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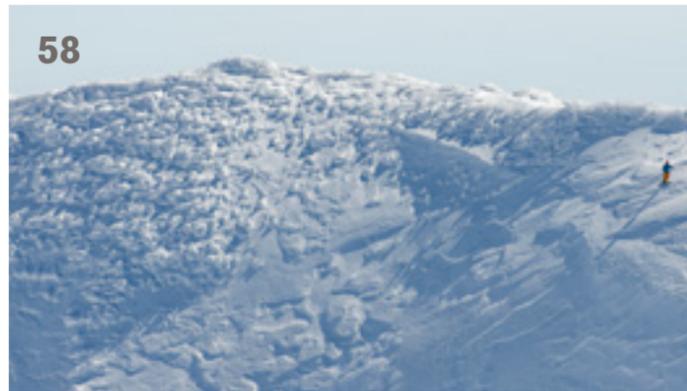
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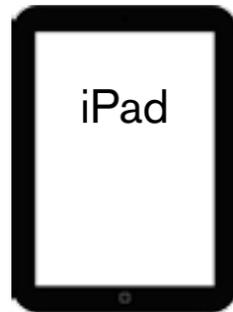
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PIC GLEN CLAYDON

WELCOME TO NISEKO AND THANK YOU FOR PICKING UP, AND DELVING INTO THE PAGES OF, THE 44TH ISSUE OF POWDERLIFE. A MAJOR THEME RUNNING THROUGH THIS EDITION OF THE MAGAZINE IS NISEKO'S INCREASING ETHNIC DIVERSITY.

Japan is actually a very homogenous society. Visit rural towns across the country and chances are in many you won't see a single foreigner walk down the main street all week, or possibly all year. As the country's population rapidly ages, farming communities are literally going bankrupt as more and more youngsters seek out city-life where they have a choice of well-paid work and modern entertainment. In some towns, land is actually being given away to attract residents.

Niseko is one of very few rural areas in Japan I am aware of where the opposite is happening. Property values are increasing and young Japanese people are actually flocking here to enjoy the Niseko powder lifestyle, learn English and experience the excitement of an international ski resort. Millions of dollars are flowing into the resort which filters down into all areas of the local community.

But it's not just money that has benefited the local community. Suddenly it's becoming clear that a new multicultural community is breeding new ideas and inspiring new cultural exchange – a rare concept

in Japan which is traditionally anti-immigration for fear of the damage it could do rather than the benefits it could bring.

Among our ranks in Niseko we now have a community of Nepalese rafting guides and chefs, a Canadian heli-ski pioneer, a Romanian pizza baron, a Dutch organic-farming chef, a Belgian beer brewer, and a barman from Miami who could turn a snow cave into the hottest pub in town (drop into new bar Amaru to see what I mean).

In this magazine we'll introduce you to a few of these people, but also highlight how Japanese chefs are now leading the way in the evolution of French cooking, much to the delight of the world's finest food connoisseurs. On the next page you'll also learn how an unknown Hokkaido chef travelled to Australia, before returning to now open a restaurant in Hirafu as somewhat of a celebrity.

Niseko won every Japan category of the World Ski Awards this year, so it's obvious this Japanese-flavoured, multicultural resort recipe is satisfying many palates. **KRISTIAN LUND | KRIS@POWDERLIFE.COM**



NISEKO M.T. RESORT
Grand HIRAFU

Make your day.

FRESH NEWS

What's new in Niseko this winter?



PIC: AARON JAMESON

NISEKO WINS AGAIN!

NISEKO was named best resort and took out every Japanese category of the second World Ski Awards. The Vale Niseko was named WORLD'S BEST boutique ski hotel, while other awards went to the Hilton, HT Holidays for best chalet, and local avalanche forecaster Akio Shinya for dedicated service.

EPIC? JUST ADD POWDER

Colorado, Utah, Lake Tahoe, Hokkaido... rolls off the tongue, don't it? Niseko has been added to a list of who's-who US ski resorts that you can ski on the Epic Pass lift pass this winter. No doubt we'll be hearing more North American accents as the continent's skiers discover Hokkaido's epic powder.



DITCH THE SHERPA – HIRAFU ZAKA ICE-FREE

Until this year, navigating Hirafu's rather steep main street up to the Ace Quad lift and many of Hirafu's best restaurants almost required climbing gear and a mountain guide. This winter, be sure to appreciate the ice-free heated road and footpaths. Buried power lines and other enhancements in 2015 will make it picture-perfect – icing on the cake!



BIG BRANDS BUYING IN

Some of the world's leading ski and outdoor brands are starting to take up residence in Niseko. Leading the way this winter is The North Face, establishing its flagship Japan concept store in new building Muse in the heart of Hirafu, opposite Shiki. The company – born as a hiking company in San Francisco in 1968 – chose Niseko for its four-seasons lifestyle and international flavour. In summer it will open a café out onto the main street.

NEW GONDOLA DELIVERS

Two winters ago, the owners of Grand Hirafu invested in a new high-speed gondola, family lift and mountain base building on the quieter, eastern side of the resort. There wasn't much there at that stage except for an old slope-side café and a few apartments down the road.

This winter will see the first signs that the investment in the resort infrastructure will pay off, with a whole new accommodation and activity precinct taking shape. Most notably, it has spawned a new on-snow kids area, complete with play equipment, and magic carpet conveyor belt – the only one in Hirafu. Hirafu's new official international ski school GoSnow Gondola Snowsports will also be based here.

The most noticeable new resident of the precinct is six-storey luxury ski-in/ski-out hotel Ki Niseko, which brings with it a new onsen for Hirafu, in-house spa, restaurant, retail shop and gallery. With plans for some next-level luxury ski-in/ski-out developments in the pipeline, it seems it's only just beginning for the gondola precinct.



SHIN-SAN'S HOMECOMING

Shinichi Maeda's love of food came from his grandmother in Hokkaido, who grew her own vegetables in summer before burying them in the first snowfalls to keep them fresh. In this snowbound climate, Shin-san learned how precious fresh food was. After making a name for himself as a chef in Australia, this winter he returns to Hokkaido, heading up new Hirafu restaurant An Dining, sure to become a local hit (located in Ki Niseko).

BRINGING BACK THE BACON

Along with about 20 new restaurants in Niseko this year (that's right – 20!) there is one notable returnee. Bistrot le cochon opened without fanfare in nearby Kutchan town in 2008 before local foodies quickly put it on the map. After a brief closure, Bistrot le cochon reopens in Hirafu this winter. Book early!



NEW OLD-WORLD VILLAGE

The resort of Niseko Village has this year opened a new shopping and dining precinct modelled on ancient Japan. Amongst paved, lantern-lit lane ways and wooden lattice facades will be upmarket dining and retail outlets. Famous Sapporo retailer Ikeuchi will operate four of the stores in addition to its Hirafu store and new rental centre. Village shops open until 8pm.

BIKES ON BOARD THIS WINTER

Major international cycling outfit Boardman Bikes has opened a showroom in Hirafu this winter, in the side street just above Rhythm. The company plans to lead the way for the growing Niseko cycling/triathlon scene. The Niseko region and its pristine roads are tailor-made for the growing number of professional events here, including an Ironman Japan triathlon at nearby Lake Toya, the Niseko Classic (70km/140km road races) and the 15.5km-long Hanazono Hill Climb.



SUMMER BOVINE BREAKOUT

The world's biggest public art event will be set loose on Niseko in summer 2015. Up to 50 locally decorated life-size fibreglass cows will be placed throughout the resort for the 81st international Cow Parade since 1999. There will plenty to do throughout the event which runs from July 15 to October 15.

IN THE PIPELINE

MOIWA ACCESS EASIER

Mt Moiwa, in the shadow of Mt Annupuri, is like Niseko's little brother but has long been known as a backcountry powder haven. For the first time this year, Moiwa will be grooming a track back to Annupuri, and is working towards securing the necessary permits and permissions for a track from Annupuri to Moiwa.



SKI-IN/SKI-OUT ON UP & UP

Just when you thought there was no more ski-in/ski-out land in Hirafu, up pops two exciting new developments. The car parking area alongside The Vale Niseko and below the Ace family run is set to become a new multi-storey retail and apartment complex.

Meanwhile international resort property developer Zekkei has plans for a luxury land subdivision set amongst the forest below the gondola. The master architect is one of Japan's most famous architects Kengo Kuma, whose works include the Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy Group's Japan HQ and the Suntory Museum of Art in Tokyo. Expect something very special.

MUSE BREATHES LIFE INTO BLVD

A “living, breathing” new building this winter sets the tone for the redevelopment and revitalisation of one of Hirafu’s main streets. Along with angular planes and terraces, six-storey apartment/retail building Muse Niseko is wrapped in an “organic”, scale-like skin that casts shadows and catches falling snow, changing mood with the climate.

Architect Riccardo Tossani says it’s a building not only for its inhabitants but the community, adding life and amenity to the mundane main street, which he hopes will become known as Hirafu Boulevard.

“The skin of the building is something that gives it an organic dimension that works with the changing climate, so it’s a way of engaging with Niseko’s unique environment and Hirafu’s vibrant local character,” he says.

“As an iconic landmark, Muse will by default become the new gateway to Hirafu as well as a terminus to the Hirafu Boulevard pedestrian promenade. At pedestrian level, this winter will see the beginnings of a shop and café that utilises the wide boulevard sidewalk with terrace seating, events and other pedestrian-oriented activities to create a vibrant anchor at the Kutchan end of the street, promoting a more energetic



pedestrian promenade. Effectively Muse and its promenade terrace will become a model for how other shops and owners should treat the sidewalks along the boulevard, giving priority to pedestrian activity rather than parking as has been the case to date.”

Muse will also be home to outdoor brand North Face’s flagship Japan concept store. A terrace will be built out the front of the building for café seating, spilling out onto the sidewalk to provide a prominent al

fresco dining court. A Japanese calligraphy art installation by Rieko Kawabe will be displayed permanently in the lobby, with abstractions of Indigenous Ainu calligraphy.

Tossani says most apartments are owned by high profile identities who wanted to contribute to the cultural development of Niseko. “Collectively the owners are sophisticated, enlightened people who wanted their building to be a significant architectural landmark in the area.”

LADY IVY’S CONTRIBUTION TO NISEKO

Long before five-star hotels and Michelin-starred restaurants, Hong Kong’s Lady Ivy Wu and husband Sir Gordon happened upon Niseko’s quaint villages in the mid-1990s. After skiing at several resorts across Hokkaido, it was Niseko that captured their hearts. They’ve been coming back here ever since, recently opening boutique hotel Chalet Ivy on Hirafu’s main street (Hirafu Zaka) in order to help contribute to Niseko’s modern development.

It’s a fitting sentiment given Sir Gordon’s powerhouse contributions to infrastructure development across Asia. Dubbed “the man who turned the lights on” by former Philippine president Fidel Ramos, Sir Gordon’s company Hopewell Holdings led the charge as China opened its doors to the world in the 1970s and 80s, quickly becoming the largest single investor in China through infrastructure creation.

Lady Ivy was heavily involved in the construction and design of opulent Chalet Ivy, incorporating ideas she had garnered from hotels across the world. Chalet Ivy is within a snowball’s throw of Bang Bang and other top restaurants, however upon returning to Niseko each time, Lady Ivy most fondly looks forward to eating chef Kato-san’s sushi at Snow Castle – Chalet Ivy’s in-house restaurant – as she will do several times again this winter.



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After all, holidays are your most precious time of year and we are here to create memories that will last a lifetime.

GROOMERS meet the locals

YUTAKA TAKANASHI

Niseko's legendary telemark skiing Patagonia Ambassador

YUTAKA Takanashi grew up amidst the concrete of Tokyo, dreaming of forests and mountain streams. His heroes were adventurers such as Naomi Uemura, the first man to reach the North Pole solo, and world-famous nature photographer Michio Hoshino – Japan's Ansel Adams.

As soon as he finished high school, he followed his heart north to Hokkaido. He soon took to skiing but switched to snowboarding when he found he wasn't improving as fast as he wanted. He fell in love with the floating sensation he achieved snowboarding the then plentiful untracked powder within Hirafu. Day in, day out.

But one day he realised he was missing out on something – skiers, and particularly telemark skiers, were able to quickly and easily access parts of the mountain he couldn't on his snowboard. He strapped on a pair of telemarks which opened up a whole new world of terrain to him.

And he seemed to be able to telemark much better than he could ordinary ski. So much so that he tried his hand in the competitive arena, participating in several world cup and world championship events.

But competitive skiing left him unsatisfied, and he returned to the arena where telemark equipment comes into its own – big, steep lines in the world's biggest alpine mountains. 12 years ago he became an ambassador for outdoor adventure brand Patagonia, and has since been on six expeditions to Alaska, as well as skiing the great ranges of North America, South America and Europe.

However, every time he came back to Niseko he realised how lucky he was that he could ski in such incredibly deep, dry powder at such low altitudes.

These days Takanashi-san still skis almost every day in winter, and is busy running Toyru, his backcountry and telemark skiing shop and year round guiding company just below the gondola in Hirafu.



PIC: AARON JAMIESON



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WHAT'S ON

Get amongst the action this winter

PIC AARON JAMIESON

DECEMBER TRY NEW YEAR'S EVE NISEKO STYLE !

THE Japanese don't officially celebrate Christmas, so NYE is the biggest event of the festive season. Watch hundreds of skiers form a giant "15" on the slopes, before skiing down in a huge glowing trail. Out on the base of the ski hill there's free live music and taiko drum performances. The only other thing you need to know is, how to say Happy New Year, and we can teach you that right now... Akemashite Omedetou!

