Grill Canyon for dinner.
- Step back in time, play a game of cards and drink a beer out of the Stanley Cup at Bar 1984 in Black Mountain Lodge.
- Gear up and turn back from climbing to the summit if weather is bad.
- Realise there are cliffs, tight tree sections, no ski patrol and no rules – this is the last frontier!
- Go in the summer, and especially autumn when the colours are unreal.
- Check out the town of Sounkyo and ponder how they have made the town look so good – building restrictions on colours and materials have made it a cute town – even the 7-Eleven and Seicomart are painted a shade of brown.
- From 09/10 stay at Black Mountain Lodge. It will be up and running with solid heating, après-bar/lounge, pool, and cheap accommodation.

Don't

- Expect people to speak English even though signs are in English everywhere.
- Climb the mountain solo. Or if you've never been, without a guide.
- Go on a Wednesday – Beer Grill Canyon is closed.
- Go in January if you want to ski/ride. It's closed due to harsh weather and too much snow!
- Stay at Black Mountain Lodge if you need your pillow fluffed or a catered gourmet dinner. There are plenty of reasonably-priced hot spring hotels if that's what you're after.
- Miss the waterfalls 2km north of town, any time of year.

Info

Kurodake main website: <http://www.rinyu.co.jp/kurodake/index.html>
 Sounkyo info: <http://www.sounkyo.net/english/>
 Sounkyo Visitor Centre: <http://sounkyovc.town.kamikawa.hokkaido.jp/>
 Black Mountain Lodge website: <http://www.kurodakelodge.com/site/>

* Dale Riva has lived in Hokkaido for 11 years, and Niseko for three of those. In between 20 years snowboarding, he is accounts manager for Niseko-based West Canada Homes and The Niseko Company.

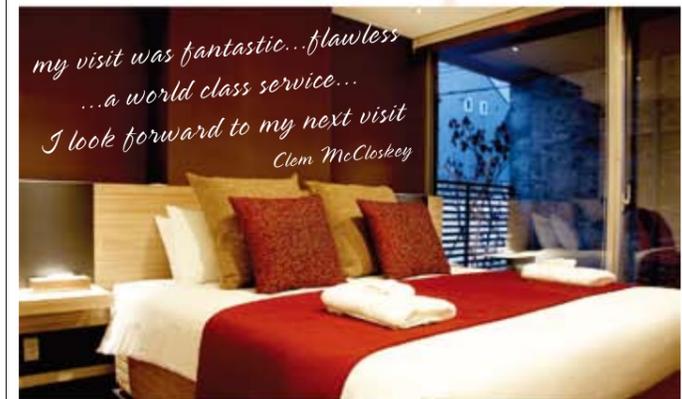


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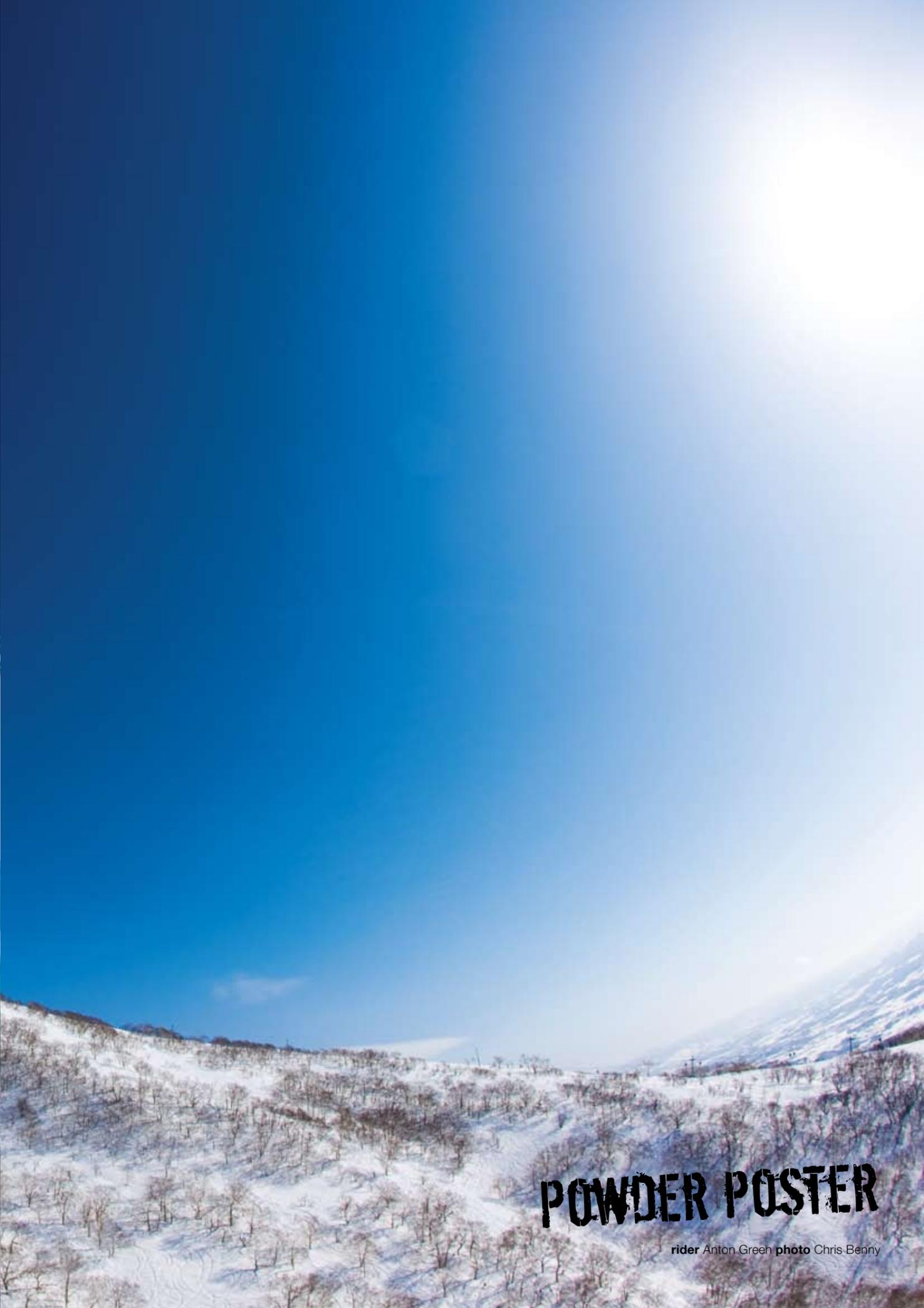
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札幌



POWDER POSTER

rider Anton Green photo Chris Benny



YEEHAW... Bevan Colless finds a big drop. Photo: Glen Claydon..



ONE-ARMED MAN... Mike Richards punches his way out of a powder cloud. Photo: Andy Laidlaw.



BLUEBIRD.. Flying high in the Hanazono half-pipe. Photo: Glen Claydon.



SPRING HAS SPRUNG... Chook launches off a ripe mushroom. Photo: Niseko Photography.



WHITEOUT... T-Roy powering through pow. Photo: Niseko Photography.



UNDER COVER... Ian MacKenzie up to his armpits. Photo: Mike Richards.



SPRING... this is what it's all about. Photo: Niseko Photography.

Nick Jackson

POWDERLIFE Cafe's barista and our regular columnist, Nick Jackson, this season helped you to get to know local skiers and boarders – everything from their ski/board setup to the tunes they listen to on their iPod while riding down the hill. Nick has also offered his unique, hilarious and sometimes just plain awkward music reviews on recently released albums – the hot, the not, and the absolute lemons. So, what better way to wrap up the season than to bring you the man behind Powder Tracks himself? Ladies and gentlemen (but mainly ladies), Mr Nick "I'm Sorry Miss" Jackson...



Name	Nick Jackson
Born	06/12/1987, Masterton, New Zealand
Stance	Regular
Width/Angle:	59cm, 21 degrees front, 12 degrees rear
Setup	Capita Mid-Life Theory – 155cm; Burton Cartel bindings
Time in Niseko	11 months
Favourite terrain	Park and Stirling Goldman deep powder
How many years riding?	One year properly, but what a year it was
Favourite move on a snowboard?	A big fat slash in pow, so big it blocks the sun and all the Earth's creatures perish in permanent darkness

2009: a year in review

WHAT a year we've had. Powder Tracks' first year, and not a single death threat. We've had ups and downs, lows and highs, misprints and Nickelback. I would like to apologise first up to one Andy Culvers, who isn't 36 years old, nor is his surname 'Gulverhouse' (sorry mate, I owe you a laaager). Secondly, I would like to thank all the riders who appeared in Powder Tracks – you were all great. Also, thanks to all the record companies for allowing illegal downloads to be so easy to access – if it weren't for you, Powderlife wouldn't be printing such a tip-top article. Thanks to L. Ron Hubbard for making me laugh. Thanks to Niseko for having so much sick snow; this is the best resort in the world, and it is only getting better! There isn't much more to say and no one else to piss off, so without further adieu, I present to you the writer of Powder Tracks Nick Jackson's 'Top 20 Songs To Do Stuff To'. Keep listening and keep riding...

