

powderlife

NISEKO | WINTER 2017



**POWDERLIFE:
10 YEARS IN NISEKO**

VOL 10 | 10TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

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*"The land drops off into a valley;
we've literally built on the cliff
so it looks down over the river
and back up to the mountains."*

- SHOUYA GRIGG

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COVER PHOTO
NAOKI FUJIMURA

SKIER
SHIZUTO NAKAZAWA

Naoki Fujimura is originally from
Kyoto and has been living in Niseko
since 2001.



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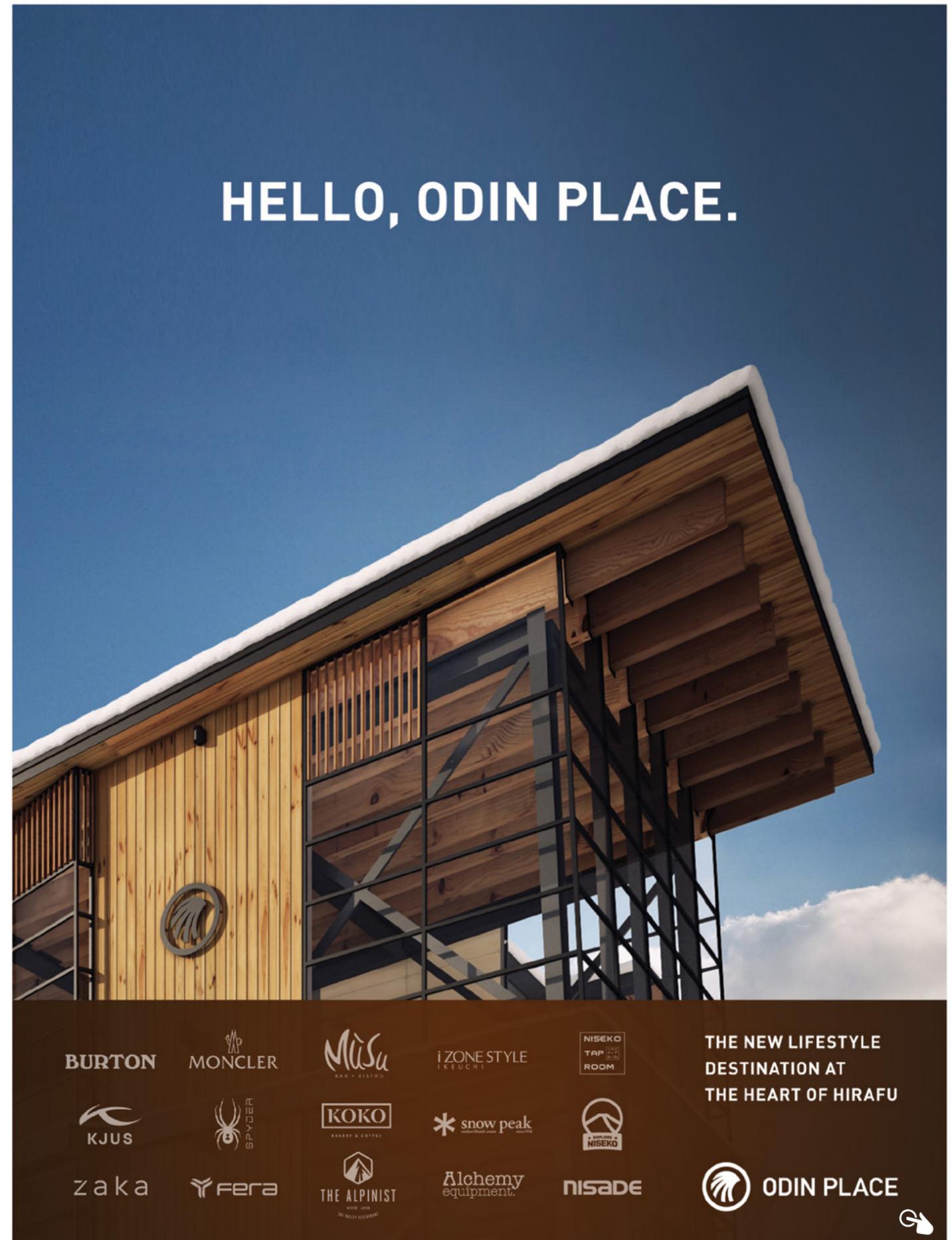
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Japanese people tend to be fascinated by foreigners, probably as result of the country's borders literally being closed until the mid-1800s. Even today, immigration numbers are minimal and multiculturalism is almost non-existent. Walk down the main street of an average Hokkaido farming town on any given day and you have little more than a snowflake's chance in Hawaii of seeing a non-Japanese person.



■ KRISTIAN LUND



Having spent many years living in different parts of Japan, as a particularly large, bearded Caucasian nicknamed Yogi (as in the bear), I am used to being a subject of curiosity. People love to ask where I'm from, how tall I am and whether I speak Japanese.

However after a decade living in Niseko, I've recently come to the realisation that these days no one raises an eyelid when they pass me at the supermarket, or even in the onsen. With so many foreigners now living here and visiting, I think it's official that we are no longer unique in Niseko, which must be a fairly unique situation in Japan.

I had an interesting insight into the changes in the multicultural makeup of Niseko recently while having dinner with a visiting Chinese client at now-famous izakaya restaurant Torimatsu. An older Japanese resident sitting beside us at the long, grill-side counter bar leaned over to spark up a conversation.

It soon became apparent that, as I should have expected, he wasn't at all interested in me. He was purely interested in learning more about my Chinese guest and why this new wave of foreigners – following on from the original Australian, Kiwi, North American and European wave – was so drawn to Niseko. It seems to be a sign of the times that the massive recent enthusiasm from Chinese and other Asian markets is of major curiosity to residents these days.

This interaction was also another opportunity to learn from an older local how he felt about the changes in Niseko and the incredible foreign interest being paid to this tiny potato-farming town in northern Japan. He seemed worried that climate change might mean the snow would stop falling, or that for some other reason, foreign investment in Niseko would disappear all of a sudden, leaving his community without an industry on which its livelihood had become so dependent.

This is the 10th Anniversary Edition of Powderlife, and for some reason it feels like Niseko is at a bit of a turning point – well and truly established and now living life in the fast lane as a participant in the glitzy global ski industry.

So we thought this issue was a good opportunity to take a look at the past, present and future of Niseko from a variety of perspectives, a theme you may notice running throughout many articles in the magazine.

It's also a bit of a new look for the mag this year, thanks to the incredible efforts of my highly talented team who put their heart and soul into making Powderlife a publication they are proud of.

We hope you enjoy it and take a copy home with you to dip back into whenever you want to relive your 2016/17 visit to Niseko.

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We wrap up a decade in Niseko and take a glimpse into the next

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A look at the socially responsible future of Niseko development

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10 YEARS IN NISEKO

The Decade in Review

TEXT AARON JAMIESON

Once upon a time, Hirafu was a tranquil mountain village – a quiet place where on a windless night, you could almost hear the snow falling. A stroll through the streets of an evening was a solitary experience, and yes, there were fresh tracks at 3pm every day.

Michelin Guide had no idea Niseko existed and the most popular restaurant in town was a ¥100 udon bar on the main street. Fine dining was a pizza at Yummy's or a night out at izakaya Mina Mina. Jam Bar and Pow Pow were the go-to bars after hours, or you could duck over to Hank's or Fattys' – an Aussie-run bar in the back of a semi-trailer parked in the snow. You could just about count the number of seasonal foreign workers on one hand. Back then, if you lived in the lower village, you were way out of the midst of it.

Walking to the lifts in the morning you almost had to use crampons and a sherpa to navigate the random mountains of snow and ice along the now-heated Hirafu Zaka footpaths. The main accommodation providers ran their businesses out of

demountable buildings on spare blocks of land. There was no Lawson, no ATM, no five-star accommodation, no traffic, no ski valet and barely any visible English. Just 10 years ago, Hirafu was truly a tiny, unknown, frontier snow town.

Crab ramen was still the most popular lunch to break up a day on the mountain, but it wasn't served in the fancy Hanazono 308 base centre – back then it was a steamed-up combination of demountable buildings tacked together. Oh yeah, and there was a KFC underneath the Hirafu gondola!

The simplicity of Niseko was the essence that captivated all who visited. Today, walking between the modern apartment blocks and multi-million dollar chalets, so much has changed. But the simplicity and soul of Niseko still exists. It's in the people, it's in the nature, and when you watch the flakes falling at night, listen... it's only waiting for you to recognise it. It's what brought us all here and it's what brings the world back every year.

How quickly this sleepy little town has adjusted to accommodate for the booming demand of the newly arriving international tourists is a credit to the local Japanese and their counterparts, the foreign residents, who have united to quickly create one of the world's most fascinating and unique snow destinations. ■

Hirafu Zaka pre heated roads and footpaths, as viewed from Nisade's The Setsumon, opened January 2008



THE NEXT 10 YEARS

Buckle up and let's see what the future holds.

TEXT KRISTIAN LUND

If you thought the last 10 years were interesting, the next 10 look to be taking a similarly radical if not slightly more refined shape. Niseko has caught the attention of huge tourism and development companies from all around the world, and it seems each new season brings another major new development announcement.

Firstly, planning is well under way for two of Niseko's four resorts to implement impressive masterplans and install world-leading hotels – Park Hyatt at Hanazono and Ritz-Carlton Reserve at Niseko Village. Hanazono's plans will include new lifts up the mountain, as well as potentially across to Mt Niseko Weiss nearby on which it owns land and lease-holdings. Preliminary internal studies are currently underway. A revamped base area will include new world-class children's ski school and daycare facilities, retail, restaurants and new cutting-edge summer activities.

Meanwhile Niseko Village is forging ahead with its masterplan. The resort has already started building new lifts – excitingly not up the mountain, but around the village to better allow guests to explore and access all its different areas.

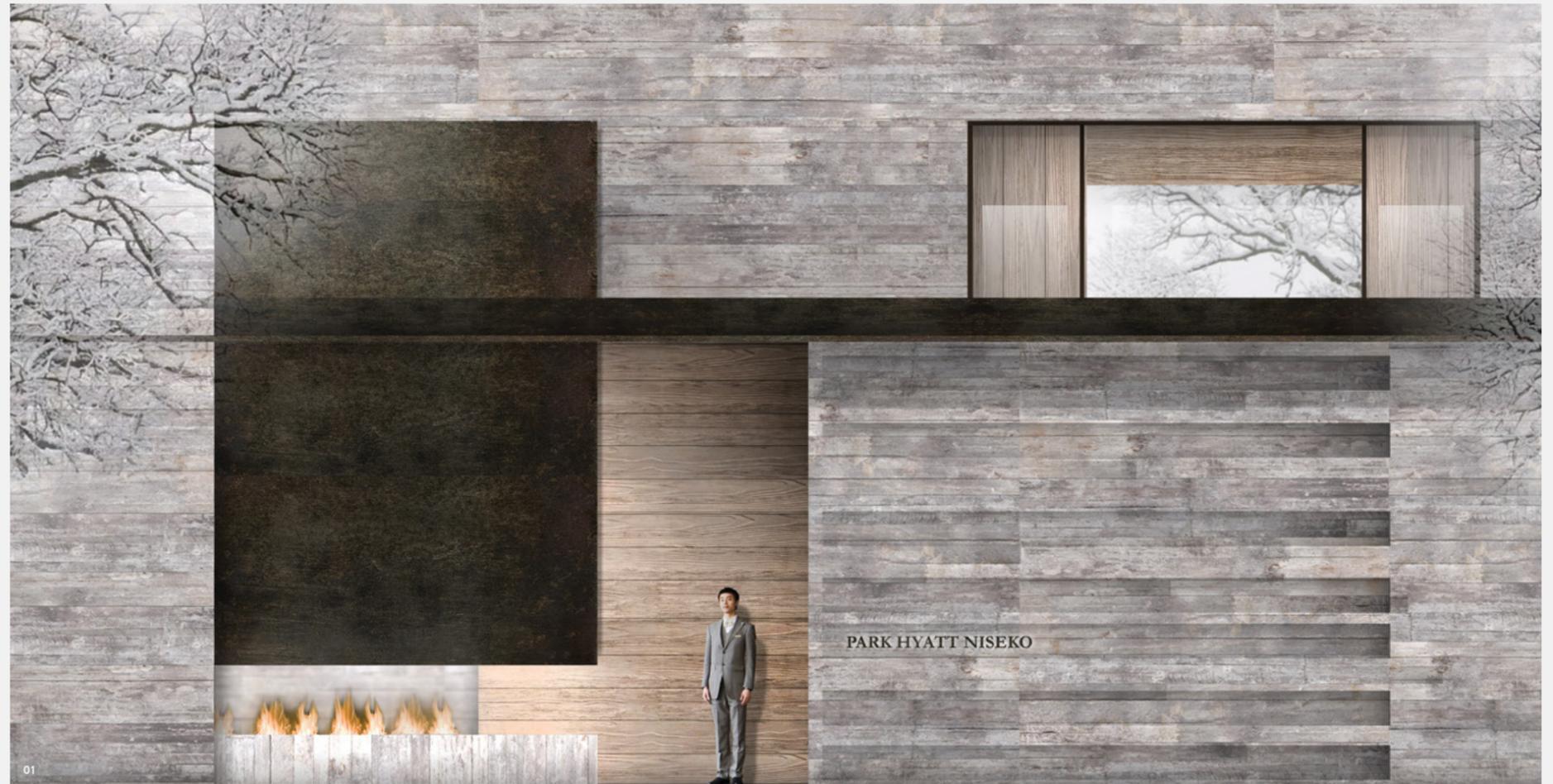
Several large international hotel and resort companies have already announced major new developments in and around Hirafu. While condominium and resort-based development have been the

mainstay until now, big business is moving in and buying large tracts of land with full end-to-end development plans in place, often including a mix of hotel, residential and villa development. Boutique Kengo Kuma-designed Hirafu estate ELEVATION was a huge success, with lots all but selling out for between US\$1.3-2.5m last year.

The shinkansen (bullet train) has already reached Hokkaido via undersea tunnel, and is slated to arrive right here in Niseko (Kutchan station) by 2030, allowing direct express access from Tokyo in under five hours. This would give residents and international visitors arriving in the capital the option of one direct train, rather than a domestic flight plus two-hour road transfer. In particular this will be a boon for domestic tourism year round.

Sapporo city is pushing to host its second Winter Olympics in 2026. Niseko is earmarked to hold the alpine events, which, if successful, would mean serious government support to upgrade the resorts, towns and village infrastructure. Not to mention a surge in private investment interest. Sapporo wants to leverage off the event to cement Hokkaido as Asia's premier ski destination which is good sign for the future.

Buckle up and let's see what the future holds for the coming decade.



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Initial concept designs for Park Hyatt Hanazono
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The shinkansen is scheduled to connect to Niseko by 2030
- 03**
Sapporo is pushing for the Winter Olympics 2026, with Niseko to have a stake
- 04**
Large new luxury resorts and master-planned estates like ELEVATION are the next big thing

私のアルバム

A TRUE PIONEER

Taeko Urano



TEXT KRISTIAN LUND
PHOTOS SUPPLIED BY TAEKO URANO

As you enjoy a drink and a hearty meal at a rustic old izakaya, or one of the swankier modern establishments that proliferate Niseko this winter, we would like to suggest you take a moment to say “kanpai” (cheers) to Taeko Urano. For without Taeko-san’s foresight and efforts, Hirafu and arguably the rest of Niseko may not be the world-famous dining hotspot or international ski destination it is today.

After visiting Hakuba and several ski resorts in Europe and Canada in the 1970s, Taeko-san realised that while Niseko might have had superior snow, one thing it was lagging behind on was an après entertainment scene. So she took it upon herself to give it one, opening Hirafu’s first lively izakaya restaurant and bar, Kakashi, in 1978.

Ever since she was a teenager, Taeko-san has been mad about skiing. She grew up in Hakodate on the southern tip of Hokkaido and was one of few females who skied at that time. In 1964, after hearing tales of the prodigious snowfall and new chair lifts several hours north in Niseko (which was known as Kaributo at the time), she and a friend took an overnight train and arrived at Hirafu station at dawn. It was several hours before the first bus to the resort, so like any ski-mad youngsters, they walked through the snow to the resort to make first lifts.

After many subsequent visits, Taeko-san fell in love – firstly with Niseko, and soon after with the grandson of Hirafu’s first settler Tatsuzou Urano, who is believed to have moved here in the decades before 1900.



01
A teenage Taeko-san on an early set of skis

02
Niseko Onsen bus stop

03
Climbing the slopes before chairlifts

04
The view from the Yamada Onsen above the Welcome Centre, Upper Hirafu 1962

05
Kombu Station, the stop before Niseko (then called Kaributo)

06
Grand Hirafu circa 1970s



07



08



09

Tatsuzou-san was born in 1858 and immigrated to Hokkaido from the mainland as part of the Japanese government's push to colonise and develop the island in order to secure it from Russian control. Moving to such a harsh, remote environment is hard to imagine, but he chose to settle on the mountainside of Hirafu because of its natural hot springs that would help him ward off illness. Without any roads or electricity, and probably a lot more snow than we get these days, winter must have been quite a different experience to the one we enjoy today.

Urano-san started farming the slopes of Upper Hirafu, growing potatoes in earnest in summer on the rocky hillside. In 1961, Hirafu's first lifts opened and it became a bona fide ski resort, with seven of the farming families opening inns to accommodate the increase in recreational and

competition skiers visiting. The Urano's first lodge was called Minshuku Urano, and cost ¥500 per night which included two meals. Pretty good value for a ski-in lodge in Upper Hirafu!

They renamed it Hakuunso (White Cloud) in 1964, and this year rebuilt and reopened it with a stunning new architectural design, reminiscent of the old farmhouses that inhabited the Hirafu of yesteryear.

Today, the Urano family is the only original landholder remaining in Upper Hirafu. All others have sold up and moved over the past 10 years as foreigners have bought up their buildings and land.

For Taeko-san, the change in Niseko over the past decade has been bitter sweet. In one way it's the increase in tourism and popularity that she has been pushing for since she arrived,

opened Kakashi and subsequently a cafe and also Hirafu's first tennis courts, as well as many other initiatives to make Hirafu the vibrant year-round resort that it has become today.

On the other hand, it saddens her that while she still sees her old friends regularly, they are no longer working together to improve Hirafu. Controlling interests in the village are increasing in number and diversifying, meaning the original cohesion and soul of the village is harder to maintain.

If there's one message Taeko-san would like to pass onto current and future Niseko stakeholders, it's that she would like everyone to work together to keep improving the area, like she and Hirafu's founders have been doing since day one. ■



10

"Moving to such a harsh, remote environment is hard to imagine, but he chose to settle on the mountainside of Hirafu because of its natural hot springs that would help him ward off illness."

07-09
Heli-skiing Blackcomb Mountain, Canada 1973

10
With late husband Yoshihiro Urano in Lodge Hakuunso 1997



Celebrating 10 years of excellence.

The Niseko Company would like to wish a heartfelt thank you to all of our valued guests for helping to make the last ten years such a success.