JANUARY FESTIVAL OF JAPAN

Real, life-size professional sumo wrestlers, traditional artisans, indigenous Ainu ambassadors and karate masters – there's more culture at Niseko's Festival of Japan than you can poke a Pocky Stick at! FOJ was set up by locals with the support of local government and businesses to make sure visitors have a chance to discover more of Japan's unique cultural experiences while skiing in Niseko. The festival includes live performances and interactive arts and craft classes, with the opportunity to meet a wide range of cultural ambassadors. Events will be held throughout the resort from January 21 through until January 28. For more details visit their website at www.festivalofjapan.com.

FEBRUARY SAPPORO SNOW FEST

Japan's biggest and most famous annual snow festival takes over the centre of Sapporo at the beginning of February every year. Book a tour at Explore Niseko and get driven into town to witness giant multi-storey snow sculptures, cartoon characters, temples and more!

FEB YUKITOPIA

Yuki (snow) + utopia = Yukitopia, the Niseko region's very own celebration of Hokkaido's snow. Held in the local area's major town Kutchan over two days in February every year, Yukitopia is the biggest local festival of winter. There's competitions like skiing across a pool of icy water, snow sculptures, giant snow men, snow slides, snowmobile rides, games and prizes, and "snow" much more. Catch a free bus into Kutchan from outside Seicomart in Hirafu.

MARCH JIVAMUKTI YOGA WORKSHOP

Sanctuary Niseko is honoured to host internationally acclaimed yoga teacher Cat Alip-Douglas for a series of yoga workshops from 1 March to 3 March 2015, to be held at The Orchards, Niseko, just outside Hirafu. The workshops will be focused on the exploration of Jivamukti Yoga – one of the yoga traditions that offers both physical and intellectually stimulating yoga practice. Participants will be able to experience Vinyasa (flowing sequences of postures), hands-on adjustments, Pranayama (breathing exercises), meditation, Sanskrit chanting, Yogic philosophical teachings and deep relaxation. Not only is yoga great for your mind and body, it will also help your skiing!

ALL SEASON Keep an eye out for taiko drum performances, rail jams and big jumps, and Hanazono's park and halfpipe comps.

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

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

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POWDER TOOLS

Gear to get you going when it's been snowing



THE NORTH FACE TRANSFORMER JACKET

AUTOBOTS, roll out – just make sure you've got your Steep Tech™ Transformer jackets on! Pardon all the Transformer references, but there's more than meets the eye to this rugged jacket. With pockets galore and a removable built-in backpack, it packs more storage than the back room of the Seicomart. Kevlar reinforced padding will protect your elbows and shoulders from tree branches, while still allowing good movement in the arms for manoeuvring in the pow.

¥56,160 from The North Face Gravity.

THE NORTH FACE POWDER GUIDE VEST

Seasonal workers and most powder tourists will probably spend 90% of their time in Niseko's "slackcountry" – ie lift-accessed backcountry. The North Face Powder Guide Vest is a viable alternative to a full touring kit, allowing powder junkies to store all necessary avy gear and accessories while reducing bulk and evenly distributing the load for better balance in the pow. The bomb-proof ballistic nylon exterior also makes a nice shield against branches on Niseko's tree runs.

¥25,920 from The North Face Gravity.



base deck

GENTEMSTICK TITTI

Want to teach your youngster the appreciation of powder rather than the park? The 118cm Gentemstick Titti is quite possibly the best junior powder board in the world. Gentemstick founder, snow surfing pioneer and local legend Taro Tamai based the Titti on his Mantaray model, tweaking it for his 7-year-old son's stature and style. "Titti" is an old Lapland Sami term for a young salmon, who, like your offspring, will one day find its way in the world without anyone guiding them.

¥41,040 from the Gentemstick Showroom.

KJUS DIAMOND JACKET

I often wonder – if diamonds didn't cost a fortune, would they be a girl's best friend? Fortunately you'll be able to justify dropping \$2k+ on the KJUS Diamond Jacket. This sophisticated and elegant jacket is filled with European White Duck Down and clad in an innovative Solar+ fabric that converts sunlight directly into perceptible heat. So it will keep her warm on the hill and stylish while sipping daiquiris at the après bar.

¥216,000 from Larry Adler.



K2 SHREDITOR 136

AKA the Powabungas, these skis tip the width-o-meter like no ski before. While not exactly an all-rounder, the Shreditor 136 is surprisingly nimble on the groomed and in tight spaces, making it an excellent tree ski on those über-deep days. What's more, no one will lose sight of you with those day-glo green top sheets and bases.

¥118,800 from Rhythm Niseko + Rhythm Hakuba.



ANON MIG GOGGLE

Apart from its chic design, the Anon Mig's full magnetic facemask system is what really set this goggle apart. Included is a face/neck mask with a metal bridge worked in, which snaps tight to a magnetic seal on the goggle frame – no more gap between your mask and goggles! Also switch lenses in seconds – Red Ice for everyday Niseko, or Gold Chrome if the sun pops out.

¥25,920 from Niseko Sports.

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¥63,720~ from **i GATE IKEUCHI**
Niseko Hirafu and Niseko Village.



ATTIBA GRIP BOOTS

When it comes to boots, the Italians do it best. Crafted from high quality leather and featuring premium insulation, these boots also come with retractable snow spikes for traction when needed.

¥12,900 from **Beats Niseko.**



ARC'TERYX BEANIE

This Arc'teryx beanie will make you look badass and give you serious street cred, while the 100% wool and fleece underbanding will keep you feeling snug as a lamb.

¥4,536 from **i GATE IKEUCHI**
Niseko Hirafu & Niseko Village.



COURSE MAP GOGGLE WIPE

Never get lost on the mountain again with this official Niseko United Course Map goggle cloth. Not only will it help you plan your strategy for your next few runs, it will become invaluable when your goggles are covered in pow. ¥1,500 from shops all over town.



OYUKI 10K MASK

Find grace as a geisha or wage war on the mountain as a samurai. These 10k water resistant masks will keep the snow off your cheeks or the ice out of your whiskers.

¥3,600 from **Rhythm Niseko, Rhythm Hakuba and Beats Niseko.**

HANAZONO T-SHIRT

Nowhere does powder pillows for the punters quite like Hanazono. Take home this "Powder to the People" t-shirt to give you a conversation starter so you can recount your tales from Strawberry Fields – forever.

¥3,000 from **Niseko Sports.**



SHASHIN SHINBUN

The Shashin Shinbun is a hard-bound picture journal of local photographer Aaron Jamieson's first seven years shooting life in Niseko, along with contributions by offsider Yasu Shimanuki. Take one home to relive the memories.

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CAT SKIING

Tame the legendary Niseko snowcat

THE steel-coated Niseko snowcat is a wild, noisy beast found only deep in the snowy mountains of the north island of Japan. It detests crowds, preferring to travel in small groups, away from busy ski resorts in search of bottomless untracked powder runs. Follow its tracks, and you're in for an unforgettable Niseko adventure.

Fortunately for us, snowcats love powderhounds, and several local businesses have tamed some of these backcountry beasts, meaning you too can now enjoy the freshest of untracked powder across the region.

NAC runs cat ski tours at the now disused Weiss ski resort, just beyond Hanazono. The terrain is mellow so it's a fantastic experience for families or groups of beginner to intermediate skiers who want to experience skiing a mountain to themselves.

The resort of Niseko Village, alongside Hirafu, fires up its snowcat every morning before the lifts start running to offer six lucky powderhounds the first run down the mountain. Not only is it a great experience rumbling up the mountainside, but you'll never forget the day you and only five others had the whole of Niseko Village to yourself.

For those who want to venture into the heart of the snowcat's native habitat and enjoy some of the deepest virgin powder and steepest terrain in the region, jump aboard a Niseko Photography Backcountry Cat Skiing tour. This tour takes five people to the Yamanashi Range just outside Niseko, an inaccessible powder paradise – unless you have a snowcat. The tour traverses frozen rice fields, navigates through forests and climbs some seriously steep faces to get you to the powder runs of your dreams. The remoteness of this place becomes apparent when the cat rumbles away, leaving you standing in silent awe if not for the occasional crackle of the guide's radio. As you're accompanied by a professional photographer, this is literally an experience you'll never forget!



EXPLORE NISEKO CAN BOOK THE SNOWCAT TOUR OF YOUR CHOICE ANY OTHER ACTIVITY VIA WWW.EXPLORE-NISEKO.COM OR SIMPLY DROP BY THE GLASS BOX NEXT TO SEICOMART.



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We're at 'The Basin', a football field-sized patch of pristine powder, surrounded by forest and mountain ridges, 18km out from base. We're truly in the middle of nowhere. Without a snowmobile there would be no hope of making it back to civilization alive as the deep snow would prohibit walking more than several hundred metres an hour.

Our guide kicks over the engine and roars off, hitting about 100kmh in a matter of seconds. He draws a circle out towards the perimeter of The Basin before cutting across field at full pace. The bike wheelies for 20m before the nose of the sled lands. He carves sharply to the left, the whole 200kg sled virtually laying down on its side, almost burying itself in snow. He straightens up and with another burst of power, lurches out of the cloud of powder, wheelies into line and returns: "Now it's your turn".

I take off, cautiously at first, unsure how my steed will negotiate the deep powder. Swinging my far leg over onto the right side gunnel to aid my turn I lean hard. The nose dips into the powder and slowly resurfaces. With 100m of untouched powder now straight ahead it's time to give it some. I squeeze the throttle and take off, only topping 50kmh but feeling like it's twice that.

It's one thing to drive through winter Hokkaido on bitumen roads, but it's something else ploughing through half a metre of snow, over ridges and through gullies, weaving through forests and fields for mile upon mile, without a building, car or power pole in sight. I can't call snowmobiling a spiritual experience, but without the roar of the engine I think it would be.



PICS: GLEN CLAYDON



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POINT

SHIRIBETSU - DAKE

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TORQUE : VAL 3

HELI-YEAH!

A pioneering new heli-ski operation just outside Niseko has opened up some incredible new terrain to visitors chasing the ultimate high.

WE'RE SEATED FOUR ABREAST ON WHAT FEELS LIKE A COUCH FLOATING INSIDE A GIANT GOLDFISH BOWL.

High above the Rusutsu Resort Hotel, the curved windows framing the ordered and symmetrical farmhouses, fields and fences of Kyogoku and Kimobetsu laid out below us like a gallery of Mondrian paintings. The corrugated roofs bringing colour to the monochrome meadows.

But we're not on the amusement park Ferris wheel, slowly going nowhere. We're airborne. Ascending. We corkscrew around the peak. With our excitement and anticipation we're looking at all the possible lines with our whole bodies.

Directly in front of us our pilot Inada-san is an oasis of calm scanning the horizon, imperceptible movements manoeuvring the machine. A stake in the summit signals our landing zone and Inada-san sets us down as softly as the snow that falls here.

We remember our landing training. Undo seatbelt; clip back together; slide along the seat to the door; step out of the helicopter single file; head down, hunker down beside the skids as the guide unloads our skis, poles and snowboards.

Hisetsu – flying snow. The roar of the rotors. The helicopter rises, the surface snow swirling all around us, hovers momentarily then banks and disappears below the top of the mountain. Silence. Smiles. Standing on the summit of Shiribetsu-dake.

Sugoi – awesome. *Subarashi* – fantastic.

If you've been lucky enough to stand on Rusutsu's East Mountain on a clear day and taken in the majestic panorama of the Niseko Range, Mt Yōtei, and Rusutsu's West Mountain, your eyes will have come to rest on the open bowl and gullies of Shiribetsu-dake. This peak has been a long-standing touring itinerary for locals and most recently skiers and snowboarders on guided excursions. But the two-hour hike to the top keeps it untracked for most of the winter.

The ridge line to the Shiribetsu-dake summit stretches from the boundary rope of Rusutsu's West Mountain and there isn't a skier or snowboarder who hasn't looked up and wondered what it would be like to make turns on this magnificent peak.

Thanks to the Hokkaido Backcountry Club (HBC) you no longer have to wonder. Heli-skiing has come to the Shiribeshi region of Southwest Hokkaido, and Shiribetsu-dake is the first drop zone of what HBC hopes will be a network of heli, snowmobile and snowcat-accessed peaks offering totally unique skiing and riding experiences.



“Shiribetsu-dake is the first drop zone of what HBC hopes will be a network of heli, snowmobile and snowcat-accessed peaks offering totally unique skiing experiences.”

HAJIME

Where it all started

Hokkaido Backcountry Club is the ambitious project of Canadian co-owner of Black Diamond Tours, Clayton Kernaghan, and Japanese mainland native Makoto Koizumi. Although not the first heli-ski operation in Hokkaido, it's the only one to have taken up the challenge in recent years.

"To put our operation in perspective, it may be the smallest heli-skiing operation in the world, but the largest in Japan," Clayton says. "An Olympic skier began Hokkaido's first heli-ski operation in the 1980s but a recession and rising costs meant he had to give it up in 2003. We're now using world-class guides and best practices to pioneer modern mechanised skiing in Hokkaido."

Clayton first came to Hokkaido as an English language instructor, calling the Olympic mountain Sapporo Teine his home hill for seven years. In 2003 he quit a stable job to fulfil a long-held dream. He bought a lodge in Niseko Village with his wife Ayami and set up Black Diamond Lodge and Tours.