Nick J's Hottest 100... That Is Really 21

1. Death From Above 1979 – *Blood On Our Hands* (Justice Remix)
2. Digitalism – *Pogo*
3. At The Drive In – *Pattern Against User*
4. Architecture In Helsinki – *Hold Music*
5. The Von Bondies – *C'mon, C'mon*
6. Muscles – *Ice Cream*
7. Does It Offend You, Yeah – *Let's Make Out*
8. Passion Pit – *Sleepyhead*
9. The Avalanches – *Since I Left You*
10. The Black Keys – *10am Automatic*
11. Bluejuice – *Vitriol*
12. The Infadels – *Love Like Symtex*
13. Silversun Pickups – *Lazy Eye*
14. Black Keys – *When The Lights Go Out*
15. Justice – *DVNO*
16. Enter Shikari – *Sorry You're Not A Winner*
17. The Klaxons – *Golden Skans*
18. N.E.R.D – *Spaz*
19. New Young Pony Club – *The Bomb*
20. Peter, Bjorn & John – *Young Folks*
21. Will Smith – *Gettin Jiggy Wit' It* (honourable mention)



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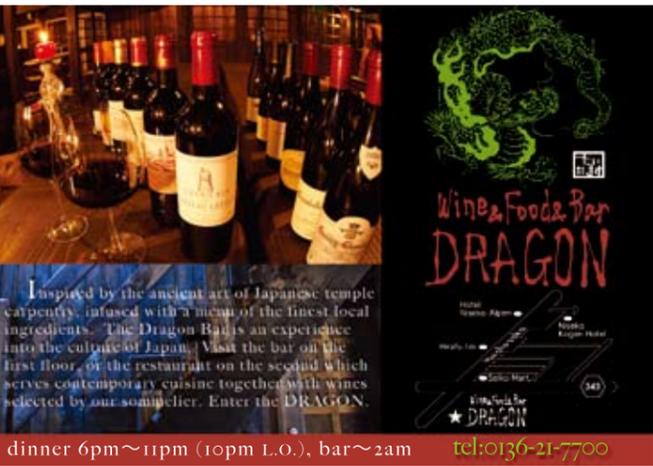
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Restaurant Yo

Hurry Slowly on down to the Lower Village, but don't forget to book

By Kat and Kim
Sekka Dining chefs



NESTLED down in the Lower Village, tucked in behind pension Hurry Slowly, is Restaurant Yo. Yo is not any ordinary restaurant, serving traditional Japanese cuisine that you must book in advance. They only prepare the food for the bookings, so just dropping in won't do, and with only four tables and a barbecue room, booking early is advised.

When you make the booking you're asked which menu you'd like. On offer is the original menu at ¥3500 per person. This consists of nine to 10 dishes where you get to choose the star attraction from a beef sukiyaki course, a seafood course, a vegetable course, or a hand-rolled sushi course. Then there's another option for Japanese barbecue for ¥4500 per person. The Japanese barbecue is served in the traditional style, with a sunken hearth and coal flames. There are varieties of meat, seafood and vegetables for you to grill, and also served alongside the barbecue is a hot pot, salad, sashimi and more. Then there is option F, Beef Shabu Shabu, where you get a pot of simmering broth on the table to cook the thinly sliced beef, which is then dipped into your favourite sauce. Served alongside the shabu-shabu course you get temaki sushi, yakitori and salad.

As the barbecue room was booked out, we opted for the ¥5500 special course. Here you still get to choose from the previous four courses with the addition of a few more premium Hokkaido specialties, such as Taraba

crab. We both agreed on the beef sukiyaki course. On arrival, we step through the door into a little stone garden which then leads into the restaurant. We're a little early (as we're rather eager) but are greeted warmly. Even the chef pops around the corner to welcome us. We are taken through to our table. Each table is off in its own little separate room, and the many small windows through to the other rooms ensure you feel private but not isolated. As the food has already been ordered, the only decision you will have to make is what to drink. The sampler set of sakes – three very generous glasses, all with the name inscribed underneath – is a great way to experience the subtle differences between good sakes, and get a feel for what you would like to continue the evening with. We both agreed our favourite was the Hakkisan, dry with a little spice. Oishii! As we sip away, we're treated to a clear view of the barbecue room being set up for the lucky diners still to come. The delicious charcoal smell through the restaurant is intoxicating, so we will definitely be back for barbecue soon.

The first dish of the evening is a small plate of zensai (Japanese hors d'œuvre), some small school prawns, cream cheese with bonito and nori (dried seaweed), and four plump edamame (soybeans in the pod) with a sprinkle of togarashi (chilli). The plate displays the Japanese art of beauty from simplicity. After we have savoured the zensai, a small flame is lit under a stone cooker in front of each of

us. Under the lid, mushrooms, tofu, negi (spring onion), onion, Japanese herbs and the famous wagyu beef sit in a little broth, gently heating until cooked, with a raw egg on the side to dip in to. It was recommended we wait until the flame died out before diving in, but the smell wafting out from under the lid was a little too much to bear. We may have actually finished the dish before the flame even had a chance to die. The following dish, a salad of prosciutto, peppers and mizuna, is light and refreshing.

Then a lidded pot is brought forth. The lid is lifted and a square of tofu covered in a crab sauce is unveiled. Again the aroma leaps out and drags you in. The tofu, silky soft, takes the subtle flavour from the crab excellently. The next dish in the progression is a bit of a 'do-it-yourself-er'. A small grill, covered in kanji and filled with glowing coals, lands on the table followed by a tray of goodness – the goodness being okra, shitake mushrooms, Hokkaido diver scallop, Taraba crab leg and wagyu beef. The idea is to grill each piece to your liking, then dip it in to the waiting wasabi, salt or lemon. It's just like cooking on a barbecue, only inside and at a table. The crab is phenomenal, the taraba is juicy and sweet, and the flesh from the legs just keeps on coming. The wagyu beef (cooked medium-rare to perfection, thanks chef!) left the feeling of umami (deliciousness) that lasted and lasted.

A trio of nigiri sushi appeared quickly after the grill was removed, the rice shaped into little rounds, which were

oh-so-cute. A nice change from the more traditional rectangle shape. They were topped with salmon, eel and scallop, still warm from the cooker and seasoned just so. As the last nigiri disappeared, a plate of ultra-fresh sashimi filled its place. More scallop and salmon, this time accompanied with tuna, snapper and prawn. We were both still trying to get our head around the whole raw prawn (it's a texture thing).

By now we were starting to feel content, but there were still three courses to come. The first was a piece of whitefish with sautéed Japanese greens and wild mushrooms – again, beautiful in its simplicity. Then, a braised pork belly, so tender and full of flavour. Japanese pork can really make you do a double take on how much flavour it can have. The belly was topped with a dab of hot Japanese mustard to cut the richness. Finally, a slice of adzuki (small red bean) and chestnut cakes with a cup of Japanese tea. The cakes were delicate and, with the tea, a perfect end to a meal when you just need a mouthful of something sweet to finish off.

Feeling happily content we wandered off into the snow, knowing the next time we come we'll be hurrying not too slowly as we know what's waiting.

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




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Salada Udon

By Tess Stomski and Sachiko Kageyama from Niseko Gourmet

OVER winter you may have found yourself eating a hot dish of udon noodles, however moving into spring and summer, it is more popular in Japan to eat cold noodle dishes. Salada Udon is a popular modern Japanese dish eaten mainly in the summer months.

Traditionally Udon noodles are made from kneading flour, salt and water which results in a thick white noodle. As you may know, Kutchan is famous for its potatoes with its mascot being the skiing potato boy, Jagata Kun. To make use of its famous potatoes, Kutchan produces an udon noodle made from potato starch instead of the traditional flour noodles. Pictured below, these are a delicious alternative to the traditional flour noodles and are available in supermarkets throughout Kutchan.



Ingredients:
 400g udon noodles
 2 small cans canned tuna (or crab meat, ham, chicken etc), drained
 ¼ lettuce
 1 cucumber
 2 medium sized tomatoes
 1 avocado
 5 shiso leaves
 Mayonnaise to taste
 Sesame seeds to taste
 You can substitute other vegetables into the salad, for example bean sprouts or broccoli.

Dressing
 5 tablespoons soy sauce
 5 tablespoons water
 4 tablespoons mirin
 2 tablespoons vinegar
 3 tablespoons lemon juice
 1 tablespoon sea kelp stock
 3 tablespoons sesame oil
 Salt and pepper to taste

- Method**
1. Cut the lettuce into bite-size pieces and julienne cut the cucumber and shiso leaves. Dice the tomato and avocado.
 2. Add the dressing ingredients into a bowl and whisk to combine.
 3. Bring a pot of water to the boil and cook the udon noodles to al dente. Drain the noodles, and rice under cold running water. Leave to cool in cold water.
 4. Drain the water really well and place onto a deep serving dish.
 5. On top of the noodles place the lettuce, cucumber, tomato, avocado, and tuna. Sprinkle the shiso herb on top. Shiso can also be substituted with coriander.
 6. Pour the dressing over the salad, and decorate with mayonnaise and sesame seeds to taste.

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Niseko Survival Guide: Surviving the Village

By Matthew Thomas

IT'S easy to get so wrapped up in the winter wonderment of Niseko that you forget all about common sense.

Caution obviously needs to be considered while on the mountain, and certainly when outside the backcountry gates. However, tourists who visit Niseko from warmer, more familiar home climes often aren't aware that it's worth considering your personal safety when simply getting around town. While there's generally no life-threatening dangers, there are a few things you need to be made aware of that you may not have otherwise considered.

Besides physical dangers, cultural differences can make it hard to simply achieve what you want... and sometimes this can be downright frustrating! With that said, Powderlife has compiled this 'village survival guide' to hopefully keep you safe, while also allowing you to understand Niseko that little bit better...

Stay safe...