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YOICHI WATANABE
Photographer

Something that hasn't changed over the past 10 years is the classic Niseko powder day. Deep, dark and thick with powder. This is what it's all about. Skier Yuki Tsubame.

Photo featured in Stuben Magazine 02.

There's plenty of arts and culture to take enjoy in and around Niseko throughout winter. Here's a few ideas to get you started.



PHOTOS GLEN CLAYDON

TAIKO MAESTRO

Throughout the year in Niseko you can witness the magnificent taiko drum performances by local troupe Yotei Daiko. Belgian Kris Gaethofs had never played drums before but was hooked on taiko after he first heard them. When he got the opportunity to play himself, he picked up his sticks and ran with it.



KRIS GAETHOFS
FIRST FOREIGN MEMBER
OF YOTEI DAIKO

Catch Kris and Yotei Daiko outside Rhythm Summit and Green Farm Cafe at the Hirafu intersection 4-4.30pm Sundays from January 1 to March 5.

When did you start taiko-ing?
My first try at taiko drumming was during Yotei Daiko's 2012 spring workshop at the Kutchan Cultural Centre. This is a yearly returning workshop and everyone that finishes it can join the Yotei Daiko members playing the drums during the Kutchan Jaga Matsuri (Potato Festival). The workshop was so much fun I decided to join Yotei Daiko in earnest afterwards.

Why did you decide to do it?
I watched a performance by world-famous taiko performers KODO in my home country. This left me duly impressed and after moving to Japan and experiencing in person the energy vibrating from Yotei Daiko's performances, I just had to give it a try myself.

Were you the first foreigner to play with Yotei Daiko?
Others have dabbled but I'm the first to receive the Yotei Daiko Happi Coat (to become a full performing member).

What do you enjoy about taiko drumming itself?
It's the perfect stress relief combined with physical exercise, but as well as that, nothing beats the feeling of performing live in front of an audience. But more than just taiko drumming, joining Yotei Daiko was like becoming part of a second family. It really is a great group of people.

There seems to be a certain power and almost a connection with the gods when you're all playing. Does it feel special like that?
Yes, it certainly does. From the moment our lead drummer first strikes his drum I can feel the energy starting to build up inside of me and the other members only to be released when we all join in. It's an incredible feeling!

How often do you have to practice?
We aim to practice twice at least twice a week together as a group. Casual at times and pretty hardcore at other times.

Is it difficult to remember all the songs? (Do you call them songs?)
Haha. Good question. Let's just say it took me quite a while. Most of our songs are not written down in any form and we learn by watching and listening to senior members.

Do you or anyone else ever make mistakes? It doesn't seem like it!
Of course I do. The trick is not to make it obvious to anyone but our own members. ■

Pick up a copy of our Powderlife's weekly partner publication What's On Niseko to find out what cultural and other events are on during your stay.

AYA GALLERY

Talk about sophisticated – from this season you can ski into an art gallery in the heart of Hirafu. New ski-in/ski-out condominium hotel AYA opened its doors onto the Ace Family Run this year, complete with gallery featuring a range of winter-themed works by seven young Hokkaido artists, and one from Macau. Curated by Sapporo artist Kiyoe Hosokawa, Kiyoe Gallery Niseko features 20 works, both paintings and sculptures, and later will include ceramics and traditional arts and crafts. Hosokawa-san says this is a great opportunity for local artists to be exposed to visitors from all over the world. Artworks are for sale so it's also an opportunity to take home a unique Hokkaido souvenir. ■



Kiyoe Gallery Niseko is located on the ground floor of AYA Niseko at the base of the Ace Family Run



WOODBLOCK PRINT POST

We loved this modern take on famous ukiyo-e print "Evening Snow at Kanbara" on Instagram by Hokkaido doodler @outdoor_illustr. The hunched figures in the 1833 original couldn't illustrate more vividly the severity of life in olden day Japanese snow country, with the Instagram-age hikers occupying an entirely different era. Ironically, the original scene is thought to be fictional as it rarely snows in Kanbara, sub-tropically south of Tokyo. ■



PHOTO BOOKS

STUBEN MAGAZINE



Yoichi Watanabe is the father of snow photography in Niseko, and this year he brings out his follow up issue of Stuben Magazine. Stuben isn't just about Niseko, it also features articles, photos and illustrations on skiing culture as it exists all around the world. Be sure to admire the silver print of the images on the inside covers.

AVAILABLE AT
www.gentemstick.com,
Gentemstick Showroom and
other retailers across Niseko

KOKYU
(THE BREATH)



Taro Tamai is a local snowboarding legend and founder of the world-famous Gentemstick snowboard. His unique style of snow surfing is one way he expresses his creativity. Another is photography, which he shares with us in his new book Kokyu (The Breath).

"What Tamai-san sees and captures through the lens is the translation of his visions."

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OUR FAVOURITES

We picked out a few items we liked to whet your appetite, so if you like these, you've got to go and have a look for yourself.

SAKE BAG
Sake Bottle Canvas Bag
'Midori Kawa' Sake Brand
c. 60-70 years old | JPY3,500 yen

TEAPOT
Vintage Kyushu Tetsubin
Cast Iron Teapots
c. 40 years old | from JPY4,500

KIMONO
Uchikake Vintage
Wedding Kimono
c. 30-40 years old | JPY26,000 yen
(in-store kimono from JPY1,000 yen)

COCOROYA

old and new
japanese treasures

Whether you're looking for an authentic souvenir, or to experience a solid dose of traditional Japanese culture, there is a small shop just off the main street of Hirafu that is literally packed to the rafters with unique old and not so old items from Hokkaido and beyond.

It would take several hours, if not a day, to observe and consider every item in Cocoroya. To learn the story behind each one would be an undertaking of novel proportions. If you have the time, shop owners Yuji and Susan Otani can certainly tell you a story or two. Susan says it's as much a gallery and cultural experience as it is a shop. "I'm sure a lot of people come in for a quick look, but end up staying for an hour and taking something home with them," she says.

can take home their own piece of Japanese history with them."

Popular items include kokeshi dolls, kimono and obi, and men tend to like the old tools and knives. Authentic samurai swords – that's right, used by actual samurai and complete with dents in the blades – are also a big hit. Most are several hundred years old and are quite rare in Japan because many were taken out of the country after World War II.

"We have imitation ones as well, but the real ones come with certificates of authenticity," Susan says. "The actual blade is the antique, but the sheath, handle and fittings are also collectable and people like to customise their sword, or collect different parts and put their own together." ■

"People love the search, so we cram it full of everything and people can spend hours in here fossicking. There's only one of everything, so when someone finds the one thing they really like, they're so happy because they feel like they've got a personalised souvenir from Japan. It's like they



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c. 20-40 years old | from JPY1,500



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SALT SIGN
'Shio' Vintage Metal Kanban
('Salt' Sign)
c. 50 years old | JPY3,500



KOKESHI DOLLS
Vintage Wooden Dolls
c. 10-60 years old | JPY800-12,000



LAMP
Kerosene Lamps
c. 70-80 years old | from JPY18,500



KOBAKO
Small Wooden Box
for Sewing etc
c. 80-90 years old | JPY4,800 yen



SKIS
Vintage Haga Sapporo Skis
With Bamboo Bindings
c. 70-80 years old | JPY45,000



YUJI AND SUSAN OTANI



PHOTOS NIC LEHOUX

"Fireplaces have a magical draw on people of an almost primal quality. The fireplace helps us blur the distinction between indoor and outdoor, while being the physical focal point of the building."
- CHRIS FJELDDAHL

ODIN PLACE

trend-setting hirafu icon

It might not be Fifth Avenue New York, but Hirafu Zaka Street is giving us a glimpse into the future of the village with an iconic new landmark building this year. The newly opened Odin Place, on the corner of the crossroads marking the centre of the village, was designed by award-winning US architects Bohlin Cywinski Jackson (BCJ), the team also behind the world-famous Fifth Avenue Apple Store. Other works include Pixar Studios and a house for Bill Gates.

Odin Place's design was inspired by the wood, steel and glass structure of BCJ's Grand Teton Discovery and Visitor Centre near Jackson Hole Mountain Resort in the US – a favourite building of Odin Projects' founders, Norwegian brothers Chris and Bjorn Fjelddahl and Frenchman Nicolas Gontard.

Chris says an indoor-outdoor fireplace and chimney located on the uphill entrance to the building is a key feature of the design that will become a landmark meeting point. "Fireplaces have a magical draw on people of an almost primal quality," he says. "Our vision has always been to make Odin Place an alpine statement, and a place that is truly multi-seasonal. The fireplace helps us blur the distinction between indoor and outdoor, while being the physical focal point of the building."

The responsible development of Odin Place by private enterprise is an encouraging step forward in the development of Hirafu. More than just a building, Odin Place has been designed as an open public thoroughfare that will hopefully help shape the character of the

village from the centre out. Like any thoughtfully designed public space, it will inspire interest and movement in and around it, and become a place where people from all over the world can freely congregate in the Hirafu village heart.

Fjelddahl said the prominence of the location obligated them to do something responsible for the town. "Because of its iconic location at the corner of the most central spot in town, we wanted Odin Place to be a thoughtful, human-scale retail experience," Fjelddahl says. "The site could have supported a much larger building, but we deliberately opted to make it smaller in order to make a positive impact on the landscape of central Hirafu. We wanted the building design to be open, inviting and porous, hence entrances on both ends, which we

hope will create a flow through the building."

The building houses fashion and outdoor sports outlets including Burton Snowboards, as well as other businesses, from activity booking hub Explore Niseko to craft beer bar Niseko Taproom. Odin itself is managing three food and beverage outlets designed in collaboration with its partner, Eight Partnership. The Odin team has been highly involved as co-designers in the project, particularly the interiors.

Now that Odin Place has set a standard for the development of high-profile locations, we're looking forward to seeing the owners of other key main-road sites follow in similar fashion. If they do, Hirafu's future is looking very stylish and exciting indeed.



DIRECTORY

1F
BURTON SNOWBOARDS
Flagship Hirafu retail store
EXPLORE NISEKO
Activity booking centre

2F
KOKO
Bakery + Coffee
MÛSU
Bar + Bistro

ZAKA
Alpine apparel brand store
MONCLER
Clothing + Jackets + Accessories

3F
NISEKO TAPROOM
Craft beer + rotisserie
THE ALPINIST
Alpine cuisine
iZONE STYLE IKEUCHI
Apparel retail store
MORINOMA CAFE
All-day alpine café
NISADE
Lifestyle showroom



BOHLIN CYWINSKI JACKSON (BCJ)

Bohlin Cywinski Jackson is noted for elegant and humane design, ranging from modest houses to large academic, civic, cultural, commercial and corporate buildings.

"Our principals and staff are deeply committed to active collaboration with our clients, emphasizing thorough research and analysis of each situation's particular human, technical, and economic circumstances. The result is exceptional architecture that resonates within its place."

Since 1965, Bohlin Cywinski Jackson has received more than 625 regional, national, and international design awards, including three Committee on the Environment Top Ten Green Project awards from the American Institute of Architects (AIA). It is also the recipient of the AIA Architecture Firm Award, a prestigious honor bestowed upon an architectural practice by the Institute. Founding principal Peter Bohlin was awarded the AIA Gold Medal, the highest honour an individual American architect can receive.

POWDER ESSENTIALS



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JPY140,400 FROM IGATE IKEUCHI NISEKO VILLAGE



GOPRO HERO5 BLACK
4K action camera with easier menu, touchscreen + water/powder resistance
JPY50,760 FROM RHYTHM



MONCLER WOMEN'S BAUGES JACKET
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OAKLEY LINEMINER GOGGLE WITH PRIZM INFERNO LENS
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OYUKI THE CHIKA MITT
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JPY16,900 FROM RHYTHM



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BLACK CROWS NOCTA

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FROM RHYTHM SUMMIT



PIEPS SET SPORT DSP SPORT, SHOVEL TOUR, ALUMINIUM PROBE 260

This kit could save you or your buddy's life – buy it and do an avy course to learn how to use them (Course details page 148)

JPY66,960 FROM RHYTHM SUMMIT



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Arc'teryx has entered the avalanche protection market with this battery-powered, fan-driven pack

JPY172,800 FROM IGATE IKEUCHI NISEKO HIRAFU



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AARON JAMIESON
Photographer

*Staring out into the snow through
a veil of steam. There's nothing
quite like it. Weiss Onsen Hotel,
Hanazono.*

**DESTINATION:
NATURE AND WELLNESS**

Niseko is fast becoming known as a wellness and healing destination, with a growing number of onsen accommodations, spas, massage and therapy clinics, yoga classes and retreats. Indulge yourself this winter.



YOGA

If you're missing your regular yoga sessions from home, there are now plenty of opportunities to take part in classes this winter. With snow falling silently outside, Niseko makes a unique backdrop to practice to. Spring, summer and autumn here are even quieter than winter, and there are more and more yoga retreats popping up throughout the year. For class locations and times in winter, pick up What's On Niseko, and if you want to come back for a retreat, keep an eye on PowderYoga.com and SanctuaryNiseko.com/Yoga.



SPA FIRST

Every serious ski resort needs a luxury day spa, and now Hirafu can call itself a serious ski resort. Niseko Spa opens this winter in new condo Haven in the Middle Village. Designed by world-leading Tokyo spa designers, Takara Design, the spa sits on the edge of the village overlooking the tranquil shirakaba (silver birch) forest. Niseko Spa's offerings include facials and body treatments designed to combat the harsh dry weather in Niseko. They also offer massage, hair treatment, waxing, and nail art.

ONSEN RECOMMENDATIONS



Yugokorotei Onsen is a little bit hard to say, so many foreign locals simply call it Annupuri Onsen. It's a rustic old place with a simple indoor bath but an exquisite rotenburo (outdoor bath). When you've finished, there is a relaxation lounge with free massage chairs and kids play area.



Weiss Hotel Onsen near the Hanazono ski resort is somewhat of a local secret, but one of the most elegant onsen in Niseko. There are several indoor baths in a range of styles and temperatures that will suit adults and children who don't like extreme heat, and there is also a small outdoor bath.



Goshiki Onsen is an ancient old bath house located high up on a pass behind Mt Annupuri. It's not easy to get to but if you can find a way, bathing in the milky, turquoise water is most certainly an experience you will never forget. You can also ski there, but you have to hike or get a lift back.



Ski straight into the Hilton Niseko Village, put your skis in a rack, stroll through the decadent lobby and head on out to the onsen. The indoor bath here tends to be quite hot, but we recommend jumping in before making the dash downstairs to the must-try rotenburo overlooking a carp-filled pond.



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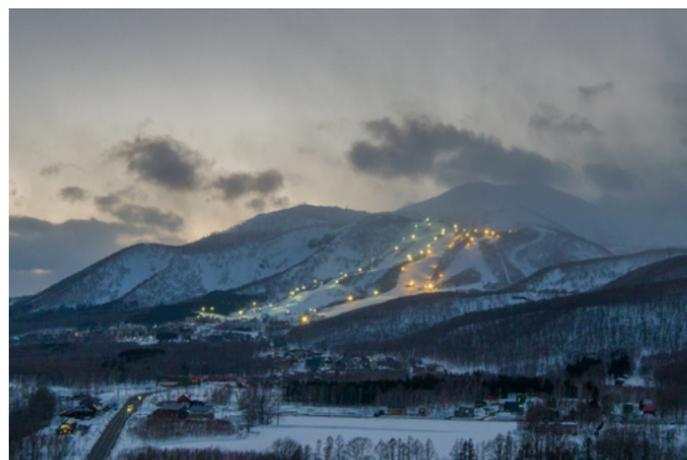
RISE OF THE DRONES

a cool new point of view

TEXT AND PHOTOS · GLEN CLAYDON

In the last few years UAVs – or drones as they are commonly known – have revolutionised film production and photography, allowing recreational and professional users alike to capture shots that were only ever possible with helicopters.

I had never previously intended to get into aerial photography but a good friend surprised me in February 2014 by giving me one as a present. The drone was the first ‘Phantom’ made by DJI, which was the first mass-produced UAV that was affordable, reliable and relatively easy to fly straight out of the box, using GPS for internal flight stabilisation of the craft. DJI is now up to the Phantom 4, and have partnered with Apple for sales, and Hasselblad for research and development. It was a mind-blowing experience connecting a GoPro to a drone for the first time and sending it up in the air. As a photographer, a whole new world opened up and I have since become a dedicated aerial photographer and videographer.



After the initial excitement passed, the reality of flying – and crashing – quickly became apparent. With no experience working on electronics or soldering, necessity forced my hand. The first upgrade I managed was to add a two-axis gimbal to the drone that kept the GoPro camera steady regardless of the movement of the drone. The second upgrade was to install a POV (point of view) setup, which allowed me to see through the camera in real time through a monitor attached to the remote control. These days it isn't necessary to make modifications. As technology has developed, integration with mobile applications and devices has made using drones easier, safer and more reliable.

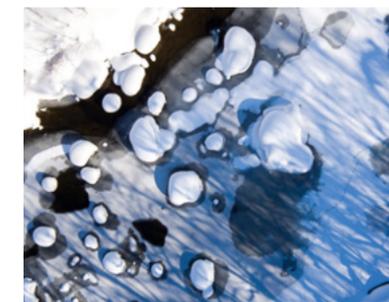
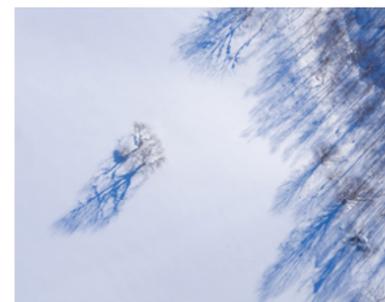
After working in the Niseko region as a photographer for years, being able to reassess the landscape from the air has been

brilliant. The challenge now lies in shooting images that are great as photographs, rather than thinking they are great just because they are new – the aerial 'wow factor' is always there to some extent.

Here in Japan there are restrictions in place for use over cities and towns over a certain population density, and certain other guidelines. The use of drones for industrial purposes is exploding, as is virtual reality (VR), interactive 360-degree panoramas, and VR mapping, to mention just a few other applications. At this stage there is no licensing system for users but Japan will no doubt be implementing one in the not too distant future. ■

Used wisely, drones produce perspectives that blend reality with previously imagined perspectives, capturing the world in a stunning new way. To see more examples of my Niseko aerial photography, visit glenclaydon.com and 360niseko.com.

NOTE
Niseko United has banned the use of drones over the ski field so please don't operate them over any of the resorts without approval.





NAOKI FUJIMURA
Photographer

TAKUHIRO SHINOMOTO
Skier

*One last run, one last photo
before the sun goes down.
And what a beauty it is.*



PHOTO DARREN TEASDALE

SEASONAL FORECAST 2016 / 17

“Going by the stats and analysis, they surmised that despite dour predictions, Niseko would be in for an above average season and the Hakuba resorts would be below. Both turned out to be correct.”

It’s a funny thing writing the seasonal snow forecast at the start of every Powderlife. Every year there are plenty of very good reasons to be positive that it’s going to be a good season – possibly one for the record books! “The first snowfall was the earliest it’s been for x-number of years,” one person will say; “The yuki mushi (pre-season snow bugs) were in plague proportions,” will say another. No one knows for certain, but it’s always fun to speculate.