Rather than joining the winter adventure industry on Hokkaido, Clayton has spearheaded it. Black Diamond Tours has guided the stars of the ski and snowboard world to the best that Hokkaido has to offer, then taken recreational skiers and snowboarders to those same areas. Each season they've expanded their business and geographical horizons. From day tours in and around the Niseko Resort area, they now offer multi-day trips all over Hokkaido.

Makoto-san meanwhile had been running a heli-ski operation catering to mainly Japanese clientele in Hakuba on the main island of Honshu. He was looking to move the venture to Hokkaido at the same time Clayton was looking at getting something going and they were put in touch.

"Makoto is the real driving force behind the operation and has put everything on the line to get it going," says Clayton. "It was never my dream to start a heli operation in Japan and from all accounts I thought it would be impossible. But with Makoto's samurai spirit, I feel like anything is possible again. Respect. He's put his life and soul into the operation over several years and is beating down the doors to make headway."



Commercial heli-skiing began in the late 1950s when Bengt "Binks" Sandahl started guiding skiers out of Alaska's Alyeska Resort. Heli-skiing operations based at or near ski resorts typically offer "Sunday stroll" powder skiing and boarding on glorified green slopes.

With an abundance of those sort of conditions and terrain in and around Niseko, it would have been easy for HBC to do the same. But Shiribetsu-dake is far from a Sunday stroll. So much so, that when the Warren Miller film crew returned to Hokkaido to film a segment for their 2014 ski and snowboard movie 'No Turning Back', their first port of call was the Hokkaido Backcountry Club and Shiribetsu-dake.

Why Shiribetsu-dake? "It's a short flight and van ride from Niseko Village to the staging area in Kimobetsu and at the moment it's the only mountain that we have been able to gain permission to use in six years of trying in earnest," Clayton says. "Fortunately Shiribetsu-dake is owned by the local town municipality, as opposed to the provincial level government, which has meant less bureaucracy and freer forward progress."

"It just happens to have some steep and interesting terrain with a great staging area that can hold its weight at a world-class level. Unfortunately the terrain doesn't cater to the novice skier or boarder, something we've recognised and are working on."

"From the 1109m summit our runs vary between 550m to 850m vertical, with most runs averaging 650m. On a six-run day you'll get a minimum of 3000m vertical guaranteed, but will most likely end up skiing over 4000m on slopes ranging between 30 and 40 degrees."



MIYUKIBARE

Beautiful morning after heavy snow

"On a six-run day you'll get a minimum of 3000m vertical guaranteed, but will most likely end up skiing over 4000m on slopes ranging between 30 and 40 degrees."

After heavy snowfall overnight the day broke calm and clear, and after an early breakfast I made my way to HBC HQ. Over coffee Clayton introduced me to lead guide Jordy Shepherd and tail guide Pablo Arsenaux.

Jordy is an internationally certified guide (IMFGA, ACMG) who has more than 20 years heli-ski guiding experience in Canada, most notably Eagle Pass Heli Ski.

Pablo is a Canadian Avalanche Association (CAA) Level II certified avalanche forecaster most recently based at Castle Mountain Resort in Alberta and Mustang Powder Cat Skiing, British Columbia.

On the heli trip with me this day were

seasoned skiers Johnnie from England, Michael from Switzerland, and Angus from Australia. Rounding out the group were local photographer Glen Claydon, and Pippy and Kondo-san from HBC sponsor NISADE.

We completed the paperwork to become members of HBC, got weighed to determine the payload, and were fitted with avalanche transceivers. Jordy gave a well-structured and easily understood briefing highlighting the snow and helicopter safety procedures which would minimise our risk in the mountains. This concise but comprehensive demonstration covered how to use the avalanche transceiver to locate a member

of the group if they became buried in an avalanche, the most efficient snow probing and shovelling techniques, and how to get in and out of the chopper safely and effortlessly.

"Safety is our absolute number-one concern," Pablo tells me. "Our Astar helicopter undergoes some of the strictest safety measures and routine maintenance in the world. The yearly inspection in Japan takes almost 30 days to complete. Our pilot Inada-san has over six years training with the Japanese Coast Guard and is the most experienced heli-skiing pilot in Japan."

After a simulated rescue we geared up for the flight to the goods.

ORIRU JIKAN

Time to take the drop

The wind has sculpted the snow into layer upon layer of what feels like polystyrene sheets, scratchy and squeaky under my skis. For safety we pair up and drop in one at a time, my skis barely breaking through the snow surface. But as I drop down the face I can feel the snow softening, slowly welcoming me in, the promise of powder. We regroup several times down the first run, Jordy and Pablo explaining the terrain and route ahead, recommending the best lines.

This is a very relaxed heli-skiing experience compared with ones I've done in British Columbia, Canada and New Zealand's South Island which feel more like military operations with little time to savour the surroundings and relax into the riding. The HBC experience is laid back while being no less safe nor professional.

Our first run finishes in a meadow at the foot of the mountain and we take turns being heli-shuttled back to the summit for more.

Not only are there 360 degree views from the summit, but also 360 degrees of skiing options. With our muscles warmed and a better feel for the terrain and snow conditions, we move around the mountain to find lines that have been less wind affected, holding deeper, lighter powder.

Looking down I pick my line. Telling myself to relax and breathe, I let my skis follow the contours of the face, which time, weather and snow has carved, gouged and shaped into natural half pipes. I watch Johnnie, Michael, Angus, Pippy, Kondo and Glen playing in the pipe and slaloming through the trees. Shouts and laughter fill the forest. The second and third runs pass in a blissful rush, the powder getting softer and deeper each turn.

At the end of our third run we continue through the forest past the pick-up zone, ending up beside Route 276 across the road from our lunchtime rendezvous, Fukuro no Mori. This unique structure is home to a restaurant serving hearty regional Italian pasta dishes and artisan wood-fired pizza. The restaurant is warm and welcoming and the pizza hits the spot. We finish with coffee and cake, and then walk the 100m or so back to the take-off point for the afternoon runs.



It snowed yesterday and it looks like it will snow later. The prodigious volumes of snow this part of Hokkaido receives is both a blessing and a curse. During heavy snowfall the helicopter could be grounded for a day or two, but this is massively outweighed by the quality, quantity and consistency of snow that falls. With plentiful and consistent top ups, the choice of line is not governed by the guides farming the slopes trying to preserve the powder for tomorrow's guests, a practice heli-skiing operations in other parts of the world are often forced to employ.

Jordy leads us to a different part of the mountain for the afternoon and just when you think it can't get any better, it does. With three runs under our belts, the muscles rested, and the body rejuvenated, we hit a steeper zone with wider gullies and knee-to-waist-deep powder from top to bottom. Then we hit it again. And again.

The pace and progression of the day has been perfect. Our confidence is high, the choice of line more assured and the execution smoother. I watch the rest of the group immersed in dry, light powder the snow streaming off the backs of their skis and boards like contrails off an aeroplane, Mt Yōtei as their backdrop.

Halfway down the gully, time seems to slow. I'm in the snow, enveloped, the surface crystals glistening around me. I'm moving freely, effortlessly, the snow rising up my body like a wave. I cut back off the side, find the centre of the gully and the wave crashes against my chest, over my shoulders, over my head. Breathe in, and hold, the wave crashing, through, breathe out, breathe in. The snow flying all around me.

"I watch the rest of the group immersed in dry, light powder; the snow streaming off the backs of their skis and boards like contrails off an aeroplane."



POWDER
LEVEL
11/10

DEGREES
30+

SHOURAI

The future for HBC and Niseko heli-skiing

In their first season Jordy and Pablo guided guests from Asia, Australia, North America and Europe, flying 22 full and/or half days in the five weeks of operation (13 February to 20 March, 2014).

And it wasn't the sole preserve of 30-to-50-year-old males. A group of family and friends from Hong Kong took home the record for most runs skied in a day, while another group of Singaporean beginners took the record for longest single run, sideslipping their way down in four hours!

In 2015 HBC will be returning with the "3-Run Big Mountain Intro" and "7-Run Big Mountain Tour" on Shiribetsu-dake.

They've also partnered with a lodge on picturesque Lake Toya to offer a unique three-night accommodation/heli-ski package. For ¥376,000 per person all inclusive, a group can secure 10 heli-accessed guided runs plus unlimited guided resort skiing, touring, back-up cat-skiing or snowmobiling.

"Our biggest challenge last season was what to do while waiting for the weather to clear," Clayton says. "This season, in addition to Rusutsu resort guiding, we're introducing back-up cat skiing on an exclusive mountain directly adjacent to Mt Rusutsu Isola".

After a number of exploratory flights all over South West Hokkaido at the end of last season, one of the areas HBC is looking to access is the Kariba Mountainous District, a chain of peaks rising out of the fishing village of Shimamaki about 50km due west of Niseko on the Sea of Japan coastline. This is steep, above tree line, alpine terrain. And an abundance of it. Mt Kariba tops out at 1520m and the area offers descents of over 1000m vertical, with some of the lines dropping right down to the shoreline, Clayton says.

"This southwest corner of Hokkaido has the potential to be one of the world's best mechanised skiing destinations."

Mike 'Mike Pow' Richards is a Welsh ski instructor who's skied and taught on five continents. He's made the annual winter migration to Hokkaido since 2006 because he can't get enough of the powder, the food, the people, the culture and the lifestyle.



"This southwest corner of Hokkaido has the potential to be one of the world's best mechanised-skiing destinations."

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PAR EXCELLENCE

The West's recent love affair with Japanese food has drawn attention to its impeccable culinary culture. And it's becoming increasingly apparent Japanese chefs can cook just about any cuisine as well as, if not better than, the world's best chefs. This ambitious spirit is alive – and blossoming – in Niseko.





THERE ARE A FEW WORLD-CLASS RESTAURANTS AND OTHER FOOD BUSINESSES IN NISEKO THAT YOU WILL NEVER READ ABOUT IN POWDERLIFE.

Not because I want to keep them a secret, but because their owners do. Cash jangling in the till isn't what drives them. More than business people, they are *shokunin*.

The closest English translation for *shokunin* is artisan or craftsman, but it has a much deeper meaning in Japanese society. *Shokunin* don't have just technical skills; they have a cultural imperative to achieve excellence and harmony in their craft for the general welfare of the people. They are perfectionists with their goal not necessarily profitability so much as fulfilling their role in society.

It's a cultural trait that runs deep in Japanese society. This single-minded obligation to pursue perfection is one of the main reasons Japanese chefs are being recognised by their peers as the best not just in Japan, but the world. Upon publishing the first Michelin Guide to Tokyo in 2007, then Michelin head Jean-Luc Naret praised Japanese restaurants not only for their meticulously prepared food, but also for presentation and their unique hospitality. "They have a level of subtlety that we do not possess," the Frenchman said. High praise indeed from the ultimate authority. There are now more three-star restaurants in Tokyo than there are in Paris.

Today, Japanese chefs cook almost every cuisine imaginable. And they're no longer

asking themselves how they can make their dishes more Japanese, or more faithful to the original. Instead, each restaurant creates its own unique take on a chosen cuisine, pioneering experimental flavours and presentations, and understanding the essence of a high-quality dining experience.

Niseko is at the forefront of a pioneering take on traditional French cuisine – Hokkaido French. This rural northern island is known as "the food bowl of Japan" and regional chefs are adding unique flair to their dishes with colourful, local, fresh, full-flavoured seasonal produce from both land and sea. When Michelin Guide visited Hokkaido in 2012, it awarded a star to two local French restaurants – Kamimura in Hirafu, and Maccarina in neighbouring Makkari. Fortunately their *shokunin* chefs are happy for us to write about them.

Maccarina's founder Hiroshi Nakamichi, who trained in France in the 1970s, is leading the Hokkaido-French charge. Michelin awarded three stars to one his restaurants, the superb Molière in Sapporo, and a star to another of his restaurants Asperges in Biei in central Hokkaido. Last winter Nakamichi-



PIC KO SASAKI

san turned his attention towards Niseko, opening Asperges Hanazono at Hanazono.

Kamimura remains the only official Michelin-starred restaurant in Niseko until the guide's next visit. Charismatic head chef Yuichi Kamimura (*pictured above*) initially resisted the call to follow his father's footsteps and become a chef, before chancing upon an opportunity to apprentice under world-famous French-fusion chef Tetsuya Wakada in Sydney. The opportunity unearthed his creative flair and he determined to open his own French restaurant in Hokkaido. While unmistakably French in style, Kamimura-san admits his degustation menu is now less traditional and more influenced by the local landscape and ingredients from local farms.

Several other talented young chefs are taking up the next generation of Hokkaido French culture. Last season Kamimura installed long-time apprentice Tsuyoshi Kawaguchi as head chef at a new restaurant venture outside the ski resort in nearby Kutchan. And this season another French-trained local chef Kazuhiko Kojima takes up residence with his own restaurant in central Hirafu, Bistrot le cochon.

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REVIEW | BISTRO KUTCHAN SAKABA

BY EMMA LEE

PIC YASUYUKI SHIMANUKI

EVERY now and then I like to pretend I'm not a ski bum. I brush the icy tangles out of my hair, put on a jacket that doesn't have a powder skirt, and go somewhere other than a ramen joint for dinner.

Bistro Kutchan Sakaba has got my back when it comes to this ruse. With a warm interior, an utterly delightful menu, and a price tag that even a snow bum like myself can afford, Sakaba would have to be one of my new favourites.

The bistro opened last season without much noise, but word soon spread that Niseko's only Michelin-starred chef Yuichi Kamimura had spread his wings and opened an unassuming little tapas-style bistro in Kutchan, the nondescript little "CBD" of this little skiing/farming community. As you step in off the cold, wind-blown main street it's like stepping into another world. Wine boxes have been used as panels along the back wall, another wall is covered in hundred of wine bottle corks, and gnarled timber tabletops complete an understated elegance.