Don't ski/board on the roads or footpaths:

It may seem fun and so much quicker and easier than walking, but skiing or boarding home from the hill can be one of the silliest things you can do in Niseko. Because the roads don't have as much snow on them, and generally a lot of ice, your skis or board won't react like they do on the mountain. So where on the hill you might be able to stop within a couple of metres before hitting that beginner skier who's just veered wildly in front of you, on the road, instead of stopping you could very easily find yourself skidding underneath a bus that's just pulled out in front of you. For the drivers, it's hard enough driving in the snowy, icy, white-out conditions without having to worry about dodging out of control skiers and boarders. Please, keep your riding on the hill!

Don't walk or park under roofs:

During your stay in Niseko, you may have noticed snow falling from roofs. This may look impressive, but can be very dangerous – notice the thud when the load hits the ground. Niseko gets massive amounts of snow during winter, and despite appearances, it's very heavy. Believe it or not, snow sliding from rooftops kills people in this part of the world, and can seriously damage cars.

Walking on icy roads and footpaths:

Niseko's footpaths and roads can be sometimes like an ice skating rink – especially after a nighttime freeze follows a daytime melt. Joggers or sneakers from home just won't cut it, so you'll need good pair of snow boots with plenty of tread (gumboots will also do the job, and keep your feet dry), or failing that a pair of snow cleats or spikes that you can clip onto your shoes (which you can buy from any number of ski stores in town).

Other tips we can give you are: for balance, don't walk with hands in your pockets so you can brace yourself for a fall – wear gloves to keep your hands

warm instead; take smaller steps; and don't carry heavy loads – if you fall, throw goods in the air and protect yourself, not your goods. It should go without saying, but don't slide down slippery, steep sections of ice to show off!

Also, when crossing the road, factor in that the roads are icy and slippery and that it will take cars longer to stop for you.

Driving on icy roads:

Niseko is well serviced by inter-resort buses, which are the safest, cheapest and easiest mode of transport in the area. These resort buses are free for mountain pass holders. There are also regular buses into Kutchan. But if you insist on driving, make sure you drive to the conditions and always be in control. Icy, snowy, white-out conditions can be a nightmare to drive in. Every driver here will be able to tell frightening stories about completely losing control of their car on 'black ice'. For a detailed feature on how to drive safely in Niseko, refer to your copy of Powderlife Issue 13's Niseko Survival Guide, or find it online at www.powderlife.com/_issues/powderlife13web.pdf.

Don't leave bars alone:

If you're going drinking, make sure you leave the bar with someone else and try not to walk home alone. Also make sure you rug up and stay warm. People have been known to fall asleep in the snow in Niseko, although so far there have been no confirmed fatalities. This season's case of a tourist going missing under these circumstances have reaffirmed these dangers, so please do the right thing by yourself, and your friends.

Making life easier...

Cash out?:

Yes, we all know Hirafu needs an ATM, but at the moment there are no international machines here. If you are a tourist and want to take cash from a home account, you will need to go to Kutchan's post office, which is open 8.45am-7pm weekdays, and 9am-5pm on weekends or public holidays. You can also take cash at the 7-11 near Kutchan Station, or on the third floor of Chitose Airport. Most cards with Cirrus and PLUS marks are accepted, but round-cornered cards are not.

At your convenience:

There are two convenience stores in town for all your local shopping needs. The iconic Seicomart in the heart of Hirafu is arguably king, but Lawson, the blue shop just down the road towards Kutchan, is another option that offers smaller queues and a larger range of international products.

Kutchan has shopping covered:

Several specialty stores in Kutchan may also come in handy when you wish to expand from the stock in Seicomart or Lawson. Best Denki stocks all your technical needs from memory sticks and external hard drives to heaters and fans. M-Pocket has imported groceries, specialising in imported alcohol. Homac shelves basically every household product known to man, while Max Value is your best option as far as big supermarket chains go. The ¥100 Shop stocks cheap groceries, stationery and more priced around...you guessed it...¥100. There are no pharmacies or stationery stores in Hirafu, but several in Kutchan, such as the Tsuruha Drug. The Co-Op, located next to Kutchan Station, is both a department store and supermarket (a hot tip: the Co-Op's perfect for tracking down the perfect little number for any kind of fancy dress party!).

Best bet is just to head out to Kutchan and have a walk around; there are plenty of little shops, cafes, restaurants, bars and more hidden about this quaint yet vibrant little town that will make your trip better, easier or just plain memorable.

For a map of Kutchan check the 'K-Town' section towards the back of every Powderlife.

Watch your jacket:

Although Japan is renowned for its impressive low crime rate, which is especially the case in rural Niseko, things do get stolen – it would appear to be by foreigners, rather than local Japanese. Jackets are one of the main targets of thieves, who have been known to steal from bars. A domino effect is also known to happen, whereby someone has their jacket stolen and then they take somebody else's to make up for it. In this case, it's not uncommon for many jackets to go missing in a single night. So, make sure you keep your jacket in a cloak room if there is one, or just try to keep all your friends' jackets together and do your best to keep your eyes on them.

Also, it might be worth investing in a padlock for your skis or board. While it is rare for your gear to get stolen here (many locals never even lock their doors or windows in Niseko!), it only takes one bad person to spoil the party for everyone. Most Japanese people are extremely honest and will go out of their way to return a lost or misplaced item.

For your information:

The Niseko Grand Hirafu Welcome Centre at the main bus stop in Hirafu parking lot has a wide range of brochures and transport information. They can also help with accommodation in case you've arrived without making a booking. Call 0136-22-0109.

The Hirafu Safety Information Centre next door to the Seicomart is a 'koban' police box which also doubles as a tourist information office. Drop in anytime for directions or any other needs or give them a call on 0136 22 5878.

Meanwhile, the Kutchan Tourist Information Centre, located on Eki-mae Dori opposite the Best Denki, provides an excellent English-speaking service for visitors. They can be contacted on 0136-22-1121.



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In Focus...Masanobu Saito

Interview by Yuri Hamada



HAVE you experienced the aroma and flavour of juicy yakitori skewers? Niseko's famous yakitori izakaya owner, Masanobu Saito, came to Niseko all the way from Kyushu 34 years ago, and quickly became famous for his restaurant, Bang Bang. Masanobu invited *Powderlife* to his cozy restaurant to talk about his love for Niseko, skiing and the community.

What brought you to Niseko?

I'm originally from Saga, Kyushu and grew up near the ocean. Out of the blue, I decided I wanted to give skiing a try and some of my friends told me to go to Niseko. That was 34 years ago. When I came here for the first time, I worked at several pensions as a seasonal worker like so many young people now in town. After 10 years of living in Niseko, I felt Niseko was becoming my new home. So, 24 years ago I bought some land and opened my restaurant as a way to make a living. Also, at that time there were no places to go for a drink or to eat in town,

so I thought opening an izakaya would give local people a place to hang out after a hard day's work.

What was Niseko like then?

It was a much smaller resort than it is now, but we still had many domestic tourists and they brought a good amount of energy to the town. I'm sure it's hard to believe that at that time there were only 10 accommodation houses and maybe only two restaurants in the resort. One other difference that might be difficult for people to imagine was the snow. Back then I remember the snow was surprisingly much lighter and fluffier than the powder snow that we have today. On top of that, it snowed constantly from the beginning of December to May. This was an incredible sight for someone who grew up in southern Japan.

Had you run a restaurant before? What is your philosophy behind your restaurant?

To tell you the truth, this is my first restaurant. I wanted to open a cozy place for people to hang out. I thought yakitori could be good. From eating yakitori with your fingers to watching the chef cook, this izakaya ambience makes people relax. My main philosophy in running Bang Bang is to make sure my customers are happier than when they first walked through the door. By the end of the night I can guarantee two things: I've talked to everyone in the house, and everyone will leave with a smile.

We heard that you are a big skier. Do you still ski often?

Absolutely! Skiing is the reason that I am here. I started alpine skiing 34 years ago. Alpine skiing is fun but I enjoy going off-piste, and I wanted to enjoy Niseko's beauty while skiing, so I started telemark skiing 16 years ago. While telemarking, you see so many small details in the natural surrounding, like birds flying or rabbits running, because your line of site is closer to the snow. Also, the added versatility makes it easier to find untracked lines. Who needs a stairway – the mountain is heaven enough for me!

What do you do during summer?

I usually go back to Kyushu for two weeks, and after that I keep myself busy enjoying summer activities, such as climbing, fishing, paragliding and so much more. I love exploring nature, so I often go into the woods to try to find my own place to relax; somewhere no one has found before.

What do you think about the internationalisation of Niseko?

I think it is great. When Niseko was just beginning to grow as an international ski resort, the locals had some difficulty communicating with and understanding different cultures. Nowadays both locals and tourists put so much effort into understanding each other by learning both language and culture. I think we do a great job of meeting in the middle without letting our own background fade. This creates the unique culture that we see in Niseko today.

What do you see in the future for Niseko?

A lot more development on the way, which could lead Niseko to become a prohibitively expensive ski resort. I would like to see Niseko as an affordable place to live. Nowadays, so many skilled and talented young and old people are leaving because of the expensive cost of living. I'm sure these developments could turn Niseko into an even nicer ski resort, but at the same time I would love to see all my customers come back here year after year.

What are your top three tips for visitors to Niseko?

1. Explore the mountain and find yourself off-piste.
2. Appreciate the locals, the local businesses and their great hospitality.
3. Admire the views of Niseko, and the great personalities found in the varied styles of housing.