However for the second year in a row we’ve got a climate cycle that could give us some clues. Last year we had an El Nino weather event, which in simplest terms means warm water that usually pools over this side of the Pacific Ocean moves eastwards towards South America, affecting the local climate and generally resulting in lower-than-average snowfall here.

This year is the opposite – La Nina – and the good news is that La Nina years tend to be colder and favour heavier snowfall in Hokkaido. Last year our friends at Japan Ski Tours tipped us off on some very interesting figures they had col-

lated on snowfall depths across Japan in El Nino years. Going by the stats and analysis, they surmised that despite dour predictions, Niseko would be in for an above average season and the Hakuba resorts would be below. Both turned out to be correct.

So we thought we’d ask them if they had any insight on La Nina years. It turns out that as expected, La Nina years do have above average snowfalls in Niseko. The data isn’t able to reveal by how much it might beat the average, but we’re confident it will be enough.

And a final note: while we’re seeing more and more warmer, drier winters in the northern hemisphere, there’s one thing we can still be certain of in the world right now – that while there might be minor ups and downs, Niseko always gets more than enough snow. ■

Check out JapanSkiTours.com for further La Nina insight and daily snow forecasts/road condition reports conducted by an in-house professional meteorologist.

MECHANISED SKIING GEARING UP



PHOTO GLEN CLAYDON



PHOTO HBC



PHOTO WILL WISSMAN

Several foreign-owned organisations are rapidly forging a mechanised ski touring industry in Southwest Hokkaido. Niseko-based Hokkaido Backcountry Club (HBC) has just taken the 2016 title of World’s Best Heli-ski Operator at the World Ski Awards.

Meanwhile Kiroro Resort, just an hour up in the hills northeast of Niseko, is shaping up to become a mechanised skiing mecca.

Canadian Clayton Kernaghan heads up HBC, which has been running heli-tours for two seasons off the steep and deep Mt Shiribetsu (above), at nearby Rusutsu just over the other side of Mt Yotei. They also operate cat skiing out of Shimamaki southwest of Niseko in some mind-blowing terrain (below).

Kernaghan was also co-founder of Higashiyama-based Black Diamond Tours (BDT), which has this year given a new lease on life to a small backcountry ski resort surrounded by onsen (hot springs) in the hills behind Niseko. A couple of years after closing down, this year they will

reopen the former one-lift Chisenupuri resort area for cat skiing. Current plans are to reopen one lift within five years, and potentially more in future to make it a fully-fledged resort for the first time. Accommodation development in the vicinity is a possibility, which would add an interesting new holiday option to Niseko.

Kiroro general manager Ian Mackenzie says plans it has been working on for several years to mechanise its ski touring options are coming to fruition. This year it will undertake several test days for both heli and cat skiing in the backcountry surrounding the resort boundaries (below). It’s assessing the possibility of up to a dozen peaks it could land on towards Yoichidake and all the ridges down to the Tribute Hotel.

“Hopefully we’ll be fully mechanised for winter 2017/18,” Mackenzie says. “Then as a resort we’ll have a very robust in-house backcountry experience – slack country, backcountry touring, cats and helicopter.” The resort has received approval from both the local town and the national forestry commission. ■

DIY SNOW FORECASTING TIPS AND RESOURCES

Snow forecasting is an inaccurate science at the best of times, but given complex local geographic and meteorological factors, forecasting snow in Niseko is especially hard. The easiest way to get some local insight is to check out daily local reports online (ours at Powderlife.com, 360niseko.com, and SkiJapan.com) and if you want to get a bit more hands on or get a handle on conditions if you want to go out the gates, here are a few good basic resources to get you started:

01. Snow-Forecast.com

This is one of the more reliable guides as to when it’s going to snow, roughly how much might fall, and the associated temperatures and winds. The amount of snowfall is inaccurate – it gives a centimetre estimate, which is never anywhere near correct. However it does give an indication of how much might fall: 1-5cm means it’s probably going to snow; 5-10cm means probably a lot; 10cm+ means we could be in for 30cm+ fall, but check also for high winds as it could be a storm. Use as a rough guide only.

02. Tenki.jp

This is a Japanese website with the best official meteorological forecasts for the immediate region. If you don’t know any Japanese it might be tricky to use, but if you buy a local beer, they may help point you in the right direction.

03. Niseko.Nadare.info

This is the official Niseko avalanche safety report that anyone going out the gates should familiarise themselves with. It gives a basic wrap up of weather conditions and avalanche risks, and notes which gates are open. This is your daily must-read report in Niseko.



HIROMI TATSUMI
NISEKO AND GENTEMSTICK
CHAIR SNOWBOARDER

NISEKO CHAIR SNOWBOARDER TAKES OUT MT BACHELOR

Shortly after last year's Powderlife went to print with our feature on Niseko and Gentemstick chair snowboarder Hiromi Tatsumi, he travelled to the US to compete in his third Mt Bachelor Dirksen Derby. As we mentioned in the article, in his first attempt three years ago he came third, then in his second attempt the following year he came second. Can you see a pattern forming? Well, we're stoked to report that last year he did take it out! Well done Tatsumi-san. ■



PHOTO NAOKI FUJIMURA



OYUKI TEAM RIDER PEP FUJAS
IMAGE BY DANIEL RÖNNBÄCK

NISEKO BRAND OYUKI SIGNS ON PEP FUJAS AND MAUDE RAYMOND

Two of the world's top skiers have signed on as team riders for locally grown winter apparel brand, Oyuki. American Pep Fugas and Canadian Maude Raymond will be using Niseko as a testing ground for designing their own signature Oyuki mittens.

Pep will be in Niseko in February perfecting his mitt, and will hold a 'meet and greet' night with local up and coming young freeskiers at Rhythm. ■



PEP FUJAS



MAUDE RAYMOND



Photographer: Jordan Manley | Skier: Chad Sayers

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YAMA SAN

TEXT KRISTIAN LUND
PHOTOS KATSUHIDE FUJIO

If you see a bright orange van parked in a Niseko carpark, or an orange flash on the mountain, there's a good chance Yama-san is in town. Also known as Orange Man, Kazushi Yamauchi is one of the most colourful characters on the Hokkaido snow scene.

I first met Yama-san about eight or 10 years ago at the premiere of one of the famous local Car Danchi snowboard movies. At that time he wasn't Orange Man – he had the goatee beard and long hair but essentially just came across as a down to earth, local snow-surfing legend. At the same time, there was a certain aura about him that I couldn't quite put my finger on. I came away from the meeting thinking, "that Yama-san is a cool guy".

When I met him again this year, however, the transformation was complete. Yama-san was orange from the top down. He stepped out of his signature orange van, wearing an orange beanie, orange sunglasses, orange T-shirt, orange jacket, orange sarong, and orange sandals. I was late for our meeting which is not very good form in punctual Japan, but Yama-san didn't mind at all, smiling warmly, clasping his hands together and bowing before we started chatting.



INSTAGRAM

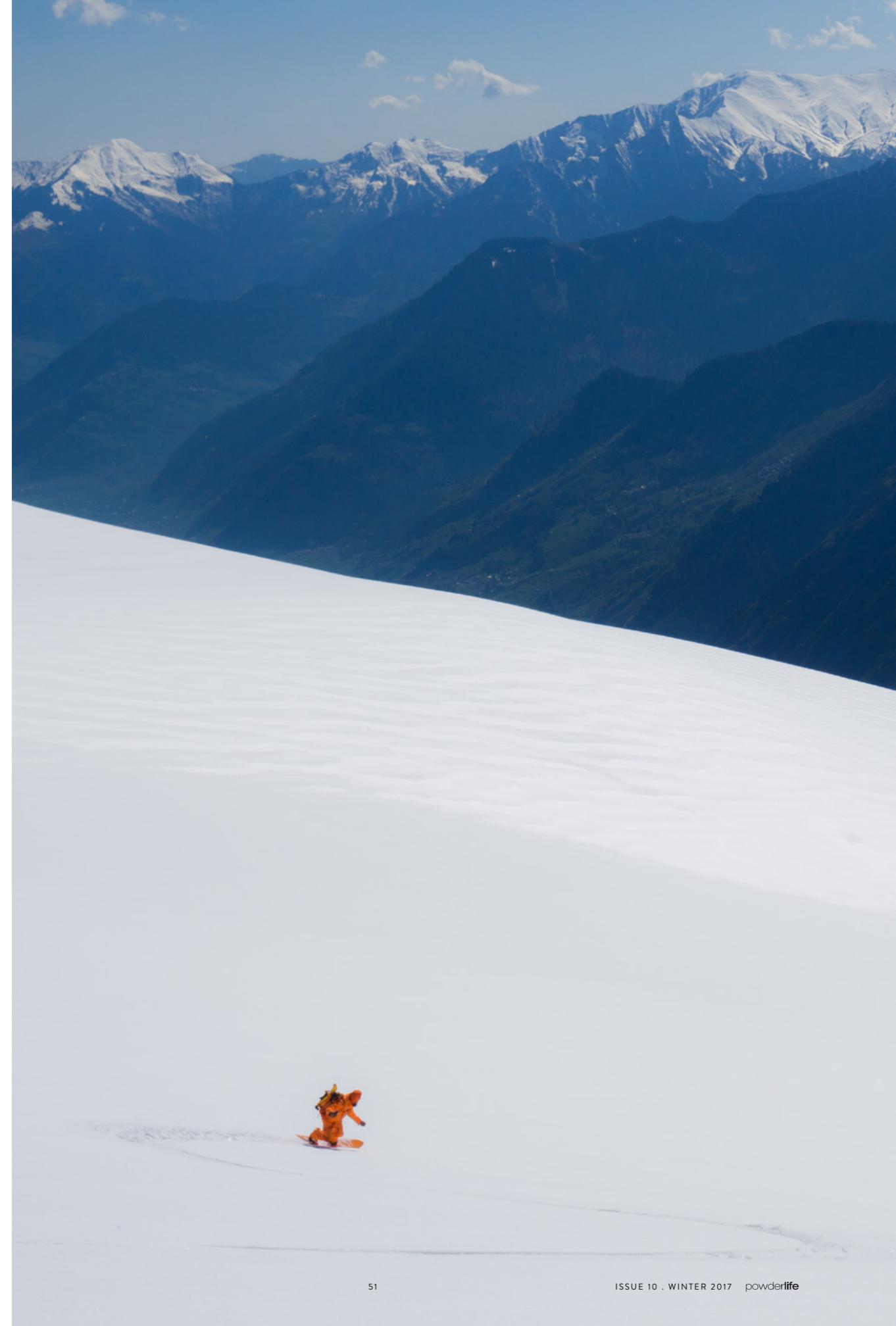
Yama-san is from Asahikawa in central Hokkaido – home to the awe-inspiring Daisetsuzan mountain range. Long-time buddy and Car Danchi filmmaker Neil Hartmann says when he first met Yama-san about 15 years ago he was all about jumping and tricks. "After a few years we all started venturing into the backcountry and his riding style started to change. Soon after that he was introduced to yoga and his life has become a snow-surfing spiritual path to enlightenment – multiple trips to India, endless hours of yoga, meditation, vegetarianism and studying the Hindu religion".

Yama-san took on his orange persona from Indian sadhu yogis, and says ever since it has brought him good fortune, especially good snow, good surf, and good weather to go with it. This year he went on another trip to India with fellow Car Danchi snowboarder Shark Boy (Hayato Doi) and Gentemstick photographer Katsuhide Fujio, who snapped the photo opposite in the Himalayas. They filmed the entire trip themselves – no professional videographers – and Hartmann put the final edit together. The resulting "Orange Trip" DVD is a very cool insight into Yama-san and his spirituality. Om Namah Shivaya! ■



ORANGE TRIP

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AZUSA UEHARA

TEXT KRISTIAN LUND
IMAGES NATE CAREY & GLEN CLAYDON

Happy skiing, happy life! This is Azusa Uehara's motto, and it certainly seems to be a successful formula. Always smiling, joking and with a joyous outlook on life, Azusa-san is one of the larger-than-life characters that make up the fabric of Niseko.

Skiing and the snow is in Azusa-san's DNA – she grew up in Niigata on the mainland and her parents were ski instructors, so she learned to ski not long after she could walk. After spending a few years working as a fashion designer in Tokyo, and then travelling the world skiing, she moved to Niseko. After working as a ski patroller she noticed there

were a lot of people in Niseko telemark skiing – a Nordic style of skiing where the toe of the boot is attached to the skis, but the heel is free, allowing greater ability to negotiate different terrain.

It seems she was a natural and perhaps, she says, "crazier" than other telemarkers, because within two years of taking up the discipline, she had won a swag of national events, and came 10th in the FIS World Cup Telemark. Unfortunately due to an issue with her heart she had to retire from the strenuous competition side of the sport, so we will never know if she could have gone on to be number one. Fortunately it hasn't

stopped her from getting out on the mountain every day in the winter.

These days she shares her passion for life and skiing with others through telemark camps for women under her company, Snow Diva Telemark. She gains true joy from teaching others and witnessing the moments when it all clicks and another person is a step closer to mastering the art of telemark skiing. ■



PHOTO NATE CAREY



01 Corbet's Couloir, Jackson Hole Mountain Resort
02 Always smiling, telemark skis in hand
03 Scandinavian winners trophy mugs

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NISEKO LOCAL CUSTOMS

TEXT KRISTIAN LUND
IMAGES SNOWBOARDING: KEATS
SKIING: KRISTIAN LUND

"If I'm 80 and can shape a hand made board at the base of Moiwa I think I'll have achieved my goals."
- JOSH MONIN



If you take your powder seriously, you might want to consider that your sticks or plank were probably mass-produced among thousands of others – almost a one-size fits all model, made in a country where riding deep dry powder is a luxury, not an everyday fact of life.

Niseko locals and visitors now have the opportunity to order personally customised skis or boards made in two separate local boutique factories.

You can work with the actual human that will hand make your skis – they can assess your height and weight, see footage of your skiing/riding style, and you can then discuss what sort of shape, length and flex combination you would like. To top it all off, you may even choose a custom graphic or design your own topsheet.

Both of these factories have been set up by Australians and at opposite ends of the Niseko United ski resorts.

Roko Skis is the new pet project of passionate outdoor adventure entrepreneur Ross Findlay, who was the first foreigner to live in Niseko and also kickstarted the summer rafting industry here.

Making skis had been a dream since he was at university, and he's hoping the Roko brand

will take off in the local area and beyond. The factory is located in a wing of the rustic old train station in the heart of downtown Kutchan, just beyond Hanazono.

Offshore Snow Shapes is a snowboard brand founded by surf and snow loving artist Josh Monin, a committed disciple of the Niseko-born "snow surfing" movement and backcountry riding.

The company has been making boards for several years near the beaches of Eastern Australia. With demand increasing and a desire to see where this thing could lead, this year Monin teamed up with buddy Richie Willcocks to set up their very own manufacturing workshop right at the base of the Moiwa ski mountain – just beyond the western-most resort of Annupuri.

Monin says making custom snowboards is a niche concept, but it was a process that ultimately led to a better connection between board and rider.

"Everyone has a different style and different preferences for how they want a board to feel," Monin says.

"Similar to ordering a custom surfboard, the process needs to be a blend of what the customer wants, and how the shaper interprets that information. Sometimes you

get the magic board, sometimes you have to fine tune it. There is something special about getting a board made specifically for you."

Just two years into the business, Findlay has learned there is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to ski design.

"We did a testing day with five skiers and every one of them was a very good skier. But when I was watching the video later I realised everyone is a different age and build, and all ski so differently.

"One guy was from an alpine racing background, and even in the powder, he really pushes into it. Then there was another guy who was skiing more on the back of the skis. I was thinking, how can you make a pair of skis that everyone is going to like when everyone skis so differently?"

"Then someone might want their skis more lively, and someone else might want something more passive. Do you make them for the three guys that are really good, or the seven guys that are not so good?"

Again, these are things you can work with the maker to adjust as you go. In both cases, you know that each one has been tested, refined and built right here in Niseko. ■

- 01 Josh Monin testing the goods
- 02 Roko custom graphic
- 03 The boards in their element
- 04 Offshore Snow Shapes lineup
- 05 Offshore shaping bay
- 06 Roko Factory
- 07 Roko ski maker Aki Ishiyama



TRAVERSING THE ANNUPURI SKYLINE

Niseko to the Sea of Japan

STORY AND PHOTOS AARON JAMIESON

The Annupuri range is a rugged spine of large peaks rising as cliffs from the ocean and then carving a swathe through flat farmlands to Hirafu. From here, just a small valley – cut by the Shirebeshi river – separates the range from Mt Yotei. This unique geology contributes to Niseko's seasonal climate and epic winter snow conditions. Storms roll in from Russia in the northwest, across the Sea of Japan, and slam into the Annupuri range. The momentum pushes these storms southward and, looking for a way through, they peel along the range before tearing through the valley between Yotei and Annupuri, disgorging themselves and leaving behind unprecedented amounts of snow.

For the past decade I've explored the mountains of Niseko. From the resorts, through the gates and then quickly discovering the backcountry where I find

I am drawn with a passion; a passion for exploration, driven by the pursuit of perfect snow in pristine wilderness. Niseko's mountains are beautiful and expansive. Mt Annupuri salutes Yotei at the head of the range, running from the rice fields of Kutchan all the way to the ocean. It is a vast wilderness of alpine peaks and open expanses, cropped by a waistband of forest that blankets the lower half of the range and spills out onto farmland at the foothills.

I've spent many days behind the peaks visible from Annupuri, incrementally exploring the backcountry, but I'd always looked further and craved the time and opportunity to explore the furthest peaks. The well-known open bowls of Annupuri are just a sample of the terrain and only a fraction of what's between here and the sea.