My meal started with the foie gras pâté. I have to admit that I saw this in the teaser menu a few weeks before visiting. As soon as that first taste settled on my tongue I honestly considered sending back everything else I had ordered and asking for five more.

Next we were served onion butter bread and mushroom confit in pancetta sauce, scrumptious mouthfuls that were oozing with Hokkaido farm freshness, and made me feel a little less petulant about not ordering more pâté.

The tapas style menu is ideal for a grazer like me, but heavier dishes are also available for those who like one substantial plate. With this in mind, I ordered the risotto of the day, a chicken confit that smelled so

invitingly aromatic that I forgot to take a picture before I dived in.

I was the night's designated driver and so was unable to select from the extensive drinks list, but I was impressed by the international variety, which includes vino from Chile, USA, Italy and France, as well as a representation of local Japanese wines.

Driving didn't stop me from ordering dessert, and we sampled a homemade chocolate terrine, and a semifreddo – a decadent creation of ice cream and cream, with crunchy toffee pieces throughout.

The exquisitely delicious menu should really come as no surprise, as Head Chef Tsuyoshi Kawaguchi worked along side Kamimura-san in Niseko for five years. However, the ambience and warmth of this delightful restaurant is attributable to Chef Yoshi and his lovely wife Izumi who was a most charming and efficient host.

I highly recommend you step out to Kutchan to sample the sophisticated yet welcoming Sakaba. The menu will have your taste buds jumping with delight, and the atmosphere will leave you feeling warm and refined – an unusual but pleasant experience for a ski bum like me.

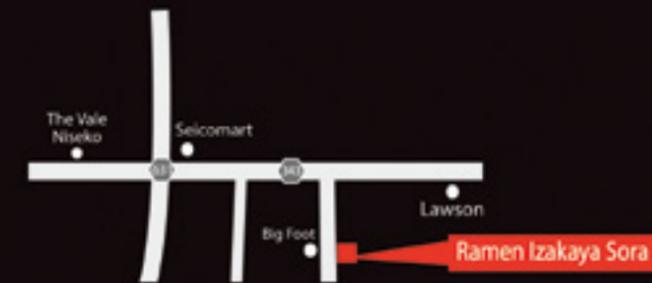


PIC PAUL MALANDRIN



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PIGS ROSS COLE-HUNTER

REVIEW | IKI NISEKO

BY ROSS COLE-HUNTER

ADDING a further twist to Hirafu's multicultural dining scene is IKI Niseko, a Japanese-influenced fusion cuisine restaurant headed by long-time local Dutch chef Dennis van den Brink. The restaurant is a showcase of what is possible with food that is abundant in Hokkaido – local produce, local livestock, local game and local seafood. These ingredients are brought together in a fusion of European and Asian styles, from rustic stews and pasta to teppanyaki and charcoal grilled fish.

Located on the ground floor of the recently built Shiki building, the restaurant has a relaxed, upmarket atmosphere. There is also bar-style seating right in front of the teppan (steel barbecue plate) to let you really appreciate the craftsmanship of chefs that are working here, as well as intoxicate you with the aromas of the cooking meat. In addition to the teppan, IKI have an irori (charcoal hearth) for truly unique Hokkaido style roasted fish.

We selected four plates for dinner that were popular and representative of IKI's style. First to arrive was immaculately

presented Yellowtail Carpaccio. In no time at all, half of the plate had disappeared. The subtle balsamic and sudachi (Japanese citrus) dressing gave it just a little extra oomph while still allowing the tenderness and subtlety of the fish to shine.

This was followed by the equally stunning Spider Roll – tempura soft shell crab sushi, with tobiko caviar. Sushi is quite a simple food in theory, but it's amazing the difference that a skilled chef can bring to the equation. Every bite was a pleasure.

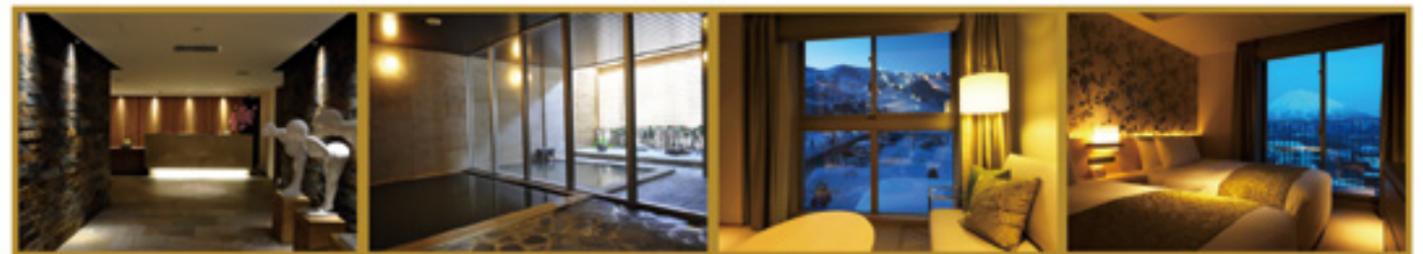
The first of the mains to arrive was the Hokkaido Venison Stew. Deer might not sound like a very Hokkaido meal, but wild deer are abundant here. The venison was so soft it was possible to eat it with chopsticks – the fibres of meat literally fell apart inside my mouth. The stew was rich, and the local garnishes were unique and delightful, from the beetroot, to the maitake mushroom and local roots.

As the last mouthful of the venison stew was about to be consumed, the impressive Australian Lamb Rack came out. The lamb is firstly seared on the teppan, crumbed



and marinated and finally roasted to juicy perfection, incredibly tender and succulent. The marinade was subtle and took a back seat, letting the lamb have the spotlight. Like the Hokkaido Venison Stew, the garnish was also unique and incredibly varied, from the perfectly cooked Brussels sprout, to the tart Japanese citrus and the smooth fried goat's cheese. This was certainly the highlight meal of the evening and the temptation was there to lick the plate clean to make sure not a single scrap of flavour was left behind.

After the meal, a little time was spent relaxing at the bar that is integrated into the restaurant. A nice way to end a lovely Hokkaido dining experience in Hirafu.



Chalet Ivy's concept is very simple: we aim to be your home away from home in Hirafu. Whether you are touring the bounty of natural beauty that is summertime in Hokkaido or heading out for a long day on the world-famous Niseko powder snow, Chalet Ivy is here to heartily welcome you home afterwards!

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亦樂廬

PLACES CALLED HOME

Niseko is no longer just a ski holiday destination. It's a four-seasons lifestyle destination, and hundreds of people from around the world now call it "home".

EKIRAKU

architect James Saywell
associate architect Endo Atelier KK
project manager West Canada Homes

NON-JAPANESE architects often confront two all-new considerations when they come to design a house in Niseko: one, the need to compensate for the uniquely immense volume of snowfall the home will have to contend with; and two, incorporating authentic Japanese design aesthetic. These two issues compounded under Hong Kong-based architect James Saywell's vision for Ekiraku, on the outskirts of Hirafu.

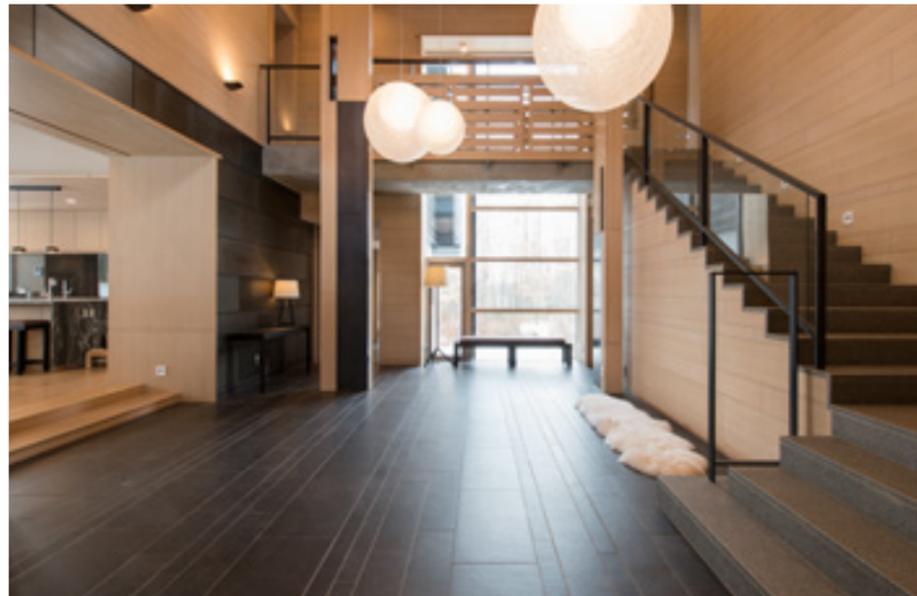
"One of the most important things for both me and the owners was that we somehow made the house of its place," Saywell says. "None of us is Japanese and it's my first project in Japan, so it was very important from the get-go that we respect the very rich tradition, history and culture of Japanese building, so that the soul of the house would feel that it was in Japan, without crossing the line into kitsch or cliché. This is tricky for me to say because I'm not Japanese, but somehow I wanted visitors to the house to sense, in a non-obvious way, that it was a Japanese building."

One of the most obvious ways Saywell felt he could inject Japanese influence into the building was in the roofline, extending its eaves as is characteristic in traditional Japanese architecture, albeit in the south where snow wasn't a consideration.

"The formal emphasis in Japan and much of Asian architecture is in the roofline, so it was very important to me to try to stretch out those eaves and get the wonderful shadows falling on the top parts of the walls.

"We worked very hard with the associate architect and engineer to try to stretch these out and make them very thin, which with snow loads was a considerable challenge. The snow certainly became another character at the meeting tables. It was a contradiction of being able to support huge snow loads and retain the delicacy and thinness of Japanese architecture."

The exposed concrete exterior was a nod to the quality of concrete work in modern Japan, while the dark grey exterior siding was largely influenced by local farmhouses.



This exterior grey carries through to the interior, offset by liberal use of pale blond wood tones to add a contemporary feel. The Japanese use of panel walls made from wood also features prominently.

A key feature of the house is the monumental wall that is first visible alongside the ramp to the front door. The wall runs directly through to the other side of the house and has several purposes – firstly as a way to help divide the house into smaller quarters, and also as a playful way to present the spectacle of its views.

“Because the frontal view is so dramatic with Mt Yōtei and the farm alongside, the obvious thing was to turn everything towards that and give every room a big impact view,” Saywell says. “I actually didn’t want to do that – I wanted to save that prize view for the most important parts of the house. So one of the things the wall does is momentarily deny you the view once you’re on site. Then it’s reintroduced under a choreographed promenade through the building.”

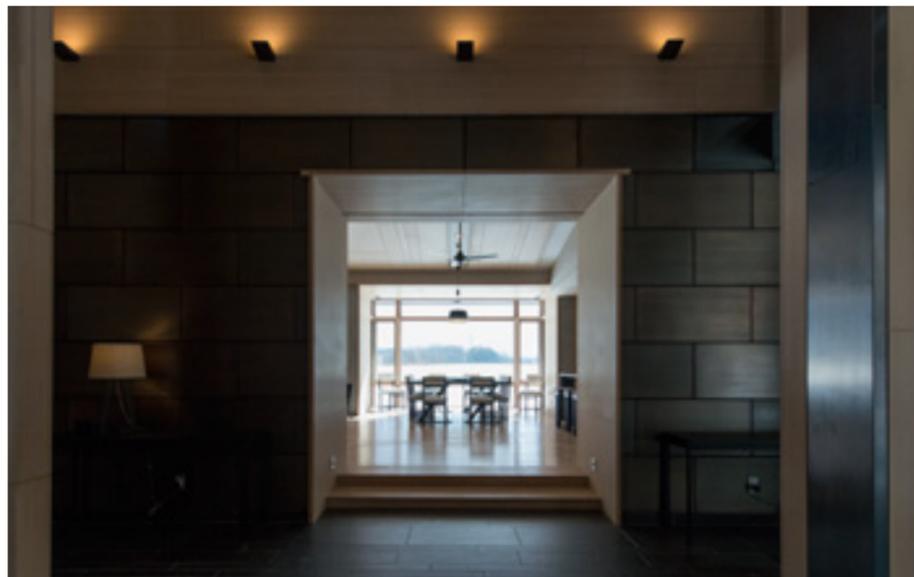
“Even though you never see the entire wall in one place it enters the building from the front entrance and slices through to the back of the house, where the master bathroom sits clinging to the other end of the wall as a pavilion floating in the trees.”

Another overriding objective was that the home retain a comfortable, homely atmosphere. The Hong Kong-based Chinese owners have three children and would often have other families staying with them.

“Aesthetically we wanted a modern house without being cold,” the owner says. “Ekiraku is the Japanese pronunciation of Chinese characters “亦樂”, meaning to be happy. We selected these two words from the first line of the famous Confucian Analects: “Is it not delightful to have friends coming from distant quarters?”

“We built this house to share with our family and friends and we thought these characters accurately embodied our intentions for the house.”

The final product is better than they had envisioned. “The flow of the house, the proportions of the rooms, and the choices of materials came together beautifully. We couldn’t be happier. There are so many spots in the house where I want to sit and enjoy the different views. Our kids absolutely love it. From the first day we moved in, we all feel the house is truly built for our family and how we live.”