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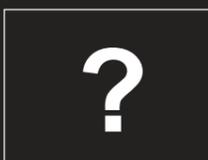
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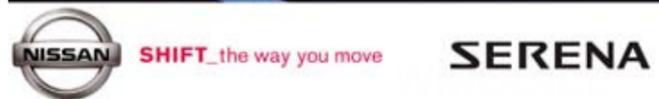
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how to ❄️ Learning Japanese

Japanese for powder people

by studio tdes

Lesson 8: Working

HAVE you fallen in love with Niseko? Or perhaps in Niseko? Many tourists in Niseko spend part of their holiday thinking about how they can afford to come back. Sell the car? Get a second job? If you can get the appropriate visa, spending a season working in Niseko is also an option. This is one of the few places in Japan where it's possible to work in the service industry without speaking Japanese! Still, even if your workplace is aimed at English-speaking tourists, you'll get at least a few Japanese customers – or have some Japanese co-workers – so why waste an excellent language opportunity? In today's lesson there's some language for workers to use – and for customers to understand. And remember, if all this language seems to flow through your sieve-like brain, smiles and gestures do go a long way ☺

1. いらっしゃいませ *Irasshai mase* hello, welcome

When people walk into your shop, bar or restaurant, greet them with: **Irasshai mase!** The volume ranges from a hearty bellow/squawk to normal talking level, depending on the kind of establishment. Customers are not usually expected to reply to **irasshai mase**, but if they do greet you with something like **konnichi wa**, you should then return the greeting.



2. 何名様ですか? *Nan mei sama desu ka?* How many people are there in your group?

When people arrive at your izakaya or restaurant, you'll need to find out how big their group is: **Nan mei sama desu ka?** If it seems obvious how many people there is, you can just check: **Ni mei sama desu ka?** (Table for two?) Your next question is likely to be: **Goyoyaku itadaite masu ka?** (Do you have a booking?)

3. どうぞ、こちらです *Douzo kochira desu* Please sit here, this way please

When you've decided where you want the customers to sit, gesture towards the table and say: **Douzo, kochira desu.** If you've scored a job in one of the classier Niseko joints, you may need to use this: **Uwagi o oazukari shimashyou ka?** (May I take your coat?)



4. お飲み物は、お決まりでしょうか? *Onomimono wa okimari deshou ka?* What would you like to drink?

The verb to drink in Japanese is **nomu**. A drink is **nominomo**, or **onomimono** (you can whack an o in front of many words in Japanese to make them more formal). After you've given out the menus, ask them if they've decided what they'd like to drink: **Onomimono wa okimari deshou ka?** A bit later on ask for the food order: **Oshokuji wa okimari deshou ka?** You might like to repeat the order back to them, to make sure you've got it right: **Gochumon o kurikae shimasu ...** (I'll just repeat that back to you ...) Finally, before you head off to the kitchen, you could say: **Ijou de yoroshii deshou ka?** (Is that all?)

5. かしこまりました *Kashikomari mashita* Certainly.

When a customer orders something you can say: **Kashikomari mashita** (Certainly). When you're working behind a bar you can also just repeat the order back to them with a **desu ne** attached. **Biiru futasu onegaishimasu** (Two beers, please). **Biiru futasu desu ne** (Two beers, coming right up!)



Learning Japanese ❄️ how to

6. 申し訳ございません *Moushiwake gozaimasen* I'm terribly sorry.

Apologizing is hugely important in the service industry in Japan – especially if you can't speak Japanese! You probably know how to say sorry with **sumimasen** or **gomen nasai**. But how about when you're working? When speaking to customers, the more formal: **moushiwake gozaimasen** is usually more appropriate. Say it if you have run out of something on the menu, or you spill a drink on a customer. If a punter in your bar is making rambling, nonsensical complaints, just keep bowing and saying **moushiwake gozaimasen** until they leave.

7. どうぞ *Douzo* Here you go.

When you give customers a plate of food or drink, you can simply say **douzo** (Here you go). If it's food that is to be shared (like at an izakaya), just announce what it is when you're putting it on the table: **Eda mame desu** (This is eda mame). If the food should be delivered to a certain person, you can ask like this: **Soba no okyakusama?** (Who ordered the soba?)



8. お下げしてよろしいですか? *Osageshite yoroshii desu ka?* Can I take these?

If you're working in an izakaya or a Japanese restaurant, you don't need to whip away the plates as soon as customers have finished eating – that's not Japanese style. When you do pick up some glasses or plates and you're not sure if the customer has finished eating, say: **Osageshite yoroshii desu ka?** (Is it OK if I take this?)

9. 分かりません *Wakarimasen* I don't understand.

In case you try your best with numbers 1-8, but can't understand the rapid-fire Japanese that's coming back, perhaps you'd better learn this: **Wakarimasen** (I don't understand). If you're a complete beginner, your shoddy pronunciation and clueless expression will no doubt make it obvious, but you could announce it anyway: **Nihongo dekimasen** (I can't speak Japanese). This could also be useful: **Shoushou omachi kudasai, nihongo dekiru hito o yonde kimasu.** (Please wait while I go and get someone who can speak Japanese). If that's too long to remember, at least say: **Chotto matte** (Hang on a second) before you run away, or they might think you're not coming back!

10. お疲れ様でした *Otsukare sama deshita* Well done, good job etc

This is a very important word to know if you have Japanese co-workers. Say this to them as they are leaving, or before you leave. You can also use it when they've just completed an arduous task such as clearing snow, lifting heavy boxes or talking to an imbecilic customer. There's a short version that you can use with friends and co-workers: **otsukare!** If you're an instructor say **otsukare sama deshita** to your students at the end of the lesson.

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

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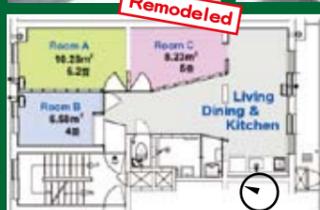


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Introducing Kutchan

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



Kutchan Downtown

Map showing streets, landmarks, and icons for various facilities. Key locations include: Otaru Shinkin, Hokuyo Bank, Seicomart, Police Station, Fire department, Shinbeshi Subprefectural office, Otaru Welfare hospital, and JR Kutchan Station.

Icons include: Supermarket, Convenience store, Drug store, Post office, Bank, Gas station, Public facility, Book store, Fire department, Police Station, Hospital, Office, Pharmacy, Bank, Gas station, Public facility, Book store.

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.

A history of 'K-Town'

By Matthew Thomas

WHEN Hanpai Abe and about 16 other explorers happened upon Kutchan in the year 1892, it was the dense, lush forest wilds of the area that possessed promise for settlement.

As it turns out, these settlers from Tokushima prefecture, on Shikoku island – who had only recently settled in the nearby Yoichi – were right. Thanks to the fertile land, equating to about 260sq km, the population of Kutchan swelled to around 10,000 by 1903, after it was separated from Abuta village in 1893. The population has risen to the current approximate 16,000 permanent residents since 1903, with a density of about 62 people per sq km.

Settlement in Kutchan – now affectionately known as 'K-Town' by foreigners – wouldn't have been a difficult decision for Abe-san and Co., thanks to the area being surrounded by picturesque mountain ranges, it being located just north of the iconic semi-dormant volcano Mt Yotei, all the while sitting on the Shiribetsu River, one of the most pristine sources of water in all of Japan. In fact, the word 'Kutchan' originates from the indigenous Ainu language, and it is said the phonetically equivalent kanji comes from the word 'Kut-Shan-i', which means 'the place where the channel flows'. Others claim the name is derived from 'kucha-an-nai', meaning 'stream of a hunting lodge'.

As expected and intended by its settlers, Kutchan's main industry became agriculture. Local specialties include potatoes, melon, sake, short-grain white rice and udon noodles made from potato flour. Grain, corn, kidney and soy beans, and wheat also thrive in Kutchan climes. Agricultural success can be generally attributed to fertile volcanic soils and the area's four distinct seasons, ranging from a cool, dry alpine summer to a cold winter, with some of the heaviest snowfalls in all of Hokkaido.

After harnessing many of the nearby Niseko ranges, mainly Mt Annupuri, along with other natural wonders, Kutchan was also soon able to profit from outdoor sports like skiing and snowboarding, rafting, golf, cycling, mountain biking, fly fishing, paragliding and hiking – attracting tourists from within and outside Japan. Logically, Kutchan's two most celebrated aspects – skiing and potatoes – are recognised simultaneously by a jolly-looking cartoon town mascot named Jagata-kun (above right), a title that roughly translates into 'little, fat potato boy'. Other symbols of Kutchan include the town tree, the Itaya Maple (bottom right), and the town flower, the Yellow Rhododendron (upper bottom right).

A major historical turning point for Kutchan was the town becoming the capital of the Shiribeshi sub-prefecture, thanks mainly to its comprehensive governmental offices. A national train servicing the area also increased Kutchan's esteem as a self-sufficient and accessible township. Rail company JR Hokkaido plans to include Kutchan in its planned Hokkaido Shinkansen (bullet train) service by 2020, which could be announced as early as March next year, and would connect the town to Honshū and, consequently, Tokyo.

As the main regional centre of population, Kutchan hosts a variety of cultural institutions and events. The town is home to two museums, the Kutchan Natural History Museum and the Shu Ogawara Art Museum. The town also hosts the annual Kutchan Jazz Festival every July, drawing thousands to enjoy the music of Japanese and international musicians.

Kutchan's sister city is St Moritz in Switzerland, and has been since 1964. Many will have noticed a neighbourhood in Hirafu not coincidentally named St Moritz. In 1991, Kutchan and its residents celebrated their 100-year anniversary.