LENA STOFFEL



BEN ANTONI



ALINE BOCK



MATHIAS KÖGEL

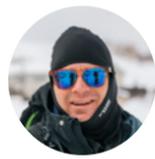
THE TEAM



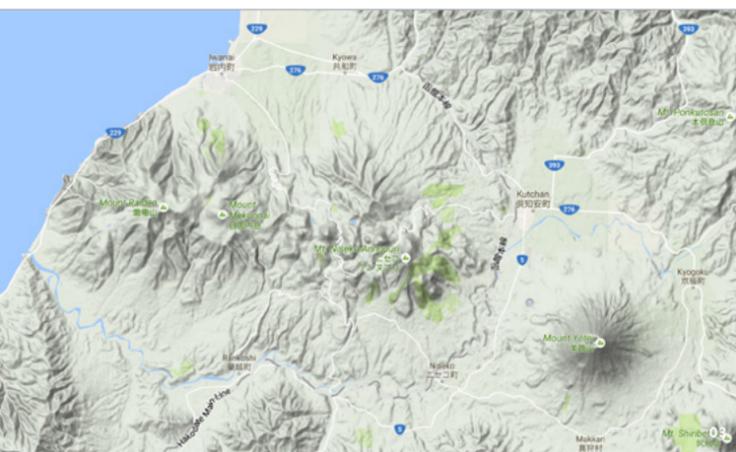
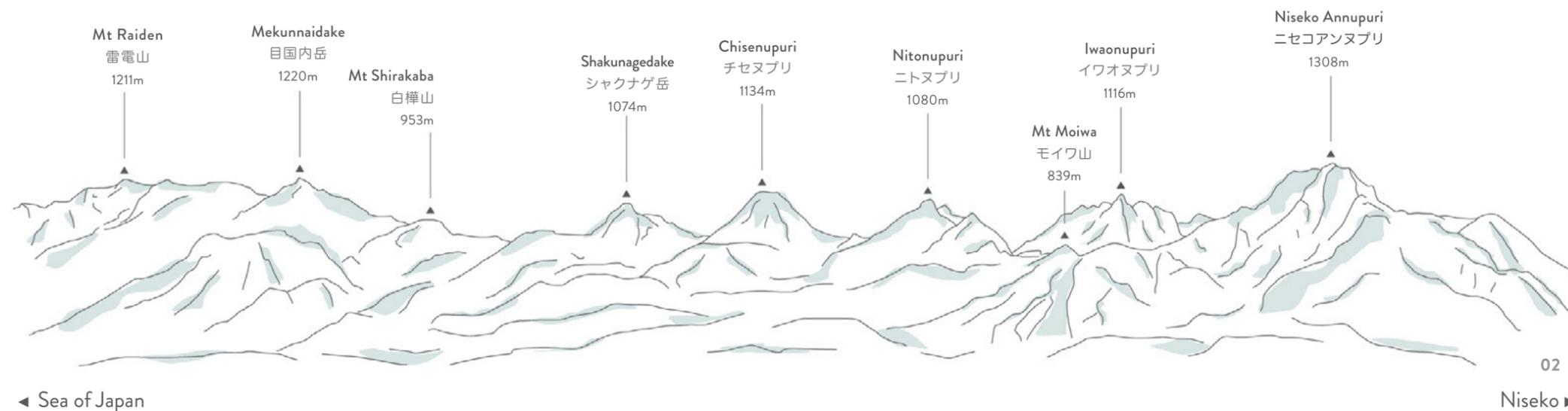
AARON JAMIESON



TATSUMI KONO



TEDDY LAYCOCK



I've spent years mapping and planning routes from home in Hirafu all the way to the Sea of Japan, marking points of interest for further investigation. What I wanted to do was not possible as a daytrip and required planning and logistics, as well as ample time in the mountains, to thoroughly explore the hardest-to-reach terrain. For me it's like exploring the back yard that you've seen little bits of but never ventured into. The big mountains are visible from the more popular backcountry peaks here – like Nitto and even Chise – but it's the thrill of walking into the wilderness and leaving these peaks and the resorts behind that I was chasing.

At first, the idea was just a tiny seed; the glimmer of an adventure combining shared passions and a love of wild mountains and oceans. A multi-day, snow camping and hiking traverse of the Annupuri range, finishing at the ocean,

then following the waves north to where mountains and ocean are most closely entwined; the island of Rishiri. This story recounts the first part of a month-long trip – the traverse to the ocean.

Hokkaido takes all the unique culture and wonder of Japan and blends it with a pristine wilderness to create a truly special piece of the planet. A remote land of extremes which attracts a special kind of person. And so too did this trip. Long days hiking in the mountains, camping in the snow, enduring the wind and cold – coupled with surfing in water cold enough to break the will of even the most seasoned veterans – takes a certain energy that only a team of truly positive and dedicated adventurers, and friends, can bring.

Our team comprised myself, assigned as trip photographer and running the logistics of the trip with professional skier

- 01 Lena Stoffel backcountry slide
- 02 The Annupuri Range
- 03 As viewed from above
- 04 Blue skies as we set out
- 05 Aline Bock deep in the trees
- 06 The campsite at Niimi

Lena Stoffel, and snowboarding peer Aline Bock; videographer Mathias Kögel, who had been commissioned to produce a film of the trip; and a support crew made up of Teddy Laycock, our primary backcountry and snow camping expert; Tatsumi Kono, lending local knowledge; and Ben Antoni, providing additional grunt to help us move gear, as well as general comic relief.

Our band of seven spent two days packing, planning and working through logistics before setting out on what would be an adventure on the way to realising a long-held dream.

The first stage was to set out from our lodge in Niseko, hoping to quickly cover the local backcountry and explore some lesser-known terrain, before finishing the day with a camp close to Niimi Onsen, a last candle of civilisation before the wilderness takes over completely.

"Finishing the day with a camp close to Niimi onsen, a last candle of civilization before the wilderness takes over completely."





DAY 1

The sun was shining and the first part of our trip went smoothly and without incident. A naive confidence set in and we enjoyed some fresh turns in the morning before slogging on towards our intended campsite.

It was as we approached the bald, rounded peak of Chise that the weather switched. An impenetrably thick cloud condensed on the mountains, bringing with it some of the worst white-out conditions I'd seen. It did not take long for to understand the magnitude of what we'd set out to achieve. Even with maps, compasses, planning, and Tatsumi and my combined local knowledge, a dense white-out in the high alpine forced us to take a meandering course towards first camp. Twice we walked in a circle as the disorientation of white sought to confuse our instincts and hold us in the mountains.

We moved carefully as a group, into unknown and invisible terrain. The fun of skiing fresh lines was replaced with the fear of being lost in the mountains. A painstaking process ensued, as we navigated using a compass and topographic maps, pinpointing our location when we could get enough visibility to match terrain features with our paper topographic maps. Daylight faded, the cold afternoon arrived, and we trudged on with our packs pulling our spirits downward.

Much later than we had planned, we arrived at Niimi Onsen – an oasis calling to us in a frozen expanse of inhospitable white. We pitched camp, cooked dinner, and after a restorative hike down to the onsen, a long bath, and a walk back up to camp, our spirits lifted. We bunkered down in our tents and sleeping bags for the night, as the fog gave way to flakes and we listened to the snow collect and slide off the nylon of our flies.



It was day two and already we were tired – the team had managed sporadic sleep but the cold was more than some of us had anticipated and had a sapping affect on our resolve.



DAY 2

Morning broke and after a much longer day than expected – and a much colder night – we were forced to re-evaluate our situation. It was day two and already we were tired; the team had managed sporadic sleep but the cold was more than some of us had anticipated and had a sapping affect on our resolve.

Faced with questionable weather, we decided to take a conservative approach and this proved to be an excellent decision. We needed to move our camp higher into the mountains but to do this in a snowstorm was asking for trouble. We re-planned our route and potential campsite and went about navigating a way through to our next camp, opting to stay below tree line. This also allowed us plenty of time to ride new lines and get a good helping of powder turns, before settling back into our tents that evening. The skiing was like riding anywhere around the resorts – nicely spaced trees and open bowls, but with no-one else out there. We had the place to ourselves.

-
- 08 Pressing on in a white-out
 - 09 Waking up to a dusting
 - 10 Mekunnaidake campsite
 - 11 A hot noodle breakfast
 - 12 Five-star backcountry kitchen



DAY 3

Another cold but more comfortable night saw us wake with renewed vigor. The sun was burning the clouds off and the weather appeared stable. We quickly packed and pushed on to the highest campsite we had planned, at around 1000m, on the alpine flanks of Mekunnaidake.

Mekunna is awesome – it's huge with two big rolling sides. The back side is lumpy and amazing, the front side has big intermediate ski lines and a plateau, topping some lower altitude steep terrain descending into trees.

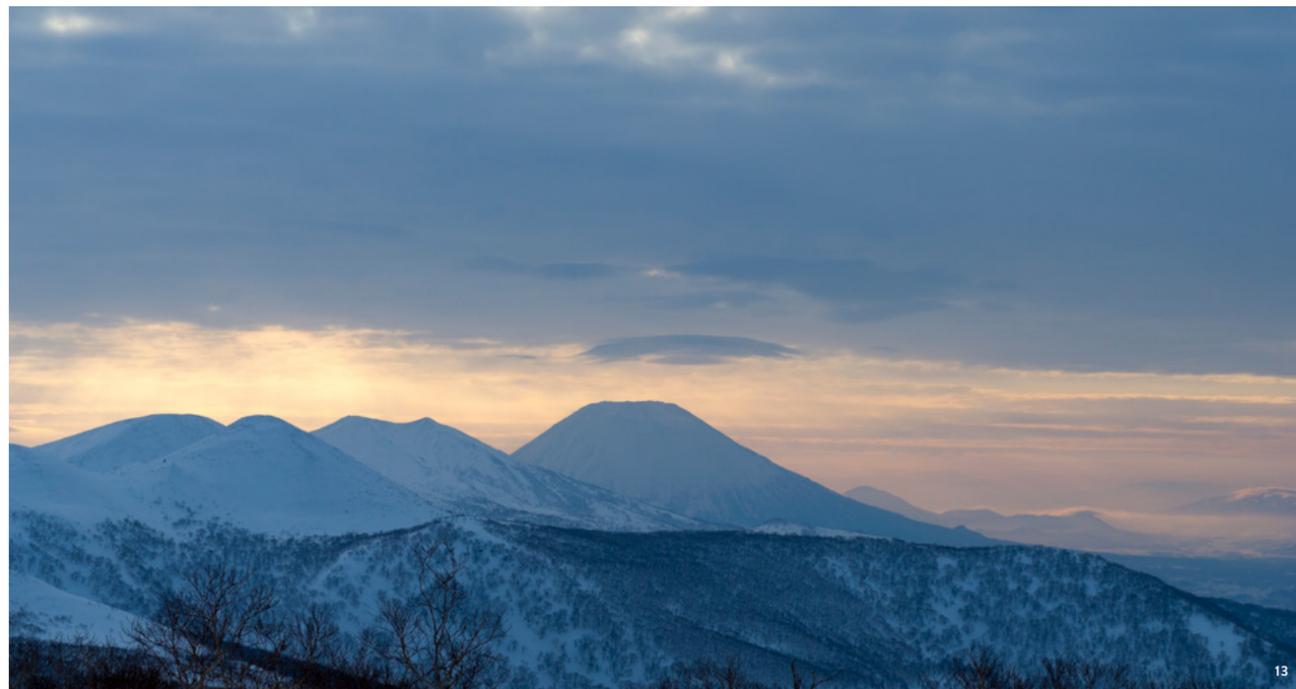
Our camp on Mekunna was a special location. Dug into the side of the mountain, our tents looked back over the range to Annupuri and Yotei in the distance. Out here, you're really removed from civilisation; the only sounds you hear provided by nature.

Our progress over the first two days hampered by weather, the

third day would see us tackle the highest passes and make a long distance mission to the ocean, with fully loaded packs including camping equipment, food and film gear.

The weather report was looking bad for the afternoon and it was difficult to estimate exactly how far we would have to travel, or how long this would take. It was questionable as to how achievable this would be and a group meeting had us vote on whether we would go, or retreat back towards the relative safety of the only building within a day's ski – Niimi Onsen.

The team was split – the enthusiasm of some overruling the sensibility of others. Tatsumi and I agreed that the wind looked bad. Seriously bad. But... there was an opening in the morning with severe wind predicted to hit after lunch. We agreed to wake early and prepare to depart, with the direction to be decided after another weather check in the morning.



DAY 4

Waking to epic weather – clear skies and no wind – we decided to go for it. Packing down our campsite as quickly as possible, the team set off to conquer the peaks of Mekunnai and Raiden Yama, hoping to be at the van we'd left at the ocean-side just after lunch. Raiden Yama translates to “thunder and lightning mountain”. It's the biggest and most open mountain expanse in the entire range and, for me, the most foreboding and alluring.

An early morning hike put us on the back side of Raiden for lunch. The weather was immaculate, the wind almost breathless. We joked confidently of arriving at the ocean and needing a swim after a warm day walking in the sun. We set off for the final push, over Raiden and down to the ocean. As we rounded the back of the summit, everything changed. It got windy, really windy. I'm not talking about wind that feels a bit chilly. Or the wind you cower in your jacket hood to

escape. This was wind comparable to wind storms I'd experienced on the ice cap of Greenland. It was horrendous. A howling, demonic, ice-fuelled series of continuous whip-strikes.

The situation turned from a fun day walking in the sun, to bad. Hardened ice underfoot and 100kmh headwinds hurling snow with chaotic ferocity in every direction. We were plastered with snow, our gloves had iced up, and visibility was an impenetrable blizzard beyond 3m. With no real option other than to push on into the unknown terrain ahead, we struggled and we suffered. Frozen solid by the wind and, even with crampons, constantly sliding and falling on the ice. Raiden was not allowing us an easy passage and seemed determined to rip us from the mountain. We continued to suffer for almost three hours, all the while enduring ferocious winds roaring from the ocean, stripping snow from the peaks,

and the spirit from our team.

It was our firm resolve as a group that brought us across the top, to find relief in the form of a grove of trees. Still the wind lashed us but we were no longer in immediate danger of frostbite, or worse, sliding off the now stripped and icy mountainside into the rocky valleys below.

In the hours spent battling the wind, we once again had to surrender our planned route and – now in survival mode – aimed to reach the lower altitude and relative safety of the forest as quickly as possible, before the weather or an accident made our situation any worse. We strapped in and picked our way along and down to the trees on the leeward side of the ridge, our only choice being to hide from the wind and make a high traverse as far as possible.

Our persistence and punishment were justified and rewarded, as

we traversed several tree-covered ridges and bowls to enjoy a pristine view to the ocean and Iwanai town. The sun was casting a warm afternoon glow and the snow was untouched, spring-flavoured, fun snow and widely spaced pines for hundreds of metres below us. After six hours of hiking – carrying kit and being lashed by wind – it was time to enjoy some turns!

Taking this chance to shoot some images that I'd had in my mind for years, the strenuous effort of the last four days evaporated. Riding lines with views to the ocean and the coming together of mountains and sea. We each enjoyed our own lines down and then, meeting in the forest below, we raced through the pines as a group, like playing ski tag through a zigzagging obstacle course. As the terrain flattened out we found what looked to be the closest road on our maps, a faintly visible logging track, and used what gradient we had left to ski as far along it as possible.

Slowly twisting down along the logging track we crossed a bridge and met up with the uncleared access road where we unstrapped, added our boards and skis to our packs, and started walking with the smell of salt air in our nostrils and satisfied smiles on wind-burned faces.

The slushy road eventually melted to bitumen and we slumped onto our packs on the roadside snow bank. We'd hiked and camped the length of the Annupuri range, experienced everything the mountains of Niseko had to offer, and finally realised a long-held dream.

Embarking on the next section of our trip, we had a renewed sense of what was possible. Setting off north in two vans loaded with camping gear, surfboards and ski equipment, we followed the ocean – searching for waves through to the most northern tip of Hokkaido. ■

- 13 Mekunnaidake back to Niseko
- 14 The final approach to camp
- 15 What a view to wake up to
- 16 Hard-earned turns
- 17 Sunset over the Sea of Japan

[Click here to view the full film from the trip – The Way East – which had its global release in December and a special premiere in Niseko.](#)



TANCHO ZURU

Hokkaido's Iconic Crane

IMAGE BY DENISE IPPOLITO ©

In Japan's nature-worshipping Shinto religion, the crane has traditionally been a revered bird.

Among other things, it denotes longevity, and is commonly used symbolically in Japanese baptism and wedding ceremonies. An ancient legend promises that anyone who folds a thousand origami (Japanese paper art) cranes will be granted a wish by a crane, such as long life or recovery from illness or injury.

In the hierarchy of Japanese cranes, one stands out from all the rest, and – like all good things in this country – it lives in Hokkaido.

It is the Red Crested Crane, or tanchozuru – which has been designated officially as a living Japanese monument. Until very recently it was adopted by Japan Airlines as its company logo, appearing in stylised form on the tail fin of JAL commercial planes and perhaps providing comfort to nervous Japanese air travellers.

Snowy white, with black tipped wings and throat and a bright red cap, it is a magnificent creature, growing to a height of 1.5 metres, with a wingspan of 2.5 metres. It dances – bobbing, weaving and leaping spectacularly in courtship and other communication rituals. ■





HIKING OUT FROM HAKUGINSOU

The Essence of the
Mountains

TEXT JARED PANGIER
PHOTOS DARREN TEASDALE &
YASUYUKI SHIMANUKI

You can stay in a luxury holiday apartment in Hirafu, eat at A-Bu-Cha and Kamimura, ski Strawberry Fields and the Annupuri Bowls, and tick Niseko off your list. But there is a lot more to skiing in Hokkaido, especially when you stay somewhere like Hakuginso.

Standing atop the mountain, one meter back from the great wave cornice of white, I narrowed my eyes waiting for the swirling snow to pass. The wind howled up the slope directly at me as I peered over the edge, visualizing my line, thankful to have packed my facemask. Doing my mental meditation, I moved my head right, then left around a patch of trees, aiming in my mind for the undulating drop just 300m away. I had my route conceptualized.

One second before plummeting off the face of the frozen earth, I nodded to my friends. They returned my signal with two thumbs up and I shifted in my boots, pointing my board straight down.

My carbon-fiber Yonex sailed over the lip, launching me 10m directly onto a trampoline of powder. I bent my rear leg, absorbing the force of gravity as I rotated left, heading towards Birch Tree Ridge. I was determined to get airborne once again.

The Tokachi area, the farming heartland of Hokkaido, doubles as a powder surfers' paradise in winter. But what doesn't in

this perfectly positioned island, wedged between the arctic currents of Siberia and the Pacific Ocean?

Yet, Tokachi offers something different. Bigger mountains, more diverse landscape, and the most welcoming shelter unknown to man.

Hakuginso Lodge is a sanctuary in the winter storm, a haven in the powder playground, a retreat built for rejuvenation. This place welcomes all.

The bold and the daring, the weekend warriors, the aging and the aching, and even powdered professional film crews. All walks of life congregate at Hakuginso because nothing else compares. There's even a free shuttle bus from Kamifurano, providing train enthusiasts and the local geriatric society easy access to all the lodge has to offer.

From the first floor communal kitchen, you can get a glimpse of the top of Mt Tokachi itself, just a short snowshoe away, while the basement lends itself to more underground pleasures with the lodge boasting three impressive hot springs – male,

female, and a family bath for the partially clothed. The second floor is reserved for lodgers who have a choice of family-style tatami rooms or slatted bunks. The nightly rate (from ¥2600) includes futons, bedding, a drying room, plenty of places to unwind after a big day, and unlimited geothermal delight. Truly, the lodge is so amazing that I nearly didn't write this article. But perhaps the selfless deed does exist, after all.

Don't get me wrong. It is true: there are no friends on a powder day. But, Tokachi doesn't offer days, it flaunts weeks. And the proof is in the rotenburo (outdoor onsen). As I sit, steaming my sore muscles after an extended morning on the mountain, my head tips back to observe my surroundings. This place is deep; it has layers. In fact, judging by the mounds of snow piling up on the glass lantern overhead, it hasn't stopped snowing here for at least 21 days. Someone once told me that's the amount of time required to make a routine. Gee, I hope so. I could get used to this, I think to myself, as I sink lower into the bubbling water of Fukiage Onsen, my cares melting with every passing second. My mind reimagines my perfect day.