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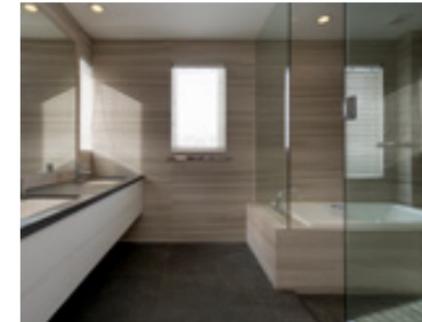
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LL HOUSE

architect Nobvhiko Kishimoto
company Pelican Design Studio / FXC

INCREASINGLY, lifestyle investors are looking to the outskirts of Hirafu and beyond for unencumbered blocks of land to build their dream homes. The village at the resort of Annupuri is designated quasi-national park, restricting development and ensuring larger lot sizes, while still being within walking distance to lifts and restaurants.

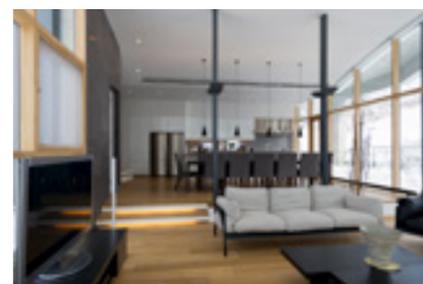
LL House makes a bold architectural statement amongst an increasing number of larger lifestyle homes in the village. Its owner chose Annupuri for the very reasons listed above. They wanted a unique house in terms of architectural style, but without sacrificing functionality. The house needed to be user-friendly for accommodating small groups of family and friends, or hosting a lot of people for parties for adults and children. It also had to be equally as liveable in summer as winter.

Architect Nobvhiko Kishimoto grew up in Asahikawa in central Hokkaido before moving to Tokyo, so while working amongst the modern design trends of the capital, he understood well the four-season environment LL House would be built into. He used this environment to inspire the design.

“The famous author CS Lewis said he imagined a range of pictures in his mind before he started writing a book,” Kishimoto-san says. “I follow a similar process, which started after I met the client. I wanted to be inspired by the environment of the site and from the client, not from other architects.”

Kishimoto-san wanted to ensure the house wasn't a typical ski resort log house or a big glass box. He wanted to ensure it used natural materials and was a cosy winter retreat for spending long periods of time when not on the mountain.

The owner wanted a house where they could cook and entertain, with space for a number of people to stay if required. Paramount was a cosy living room to spend winter evenings. The dining and living areas are separated by a split level under the one curved ceiling in the same space, ensuring the areas are related and not removed from each other.



MOMIJI LODGE

architect BHI Design Studio
project manager Ekimne

AS a modern wave of development rolls through Hirafu, many older houses and lodges are being demolished to make way for new developments that readily accommodate the modern international skier. As is often the case in places like Niseko, some feel history is being lost in the name of progress.

In Hirafu's case, however, many of its buildings were built on the cheap and without architectural planning, with little consideration for their position in the wider community. This becomes all too obvious on a summer tour of Hirafu, with no snow to mask the technicolour splatter of oddly shaped pensions and shoestring-budget, shoebox-sized cottages.

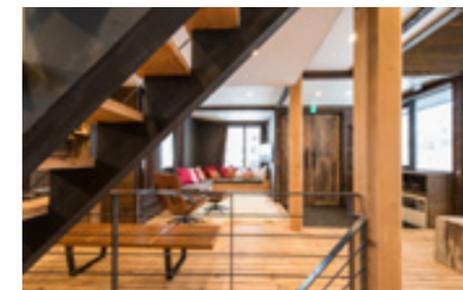
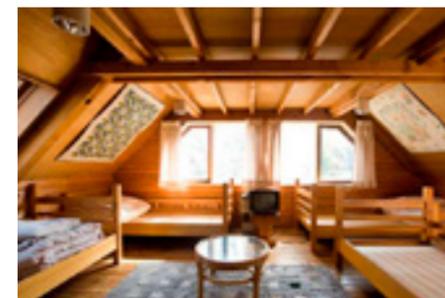
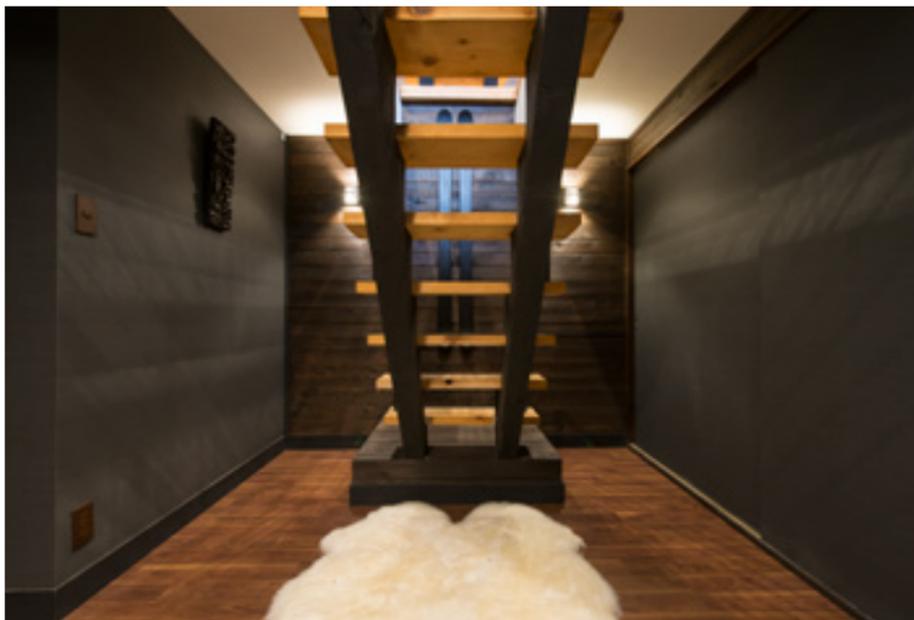
Some of these buildings do happen to be just quirky enough to have earned a positive place in the eclectic environment of the village though. A draft village master plan by architect Riccardo Tossani has identified the more important historical or aesthetically valuable structures and puts in place mechanisms to preserve their heritage.

One lodge that has been restored to modern glory is Momiji Lodge. A Hong Kong-based expat family came across what was then called the "Village House" for sale, and saw its potential to be remoulded into a perfectly liveable – and ultimately luxurious – four-bedroom chalet.

"The Village House had great "bones" and loads of traditional Japanese character," the owner said. "In Hong Kong it's all concrete, steel and glass. We wanted to preserve as much of the traditional Village House as possible and create a modern ski lodge with a rustic mountain feel.

"We tried to leave as much of the house as possible – all the original wooden flooring, walls, windows, skylights and traditional Japanese bath. The only things we added were mod-cons like a modern, open-plan kitchen and new bathrooms.

"My favourite thing now is the feel of the house when you walk in – there's so much wood in the house you get a wonderful cedar smell and can't help but kick back and relax."



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NISEKO - ST MORITZ



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2 BEDROOM / 2 BATHROOM

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THE CABINS

Hokkaido Tracks coupled with award winning design firm and architects KplusK associates has released a cool, contemporary 'ski' cabin and land package located in the undiscovered area of St. Moritz, Hirafu Village, situated in the tranquil forest on Mt. Annupuri a short distance from the family pair lift. Priced from as low as 35 million yen for a fully constructed two bedroom, two bathroom house, this package represents extraordinary value and makes an excellent entry point for lifestyle investors new to the Niseko market.

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KEMUSHI

2 BEDROOM / 2 BATHROOM



A THOUSAND WORDS

If a picture says 1000 words, there's no better way to describe skiing and snowboarding in and around Niseko than the next 10 pages.



YOTEI CRATER RIM

 AARON JAMIESON

Niseko is known for its powder, but anyone who's hiked the peak of Mt Annupuri or any other local mountain knows that up top it often ain't so pretty. Mountain peaks are buffeted by the wind and weather from all directions, stripping away any powder to a gnarly icy base.

Nowhere is more exposed than Niseko's Mt Yōtei. While *Powderlife* loves a good deep powder shot, we couldn't go past highlighting this epic image of French skier Nicolas Cruz just below the rim of Mt Yōtei, taking his time to scope out a line down to greener pastures, and deeper pow inside the crater.



PATTERNS FORMING

📷 AARON JAMIESON

As budding amateur photographers will know, it's not easy to take a good photo. So you can appreciate how hard it becomes taking epic action shots of skiers and snowboarders moving at high speed in Niseko's ever-changing light and weather conditions.

Australian photographer Aaron Jamieson came to Niseko in 2006 and fell in love with the canvas Hokkaido provided for his artistic eye. Often the subject will be secondary to its backdrop, as is the case in this shot of Nicolas Cruz on Mt Yōtei with Kutchan below. Aaron is now increasingly freelancing, in 2014 travelling to Greenland (*inset above*) and Patagonia to shoot for Australian Geographic and other adventure magazines.



BIRD'S EYE VIEWS

📷 GLEN CLAYDON

With the advent of heli-skiing in Niseko and also drone photography, we're seeing some interesting new perspectives of Niseko. At the forefront is local photog Glen Claydon, who showcases his pioneering work on blog [360niseko](#) throughout the year.

Glen snapped this photo from the new Hokkaido Backcountry Club heli-ski chopper while on assignment for Warren Miller's new film "No Turning Back". The rider is none other than two-time Olympic Gold medal boarder-cross champion Seth Westcott. The videographer was right next to Glen during the shoot, so check out the flick to see more of this action and terrain, and [360niseko](#) for Glen's behind-the-scenes footage.



📷 MIKE RICHARDS / KIRORO

KIRORO NOW WITHIN REACH

Amazed at the variety of terrain and amount of fresh powder in Niseko? This is just the tip of the iceberg – the region is Disneyland for lift-accessed powder skiing. Just beyond Annupuri you have the small but option-packed Moiwa; about 45-minutes drive southeast is the massive Rusutsu resort; or head back to Sapporo and you've got several resorts offering arguably the best powder skiing in a capital city in the world.

And then there's Kiroro. With a new road and mountain pass cutting through Mt Ponkutosan north of Kutchan a few years ago, Kiroro virtually became part of the Niseko area. It adds a whole new suite of firepower to the local arsenal, dedicated in-bound powder areas, to backcountry terrain that will challenge the world's best skiers and snowboarders (*see picture, right*). Under new foreign ownership with new resort master plan and development underway, Kiroro is a welcome addition to the Niseko family.