Wine & Dine in Kutchan

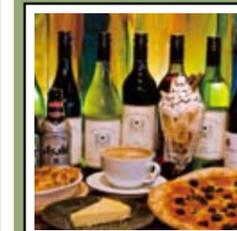


Free Bus Stop More info @ <http://www.niseko.co.jp/cta/bus2/bus3.pdf>

Locations marked: Nami Chan Chi, Sanzenri bld. 2F, Nozomi, Miyako Dori Gate, Café Kaku, Daikyo bld. 1F, Be., World Sports Bar, Station Street, Police Station, Kutchan Station.

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Open: 21:00 to 06:00 Close randomly



Men Who Ride Mountains

By Stirling Goldman

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

2008-2009. Another stellar year in the CV of SG. *Powderlife* have yet again asked me to write an article, this time about my on-and-off-piste conquests during the season. I laughed at first, as a) I really did not fancy writing a thesis - I mean, there are far too many conquests to write about; and b) I'm a busy man with many powder and female commitments.

So I have penned together a quick top 10. They may be numerically listed, but make no mistake, these achievements are all equally as impressive as each other.

10 My 210 Blizzards and rear-entry Nordicas. It would not be a true season without reference to my trusty equipment. The longevity and ongoing performance of them never ceases to amaze me - much like myself.

9 My ability to ski, consume 48 beers per night, and serenade the ladies. I really am some sort of a deity within Niseko. Sometimes I feel I should be awarded '8th Wonder of the World' status.

8 The launch of my Goldman Grill, the portable barbecue you can take anywhere whether it be a Niseko winter or an Aussie summer. It sure is a winner. I've heard worldwide sales are steady, despite the economic downturn.

7 My single, 'I Just Wanna Ride with Stirls' going platinum on the ARIA charts. Of course I never had any doubts it would. Rumour has it they want me as part of the

next Big Day Out festival tour, and if that's the case, they'd better increase security.

6 Those two Slovenian ladies... the only day on the hill I missed. Enough said. You figure it out - it's not rocket surgery.

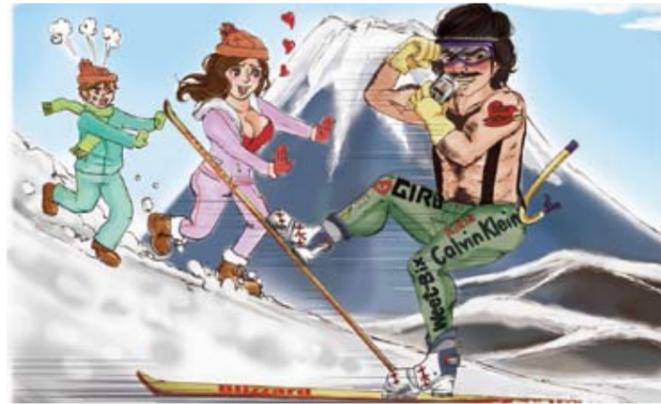
5 Bringing out the scuba gear while dropping the Annapuri Backbowsls on one ski... backwards. Always a favourite, season in, season out. The impressed look on bystanders' faces as they watch in awe makes it all the more worthwhile.

4 Being challenged to a beer-off by two Yanks. I think they got to seven and then had to be carried out by bar staff. Goldman had hardly worked up a sweat. Worse still, they were wanting to drink that beer-flavoured water they call Bud - possibly the worst beer ever made.

3 Being asked to be an honorary member of the Japanese Skiing Hall of Fame. A true honour in my illustrious career. The only gaijin ever to achieve it. This one will be locked in the memory bank forever.

2 The Aussie, the Irish and the two Scandinavians... no one does it better than Goldman. Again, you figure it out, but there was more than enough of Goldman to go around. Even had beers still being served throughout. And, most impressively, made first tracks the next morning.

1 My body and ridiculous good looks.



Call it what you want - priceless, timeless, a sponsors dream. The list goes on. Appreciated by women, desired by men, and of course produced, by one SG.

Enjoy the off season. Ladies, I'll see you soon. Fellas, keep on trying. Catch you all next year. Signing out for 08/09, S. Goldman.

Q: Stirling, many of your sponsors and cash cows are winter-related... Excuse me for asking, but I'm curious, how do you get by for work and cash in the off season? - Sally, US

A: Sally, Sally, Sally. Clearly you have not seen me with my shirt off. I have a body that is made for summer products. Speedo have tried to sign me numerous times and I already do a bit of work with Arnette sunglasses. The problem is I tend to just chase the winters in search of powder snow, so there is no real need for the summer market. Mt Baw Baw sorts me out in the Niseko off season. And there is no off season with the ladies. Sally, when it comes to Goldman, all you want to do is ride around, Sally, riiiiide, Sally riiiiide!

Q: Stirling, you've got an interesting name. Where are you from? - Slobdan, Hungary

A: Well Savos Slobster, it is interesting you ask. I hail from the great Mount Baw Baw - but you already know that. But some of my family actually comes from Hungary, too. Yes back in the day, old SG's ancestors used to cut their trade back in the 'Pest' (Budapest). Great place, Slobbo. Actually managed to get back there a couple of years ago. Let's just say I enjoyed sampling the local 'cuisine' with my paprika.

Q: You've been in Niseko for many, many years... This year's snow has been pretty average, no? What are your predictions for the 2009-10 winter, oh wise one? XOX - Helga, Sweden.

Helga, I don't like to predict things. I just go with the flow. Carpe diem, Helga. SG likes to live for the moment. No clairvoyants for him. The truth is, Helga, even when the snow is average I go so extreme that I still find parts that require a snorkel, and quite often the full-blown scuba gear. Helga, Niseko's snow is like sex: even when its bad, it's still good... very good if it's with me. Speaking of which, Helga, if I am to predict one thing for 2009-10, it would be a pretty safe bet that you may at some stage be locked into some nocturnal time with SG. But you can ask your Swedish predecessors if you want a heads up on how good it really is.

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The Vale progresses, naysayers silenced

WHILE the leaves on the trees are yet to sprout, the recommencement of work on The Vale construction site is a sure sign spring is on the way.

Nisade Chairman Jonathan Martin said he was happy to silence the naysayers with the recommencement of the construction.

"This will put to rest the endless and unfortunate rumours that the site is not proceeding," Martin said.

The world economic crisis has put pressure on Niseko developers, and there has been speculation The Vale may become a casualty mid-way through construction.

Martin said that with completion scheduled for December 6, work would reach capacity in early April with the first concrete pour.

After that, the structure would go up at the rate of a one storey every two weeks, so by August the 'bones' of the building would be up, he said.



Commercial property on the up

WITH Japanese prime time shows praising Niseko for its culinary diversity, commercial restaurant property in upper Hirafu is maintaining strong interest.

Most recent construction projects in the Upper Village are now being built, with the ground level reserved for commercial ventures, and these spaces don't tend to stay on the market for long.

"We're seeing renewed interest in commercial property in Hirafu," Niseko Property managing director Ruskin McLennan said. "We've got contracts on two of the major restaurants in Niseko. These sites have been snapped up by expats living in Japan and Hong Kong."

The Vale project, which won't finish construction until December of this year, has the commercial area of its development already spoken for, said Nisade chairman Jonathan Martin. The restaurant and bar, to be named The Vale Bar and Grill, is to be headed up by renowned Hong Kong restaurateurs Wayne and Brian Parfitt, who are well-known for their HK establishments, Wagyu, and Jaspers," he said.

Strong yen attracts Japanese investors

YEN buyers are looking to take advantage of the current market conditions and make a move on Niseko investments.

The strength of the yen and the current economic climate has moved some sellers to reconsider their placing in the international market. This in turn has opened doors to local buyers less affected by international exchange rates.

Ben Kerr, managing director of Niseko Real Estate, is one of the people on the ground who has noticed this shift in interest first-hand.

"The negative press in Japan has caught the eye of Japanese investors, and we're getting a some enquiries at the moment," he said.

"They're not buying willy nilly like the Aussies a few years ago, but they're having a good look.

"The prices have come down so it makes sense in a Japanese mindset.

"We are currently receiving more business and individual Japanese enquiries than western."

Going green to stay in the game

GREEN building methods are a focus for many of those involved in Niseko's recent architecture.

From the use of local materials to eco-energy sources, builders and designers in Niseko are answering this call.

The Forest development, designed by architect Riccardo Tossani, was built with a focus on a large amount of supplies resourced from local avenues.

"Natural materials are used extensively inside and out," Tossani said. "The floors and internal and external walls all use Hokkaido Sugi cedar.

Consideration was given to everything down to the landscaping materials of native trees and grasses."

Matt Jones from Niseko RDC said is company was working on implementing multiple eco-friendly energy techniques on the new 260 Degrees project.

"The house is completely eco-powered and heated," he said. The heat and energy required come from renewable resources, such as 52 solar panels on the roof and 20 geothermal bore holes."

Niseko's future safe, but tough times still ahead

By Matthew Thomas

NISEKO'S real estate market built itself up into a seemingly invincible force, until this season.

In 2008-09, after around seven years of momentum, the town's real estate trade experienced its first correction in response to the global financial crisis, a strong yen and a weak Australian dollar.

Powderlife spoke to several local real estate figureheads, who all remain confident that, in the long term, Niseko will bounce back to the prosperous days of old.

Many remain unsure about the short-to-mid-term forecast for the ski town, but what most agree on is the tough times aren't over just yet.