PHOTO DARREN TEASDALE



PHOTO YASUYUKI SHIMANUKI

Wake up early, stumble down the stairs for breakfast, happy it's your mate's turn to cook. The smell of waffles draws you into the kitchen, as you head straight for a shot of caffeine. You walk past one table filled with Japanese youth on holiday. At least one is face-down on the table, catching up on sleep from yesterday's beverage-filled night. At the table across from the uni students an international film crew is huddled around a pan of scrambled eggs, loading in energy for the perfect backcountry shots. In the far corner an older couple, both telemark skiers, has already eaten. They recline in their chairs, content to take in the morning scene just a little bit longer. They've been coming to Hakuginso since the year they got married, now 20 years in the making. Pulled up to your table is an old guy you've never met. He tells you he's been at the lodge for the past month, doctor's orders. Therapy he says. Farming's hard work, he continues. When you ask him where he's from, he tells

you he flew in all the way from southern Honshu. "Why?" you ask him. He shrugs. "Why not? What's better than Hakuginso?" And isn't he right?

After stuffing your belly on waffles you make your way back upstairs to get ready. You have a big day ahead of you.

In place of the traditional walk from the lodge, you and your friends decide to take a 10-minute drive to begin your day at Hokkaido's version of Rivendell. After sliding down a steep bank to start your journey in, you step carefully across Boy Scout Bridge, stopping momentarily to take in the picturesque river valley to your left as the current rushes beneath you. Soon you enter a birch forest, following the tracks of three early birds even more eager than you, with less love for waffles. Before you know it the birch have transformed into enormous evergreens sagging

with a meter of powder. No winter wonderland can compare. And you've only just begun.

The two-hour trek through thigh-deep snow is completely worth all the effort, as it takes you to a ridge with direct access to a labyrinth of perfectly spaced trees, complete with mushroom kickers.

The ride through the forest is so delightful that you forget to stop, your perma-grin compelling you forward. Your overexuberance has cost you an extra 45 minutes of snowshoeing, but you know that, too, was worth it. Besides, now you have even more reason to guiltlessly spend the rest of your day back at the magic that is Hakuginso Lodge, immersing yourself in sulfuric water, board games (Ticket to Ride), the Japanese sumo tournament on TV, and two (or perhaps five) tumblers of Nikka whiskey. Yep, you nod your head once more. Totally worth it. ■

Jared Pangier is an American teacher who has lived and worked in Hokkaido for much of the past 10 years, and currently works at the Hokkaido International School in Sapporo.

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KEATS
Photographer

Josh Monin, somewhere in Hokkaido

FRENCH FLAIR NISEKO

Asperges Hanazono

TEXT KRISTIAN LUND

Dedicated foodie photographers might find it hard to restrain themselves, but Asperges Hanazono's master chef Hiroshi Nakamichi would prefer you didn't take pictures of his exquisitely presented masterpieces. The charismatic Michelin three-starred chef wants his guests to concentrate while they're dining.

"Recently everyone wants to take a photo of their food," Nakamichi-san says. "But when they do that, it means they're not concentrating on their meal. The best way to eat is to watch and listen to the waiter, smell the food as it's served and as you taste it, then close your eyes and think intensely about every mouthful."

With this in mind, Asperges is better approached as a considered gastronomic experience rather than a convivial social occasion. Asperges aims to create a complete dining experience from the moment the guest walks in the door. Throughout, the diner is treated to a sensory extravaganza that aims to appeal to the eyes, the nose, and the ears almost as much as the taste buds.

How is this achieved? At Asperges, dishes aren't simply plated up in the kitchen and

placed in front of the diner. Each course is presented as an element of theatre with diner participation.

For example the salad, made up of 20 locally grown vegetables, doesn't come pre-dressed. The different elements of the dish are spread across the plate and the waiter invites the guest to mix them together, combining the flavours and creating a connection between diner and dish, and adding a level of appreciation as to what has gone into its preparation.

When the striking, jet-black Hokkaido abalone with squid ink is served, the waiter spoons the accompanying squid ink risotto from a rustic old iron pot onto the plate, inviting the diner to pause, consider, and appreciate the unique visual feast. During another course, a large warmed stone placed in front of the diner doubles as a plate for a small fillet of wood-fired smoked herring.

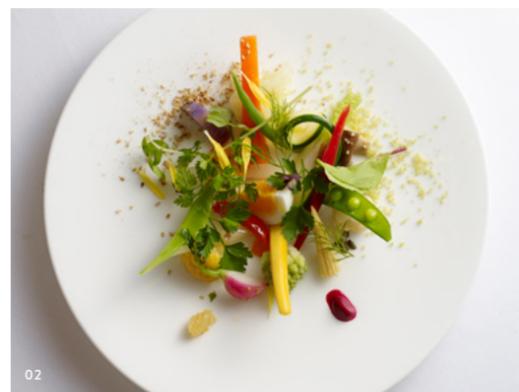
The idea, Nakamichi-san says, is to involve the diner with their meal in an age when eating is more about convenience than appreciation. He lived in Lyon in France for three years while he was in his 20s to train

and absorb its culinary ambience and often refers back to a time when large families would sit around a table and mother or grandmother would serve the seated diners.

Nakamichi-san describes his style as Hokkaido French, different from a version that might be eaten in Tokyo or elsewhere. It's a traditional, home style of French rather than a modern stylised version, with a particular focus on local seasonal ingredients. In summer Asperges operates out of the central Hokkaido town of Biei, so a visit there at the



01



02

- 01 Ezo abalone with squid ink risotto
- 02 Array of 20 locally grown winter vegetables
- 03 Grilled beef fillet with red wine sauce

height of the green season for an entirely different menu is strongly recommended.

One new dish this year is caviar served on a clever Hokkaido variety of onion that doesn't cause tears when it's sliced. Nakamichi-san fobs off the idea that seafood shouldn't be eaten in the mountains. With such wonderful seafood available from nearby ports he thinks it's a fantastic idea.

Asperges is in its fourth year in Niseko, located in one of the two base buildings at the Hanazono ski resort and is open for lunch and dinner. It's the first time Nakamichi-san

has designed a restaurant in such a unique location. He loved the idea of eating oysters and drinking champagne at lunch while watching kids skiing and playing outside.

It's also the first time he has worked for an almost entirely foreign audience. Nakamichi-san is a shokunin – a Japanese word describing a specialist in a trade or art who is dedicated to perfection. One of the reasons he chose Hanazono is that he wanted to work with an audience who might be more demanding of him. He wants discerning customers who will challenge his expertise so he can aspire to improve. A delicious challenge indeed! ■



03



HIROSHI NAKAMICHI
HEAD CHEF, ASPERGES

HIROSHI NAKAMICHI

Born in Noboribetsu, Hokkaido in 1951, acclaimed chef Hiroshi Nakamichi's flagship restaurant Moliere in Sapporo was awarded three Michelin stars, while Asperges in Biei garnered one star in 2012 in the special edition of the Hokkaido Michelin Red Guide. At Restaurant Asperges Hanazono, Chef Nakamichi's lunch and dinner menus are specially designed using the freshest Hokkaido produce.

www.aspergesniseko.com

niseko-french RESTAURANT RECOMMENDATIONS



01 KAMIMURA

Michelin-starred under Hokkaido-born chef Yuichi Kamimura, Hirafu's flagship restaurant is a must-try experience for those wanting to experience the taste of Hokkaido. 6-course and 9-course degustation menus available.

www.kamimura-niseko.com



02 MACCARINA

Based in nearby farming village Makkari, this is another restaurant presided over by Hiroshi Nakamichi, and also with a Michelin star. In the vein of Asperges but with local ingredients of the village.

www.maccarina.co.jp



03 LE COCHON

Another Lyon-trained chef, Kazuhiko Kojima, heads up this warm and wonderful restaurant, born in nearby Kutchan town and now located in the heart of Upper Hirafu Village.

www.lecochon-niseko.com



04 CHEZ DOU DOU

A largely undiscovered secret with a staff roster of one, Chez Dou Dou is grass roots Niseko dining at its finest. Be among the first to try Chef Akiyo Itou's unbelievably good homestyle French before it goes mainstream.

353-3 Yunosato, Rankoshi-cho | 0136-55-8332



LILY BULB GRATIN, NISEKO HARVEST

Hokkaido's cool climate and low precipitation provide perfect conditions for growing lily bulbs (yurine). In a creamy rich sauce, these tender, sweet bulbs make a delicious accompaniment to roast chicken or beef. For this delicious recipe and dozens of other easy-to-make local specialties, be sure to pick up a copy of Niseko Harvest, a new book by Tess Stomski, owner of catering company Niseko Gourmet, and friend Chisato Amagai. Available at shops across Niseko this winter.

EBISUTEI IZAKAYA

japanese
casual dining

TEXT EMMA LEE
PHOTOS AARON JAMIESON



Calm your belly long enough to look past the first layer of main street après spots and you'll discover a Japanese day-to-day culture that exists symbiotically with the Western ski town vibe.

Luckily you don't have to look far to discover Ebisutei, a snug izakaya located just down the hill from the Hirafu intersection. Owner-operator Shingo-san fell in love with Niseko's epic powder snow back in 2001, and settled down to open a laid-back izakaya in Hirafu's relatively peaceful lower village.

My local friends assure me that Ebisutei is an authentic izakaya, so every time I have the pleasure of dining there I consider myself at least 85% Japanese. The restaurant is pleasantly set out, and the sizzle of smells from the open kitchen ensures the wooden interior is both warm and inviting.

Ebisutei is known as one of the only dinner spots in Niseko that offers oden, a tasty stew of savouries in a

salty broth. I am not quite Japanese enough to order the random brew of konjac, fish balls and boiled eggs as my main dinner dish but it will certainly warm your belly after a day in the cold.

Once I have fulfilled my obligation as an honorary Japanese by sampling the oden, I feel I can move on to the additional delights of Ebisutei's vast menu.

One of the best kept secrets of the Japanese is salad dressing, which is in full effect in Ebisutei's Special Salad. There is a doh of tasty mash on top that you'll all be fighting to finish off, and the garnish of crispy chips make a pleasant contrast to the fresh greens.

Ebisutei's Fresh Avocado and Prawn Spring Rolls are bursting with greenery and make a nice accompaniment to the fried dishes on offer. I'm a sucker for deep fried oysters – deep fried anything really – and Shingo-san serves his on the half shell, which

somehow makes them more delicious. I was also a fan of the Cheese and Potato Croquette, a typical izakaya offering which doesn't disappoint.

I'd like to give a shout out to the Crab Fried Rice, which is perfectly cooked without the oiliness of regular fast food versions. Grilled Hokke is the quintessential izakaya dish and Ebisutei serves up a generous portion which is grilled to the ideal level of flaky tenderness.

Other offerings include everything from Pan Fried Udon to BBQ Beef Loin, and the relaxed nature of the restaurant invites you to order in staggered intervals in accordance with your stomach's desires – just one of many reasons I love izakaya!

If you're looking for an authentic Japanese experience, pop down to Ebisutei to have a draught Yebisu with me and my local homies – we'll have a bowl of oden waiting for you. ■



LONG TANG

chinese dumplings

TEXT KRISTIAN LUND



PHOTO PAUL MALANDAIN

Over the past 10 years Niseko has literally become one of the most multicultural places in Japan. And with that has come an incredible diversity in the local dining scene. The Japanese love their food, and especially trying new restaurants that have got people talking. One such restaurant is tiny Chinese dumpling restaurant, Long Tang, located in the main town of the region, Kutchan, a 15-minute taxi ride from Hirafu.

Chef Jack Jia grew up in Shanghai, where the breakfast and morning tea staple is steamed dumplings. A particular speciality of the region is shoronpo – essentially a “soup dumpling” – semi-translucent satchels of dough encasing balls of minced pork suspended in soup. Pick one up with a large spoon,

poke the soft, thin pastry skin and allow the soup to spill out into the spoon. Then slurp the lot up into your mouth.

Shoronpo became popular across Asia after a Taiwanese company created a shoronpo chain. However, much to any Shanghai residents chagrin, they are nothing like the real thing, with a thick pastry so as they can survive as a portable fast food. When Jack’s now wife, Akie, tried his shoronpo, she knew they were going to be a hit in Japan.

While traditionally eaten in the morning in Shanghai, here it’s a lunch or dinner option to fit in with the local culture, and we can assure you it certainly fits in comfortably amongst Niseko’s international dining options. ■

CHEF’S RECOMMENDATION LONG TANG



01 Steamed Shrimp Dumplings
JPY500
Delicate dumplings wrapped in a thin skin and prepared in a bamboo steamer basket, revealing the orange shrimp inside.



02 Shoronpo [Xiäolóngbāo]
JPY440
Semi-translucent satchels encasing the minced pork suspended in soup. Pick up with the large spoon, poke the soft, thin pastry skin, and allow the soup to spill out. Then devour!



03 Handmade Spring Roll
JPY500
Delicately fried pork and vegetable filling, wrapped with a thin crepe pastry. It’s served crispy on the outside, with hot juicy filling inside.



04 Shanghai Won-ton in Soup
JPY780
Shrimp and vegetable filling wrapped in a thin, homemade pastry like a Shanghai ravioli, served in a lightly salted chicken soup.



05 Boneless Chicken Leg Pickled in Chinese Rice Wine Sauce
JPY550
After burning off the alcohol, a boneless poached chicken thigh is soaked in Chinese rice wine and spices. Goes perfectly with beer.



06 Spicy Roast Pork on rice
JPY780
Pork meat marinated in a special spicy miso paste and cooked until it’s golden brown. Served on a bed of rice or on its own.

LONG TANG NORTH 1, EAST 2-18-1, KUTCHAN 倶知安町北1条東2-18-1

international cuisine FOREIGN FLAVOURS A LOCAL TOUCH

01 TAJ MAHAL

Wholesome Hokkaido produce and authentic Indian flavours make Taj Mahal a unique must-try experience for any curry lover. Open in Hokkaido for 35 years, you must try Taj Mahal in Annupuri or Kutchan.

Kutchan:
222-8 Aza Takasago | 0136-22-4566
Annupuri:
429-45 Aza Niseko | 0136-55-8699

02 AMARU

This local favourite offers the finest Tex Mex this side of El Paso, and the best hospitality in Niseko. Also the coolest bar in town, drop by for a quesadilla or buffalo wings and relax into the evening with apres drinks.

1F 179-8 Yamada | 0136 55 5993

03. CHINESE DINING NI’S

This is a delightful Chinese experience on the outskirts of Hirafu. The chef headed the Higashiyama Prince Hotel’s kitchen before opening this Cantonese and Szechuan cuisine restaurant.

159-13 Hirafu | 0136-22-6646

04. L’OCANDA

This delightful trattoria is run by a pair of brothers – one cooking the meals, the other making delicious pastries and desserts. We knew the Japanese could do French, now we know they do a fine Italian too.

76-12 Yamada | 0136-55-8625

05. TUK TUK

Thai food cooked by a Japanese chef – you won’t find Thai flavour this good anywhere outside the country itself. Tuk Tuk is a tiny hole in the wall restaurant in the middle of Hirafu that you’re sure to love.

170-41 Yamada | 080 3293 6028



THE BARN

Lofty ceilings and a luminous glass façade make The Barn one of Hirafu’s most iconic buildings. Low lighting, jazz music, the warm buzz of conversation, and quality French cuisine transport you miles from Hirafu to a place where you can linger over dinner and fancy yourself a trendsetter. Everyone loves all the hole-in-the-wall Japanese restaurants but The Barn has brought us a destination where you can really wallow in the enjoyment of a sophisticated night out and a wholesome French feed. The loft bar upstairs is a wonderful location to soak in the atmosphere before or after your meal.



THE BARN NISEKOBARN.COM | 0136 23 0888



GREEN TEA RENAISSANCE

japanese tea and sweets

TEXT KRISTIAN LUND
 PHOTOS GREEN SASO: JUN WATANABE
 KISSA AZMAYA: HIROMASA IHARA

Tea in Japan is a symbol of peace, harmony and happiness – fitting imagery amidst a zen-like powder snow-covered landscape, don't you think? Well now you can enjoy a modern twist on the ancient traditions of Japanese tea in Niseko. Two local tea houses are reviving the artform and product, introducing the elements of traditional tea culture, slightly repackaged for a modern audience. There's plenty more than just green tea – like sweet, milky, frothy lattes, parfaits and sundaes.

The Japanese word "kissa-ten" means tea or coffee shop, which is where Kissa Azmaya takes its name from. Located in Kutchan (just a few doors down from the hospital) it's less hands on and more like a café, albeit serving a wider variety of very unique teas from Hokkaido, as well as excellent locally roasted coffee. There is a traditional raised tatami (woven straw mat) floor area if you really want to do it properly, or just make it easier to sit with the kids. ■

www.greensaso.com
www.azmaya.co

Green Saso is run by certified green tea sommelier, Canadian Stephanie Watanabe and her photographer husband Jun. On the outskirts of Hirafu, Green Saso café is a small, peaceful space with large windows that frame views out over a winter forest landscape. You also have the opportunity to make your own tea using the traditional ingredients, bowls and whisks. Or you can just sit back and admire the elegance of Stephanie's preparations.



If you want to get your zen on in between powder runs, head on down to one of Niseko's funky new green tea cafes. Not sure if you like green tea? Don't worry – there's plenty of options to suit everybody.



MIDORI RAI, RAKUICHI SOBA

Immaculately dressed in kimono, Rakuichi Soba restaurant host Midori-san is as much responsible for its Michelin commendation as the chef. In a country renowned for exquisite hospitality, it scarcely comes more refined than the Rakuichi experience. As your elegant host throughout your soba noodle lunch or kaiseki course dinner, Midori-san ensures customers have a traditional Japanese experience they will never forget.

**NISEKO BEER
MICROBREWERY**



01 02 03 04 05 06

- 01 DOUBLE-HOP PALE ALE**
Twice the hoppy goodness of the below ale for those that like some kick
- 02 PALE ALE**
Caramel in colour with a good balance between the malt and hops flavours
- 03 PILSNER**
Clear, crisp, light in appearance and body with a prominent bitterness
- 04 ROSSE**
A rich, fruity beer made with organic grapes from nearby Yoichi
- 05 PORTER**
A smoky, semi-dark ale with flavours of salmon, kelp and shiitake mushroom
- 06 BELGIAN ALE**
Amber-coloured wheat beer with flavours of orange peel and coriander

Just when you thought Niseko couldn't get any better, you learn it even has its very own craft beer microbrewery/restaurant. Niseko Beer makes a very creditable drop with a wide selection of flavours to choose from – several craft brew standards (pale ale, pilsner, stout) and also a unique range of seasonal beers including pumpkin ale and even a beer brewed with oysters. Located on a hilltop on the edge of the township of Niseko it has an amazing view of the ski fields as the sun sets and the night skiing lights come on in the evening – a spectacular spot to enjoy an apres ski beer, lunch or dinner.

NISEKO TAPROOM

If you can't make it out to Niseko Town for the full brewery experience, you can sample the flavours on tap exclusively at Niseko Taproom. 3F Odin Place at the traffic lights in Hirafu.