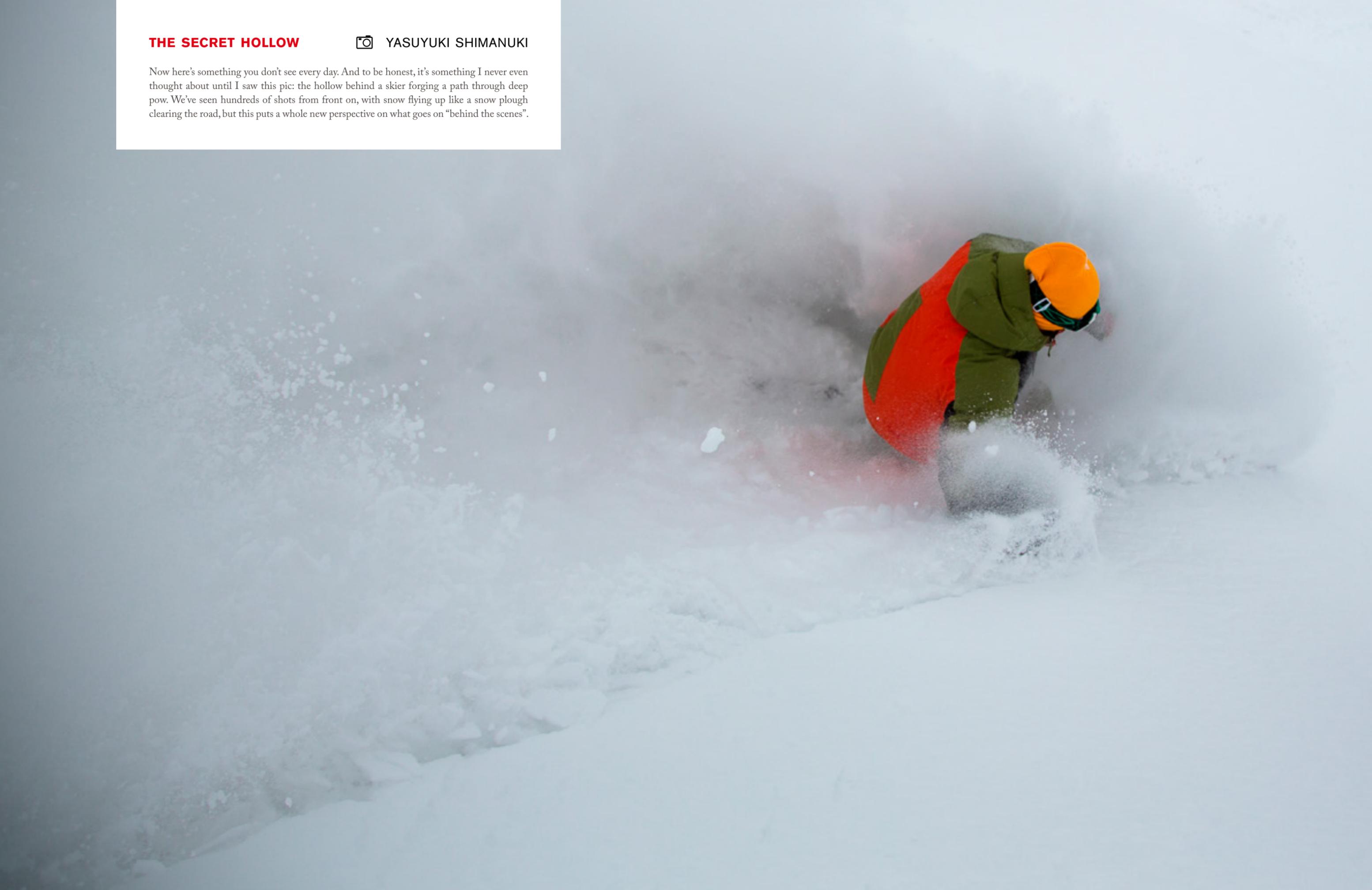


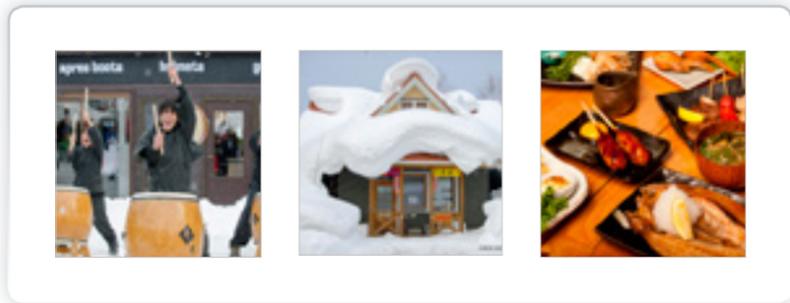
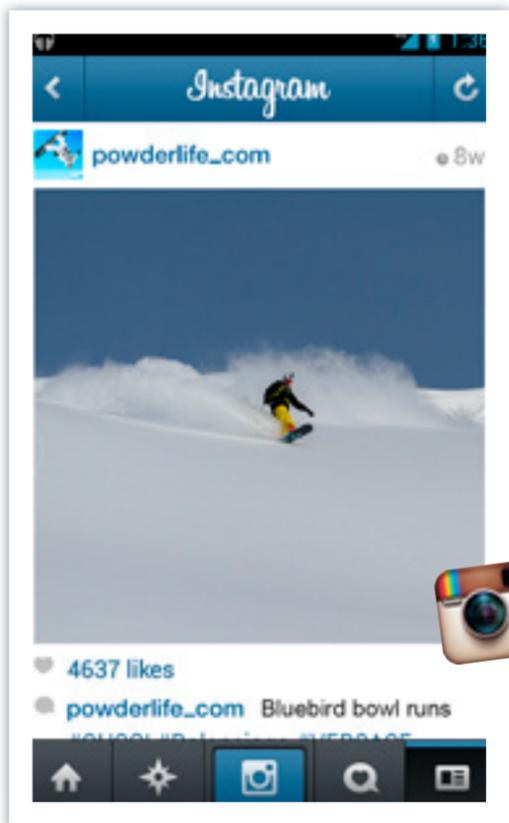
📷 GLEN CLAYDON / KIRORO BACKCOUNTRY

THE SECRET HOLLOW

📷 YASUYUKI SHIMANUKI

Now here's something you don't see every day. And to be honest, it's something I never even thought about until I saw this pic: the hollow behind a skier forging a path through deep pow. We've seen hundreds of shots from front on, with snow flying up like a snow plough clearing the road, but this puts a whole new perspective on what goes on "behind the scenes".





#POWDERLIFE OF THE DAY YOU

Are you living the “powder life” dream right now? Tag pics of your #powderlife, and we’ll feature the best Niseko powder-life moment each day on our Insty page @powderlife_com.

[#powderlife](#) [#niseko](#)

on mountain tours
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*All tours include your own personal guide, photographer and digital archive of professional photos. Video options are also available.

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Beyond the Everyday
 is
WITHIN REACH

For a change of pace and scenery during your Niseko stay, why not take a short trip over the mountain to the uncrowded slopes of Kiroro Resort. Located off Route 393 just 45 min from Niseko, Kiroro Resort offers extraordinary powder-covered terrain for every ability.

Come play for the day with one of our daily trips to and from Niseko Resort.

Day Trip	¥7,000 inc. lift pass & coach transfer
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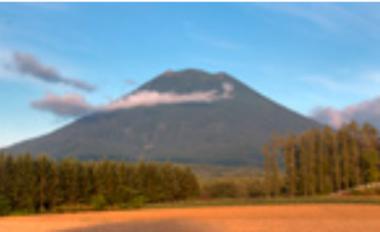
KIRORO
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WAIST DEEP four seasons

NISEKO'S THIRD DIMENSION

The majority of winter migrants to Niseko miss the other guises this volcanic, mountainous wilderness wears from season to season. Local photographer Paul Malandain shares with us a selection of images that capture the seasons most winter migrants never see.





MAKING HAY

📷 PAUL MALANDAIN

When the snow melts and the ski holiday fraternity has returned to other beautiful parts of the world, Niseko once again becomes a sleepy rural farming hamlet, set against a stunning multi-coloured backdrop stylised by its fertile volcanic geography.

For six months of the year the ground is covered in snow. As soon as it melts back, the ploughs come out and local farmers make hay while the sun shines. Niseko's most famous crop is its potatoes, however head to the local farmers' markets and food lovers will delight at the shelves groaning with unusual varieties of tomatoes, purple cauliflowers and asparagus, zucchini – and more you have never heard of. It's a time local restaurants have even greater access to fresh seasonal produce, so expect to see entirely new menus from those of winter.

If you haven't got mid-year holiday plans this year, come back to Niseko. Be sure to bring a healthy appetite, lots of energy, a sense of adventure... and of course, your camera.



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SUMMER CALENDAR

Thought skiing & snowboarding were the only things to do in Niseko? Come in the "green season" and discover a whole new world. These are the major events on this year's summer calendar to help you plan!



COW PARADE

The world's biggest public art event will be set loose on Niseko in summer 2015. Up to 50 locally decorated life-size fibreglass cows will be placed throughout the resort for the 81st international Cow Parade since 1999. There will plenty to do throughout the event which runs from July 15 to October 15.

SWIM-RIDE-RUN

JULY NISEKO CLASSIC

70km and 140km cycle races through rice paddocks and potato fields out to the Sea of Japan and back to the mountains of Niseko

JULY NAC BIG SWIM IN TOYA

This is Hokkaido's only open-water swim race held in the crystal clear waters of Lake Toya, about 30 minutes drive from Niseko

AUGUST IRONMAN LAKE TOYA

Body-busting full Ironman triathlon set on picturesque Lake Toya. Join in if you've got what it takes, or just come and watch

AUGUST HANAZONO HILL CLIMB

A short, sharp 15km race from Kutchan to the top of Mt Goshiki, climbing 617 vertical metres at an average grade of 4.6%.

SEPT NAC TRAIL RUN

Take on mighty Mt Anupuri in summer without the chairlifts in this 3km (kids), 10km or 30km up/down/cross-country race

SEPT NISEKO MARATHON FESTIVAL

A fun-run event for families and budding long-distance runners that has been going for more than 30 years!

SUMMER FESTIVALS

JULY KYOGOKU COLD WATER FESTIVAL

Celebrate the region's abundance of spring water at the Kyogoku spring.

JULY MAKKARI PORK FESTIVAL

That's right a pork festival. Makkari's herb-fed pigs are so delicious it's worth celebrating!

JULY-AUG SAPPORO BEER FESTIVAL

Head for central park, buy a beer tower and celebrate summer like they do in Sapporo!

AUGUST KUTCHAN POTATO FESTIVAL

The "Jaga Matsuri" is the summer headline act for this little potato farming region.

AUGUST HIRAFU MATSURI

Don a summer kimono and get festive! Food fireworks, fun and more!

AUGUST RISING SUN FESTIVAL

Hokkaido's own Fuji Rock Festival featuring more than 100 acts.

AUGUST FIREWORK & STAR FESTIVAL

Fun summer evening festival in Niseko Town for kids and families.

NOVEMBER MIKAKU FIESTA

The best local chefs cook up a storm at the Hilton, and you can try it all!



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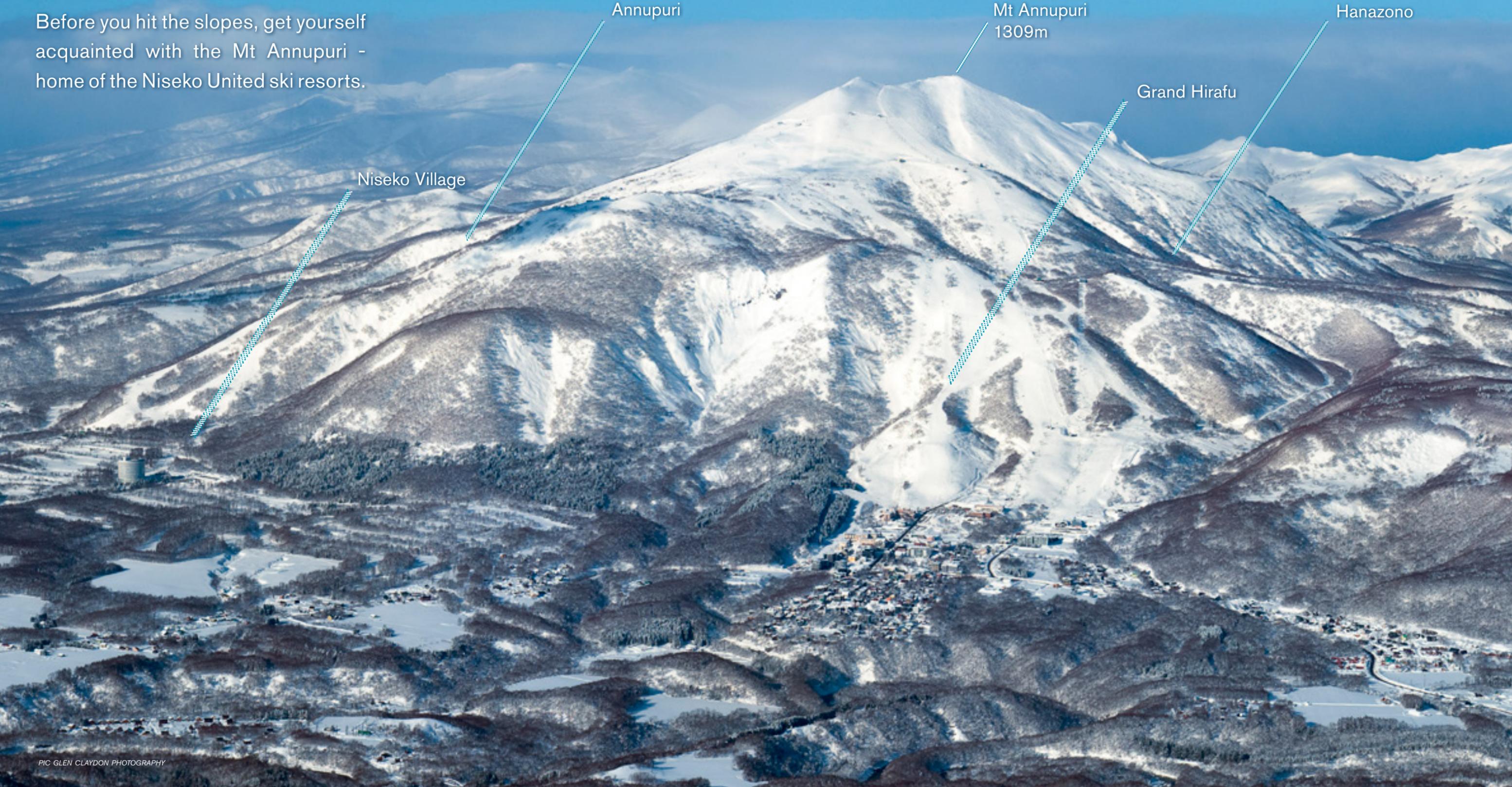
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MOUNTAIN GUIDE

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



Niseko Village

Annupuri

Mt Annupuri
1309m

Grand Hirafu

Hanazono

MT ANNUPURI

Home of the Niseko United

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



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

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

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

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

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

英語/ENGLISH
www.niseko.ne.jp

NISEKO UNITED. TRAIL MAP 2014-2015

One Mountain Four Resorts

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

▲ Mt. Niseko An'npuri Altitude 1,308m

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

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

FOR YOUR SAFETY

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

ALPINE RESPONSIBILITY CODE

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

KNOW THE CODE: IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

NISEKO RULES

Areas marked in red are deemed strictly off limits by the Niseko Rules, these are dangerous areas and must not be entered under any circumstances. Always use the gates to enter out of bounds areas. Please respect the Niseko Rules to ensure off-piste freedom and safety.

1. "Haru no taki" and "Yu no sawa" areas (marked in red) are strictly off limits at all times.
2. Crossing boundary ropes is prohibited. Those who violate the rules may be refused from using all resort facilities.
3. There is no safety control or ski patrol beyond the resort boundaries.
4. Do not enter out of bounds areas when gates are closed.
5. The "Niseko Avalanche Information" is the official daily info of the Niseko Rules.
6. Special charges will be applied for out of bounds search and rescue.
7. Ski patrol instructions must be obeyed.
8. Children under 12 must refrain from entering out of bounds areas unless accompanied by a proficient adult leader.
9. Respect the Niseko Rules- the resort and local community's official regulations created for the safety and freedom of all resort users.