The first person to open a bilingual estate agency in town, Niseko Real Estate managing director Ben Kerr, predicts that nothing much will change locally in real estate for at least the next 12-18 months.

"This winter we sold very little real estate, and it's my feeling that next winter will be quiet again," Kerr said, who began NRE about seven years ago.

"It's my guess that the current level of the yen is not sustainable and will drop a little, so even if the world economy gets slightly worse because the yen's going to be cheaper, it will be easier for us to make sales."

Kerr also tipped a few changes to Niseko's key market targets.

"We'll always have Aussies coming across if we give them good nightly rates and the yen doesn't do anything too silly," he said.

"We'll also always have expats coming from throughout Asia to ski because of the good snow, but I also see a growing Japanese ski population coming through, who will stay for three or four nights in condominiums - a trend that's here now in Hirafu.

"NRE is going to batten down and ride it out, while adapting to that changing Japanese market."

Niseko Property managing director Ruskin McLennan agreed with several of Kerr's thoughts, adding that Niseko would see an increasing number of Asian developers entering the market in the coming months and years.



Photo: Niseko Photography

He also believes the number of new developments in Niseko will slow substantially.

"Consequently, we will see land values fall from the peaks of 12 months ago, and an increased focus on the resale market," McLennan said.

Hokkaido Real Estate managing director Jason King also foresees a drop in the development and construction markets due to falling property resale values.

He said the three-year outlook for Niseko had many variables, such as "exchange rates, the world economy and when Richard Li kicks off his Hanazono redevelopment".

"Within the next year the price-reduced properties will sell, and then a fresh market can be established," King said.

"With a slowdown in construction, building prices should also return to the lower levels of five years ago, which will all be part of the new pricing mechanism.

"In any case, there are plenty of resales available, and at very reasonable prices, so it is hard to imagine that developers will be able to compete with the lower price points for a year or so."

President of West Canada Homes Paul Nikel remained positive for the future of Niseko due to its natural assets, such as the main calling card - powder snow, and plenty of it.

He did, however, add that the Niseko market correction may allow for reflection on long-term goals for the town.

"Growth will continue to be positive, but perhaps for the best will be a bit more rational and will take into account the long terms goals of the village," Nikel said.

"Niseko will always have some of the best and most consistent snow in the world, and as Asia emerges from the current crisis, demand will correspondingly increase.

"The village will continue to be popular with tourists throughout Asia, Australia and even into Europe.

"Our fundamental belief is that Niseko and Hokkaido is a beautiful part of the world and a great place to be.

"Over the past years many people have come to fall in love with the area the same way we have, and this will continue for many years to come."

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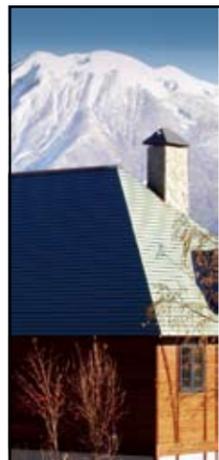
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Q&A with Jonathan Martin



Interview by Kristian Lund

NISADE'S head honcho and family man Jonathan Martin gives us his views on Niseko past, present and future...

How long have you been in Japan and Niseko and what brought you here?

I've been working in Niseko for three years, relocating the family here with me 15 months ago. The snow brought me, I had done my time in the corporate world and was looking for a change. Having always wanting to utilise those corporate skills, property development, corporate governance, corporate compliance and business management in a more relaxed and rewarding arena I had always wanted to marry the love of the alpine environment with business. Once I heard about the fabled snows of Niseko and its proximity to Southeast Asia I was sold as it ticked all the boxes.

What kind of work/projects have you been involved with before you came to Niseko?

I spent 13 years working in Sydney in a boutique funds management company that I set up with a partner. We syndicated investments across property, IT and even a film, which incidentally was a complete flop. Over time our business moved more and more into the property arena and we developed the full spectrum, industrial, commercial, retail and residential industries throughout Australia.

How many projects have you done here and what type of projects were they?

The Vale Niseko will be our third project here in Niseko, our first two, delivered in our first year of operation, were The Setsumon and The Freshwater. I certainly would not undertake two in one hit again; it was a tough first year. The learning curve was so steep and without the dedicated work of the Nisade team we would have fallen short on delivery. As it was we delivered both ahead of time and under budget thanks to strong relationships with our builder, Nakayama Gumi.

How do you feel about Nisade's premier project to date, The Vale, and what do you think it will add to Niseko?

This project will help drive the emergence of Niseko as a world-quality ski destination. Our aim is to continue the upward drive of Niseko, the place for Asia to come and ski. As the first new fully integrated new building in Hirafu, it brings so much more to the market. Offering room service, air-conditioning and a heated pool we are confident The Vale will add to the Niseko story. The challenge for us is obviously cost – it's being spent getting the product, amenity and feel just right in a time of global turmoil. My goal is the next 20 years and I know with utter conviction The Vale will stand that test. Rental-wise we are really targeting summer; the lower levels have 15 hotel rooms designed exclusively for the Japanese domestic market. More summer guests is the long-term future for Niseko.

What do you think Niseko will be like in 10 years time?

Niseko will deliver. The years ahead will be very exciting. With Hanazono, Higashiyama and Chris Peck's vision for Annupuri coming on line, the mountain will truly have four strong portals. With competing interests for the skier and boarder we will get the lift infrastructure upgrade in time which will further propel Niseko into the No. 1 slot.

Summer will emerge as a strength and will surprise many. Our biggest challenge will be to retain the Japanese experience, but I am sure we can get that right.

Do you think you will be here in 10 years time, and if so, what kind of projects do you think you will, or would like to be, working on?

The Martin family will be firmly ensconced here in Niseko, the place just has so much to offer a family and it will only get better. Work-wise it will be difficult to keep pace with the bigger corporations and institutions moving into the area, so we are positioning the business to be able to offer full-service development management services to these larger players. Alongside that we will continue to develop in our own right, small scale quality projects. That said, prior to the financial collapse we had constant approaches to joint venture with some of these bigger players and actually already have on the books a joint venture with one of Singapore's largest hoteliers.

We understand you've been working to get an international school established in the area. Can you tell us about this and what it's like raising young foreign children in Japan?

Not as much as some of the other people around town, but we are definitely in there pushing. If we could get one in the area it would be so good for not just the locals, but for the Niseko story. In fact one client this winter said if it was here she would bring her kids up for the winter semester. Kai, our son, attended Fuji Yochien (pre-school) in Kutchan last year and made some good friends, but saw it more as day care. We really want to be part of the local school community, but first and foremost we have to get our kids moving on the education platform. To that end, we have taken a different tack and are now home schooling, as we really want our son to understand schooling and how much fun learning can be.



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

FOR YOUR SAFETY

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

ALPINE RESPONSIBILITY CODE

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

KNOW THE CODE: IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY



ATTENTION

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

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



Ski area shuttle bus
Niseko Free Passport Bus

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

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

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

Strictly off limits

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

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

Niseko Rules

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

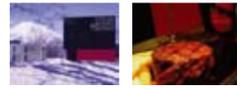
- 1. CERTAIN CLOSED AREAS WITHIN NISEKO ARE STRICTLY OFF LIMIT AND ARE NOT TO BE ENTERED AT ANY TIME**
Yu no Sawa(Gully between An'nupuri and Niseko Village area), Mizuno no Sawa (underneath Niseko Gondola) and Haru no Taki (cliff area west of Hirafu) are "STRICTLY off limits areas" as stated by the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

- 3. NO SAFETY CONTROL BEYOND RESORT BOUNDARY**
The area outside the mountain resort boundaries (back country, including the peak) are National forests and parks, and are not controlled or supervised by the resort or the Ski Patrol. Niseko Rules proclaims that hiking and riding these areas is dangerous and if you choose to, you do it AT YOUR OWN RISK.
- 4. BACK COUNTRY SKIING/RIDING IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED WHEN GATES ARE CLOSED**
During extremely hazardous conditions, the gates will be closed and out of bound riding will be strictly prohibited.
- 5. AVALANCHE CONDITION INFORMATION**
The "Niseko Avalanche Information" is the official information posted by "Niseko Avalanche Institute". This information can be found at lift stations, access gates and on the Internet.

- 6. BACK COUNTRY RESCUE FEE**
YOU are responsible for the cost of your rescue from back country areas.
- 7. SKI AND MOUNTAIN PATROL INSTRUCTIONS MUST BE OBEYED**
Niseko Rules insists that all resort users respect and obey the instructions of the Ski Patrol and the Shiribeshi Mountain Patrol.
- 8. RESPECT EACH OTHER**
Niseko's ski resorts and the locals respect the freedom of the visitors, but are concerned about their safety, and expect visitors to respect the Niseko Rules.

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

Services



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



Call for an appointment or just drop in. Ph. 0136 22 0399

Niseko Physio
ニセコフィジオ
22 0399 [MAP B2]
Your English speaking sports injury centre in Hirafu. Australian trained winter sports physiotherapists.



Sekka Deli Cafe
セッカデリカフェ
21 3088 [MAP B2]
House-made produce using local ingredients, cheeses, meats, wines. Breakfast to dinner, dine in or take away.

Skybus スカイバス
22 2108 [MAP D2]
Sapporo office 011 788 4994

Delis, food outlets



Sekka Dining
セッカダイニング
21 5022 [MAP B2]
Experience the taste of Hokkaido in style at Sekka Dining. International fusion cuisine using Hokkaido ingredients.