**JAPANESE BIG FOUR BEERS REVIEWED
POWDERLIFE'S PICKS**



ASAHI SUPER DRY

RATING 2.5/5

If you like your beer bland and lifeless, then Asahi Super Dry is the beer for you. While indescribably popular overseas and gladly paid for at premium prices, I can only imagine good marketing and distribution strategies have elevated this beer to its number one standing on the international stage. ASD seems to set the standard for Japanese lagers – clean, clear, bubbly and easy on the palate. But it's a wide beer world out there so you could give this one a miss.



YEBISU ALL MALT BEER

RATING 4/5

This is the beer-drinker's beer of the Japanese bunch. Not wholly dissimilar to the others but with a healthy hit of malt to help the medicine go down. It's a little bit deeper and more complex than the usual crisp and light Japanese beers, and more like a pilsner you might find in other parts of the world. The malt gives it an edge that you might be looking for after a day in the snow and a half hour in the onsen.



SAPPORO BLACK LABEL

RATING 3.5/5 OR 4/5 FOR LOCAL SUPPORT

We've got a soft spot for Sapporo up here, but not only for sentimental reasons – the beer delivers the full-bodied lager experience you expect from a good Japanese beer. With the craft-beer revolution, drinkers who are looking forward to a hop-hit won't find it here. But when in Hokkaido, do as the "Dosanko" (Hokkaido people) do – give it a try, support the local brew and you won't be disappointed. Goes particularly well with edamame.



KIRIN ICHIBAN

RATING 4.5/5

For our tastes, this is the standout brew on the Japanese beer-scape. It's true to its easy-drinking Japanese lager heritage while injecting some much-welcome hop flavours for a modern beer-loving community with a taste for craft brews. Easy to drink, brings a smile to the face, and will accommodate and enhance a lively several-hour session. As the label says: "brewed for good times". Amen.

**タージ・マハール
TAJ MAHAL**
Since 1982
NISEKO • KUTCHAN



**AUTHENTIC INDIAN CURRY
LIKE YOU'VE NEVER TASTED IT BEFORE**
Hokkaido Style

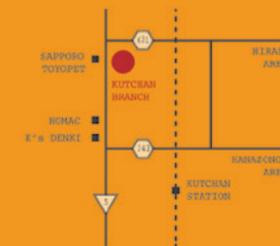


Hokkaido is known as "The Food Bowl of Japan" for its fresh, bountiful produce. Daniel Mansukhani (the dude on the left) has been serving his authentic Indian curries & naan breads to residents for 35 years.

Is it his secret spices? Or the fresh Hokkaido ingredients?
Come in and see for yourself why the locals love Taj Mahal!



429-45 Aza Niseko, Niseko
AM11:30-PM22:00
P: 0136-55-8699



222-8 Aza Takasago, Kutchan
AM11:00-PM22:00
P: 0136-22-4566

**タージ・マハール
TAJ MAHAL**
Since 1982
NISEKO • KUTCHAN

Namaste!

- All our meat is Halal
- Mild & Vegetarian options
- 10% off for Takeaway

From
¥580!

IN SEARCH OF SOLITUDE

The Creative Journey of Shouya Grigg

INTERVIEW KRISTIAN LUND
PHOTOS SHOUYA GRIGG

At the heart of it, Shouya Grigg is an artist. He just also happens to be one of Niseko's most successful individual achievers, starting from a humble foundation running a small media design company in Sapporo in the early 2000s.

Since creating a prototype for his signature style – turning an old Hirafu pension into a buzzing urban-esque bar and restaurant long before there was any form of sophisticated apres culture in Niseko back in 2005 – he has gone on to notch up an impressive list of unique achievements. A modern Hirafu chalet he designed has won multiple World Ski Awards as Japan's best ski chalet, and his masterpiece Japanese-style 'ryokan' retreat at Hanazono has featured on the covers of the world's leading style magazines.

This year Shouya has thrown out the rule book once more, having dismantled a 150-year-old kominka (traditional Japanese farm house) on the mainland, and rebuilt it to house an art gallery and cafe on his land at Hanazono. Its location on a cliff top overlooking a deep river valley gorge is perhaps the most spectacular location of any development in Niseko to date, not to mention the exquisite nature of the historical old structure and its modern interior interpretation itself.

While not formally an architect, the British-born designer has a natural talent for envisioning and then creating unique spaces on top of existing structures and landscapes, with his signature mix of modern and traditional Japanese influence. Originally a photographer and

cinematographer, Shouya seeks out solitude in the mountains of Niseko, which drives his creativity. The seasons and the landscape, and its interaction with the elements – sunlight, snow, clouds, rain – provide never-ending inspiration for his passion.

Hearing Shouya talk about his plans is always a fascinating experience as you visualise the scenes and dreams he's describing – past, present and future – in passionate detail. We interviewed Shouya so Powderlife readers had the opportunity to be inspired by his achievements, philosophies and visions.

All photos in the following pages are taken by Shouya.





SEKKA RESTAURANT 2005

Sekka Restaurant was one of the first upmarket restaurants and bars in modern Niseko

POWDERLIFE (PL):

What's your background in design and how did you get started in Niseko?

SHOUYA GRIGG (SG):

I'd been living in Japan, mainly in Sapporo, since the early 90s and I had my own media design company. I had always wanted to move into interior design or architecture, but without a license architecture wasn't possible.

I suppose I did my first 'entrepreneurial' project when I was 17 after leaving school in Perth (Western Australia) where my family had moved. I rented a little warehouse in the middle of the city and renovated it, turning it into a funky little fashion store with my girlfriend who was a fashion designer. It wasn't really about the commercial side of business, it was just more to see what I could create and where I could add value. So that's the kind of thing I wanted to do, but it was very difficult to get that type of work when I had nothing to show and no qualifications to back me up at the time.

We used to come to Niseko a few times a year to go hiking and snowboarding and have an onsen, even before the new Niseko movement started. We decided to get something in Niseko and renovate it as a folio piece. We would do everything – come up with a concept, create a logo, do the interiors, take the photos, do the pamphlet, do the website, the whole thing. I guess I'm very hands on. That's how we ended up deciding on Niseko.

PL:

Tell us about your first project in Niseko – the old Sekka Restaurant. I remember it was such a funky design with the hole in the upper floor. How did you go about creating the space?

SG:

In the very early days of modern Niseko, going back 11 or 12 years when this first movement really started kicking off, there were really no restaurants like Sekka. Hokkaido Tracks and Ski Japan were building their first buildings and there were lots of quaint izakaya and traditional places



01 Exterior signage
02 Sekka bar
03 Restaurant

"There were lots of quaint izakaya and traditional places that had been around for a few years, but there were really no restaurants you could go to and get a good bottle of wine."

that had been around for a few years, but there were really no restaurants you could go to and get a good bottle of wine.

My parents were always renovating properties in England and Australia when I was growing up, and we built our own house in Sapporo by hand. So we were prepared to do some work to create something.

We looked around and came across a rundown old pension called Piste. It wasn't "nice old" as in a 100-year-old traditional property, but it was quirky and had some different levels we could work with.



My parents came up and we gutted it ourselves. As we were gutting it I started coming up with ideas for the layout. "Let's cut a hole in the floor here, let's put the kitchen over there, let's use these little areas for the dining, let's put the front here." It was very organic. As we were doing the work we felt "this was right here and that was wrong there". It was very hands on and that's how it all came about.

These days you might call it "rough luxe", but for me I just wanted to see what I could do – it was basically a prototype and thankfully we were the clients so we could do what we wanted and

didn't really have any pressure. Back then we believed in Hokkaido as a destination and we felt Niseko would grow. So we were having a bit of fun but looking to see what we could create with everything from the concept, to the food, the ambience, the interior. The whole thread comes through to what I'm doing now.

Sekka was the start of what I'd always wanted to do with mixed-use space. It's not like I want to be a hotelier or run a restaurant. It's more about creating interesting spaces that incorporate some F&B (food and beverage), but also a shop with antiques or

objects that I find. I use some of those for styling the interior, and I sell some of them. That's followed through with everything I do even up to now with my latest projects.

PL:

Were you happy with the end result of that initial space?

SG:

Yeah, very much so. I don't really like living in a city but if you live in the city there's a lot of stimulation, a lot of people around, and parties and events. I really like my own space so I prefer to live in the countryside. But I do enjoy good conversation

and it seems through creating these spaces I've been able to communicate and connect with interesting people. I've met a lot of new friends and contacts through everything I've done. In the original Sekka I was actually working on the floor behind the bar downstairs. A lot of the friends I have now I met there.



01 J-Sekka Bar + Restaurant
02 J-Sekka Deli
03 Maki Lounge

J-SEKKA 2008

J-Sekka was Shouya's second major project in Niseko – refurbishing an old original hotel in Hirafu.



POWDERLIFE (PL):

When did you start to think about moving on to J-Sekka?

SHOUYA GRIGG (SG):

Well we were doing Sekka for about three years, and it was almost like my living room because we lived upstairs. Our home was still in Sapporo and we'd just come out to run Sekka in the winter. Through meeting people in the restaurant I would get chatting and selling them some wine, or maybe they were interested in interiors, or they'd say they were looking for some land and talk about what they wanted to do. That's how I started moving on to other projects. I got a couple of partners and we

ended up deciding to buy the old J-Second Hotel, renovating it and calling it J-Sekka. We had accommodation as well as the F&B and different outlets and that's when I moved Sekka, the dining and the bar, over to J-Sekka and closed the original. We had more space so I had to come up with some different ideas to fill it. I wanted to have an accommodation element as well.

PL:

Why the interest in accommodation as well?

SG:

With accommodation, rather than just having people for dinner, you can embrace them

more and for longer. It's a longer conversation and a deeper relationship, and it enabled us to have the delicatessen and do the breakfast thing for them as well.

PL:

So it seems that you like designing experiences as much as the actual spaces?

SG:

That's a good way of putting it. Dinner is only a small part of the whole experience. When you've got people staying you can really create a much deeper and bigger experience with them. The whole thing of checking in and staying in the room and coming down for a drink and dinner.

"That's when I started to focus on something bigger and better. All of these were stepping stones in my education and learning process."

PL:

So that was your second big project. Again, were you happy with the way that turned out?

SG:

In the beginning, very happy when we were running everything. But after a couple of years I started to do other projects. For a long time I had wanted to do a ryokan (traditional Japanese inn), like a retreat. But the original Niseko just wasn't big enough and I didn't have enough experience or money.

With J-Sekka obviously being a bigger building, it enabled me to have a go at the whole thing with some accommodation, even

though we didn't really run it as a hotel where people come and stay for one night. It was more like a condominium within the building.

So it still wasn't quite what I was really wanting to do but it was a good stepping stone. Through it I learned a lot as well. Then as I did start to do other projects I was starting to plan the ryokan retreat.

I had some different land and I was staying in different properties throughout Japan and seeing what type of market was coming to Niseko – obviously it was changing constantly. So that was always in the back of my mind and I was working on that on the sidelines. I became a little bit

more hands off with J-Sekka. We rented out some of the spaces which made it easier but it compromised the integrity of the original plan.

That's when I started to focus on something bigger and better. All of these are stepping stones in my education and learning process.

ZABORIN 2014

Zaborin is a secluded luxury ryokan with 15 separate villas in the Hanazono woods.

POWDERLIFE (PL):

So when did the seed get planted for Zaborin?

SHOUYA GRIGG (SG):

From way back to be honest. From a long time ago even before I came to Japan I used to enjoy staying at little retreats or unique properties. After coming to Japan my wife and I often stayed at different ryokans, which are like retreats. Not all high end, often just cheap, little family-run businesses. Some were good, some were bad. It's subjective but even the good ones I still found there were certain things I would probably do differently because of the way I like things. There are people who seem to like my style or like that I've got a different take on things.

I think my wife got sick of hearing me say all these things and kept saying "you've got to do your own place". From when I had my media design company in Sapporo I had a few hotels as clients. So I had this behind-the-scenes look into hotels and ryokans, photographing them and doing their promotional materials. This enabled me to fine-tune my focus.

Location is obviously important and I had some good land from

a long time ago. It was just a case of gradually planning it in my mind. I built my house on a different part of the same land about nine years ago, so I was able to live there and really get to know it. Living with the land for such a long time, being able to walk over it, experience the seasons, to live and breathe and feel it, is really important for my process of creating and designing. Most people don't have the luxury of spending such a long time on a piece of land before they do something.

PL:

So you were living on your land and walking around it for 10 years, and the whole time you were noticing what happens in different seasons, and where the sun rises and sets. So I suppose you were coming up with ideas the whole time about which direction you would face things and where you could have different features?

SG:

That's right. Even the number of rooms – I always knew it would be a small number of rooms. But every year we would go stay somewhere else and pick up something interesting and I just kept refining my ideas until I got to the stage where basically I

"Living with the land for such a long time, being able to walk over it, experience the seasons, to live and breathe and feel it, is really important for my process of creating and designing something."

had all the ideas, I had the land, I had the contacts to make it happen. I just needed finance and fortunately I was able to speak to some investors who I had produced a property for in Hirafu. They liked my style and ideas, and they agreed to come on board and make it happen.

PL:

We've been talking about you designing experiences, so what was your vision and what was the experience you wanted to create with Zaborin?

SG:

The thing with Zaborin is it's designed mainly for the Japanese

market. I felt that in Japan and within Hokkaido there was still room for a high-end ryokan that could appeal to the Japanese market. A lot of them were good but there were still things missing. The Japanese often play it very safe with ryokans – I wanted to do something a little bit fresh. I also wanted to show them some of the materials we used, or some of the found objects that I used for art on the walls as a bit of a statement that everything doesn't need to be shiny and polished. I was wanting to show that maybe that's the old way of thinking, and you can do something a lot simpler and maybe more authentic.

PL:

So you're designing a Japanese-style ryokan as a foreigner for Japanese people. I guess it's an outsider's take on their traditions. How have Japanese people reacted to it?

SG:

Well I didn't want to go upsetting anybody but I didn't want to just play it safe. We didn't want to make a big point that this is owned by foreigners or that I was very involved in the design. I think being a foreigner there are things I can get away with in Japan, because I'm not expected to do it a certain way. So I had artistic freedom that some Japanese don't have.

PL:

How does Zaborin differ from a traditional ryokan?

SG:

It basically comes down to the mindset of the owners. My partners and I have had much experience living and travelling both internationally and throughout Japan and being non-Japanese this enables us to look at things differently to other ryokan owners.

The key elements of our differences come down to choice of location, materials used for the build and interior, food concept and our style of hospitality.



01



02

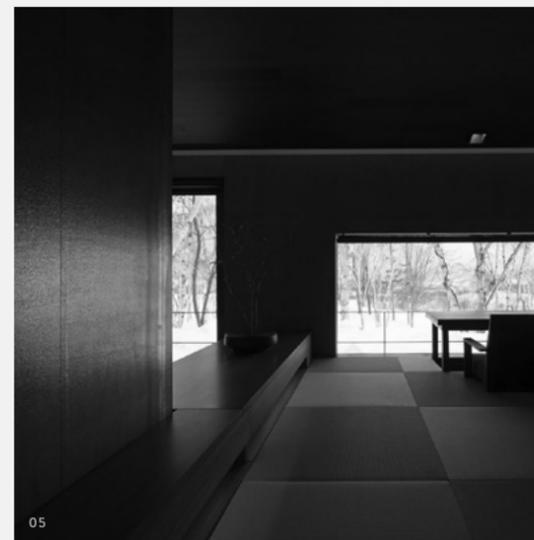
- 01 Aerial shot overlooking Zaborin alongside Hanazono Bokujou (farm)
- 02 Private Villa outdoor rotenburo
- 03 Lobby lounge
- 04 Japanese tea ceremony
- 05 Private Villa tatami bedroom
- 06 Living Room lounge



03



04



05



06

SOMOZA 2016

Somoza is a 100-year old kominka – an old wooden Japanese farm house – dug into a spectacular cliff top.

POWDERLIFE (PL):

This is now the coolest thing in Niseko. Tell us all about it!

SHOUYA GRIGG (SG):

I bought a kominka from down south, got it taken apart piece by piece, shipped up here and I've rebuilt it on one corner of my land. Zaborin's on one side, near our house, and then on the other side the land drops off into a valley with a beautiful river running through it. We've built literally on the cliff so it looks down over the river and back up to the mountains. It's an amazing location.

I've dug into the cliff and built a semi-basement underneath, so you don't actually know it's there when you approach the building. When you go through the old house and drop down the stairs, you come into a big gallery, workshop and seminar space, which is all glass on the valley side.

Then back on the ground level, one of the other projects I've been thinking about for a long time is a crafts gallery and shop – ceramics and glass and metal, just beautiful pieces that we pick up from around Japan and Hokkaido. The other half of the building is a café and restaurant, and upstairs under the big roof we've got a private Japanese tea room. It's a really fascinating space.

PL:

What sort of dining experience will it be?

SG:

I've got an amazing couple from Sapporo who will be running it – a 34-year old chef and his partner who owns a business sourcing incredible food and organic produce. Things like amazing salts and vinegars and seaweed and miso, and all these fantastic products that have got stories behind them and the people who make them. She introduces a lot of these things to him and they work together. They've been wanting to move to the countryside so they're behind the food, and I'll be involved as well choosing the ceramics and plates and other things we use.

In these old houses the ground in the main area was called the doma and was all soil. On one side would be where your horse lives, and then on the other side, the floor rises up and you would have the tatami living areas and an irori (charcoal fire pit). Above that are massive beams but otherwise it's open all the way to the roof. I've got a massive old 3m-round wooden table that can seat about 12 people and I'll put that in the middle of the room. I'm thinking about doing a chef's table where it's just one group dining, just you and your friends or family.

PL:

What's the meaning behind the name?

SG:

The name Somoza comes from the first two letters from each of our three kids' names. But the deeper meaning behind that is, I believe you should surround yourself with things you like, the things you love, because when you do that your quality of life improves.

The other way of looking at it is you're a product of your environment. That doesn't mean that you've got to go out and buy expensive furniture and things. It can be just some found objects or some cheap things that you pick up somewhere. It's more about making a choice, like choosing things a little bit more carefully. Something that speaks to you rather than something that doesn't really have any meaning.

I think what's important is the people you surround yourself with, the objects, the things you use in the kitchen, the ceramics you have your meal from, furniture, books. These things make a difference to your life – I've experienced it first hand, I've heard it from other people and read about it.

By creating this interesting space I want to introduce that concept to other people.



SEKKA lab 2016/17

Sekka Warehouse is the next project Shouya is working on – a cafe, restaurant and boutique hotel.

POWDERLIFE (PL):

So now that Somoza is almost finished, what have you got in store for us now?

SHOUYA GRIGG (SG):

Just down from the station on the main street of Kutchan I've got a nice, old stone warehouse. It's a big space – 700sqm – and I've had that for a few years, just using it as storage, but I've been working on plans for it.

Now that Zaborin is up and running I've got some interesting plans for this space. I'm looking at doing a mixture of a very nice café, wine bar, restaurant and accommodation – probably just five or six studios short or even medium-term stays.