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

Avalanche Control Area

"Mizuno no sawa" Various methods of Avalanche Control combined with an educational program are in use in this area in the interest of increasing avalanche awareness and safety. Only skiers and riders participating in the program are permitted to use this area.

Contact: Niseko Village 0136-44-2211

ANNUPURI

Mellow groomers, badass bowls

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

NISEKO VILLAGE

Your own private resort

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

HIRAFU

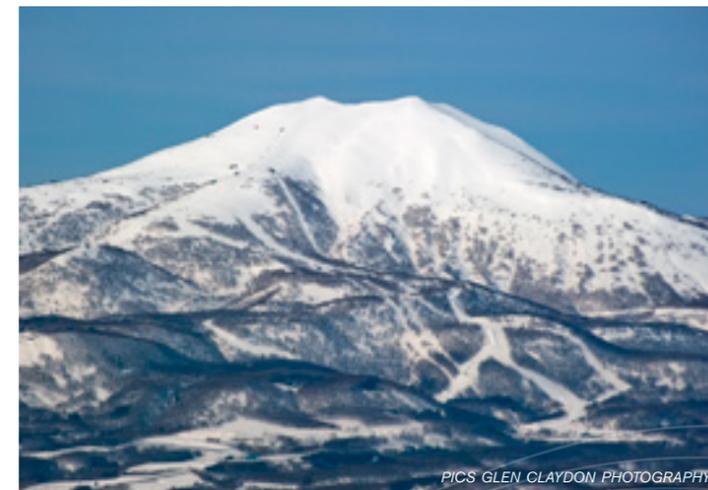
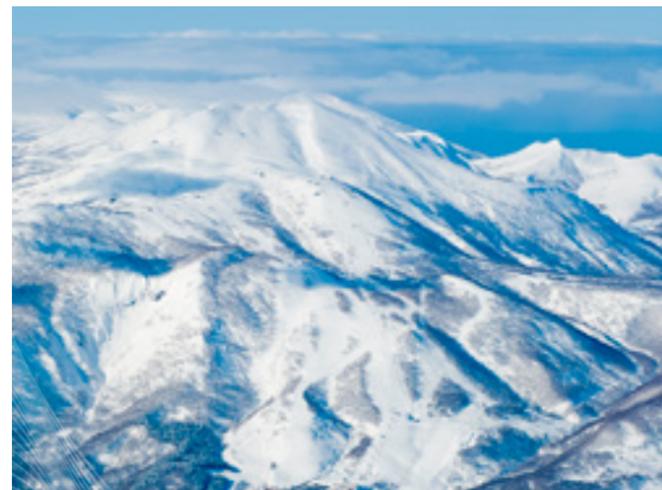
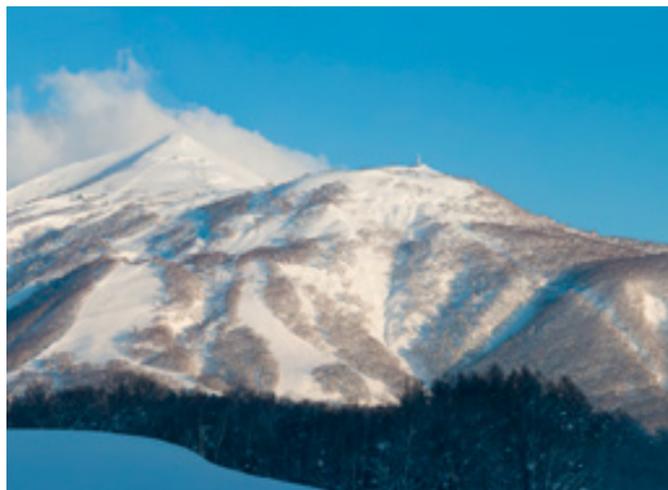
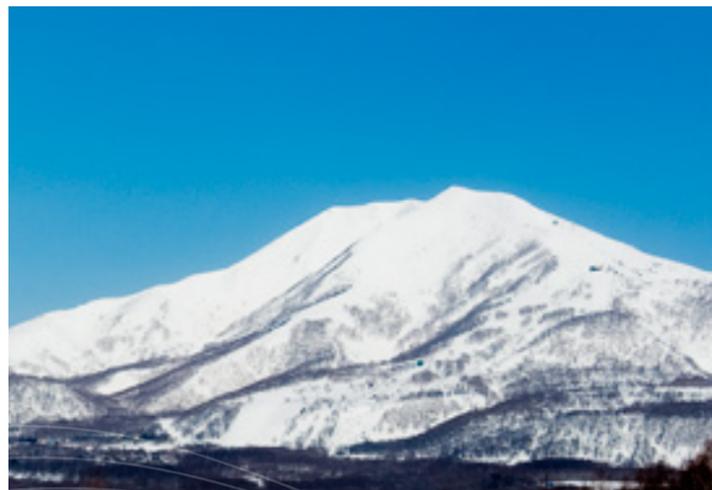
The centre of it all

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

HANAZONO

Powder laps and play time

Family fun Mellow groomers
Strawberry Fields **Full kids snow**
sports program Snow adventure
activities **Half pipe & terrain park**



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LIGHTS, CAMERA...

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

NOCTURNAL skiers and snowboarders in Niseko are arguably treated to some of the best flood-lit night terrain in the world. After dark, three of the four Niseko United resorts are still open for business – Hirafu, Niseko Village and Annupuri.

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

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

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

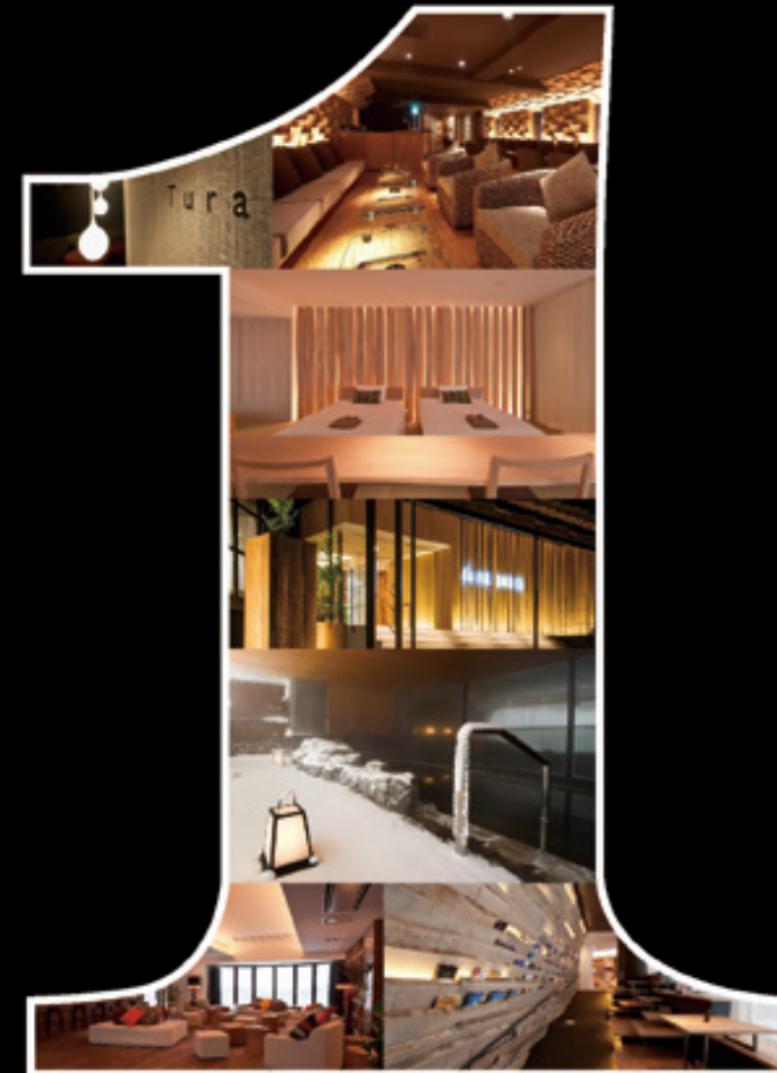
Hirafu is arguably the all-round king of night skiing. The resort has been offering night skiing for almost 50 years, so it's no wonder they've got it down pat. 1287 metal halide lamps have been erected strategically around the resort lighting everything from the beginners slope to vast swathes of the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



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

Intermediates Annupuri's long, wide runs are almost always empty, meaning some nights you can almost have the resort to yourself.

Powder Hounds Unless you're happy to cruise with the family, head to Hirafu. Literally most of the mountain is lit up either directly or ambiently. If it's snowing hard, your tracks will very often be filled in by the time you get back up. You haven't experienced all Hirafu has to offer unless you've skied it on a night like this.



Tranquil, tasteful, comfortable, friendly... all in ONE!

ONE NISEKO RESORT TOWERS

www.oneniseko.com

BACKCOUNTRY SAFETY

Think you know everything about skiing and snowboarding?

NISEKO is certainly a pioneer in Japan when it comes to opening up backcountry to allow more freedom to ski and ride off-piste. To a certain extent, Niseko matches many other forward-thinking, liberal resorts around the world, allowing more mountain access than many international resorts.

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

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

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



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

Daily Avalanche Report

<http://niseko.nadare.info>

1. Obey the Niseko Rules

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

2. Check weather and avalanche reports

Know what weather to expect and the avalanche report.

3. Listen to and obey ski patrollers.

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

4. Have essential equipment

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

5. Plan your trip

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

6. Don't enter closed gates

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

7. No go zones

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

8. Don't duck ropes

They are the boundary between safe and potentially unsafe.

9. Hire a guide

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

10. Explore the backcountry with reliable people

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

RESORT GUIDE

POWDERLIFE IS YOUR NISEKO TRAVEL GUIDE, ON THE GROUND IN NISEKO AND ONLINE ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD AT – WWW.POWDERLIFE.COM



PIC PAUL MALANDAIN

TOURIST INFO



The Niseko Grand Hirafu Welcome Centre

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

Kutchan Information Centre

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

GETTING HERE AND AWAY

New Chitose Airport.

For departure and arrival times. 0123 23 0111. www.new-chitose-airport.jp/language/english

Getting from New Chitose to Niseko

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

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

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

CAR RENTAL

Niseko Auto Rentals

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

Toyota Rent-a-Car ShinSapporo

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

TRANSPORT AROUND NISEKO

Taxis

Sprint Taxi - new bilingual taxi service 5am-11pm. Call 0136 55 5400 or use TaxiCaller app. Kutchan Hire 0136 22 1212. Misora Hire 0136 22 1171. Niseko Hire 0136 44 2635.

Bus

Niseko United Shuttle Connects Hirafu, Niseko Village and Annupuri resorts. Pickup/drop-off points in Hirafu include Hirafu Gondola and the bus stop near Hirafu intersection. ¥ Free if you have an all-mountain pass / 1 point if you have a 12-point mountain pass / or

¥500 for adults and ¥300 for children.

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

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

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

MONEY



ATMs

Shiki Niseko, Hirafu Map p97/E3. Located in the Supermarket & Deli. Available 7am-9pm.
Kutchan Main Post Office Map p94/E3. Accepts all major cards.
All 7 Elevens Accept some international cards.

Credit Cards

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

Currency Exchange

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



Accommodation & Ski Packages
Property Management Services
Tel: 0136-21-6221

find out more
holidayniseko.com/management

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CONVENIENCE SHOPPING

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

Hirafu

Seicomart Map p96/D2

Lawson (24 hours) Map 97/E3

Piz Gloria Map p96/D2

Alpen Hotel Map p97/E1

Kutchan

MaxValu For all your food/drink/grocery needs. Map p94/G3.

Homac For household/hardware. Map p94/G3.

Best Denki For all your electrical and technical needs. Map p94/B4.

M-Pocket For imported groceries and alcohol. Map p94/B3.

¥100 Shop As the name suggests! Map p94/B4.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Internet

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

Mobile Phones

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

Domestic Calls

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

International Calls

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

POST OFFICES

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

ELECTRICITY

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

MEDICAL SERVICES

Kutchan Kousei Hospital

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

Niseko Physio

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

Tsuruha Drug Pharmacy (red sign)

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

STAY SAFE AROUND TOWN

No skiing/boarding on roads or footpaths

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

Snow falling off roofs

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

Drinking Dangers

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

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

RUBBISH GUIDE

Help keep Niseko beautiful

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

Burnable rubbish (燃えるゴミmoeru-gomi)

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

PET bottles and cans (ペット、缶)

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

Compost (生ゴミ nama-gomi)

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

Non-burnable (燃えないゴミ moenai-gomi)

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

ONSEN ETIQUETTE

What to bring?

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

How much?

Most onsens range between ¥500 to ¥1000.

What to do?

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

Visitors, please be mindful:

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

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

Thank you and enjoy your stay!
Kutchan Tourism Association

A-BU-CHA 2
UPPER HIRAFU VILLAGE

A wide variety of meals and drinks – Top marks!

Try our popular Japanese dishes or hot-pots. Choice of over 400 drinks! Mouth-watering home-made sweets. Take away menu is available. Authentic Japanese seating. Families are welcome.

abucha.net

HANAJIZOH BAKERY
IZUMIKYO II

Creative and delicious breads from talented local baker - you must try!

Amazing sweet and savory breads and pastries from a friendly local family bakery. Get the free Hirafu Village shuttle to bus stop 27, near Unitas Log Village. Eat in or takeaway.

hanajizoh.net

KAMIMURA
UPPER HIRAFU VILLAGE

The iconic Michelin-starred French restaurant in Niseko!