Lawson Hirafu
ローソン
23-1230 [MAP C2]

M-Pocket Kutchan
M-ポケット
22-1070 [MAP Kutchan F7]

Niseko Wine Supply
ニセコワインサプライ090
6875 5931 [MAP XX]

Seicomart Hirafu
セイコマート
23-3271 [MAP C2]

Sekka Deli
セッカデリ
21 3088 [MAP B2]

Sekka Landmark Deli
セッカランドマーク
23 4285 [MAP E2]

Sekka Teca Wine Shop
セッカテカワインショップ
21 3088 [MAP B2]

Shokusai Hirafu
食彩 比羅夫
22 1105 [MAP C1]

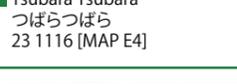
Shunsai
旬彩
23 1882 [Kutchan]

Slalom
スラローム
22 1105 [MAP C1]

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

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

Hotels



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!

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]

Yawaraya
やわらや
23 3810 [MAP C3]

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

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

Yummy's
ヤミーズ
21 2239 [MAP C3]

Kumagoro
くまごろう
23 3381 [MAP B3]

Landmark Deli
くまごろう
23 4285 [MAP E2]

Loaf Lounge
ローフラウンジ
22 1022 [Kutchan]



Maru mazu
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 4771 [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
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21 6888 [MAP D2]

Paddy McGintys
パディーマギンティーズ
55 8020 [MAP C2]



Paul's Cafe and Bar
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090 9083 6764 [MAP C3]
Specialising in Belgian beer and rotisserie chicken. More than 30 beers on tap or in bottles. Belgian Waffles.

Payoka
パヨカ
22 0117 [MAP E1]

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

Raku Izakaya
楽 居酒屋
22 6638 [MAP C3]

Rin Izakaya
りん 居酒屋
22 1444 [MAP B3]

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

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

Grandpapa
グランパパ
0136 23 2244 [MAP B3]

Graubunden
グラウビュンデン
23 3371 [MAP E4]



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

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

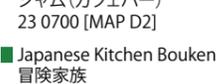
Ichimura Soba
蕎麦屋 いちむら
23 0603 [MAP F3]

if... Cafe
カフェ イフ
22 4770 [MAP B3]

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

Japanese Kitchen Bouken
冒険家族
22 3759

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



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



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

Jyuu Okonomiyaki
じゅう
44 2336 [Higashiyama]

Kakashi
かかし
23 2622 [MAP D2]

Kame
亀
22 0339 [MAP E3]



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

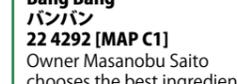
Kila
姫羅
070 6646 4715 [MAP C2]

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

Restaurants, cafes and eateries

A-Bu-Cha
阿武茶
22 5620 [MAP C2]

B's Cafe and Bar
ビーズ カフェ&バー
22 1480 [MAP D1]



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

Barunba
バルンバ
090 8907 9399 [MAP B2]

Menu Selections
Salmon pizza 1300
Vernon/Hamburg 1250
Pasta 1000-
Buffalo wings 600

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

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

Bouken Kazoku
冒険家族
22 3759

Chidori
千鳥
23 2831 [MAP F4]

Curry Goya
カレー小屋
23 3688 [MAP F4]

Downtown
ダウントウン
23 3354 [MAP B3]

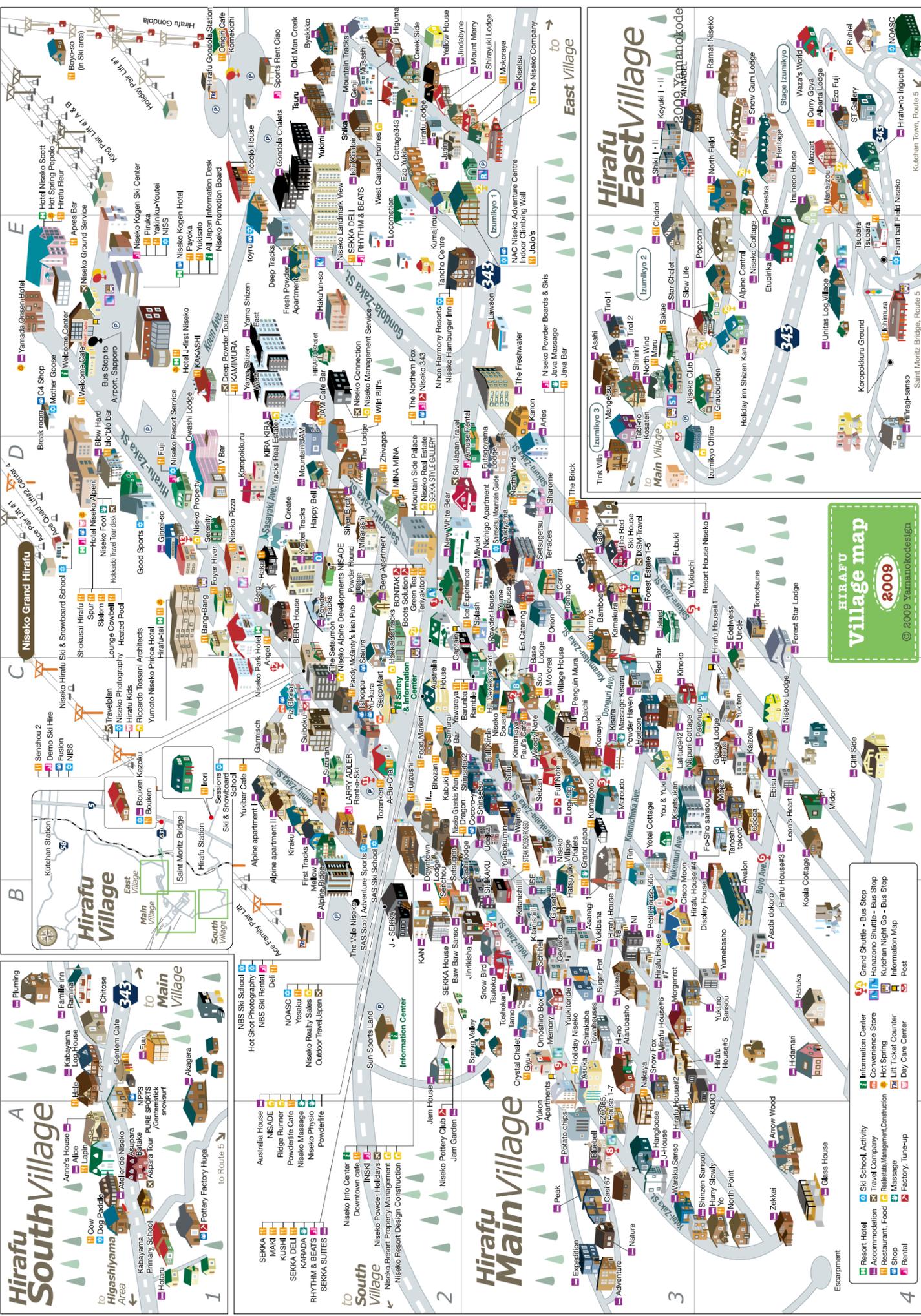
Dragon Wine and Food Bar
ドラゴン ワイン&バー
21 7700 [MAP B2]



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

Fujizushi
ふじ鮨
23 2661 [MAP B3]

Gentem Cafe
ジェンテム
23 3154 [MAP B1]



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

Bars

- Angel Karaoke Bar エンジェルカラオケバー 23 1281 [MAP D2]
- Après Bar アプレバー 23 2311 [MAP E1]
- Bar Lair バー・レイアー 22 0588 [MAP D1]
- Barunba バルンバ 090 8907 9399 [MAP C3]
- Be. ビー 556 905
- Blo Blo Bar ブロブロバー 22 1269 [MAP D1]
- Dragon Wine and Food Bar ドラゴン ワイン&フードバー 21 7700 [MAP B2]
- Fridge Door Bar (Gyu+) ギョウタスバー 23 1432 [MAP B3]
- Jam Café Bar ジャムカフェバー 23 0700 [MAP D2]
- Java Bar and Café ジャババー&カフェ 090 2871 6781 [MAP D3]
- Maki Lounge Bar @ J-SEKKA マキラウンジバー@ジェイセッカ 21 3080 [MAP C2]
- Masukotto マスコット 23 1101 [MAP C2]
- Paddy McGintys パディーマッキングティーズ 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]
- Splash スプラッシュ 23 1688 [MAP C3]
- The Brick ブリック 22 3444 [MAP D3]

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

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 イクスム 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 Pottery Club ニセコ陶芸クラブ 23 4844 [MAP A3]
- Niseko Snowmobile Adventures ニセコスノーモービルアドベンチャー 21 5001
- NOASC ノアスク 23 1688 [MAP C3]
- Paint Ball Field Niseko ペイントボールフィールドニセコ 23 2111 [MAP E4]
- SAS Scott Adventure Sports SASスコットアドベンチャースポーツ 21 3333 [MAP B2]

Real estate

- Hokkaido Tracks Development 北海道トラックス 開発 21 7202 [MAP C2]
- Hokkaido Real Estate 北海道リアルエステート 080 5587 5052 [MAP C2]
- INSKI インスキー 22 4199 [MAP E2]
- 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 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 22 6977 [MAP E2]
- West Canada Homes/Properties ウェストカナダホームズ 21 2226 [MAP E2]

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]