Again it'd incorporate another little gallery and a small function space. There'll be a little shop down there, which will be an extension of the one we're doing up here (in Somoza). It's downtown, so it's just a bit of a fun space. It's under the Sekka

brand so it's an extension of what I've been doing over the years.

It won't be super high end. It's going to be more like the Ace Hotels in the US and London – a small, funky hotel that's not super cheap, not super expensive, but it's just got a good vibe and interesting design using local and found objects and things. Often their lobbies are very well known for hanging out because it's not just the guests, but people from the community go there and hang out because it has great coffee or is a good place for a drink.

There's a fantastic piece of land alongside it that I also own and what I'll probably do there is put some railway sleepers down like a solid terrace, then open up the building so in the green season it will become a nice al fresco café area where you can sit outside.

I've always liked that concept so it's going to be fun and it's also breaking new ground for Kutchan. ■



Somoza's gallery is open this winter, featuring an exhibition of Shouya's Hokkaido winter photographs including the one pictured here on byobu (panelled Japanese paper screen canvases).

See Somoza.jp for details.



01

CLOUD 9

TEXT AARON JAMIESON
PHOTOS KENJI MASUNAGA



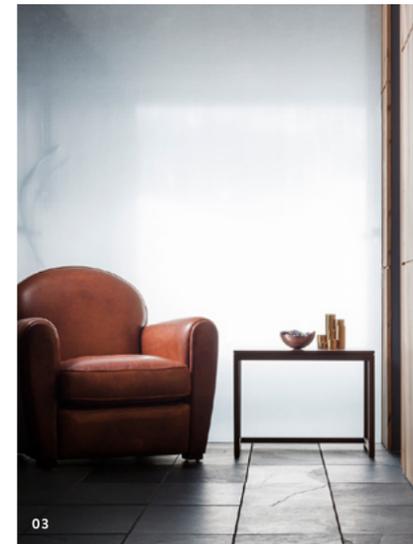
02

Surrounded by a mix of rustic cottages and newer residential developments in Lower Hirafu Village, recently completed residential project Cloud 9 stands out with its bold architectural expression. Composed of three irregularly-stacked, timber-clad rectangular volumes that rest on a 710sqm plot of land, Cloud 9 is a striking addition to Hirafu's new wave of ultra-modern architecture. Punctuating the skyline sharply with vivid angles against its natural surrounds, Cloud 9's form, material and placement intelligently harmonises with the Hirafu landscape.

Even at first encounter, Cloud 9's sculptural facade signals an architectural intention and

sensibility that goes beyond its three-dimensional form. Designed by Tokyo-based architecture firm SAAD, Cloud 9 was envisioned as three metaphoric layers of snow and ice that build up over time in winter. Similarly, each of the three individual volumes embodies its own distinct textural qualities and spatial programs.

With a total floor area of 308sqm, the holiday home comprises three bedrooms and four bathrooms. Beyond the genkan and extended hallway on the ground level is a private custom bath area, which includes a four-person sauna, a relaxation area and rain shower. This offers a unique Japanese hot spring



03

01 & 02 Front facade
03 1F
04 & 05 Living and Dining

With something as simple as a small 'shift' in the central layer of the design, the architect has completely altered the building and its interactions with its natural surrounds..

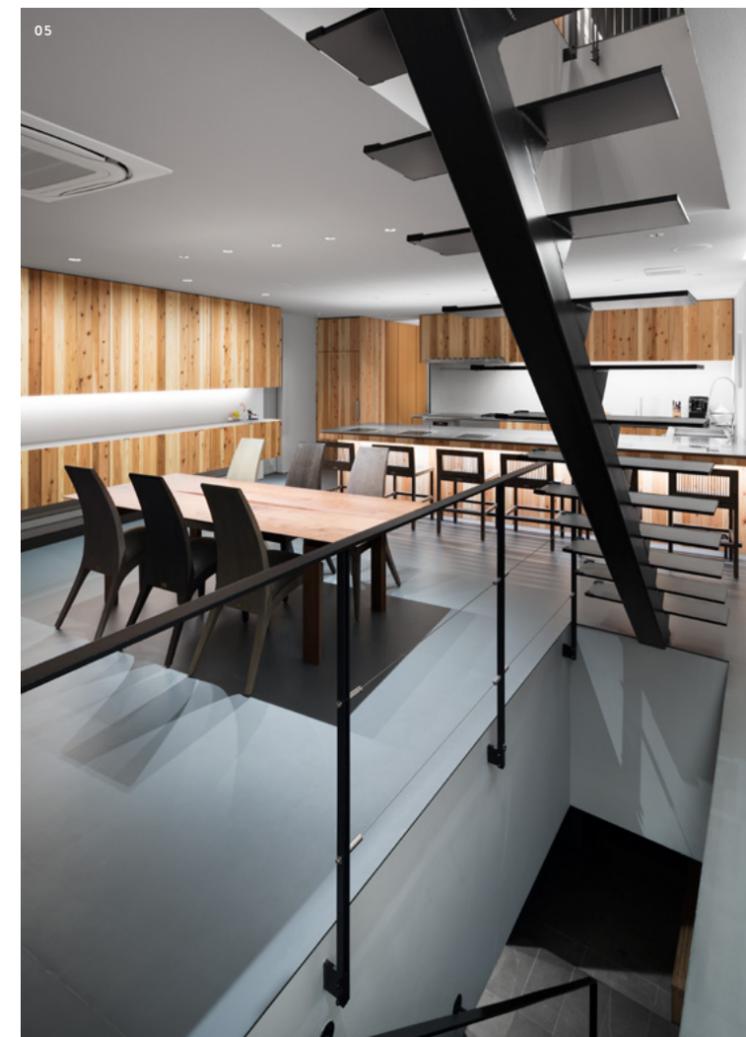
experience for the family and their guests. On the second level is an expansive open-plan living, dining and kitchen area custom-made for entertaining. The island counter is designed for personalised dining experiences with guest chefs, of which there are an increasing number in Niseko. On the steel-finished counter are recessed individual shabu shabu (hotpot) hot plates. The third level consists of the master bedroom with ensuite, and two guest bedrooms with a shared bathroom. Its design, layout and functionality combine flawlessly to create a truly unique family holiday home.

The brilliance of design is realised when it delivers pleasing aesthetics

with heightened functionality. With something as simple as a small 'shift' in the central layer of the design, the architect has completely altered the building and its interactions with its natural surrounds. This shift not only succeeds in giving Cloud 9 a dynamic and striking character, it also multiplies the indoor-outdoor living spaces by providing an open terrace, porch and undercover parking. This one gesture provides three fabulous benefits to its functionality, while also being the essence of its appearance. The offset means that each level of the building receives light differently through the year and forces an emphasis on direction. The views captured through each glass front at the end of the



04



05



06 Onsen
07 Bedroom
08 Bathroom

tubular layer are unique, while the depth of the building seems to channel the scenery from outside, bringing it closer. It is this depth that ensures people in the building feel closer to the views they see through the windows.

The layers and additional geometry ensure the building adapts with the seasons. In winter, gathering snow on the open terrace, porch and small gaps between each layer, its staggered design is emphasised and the connection to the ebb and flow of the snowbound season is obvious. Snow is part of the design.

As green replaces white, the building takes on an entirely different flavour. The open outdoor living areas are the perfect summer spaces to embrace the temperate summers of Hokkaido. The exterior has been clad in local cedar, giving it a naturally aged look. The

vertical lines of the exterior give a harmonious hum to the forested surrounds of Hirafu, and while the building holds an enormous presence, it's placement on the block and slender form have given careful consideration to surrounding property boundaries and ensure a shared view of Mt Yotei with the neighbours behind.

It is this connection to nature that has inspired much of the creative ingenuity throughout. The rectangular levels are open at either end, providing see-through views from front to back. Less partitions ensure clear lines of vision on each level ensuring your awareness of the outside is never entirely masked. This transparency is something rarely found in a city or dense urban environment but seems entirely suited to the quiet village life of Hirafu, tucked away in the wilderness of Japan's most northern island. ■



07



08

NISEKO - ST MORITZ



KEMUSHI

2 BEDROOM / 2 BATHROOM

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THE CABINS

Hokkaido Tracks has teamed up with award-winning architecture and design firm KplusK Associates to create a unique collection of contemporary ski cabins. Inspired by the lifestyle of the modern alpine explorer and enriched with the character of local culture, The Cabins fuse minimalist Japanese design with ultramodern mountain style. Set amongst pristine forest at the foot of Mt Annupuri in the tranquil area of St Moritz, Hirafu Village, yet only minutes to the family pair lift. Prices start from as low as 45 million yen for a fully constructed, two bedroom, two bathroom contemporary cabin, representing extraordinary value and an excellent entry point into the thriving Niseko market.



YOKOBAI

2 BEDROOM / 2 BATHROOM

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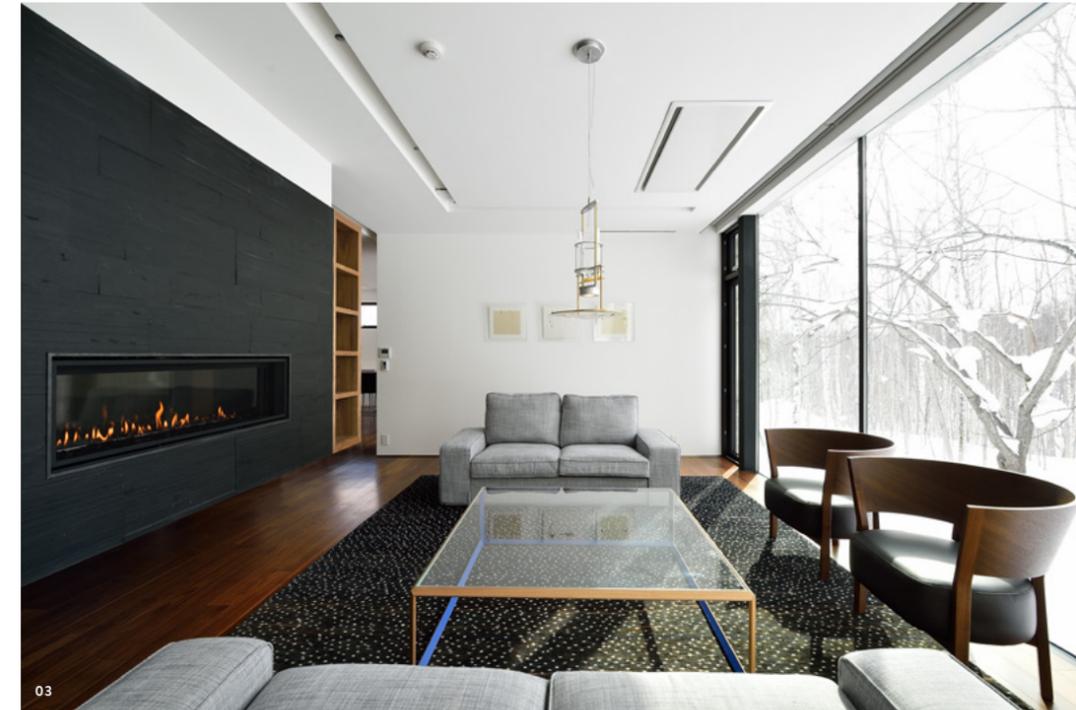
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01

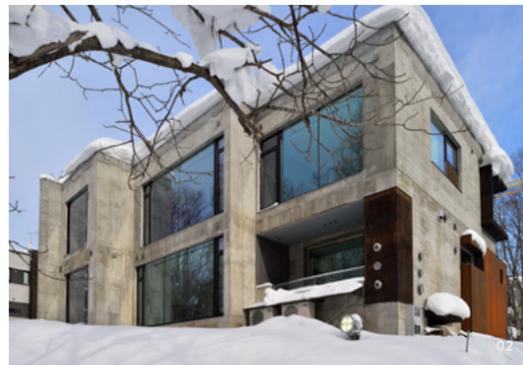
- 01 & 02 Exterior facade
- 03 Living
- 04 Passageway
- 05 Dining area



03

MUKASHI MUKASHI

TEXT KRISTIAN LUND
PHOTOS COURTESY WEST CANADA HOMES



Once upon a time there was nothing but shirakaba (silver birch) forests, snow and small animals foraging around Middle Hirafu Village in the depths of winter. These days it's a little busier, but looking out over the forest on the western boundary of the village from Mukashi Mukashi, you would never know it.

Mukashi Mukashi is the dream ski home-away-from-home for an Australian family who was introduced to Niseko about 10 years ago, and has been coming back every year since. Expecting this relationship to continue long-term, they decided to build a place they could call their own. Mukashi Mukashi translates as "once upon a time", and they decided to call the house that

after learning the phrase here and finding it fitting for the stories and memories they envisaged their house would create.

The owner's brief to the architect was for it to be "funky Japanese". "It was as simple as that – we really wanted the blend of Western and Eastern in a way that was contemporary, yet familiar." The owner's wife is also fascinated by the colour of the rural sheds popping out of snow filled paddocks across Niseko, and combining industrial design and warmth became the driving imperative.

Mukashi Mukashi is built on a 412sqm block and has 450sqm of living space over three floors. It has six bedrooms, each with

ensuite, plus a maid's room, and can accommodate up to 16 guests.

Paul Nickel, president of project manager West Canada Homes, says the house took 24 months from concept to completion.

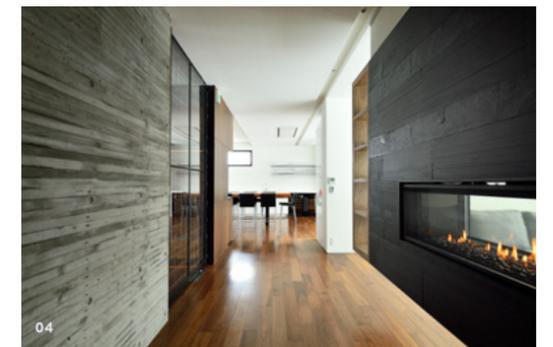
"The concept was to design a modern home large enough for family – current and future – yet incorporate intimate spaces for friends and family to celebrate together. The house is large with circulation space for all, yet still warm and inviting. It's about living in each moment and appreciating the specific space one occupies.

"We didn't want the design to be compromised just to capture a glimpse of Mt Yotei. Therefore we took a more holistic approach and

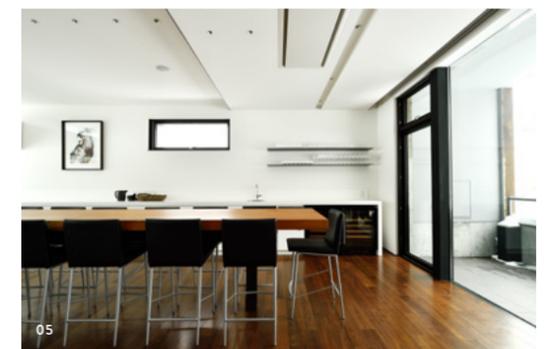
paramount was that each window frame a view of the best Hirafu offers – shirakaba forest, bustling street life, eclectic architecture, glorious Hokkaido blue sky, and of course we managed to frame a perfect Mt Yotei view too.

The exterior and interior material palette was tightly controlled with neutral tones.

Exterior finishes are concrete and rusted corten steel. Interiors maintain the natural palette with walnut floors accentuated by clean white walls. The kitchen also has white cabinets and uncluttered Corian countertops. The bedrooms and media room have 100% wool carpet throughout that adds to the warm and cosy ambiance of the home.



04

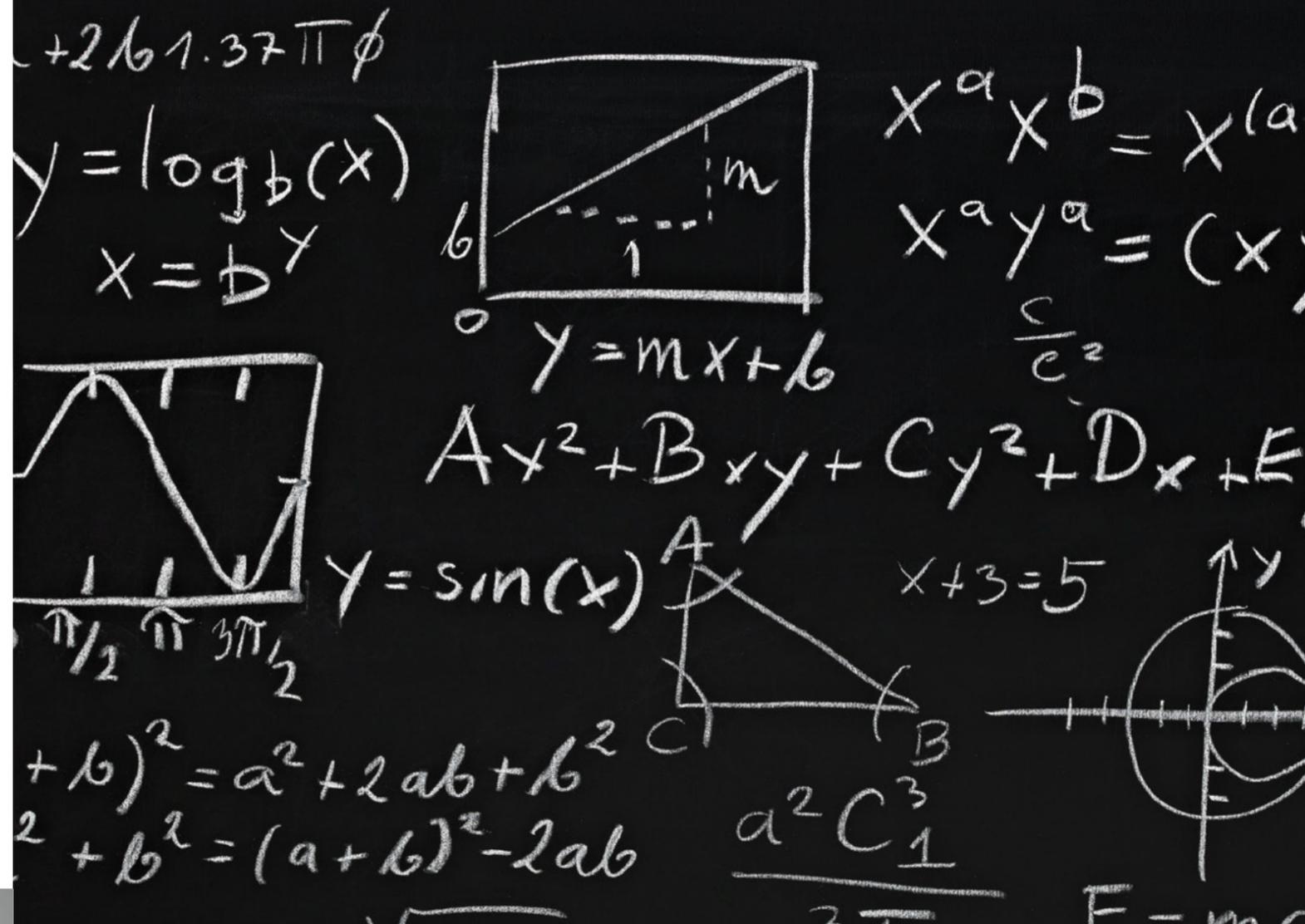


05



06 Bedroom
07 Stairway

The flow as we move within the space is remarkable, and it's beautiful watching the effects of different light, different weather, and now different seasons, and the way the house 'rises' to the challenge of being a contemporary home-away-from-home.