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

kamimura-niseko.com

THE BARN
MIDDLE HIRAFU VILLAGE

*The Barn by Odin
Niseko's authentic alpine Bistro & Bar*

The Barn is showing a fresh new face and a new exciting À La Carte Menu. Come and enjoy our Alpine recipes & cocktails in Hokkaido's warmest authentic Bistro atmosphere. Or try a glass of wine from the owner's vineyards in Burgundy, France. Last order 30 minutes before close. Open 7 days.

nisekobarn.com

D2
map p96



Lunch 11.30am – 4pm
Dinner 6pm – 1am

0136 22 5620

F5
map p97



7.30am -4.30pm
Thursday - Monday

0136 23 0331

E3
map p97



From 6pm
Monday to Saturday

0136 21 2288

C3
map p96



Lunch 11.30-15.00
Dinner 18.00-22.30
Bar 17.00-24.00

0136 23 0888

ASPERGES HANAZONO
HANAZONO

Join us for an ultimate culinary journey led by 3-Star Michelin Head Chef Nakamichi

3-star Michelin Head Chef Hiroshi Nakamichi has re-opened Restaurant Asperges in Hanazono for the 2014-15 season, integrating fresh, locally grown produce and seasonal ingredients into meticulously prepared French dishes. Lunch ¥4500~ / Dinner ¥15,000~ (+10% service charge).

hanazononiseko.com/asperges

00
at Hanazono



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

BISTRO KUTCHAN SAKABA
KUTCHAN

Casual Kutchan bistro serving exquisite Hokkaido tapas at reasonable prices

Chef Tsuyoshi trained and worked for five years at the Michelin-starred French restaurant Kamimura in Hirafu. We offer a la carte or course menus. Five-course menu is ¥3500 (minimum 4 people). We can do special course menus with two days or more notice.

kutchansakaba@gmail.com

B4
map p94



4pm-12am
Tuesday to Sunday

0136 55 5735

NISEKO CELLARS
HIRAFU INTERSECTION

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

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

nisekocellars.com

C3
map p96



2.30pm - 10pm
Open 7 days

0136 23 1608

YUMMY'S PIZZA
MIDDLE HIRAFU

Yummy homemade crust pizza and western foods restaurant

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

www.yummypizza.jp

D4
map p96



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



YUMMY'S DELIVERY 17:00-22:30
0136-21-2239

Before calling for your pizza, please have your phone number and address handy. Pizza delivery area: Niseko Hirafu Village only. Please order from 1000yen~.

配達地域はヒラフビレッジ内のみです。1000円以上のご注文の方に限り、配達先の住所、連絡先をご確認の上ご注文をお願いいたします。

Yummy's original homemade thin style Pizza
Pizza [ヤミーズオリジナル手延べ薄焼きピザ] Size 30cm

 Margelita マルゲリータ 1300 yen	 Ham & Bacon ハム&ベーコン 1700 yen
 Ham & Cheese ハム&チーズ 1500 yen	 Tacos Pizza タコスピザ 1800 yen
 Vegetable Mix ベジタブルミックス 1500 yen	 Seafood Mix シーフードミックス 1900 yen
 Hawaiian ハワイアン 1600 yen	 Cheese Mix チーズミックス 1900 yen
 Salami Mix サラミミックス 1600 yen	 Avocado with Prosciutto アボカド生ハム 2300 yen
 Chicken Mix チキンミックス 1600 yen	 4 Kind of Fungi 4種のきのこのピザ 2500 yen
 Steak Pizza ステーキピザ 2900 yen	

Salad

- Green Salad 900yen
- Caesar Salad 1000yen
- Avocado Salsa Salad 1100yen

Other

- Garlic Bread 400yen
- Potato Chicken Cheese Cream Baked 1000yen
- Potato Anchovy Cheese Cream Baked 1000yen
- 3 Kind of Cheese Bread Cream Baked 1100yen
- Potato Wedges 700yen
- Taco Nachos 900yen
- Sweet & Spicy Chicken Wings 1000yen
- Real Street with Bread 1600yen

yummypizza.jp

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-IKI-

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Cafe: 8:00 ~
Restaurant: 17:30 ~ 23:00
Bar / Lounge: 17:30 ~ Late

www.ikiniseko.com

HERMOSA ANGEL MASSAGE
UPPER HIRAFU VILLAGE

D2
map p97

Call for an appointment or just drop in

Relaxation massage and esthetic salon. Shiatsu massage from ¥4800. Oil massage from ¥6000. We have two salons on Hirafu Zaka street (up from the traffic lights). Salon 1 at B1 Hirafu 188 Bldg, opposite Niseko Park Hotel. Salon 2 at 1F Serenity Apartments, opposite Hotel Hirafu-tei.

inkarebaza.com



10am - 12 midnight
Open 7 days
0136 23 2004
0136 22 0004

INSKI
UPPER HIRAFU VILLAGE

D3
map p97

*Look good and feel great
whether you rent or buy*

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

inski.com.au



8am - 9pm
Open 7 days

0136 55 8558

LARRY ADLER SKI & OUTDOOR
UPPER HIRAFU VILLAGE

C2
map p96

*Ski & Snowboard Hire
Fashion & Accessories*

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

larryadler.com



8am – 8pm
Open 7 days

0136 21 4050

NAC SNOWSPORTS SCHOOL
IZUMIKYO 1

F3
map p97

20 years of instructing & guiding in Niseko

From beginners to mogulers NAC's instructors will get your technique right so you have more fun on the mountain. For powder skiers, NAC's Weiss Cat Skiing and Y tei Back Country Tours will keep you in Niseko's deepest powder. Hop on the blue NAC complimentary shuttle bus to get to NAC.

nisekoskischool.net



8am - 9pm
Open 7 days

0136 23 2093

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SAPPORO

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HOKKAIDO

*Visa and immigration services
to match your needs*

With extensive experience we can provide best solutions for your application. Certificate of Eligibility, Extension or Change of Status, Permanent Residence and other visa/immigration applications.

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Weekdays

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jonathanamos.com

jonathan@jonathanamos.com



8am - 8pm
All year round
090 2650 4909

NISEKO SPORTS
UPPER HIRAFU VILLAGE + HANAZONO

D2
map p97

*Three convenient locations in
Hirafu and Hanazono*

All Niseko Sports offer the all-in-one convenience of NISS Snowsports School, Niseko Sports Rental and Retail under the one roof, visit our stores this winter and head out onto the slopes in style!

hanazononiseko.com/nisekosports



8.30am - 8.30pm
Hanazono 8.30am-5pm
Open 7 days
0136 21 6633

TY MODE CREATIONS
MIDDLE HIRAFU VILLAGE

D4
map p97

Enjoy a drink while you shop

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

tymode.com



2 - 7pm
Open 7 days

0136 23 0788

RELAXATION
MASSAGE &
ESTHETIC SALON

**HERMOSA
ANGEL**

<p>Shiatsu Massage</p> <p>40 minutes ¥4,800 60 minutes ¥7,000 90 minutes ¥10,000</p> <p>65-minute Angel Course....¥7,500 <small>(all body 40min + Foot 25min)</small> 85-minute Gold Course....¥10,000 <small>(all body 65min + Head 20min)</small></p>	<p>Oil Massage</p> <p>40 minutes ¥6,700 60 minutes ¥8,300 90 minutes ¥11,500</p> <p>Foot 20 minutes ¥3,000 Head 20 minutes ¥3,000</p>	<p>¥1,000 for pickup or for us to come to you</p> <p>Call or visit our salons on Hirafu Zaka Street - the main road up from the traffic lights</p>
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Salon 1 in Hirafu 188 Building, opposite Niseko Park Hotel
+81 (0)136 23 2004

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

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- Extensive range of retail ski and snowboard boots, boot heaters and other accessories
- Fantastic selection of quality European winter footwear for all ages
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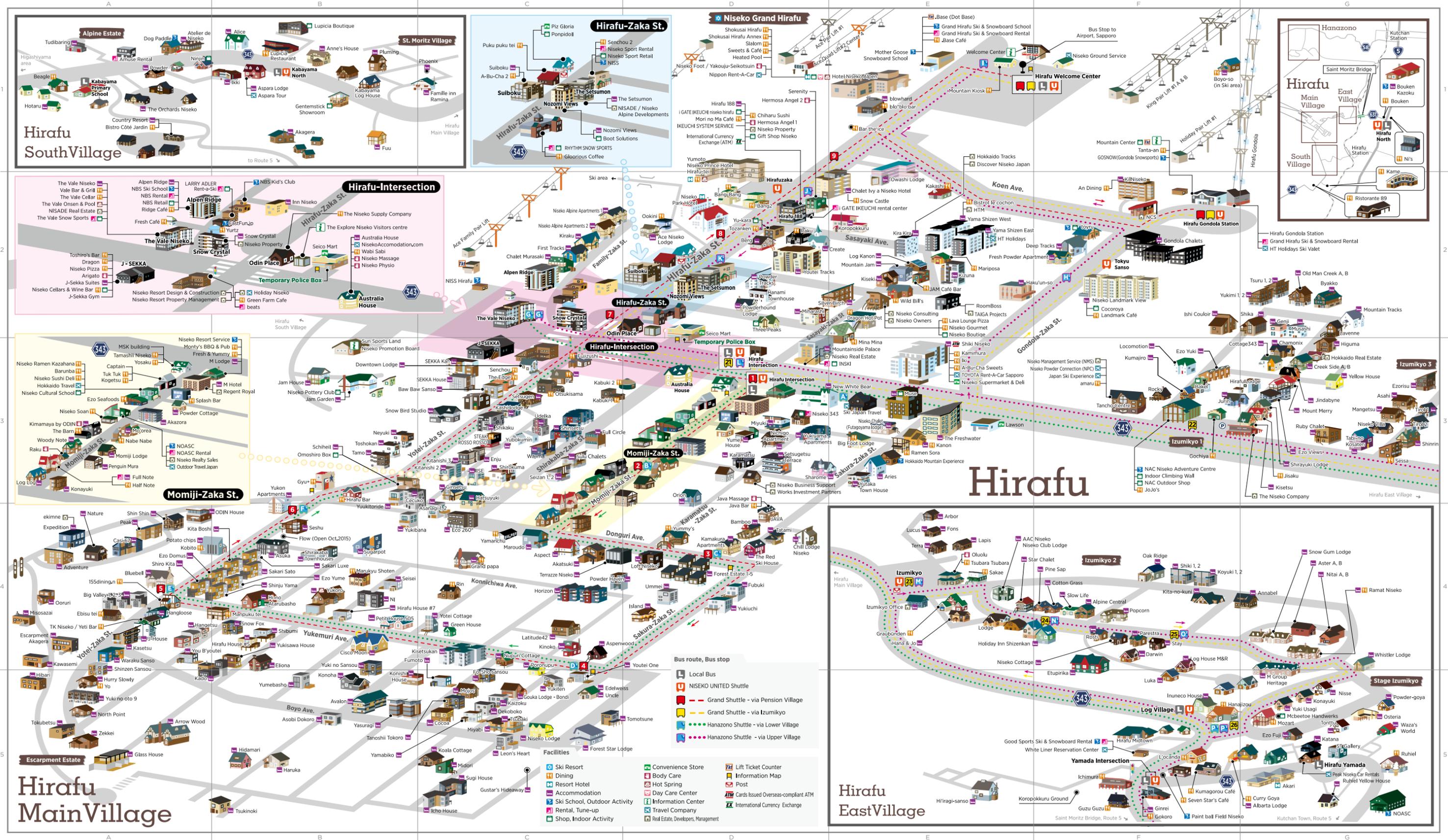


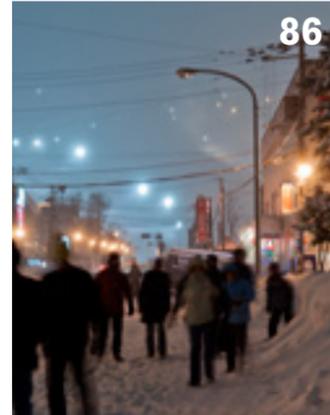
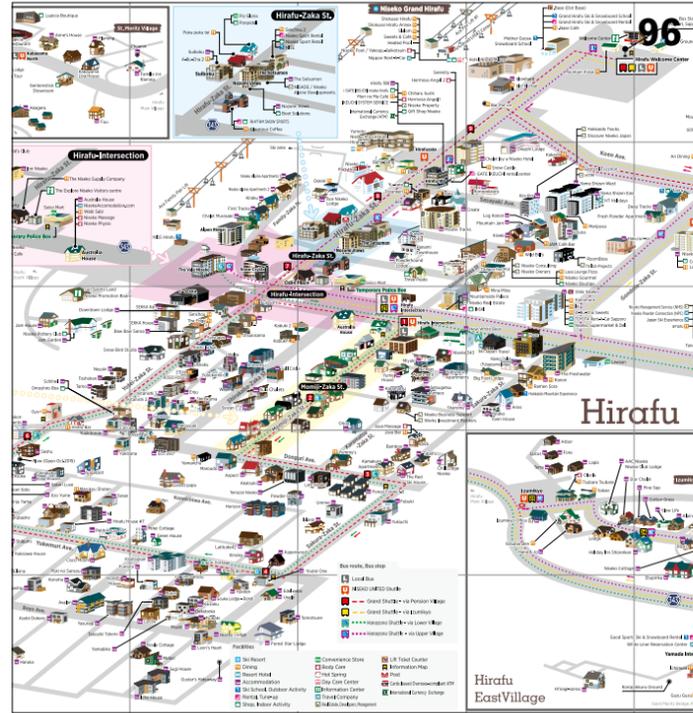
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