Accommodation providers



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

- J-Sekka Suites ジェイセッカスイート 21 6133 or 21 7788 [MAP B2]
- NISADE ニセード 22 0038 [MAP C2]
- Niseko Ground Service ニセコグランドサービス 21 2503 [MAP C2]
- Niseko Management Service ニセコマネジメントサービス 21 5020 [MAP D3]
- Niseko Powder Connection ニセコパウダーコネクション 21 2500 [MAP D2]
- Niseko Powder Holidays ニセコパウダーホリデー 23 4843 [MAP D2]
- Outdoor Travel Japan アウトドア トラベル ジャパン 21 2171 [MAP C3]
- Ski Japan スキージャパン 22 4611 [MAP D3]
- The Niseko Company ザ ニセコ カンパニー 21-7272 [MAP F2]
- Deep powder tours ディープパウダーツアーズ 21 5827 [MAP D2]
- Hokkaido Tracks 北海道トラックス 23 3503 [MAP C2]
- Hokkaido Travel 北海道トラベル 233 327 [MAP C2]
- Holiday Niseko ホリデー ニセコ 21 6221 [MAP A3]
- Izumikyo 泉郷 23 3301 [MAP D4]

Rental

- Demo デモ 21 66 77 [MAP C2]
- LJHooker Niseko エルジェイフッカーニセコ 55 8880 [MAP B2]
- NBS Niseko Base Sports ニセコ ベース スポーツ 21 5050 [MAP B2]
- Grand Hirafu Ski Hire グランドヒラフスキーハイヤー 0136 22 0109 [MAP D1]
- Niseko Powder Boards ニセコパウダーボード 0901 384 5772 [MAP D3]
- Niseko 343 ニセコ 3 4 3 23 0343 [MAP C3]
- Rhythm & Beats リズム&ビート 22-0165 [MAP E2]
- SAS Scott Adventure Sports スコットアドベンチャースポーツ 21 3333 [MAP B2]
- Sports Rent Ciao スポーツ レンタル チャオ 22 5178 [MAP F2]

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.

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

DOOR TO DOOR TRANSFER
Skybus offers a door to door transfer service from the airport to Niseko or Sapporo. Chitose to Niseko from ¥9000 return per person, or better deals for private shuttle transfers – ¥30,000 one way for up to 5 passengers, ¥40,000 one way for up to 9 passengers, or ¥50,000 one way for up to 14 passengers. Go to www.skybus-jp.com/index.html

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

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

TAXI
A standard taxi from Chitose to Hirafu will cost about ¥30,000, but you may not fit all your gear in it. Prai Taxi charges ¥20,000 for a small taxi (3-4 people) or ¥33,000 for a jumbo (8-10 people). Call 011 207 5166 or www.prai.co.jp.

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

The train schedules are subject to change so it is best to call the numbers below or visit: www.japanrail.com.
Airport.....0123-45-7011

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

INTER-RESORT TRANSPORT
A shuttle bus connects the Grand Hirafu, Higashiyama and Annupuri ski areas. There is a private company bus which costs ¥500 and a free shuttle bus which is included in your all mountain pass. See the timetable on the course map for more information. If you have a 12-point ticket, one point per trip is needed. Others need ¥500 for adult and ¥300 for child per ride.

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

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

AIRLINES
ANA.....0120 029 222
British Airways.....03 3570 8657
Cathay Pacific.....03 5159 1700
China Airlines.....03 5520 0333
JAL.....0120 255 971
Korean Air.....0088 21 2001
Qantas.....0120 207 020
Singapore Airlines.....03 3503 3311
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
When driving on icy roads the number one thing to remember is to drive slowly. Make sure the windscreen and back and side windows are thoroughly de-iced on the outside and de-steamed on the inside before setting off – don't simply clear a 'porthole' to look through. Maintain at least a five-second gap between you and the vehicle in front. Use a high gear to avoid wheel spin, but take care not to let your speed creep up. Brake gently to avoid locking the wheels. Never brake if the vehicle skids, instead, ease off the accelerator and steer slightly into the direction of the skid until you gain control.

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

EARTHQUAKES
In the event of an earthquake, stay out of elevators,

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

EMERGENCIES
Police110
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
Brasel
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. Brasel 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.brasel.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 "〒" 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.

Japan: land of contrasts

By Bevan Colless



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

I LOVE Japan.

I've lived here for nine years, so considering I'm 36 years old, that's most of my adult life. For those that knew me before I was 25, I'm sure they would suggest it's virtually all of my adult life. I love the people, the way they give 100 per cent in everything they do, their respectfulness, diligence, thoughtfulness and their sense of style. One aspect of Japan that has struck me, as

I'm sure it has many visitors, is the contradictions in society. I can gaze at the Fuji Television building (right) in Tokyo in awe of the architecture and construction that is so futuristic it makes me feel like I'm in a scene from *The Jetsons*, and then I return home to find the insulation on my house is so poor that it's colder inside than it is outside; in summer it's hotter inside than out. I can go to a juice bar and ask where the bathroom is and the attendant will run out from behind the counter and escort me there. Then I'll go back and ask for a glass of carrot and apple juice and be told that I can have a glass of apple, or a glass of carrot, but there is no way I'll be getting a carrot and apple as it's not on the menu. Some aspects of Japanese medicine is world-leading, but it is still standard practice in many hospitals to put ACL rupture in plaster-casts or back slabs for several weeks, a practice that has been eschewed by Western medicine for decades due to the difficulty in rehabbing the atrophied and stiff knee after the cast is removed.

As a physiotherapist, one of my interest areas has been in occupational and public health and safety, and in Japan the contradictions in this area are often marked. Japan prides itself on being a 'safety country', and in many areas it certainly is. The per-capita rates for murder, rape, serious assault and robbery in Japan are all among the lowest in the world. In a winter ski resort, one of the key issues related to public health and safety is access to the backcountry, and the associated risks, especially avalanches. In Niseko, it is one of the most common topics of conversation

around town. The risks related to avalanche are indeed dire, and with so few of the people accessing the area equipped with the experience, equipment or knowledge to deal with the potential risks they face, the risks are amplified. I recently watched *Bondi Rescue* on Australia Network here in Japan (a reality show following lifeguards' at work on Bondi Beach). As I watched the lifeguards try to explain to an ambivalent Asian tourist the importance of swimming between the flags, I couldn't help but compare it to an Australian punter barreling through the gates in Niseko, brushing off the ski patrol's advice.

Niseko is to be commended for its gate policy, which allows respected experts to decide if the avalanche risk on a particular day is acceptable for the public to enter the backcountry, or not. Many resorts in Japan enforce a strict 'no off-piste' policy, making no consideration for the relative safety of one area over another, or daily weather conditions and avalanche risk. In many cases this could be seen as akin to the aforementioned lifeguards permanently fencing off the beaches so people are free to lie on the sand but not enter the water. For many keen backcountry skiers and boarders, this can be particularly frustrating, especially if they have spent a considerable amount of money and effort into getting their turns in fresh powder. If the visitors are bewildered as to the reasons the areas are closed, it can often lead to heated exchanges with ski patrols.

The goal of the resort to protect their guests from harm is an honourable one, however, it must be balanced with the actual danger to the skier or rider. Resorts who favour the 'absolutely no harm' policy and totally forbid backcountry access may have root in the owners of ski resorts often coming from a background in the transport industry, where an absolutely no-harm policy is particularly admirable. Some resorts do not have suitably qualified experts to make judgments of the safety of the areas, so there could be an argument that totally forbidding access is the correct option for these resorts. However, there could also be an argument that it's another one of Japan's contradictions to the greater public and occupational health policies in Japan.

Smoking and alcohol are often considered important to a country's health and safety policy, and both are viewed with a liberal attitude in Japan. Taxes



on the products are kept low compared to most Western countries and their distribution and consumption are relatively loosely monitored by the government.

I once had a builder who is a friend of mine visit me in Tokyo, and as we were walking past a building site he stopped and after a minute said, "I just counted about \$100,000 worth of OH&S (Occupational Health and Safety) fines that I would be up for if that was my building site in Australia." As a member of the Japan Ergonomics Society, I have been invited to seminars and workshops by a government OH&S official whom I met at an ergonomics conference in Korea. In one such seminar, I watched a construction company's OH&S manager present to visiting English government OH&S managers, exulting the belts that construction workers in Japan wear instead of the harnesses which are compulsory for workers at heights in the Western world (too bulky for the Japanese, apparently). When pressed on what happens when a worker falls from a height while restrained by the belt, he admitted a permanent spinal injury was the usual result. Indeed according to statistics released by the Japan Industrial Safety and Health Association (JISHA) Annual Report in 2004, the average annual total for the years 1987-2003 for deaths to construction workers has remained over 800 per year.

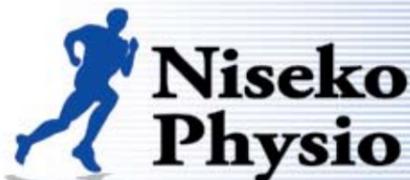
There are many things in Japan that can frustrate you but it's the differences that make it so appealing to us internationals in the first place. In many ways there is something about a country that can create a robot with feelings, while allowing you to buy beer from a vending machine on the street at midnight, that you've got to love.



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Niseko Physio was established as a branch office of Tokyo Physio, to provide quality physiotherapy care for the English speaking residents and visitors to Niseko. We are committed to providing a standard of care that is up with the best in the world. Our Australian trained physiotherapists specialise in winter sports injuries, and are experienced in accelerated rehabilitation techniques to get you back on the slopes as soon as possible. We also stock a large range of braces to further assist your recovery.

2F Australia House, 170 - 5 Aza Yamada, Kutchan-cho, Abuta-gun, Hokkaido 044-0081
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