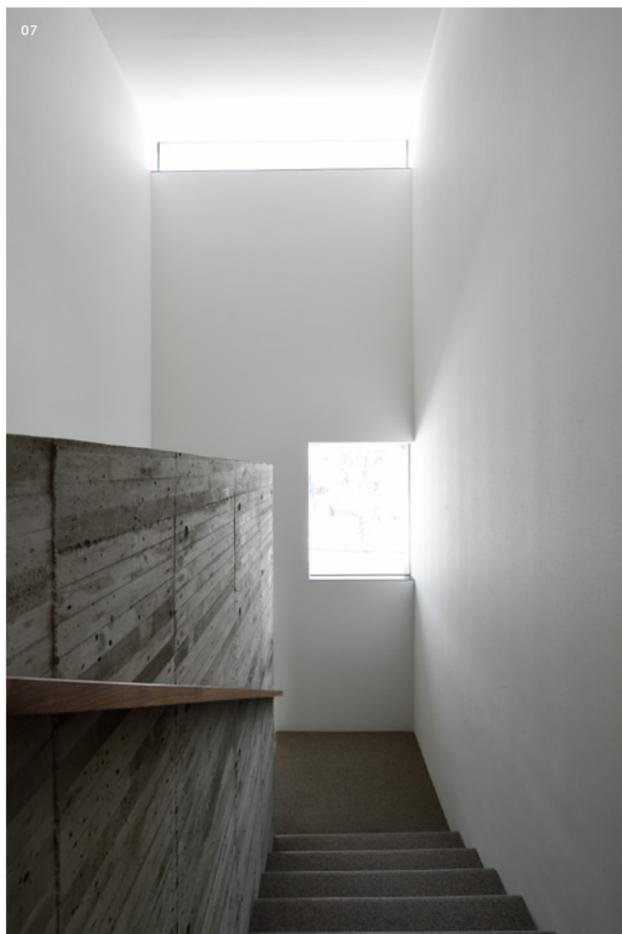


Nikel said the architect wanted to ensure a strong Japanese presence that respected traditional Japanese architecture, yet provided a modern interpretation. "Lines are simple and strong," he says. "Upon entering the living room you are greeted by a handsome see-through fireplace clad in traditional Japanese tiles accompanied by walnut bookshelves. Furniture accentuates the architect's goals."

The owners say the house exceeded their expectations. "We've spent a lot of time there now and it continues to delight. The flow as we move within the

space is remarkable, and it's beautiful watching the effects of different light, different weather, and now different seasons, and the way the house 'rises' to the challenge of being a contemporary home-away-from-home."

The flow through the spaces and the ambience at night are among their favourite things about the house. "We love the privacy the spaces afford, yet other spaces allow for 14 people to come together with ease. We love the incredible warmth of the industrial finishes and the sheer delight you experience as you take notice of the all the different materials and the lighting." ■



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01

SUIBOKU

TEXT AND PHOTOS AARON JAMIESON

Like blending ice and fire, Suiboku's designers brought the cold, harsh texture of concrete and blended it with a warm, inviting interior to create one of Niseko's premier luxury condominium apartments.

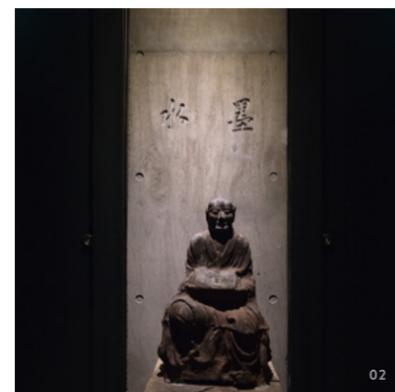
Suiboku's eclectic, industrial, loft-style interiors were revolutionary when they were introduced to the Hirafu accommodation landscape. Having stood proudly on Hirafu Zaka in the centre of the village for almost a decade, Suiboku still holds its own today.

As is so often the case with new construction, the ground-breaking ceremony was preceded by the demolition of a rundown but familiar old Hirafu building.

The anticipation of what was to follow captured the town, and when the completed building was unveiled, it revealed a vivid contrast between the past and where this tiny ski village might be headed in the future.

Incorporating arguably Niseko's most iconic izakaya A-Bu-Cha into its first floor, Suiboku immediately became part of the local community. The warm and friendly nature of the local-favourite izakaya only served to complement the clean and open space of Suiboku's enormous ground floor.

Suiboku's bold, harsh exterior provides a clever camouflage for what it keeps hidden inside.



02

- 01 Concrete centrepiece
- 02 Feature artwork
- 03 Dining
- 04 Shelving
- 05 Handwritten phone list

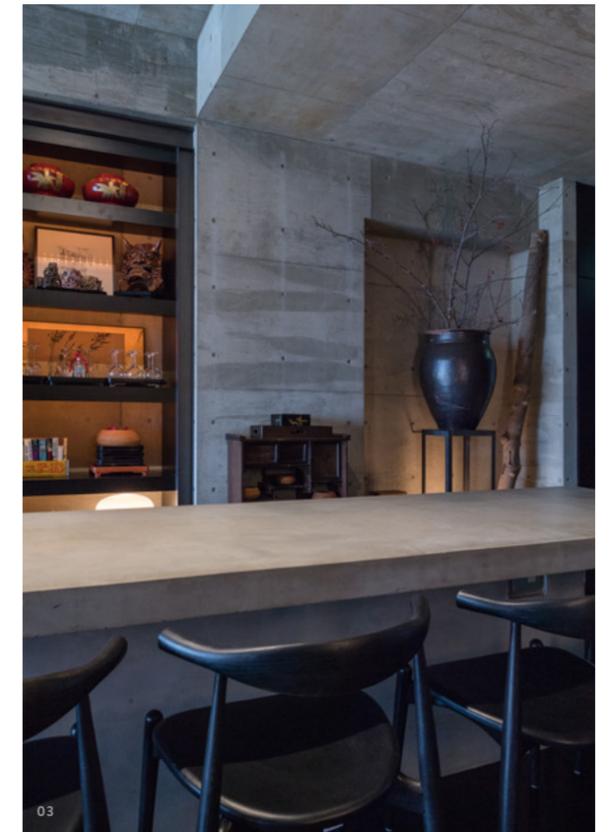
Entering the foyer, the double doors automatically withdraw, welcoming you to a subtly illuminated space alongside the concierge desk.

As you are escorted upstairs via the elevator, selective lighting orientation illuminates feature artworks, almost telling you a story as it leads you to your apartment. The sound of the key turning in the front door lock echoes like steel clanging in an empty concrete hall. The feeling of walking into a warehouse is everywhere as you pull an enormous metal portal open.

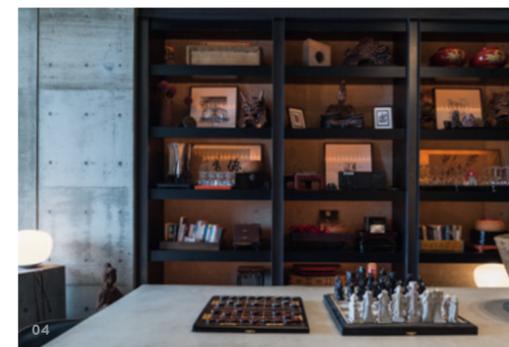
Stepping inside you are gently welcomed into a genkan area with an array of slippers. I forgo the slippers in order to feel the pristine timber floors that adorn

the entire apartment under my feet. Dark and understated, the floors underline the apartment's sense of style, before drawing your attention towards an almighty fixed-concrete dining table running down the centre of the room. Beyond its horizon is a sunken lounge laden with faux-fur pillows, alongside a floor-to-ceiling wall of glass, framing a perfect view of Mt Yotei every time the clouds part.

Intelligent design is everywhere throughout the building. The consideration and planning put into the concrete craftsmanship is astounding. All light fittings and cabinetry placements are predetermined and pre-moulded so as to leave no blemish on the concrete surface whatsoever. These clues provide an insight into



03

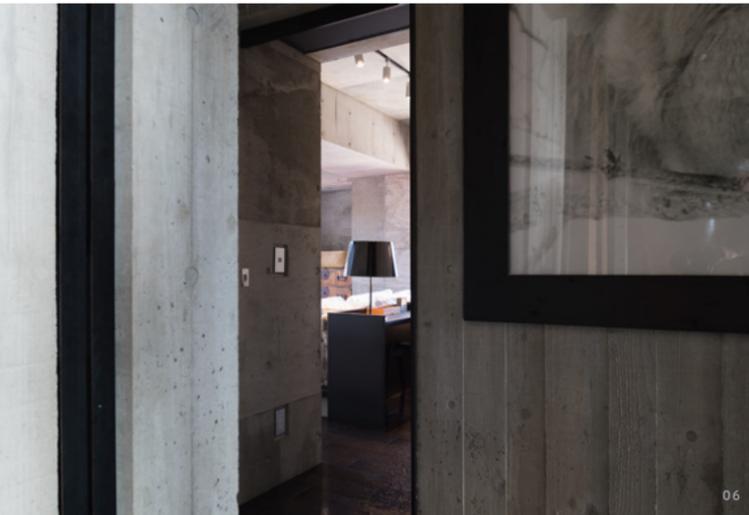


04



05

"Suiboku's bold, harsh exterior provides a clever camouflage for what it keeps hidden inside."



06



07



08

- 06 A glimpse of a bedroom
- 07 Feature light
- 08 Master bedroom
- 09 Hallway
- 10 Concrete stairwell

"It feels like you're walking into someone's home, but at the same time like you could be exploring a boutique art gallery."

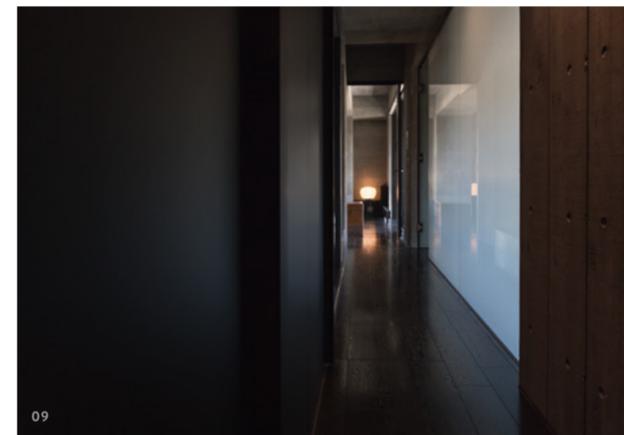
just how intricate and detailed the architectural and creative design process has been before embarking on construction.

Having opted for formed concrete as a construction material, the designers have been able to showcase both exceptional design and vision as well as the premium end of what is possible in Japan at the hands of the world's finest craftsman. Long-haired as masters of premium-finish concrete construction, Japan has led the world in the field, and while not the only example of this construction method in Niseko, Suiboku is at the head of the pack for execution and detail.

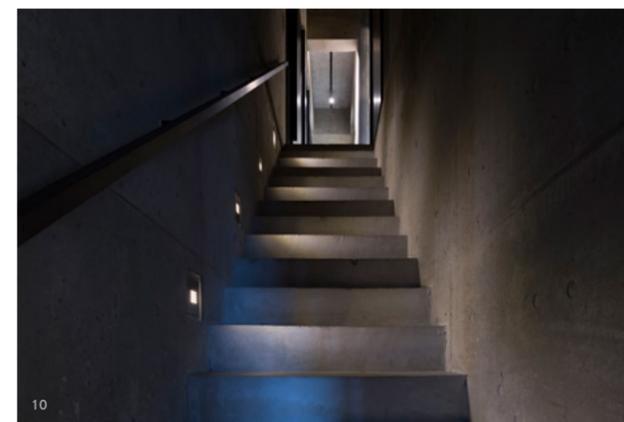
Aside from space and light being prominent features of design for the interiors, the marquee blend of concrete and softer construction materials is seamless.

A hard concrete edge meets the soft cushion of the lounge area. Everywhere you look steel and glass integrate with timber. A unique collection of antiques and other interesting objects from Japan and elsewhere capture the imagination and arouse curiosity. It feels like you're walking into someone's home, but at the same time like you could be exploring a boutique art gallery.

Something that is never lost as you walk through the building is



09



10

the feeling that it's been designed for people to enjoy. Perhaps a risk of delivering a building of steel, cement and glass would be that it might feel sterile or stark. Suiboku is the opposite. Board games are tucked into the shelves, there's a special box prepared by the owners with tidbits of local knowledge inside, and handwritten phone lists and notes foster a feeling of intimacy with your environment and your hosts. I think this special touch is unique in Niseko and a testament to the affection the owners have for the property and its very lucky guests.

Walking through the lounge room, you can't help but touch. The concrete one-piece dining table,

that could easily host a party of 12, has a surface that just begs you to rub your hand along it. It's stunning, smooth and almost soft to touch. The apartments are toasty warm thanks to under-floor heating. The couch and sunken den beg for you to launch onto the cushions and create a nest by the fire and TV, although you hardly need either. The framed views through the enormous windows are so captivating you could be forgiven for never looking for the TV remote for your entire stay. ■



BOHÈME

Niseko Hirafu



22ème presents beautiful craftsmanship in a style that is resoundingly contemporary. Inspired by traditional log cabins, Bohème also pays homage to the functionalism of modern Japanese architecture.

Designed by acclaimed Japanese master architect Makoto Nakayama and set amidst a lush forest with elevated views of Mount Yotei, the overwhelming charm of Bohème's picturesque location is sure to awaken the senses and stir emotions.

Complimenting the modern exterior is an interior featuring an alluring selection of furniture exclusively sourced from Molteni & C and kitchen appliances from Miele.



DEVELOPER - 22ème
ARCHITECTURE - nA Nakayama Architects
www.22eme.com/boheme

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LATEST DEVELOPMENT NEWS

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the first edition of Powderlife Real Estate (RE). This supplement has been put together in collaboration with advertisers – Niseko’s movers and shakers. We’ve worked with them to help tell their stories, promote their products and inform Powderlife readers about the biggest and best things across the Niseko real estate landscape.

The first three pages provide you with a wrap up of the latest development and ski resort news from across the region to bring you up to speed. While the supplement was designed to be an advertising feature, it’s turned out to be a thoroughly informative and interesting read which provides an in-depth snapshot of the Niseko real estate market and its main players in 2016-17.

– KRISTIAN LUND



UPPER HIRAFU ICON SKYE NISEKO REACHES FIRST MILESTONE

The first major development at the top of Hirafu – Skye Niseko – is one year into its 30-month build. The foundations are complete and framing goes up this coming spring. Developed by Summit Properties, the ski-in/ski-out condominium-hotel is the first new development in the premium Upper Hirafu Village location, formerly occupied by several old hotels. Scheduled for completion in 2018.

www.skyeniseko.com

AYA OPENS ITS DOORS ONTO THE ACE FAMILY RUN

Hirafu’s latest ski-in/ski-out development has opened at the base of the Ace Family Lift. AYA Niseko is a condominium hotel including 74 apartments, three penthouses, two private residences and two on-slope villas. It offers ski valet, onsen, spa, gym, yoga, kid’s room, dining, retail, art gallery and more. The property is managed by Hirafu resort operator Tokyu, who has confirmed the Ace Family Lift is to be upgraded in 2017.

www.ayaniseko.com



THE MAPLES UNDERWAY

The next big thing to emerge on the premier Upper Hirafu Village skyline will be The Maples. A joint collaboration between Nisade and Singaporean Cathay Group, the six-storey, ski-in/ski-out condo is located half way up the family ski run (opposite Chalet Ivy) with 69 studio, 2 and 3-bed apartments and penthouses. The development also features retail, commercial and F&B. Prices range from from US \$300,00 to \$1 million.

www.themaplesniseko.com





FIRST LOOK AT THE PAVILIONS

One of the biggest sales in Niseko last winter was the “Irenka” site – 20ha of Hirafu forest belonging to resort owner Tokyu. Hong Kong-based company The Pavilions Hotels & Resorts purchased the land coined Ginto Hirafu. Plans include a boutique hotel with Mt Yotei views from all suites, rooftop bar/restaurant, indoor and outdoor onsen, and full resort amenities – breaking ground April 2017 for completion Summer 2019. Land for private residences is for sale next to the hotel and the Ginto Village shopping and entertainment plaza.

www.pavilionshotels.com

THE ESCARPMENT SHINES

The Escarpment – a 15-lot master planned development at the bottom of Hirafu Village by Hokkaido Track Resort Properties – has completely sold out and has attracted some of the most exuberant building and architectural plans Niseko has seen to date. Major international corporations and identities are among the new owners, with seven homes complete this winter, to number 10 by winter 2018-19. The estate is now home to the highest density of premium custom homes in Niseko.

www.hokkaidotracks.com



\$10,000 A NIGHT CHALET

A Lower Hirafu chalet has set a new benchmark for luxury chalet rental in Niseko with a price tag of ¥1 million per night – \$10,000 – in peak season. Hakuchozan is 545sqm of decadent alpine living over four storeys, with seven ensuite bedrooms plus nanny’s room, games room, “man-cave” whiskey bar, and multiple social areas both inside and out. The living and dining areas open on to a large deck with barbecue, firepit and jacuzzi, and the price tag includes a dedicated host to look after your every need.

www.taigaprojects.com (Produced by Taiga Projects)



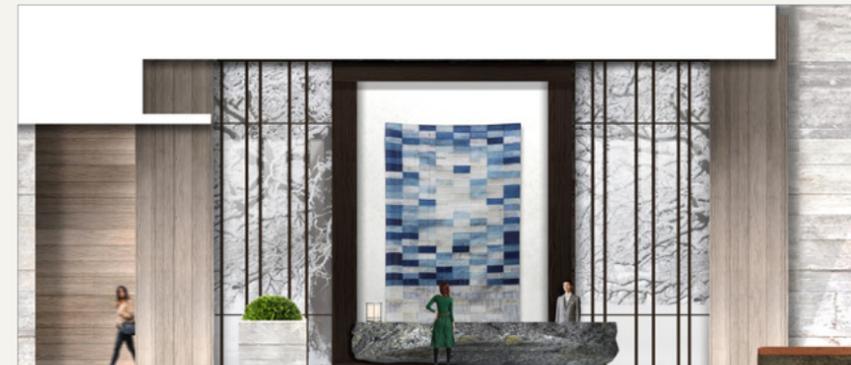
ELEVATION A HUGE SUCCESS

All but one of 15 lots are sold in ELEVATION, a luxury gated estate just below the Hirafu Gondola which was released for sale last winter. The estate was masterplanned by master architect Kengo Kuma. The 240-450 tsubo blocks were priced from US\$1.3-2.5m, and buyers were from the US, UK, HK as well as Chinese nationals from HK, Singapore and China. Developer Zekkei Properties is planning ELEVATION II and other projects.

www.elevationhirafu.com

HOTEL AND CONDO NEWS

Nisade has unveiled its latest development, boutique hotel Always Niseko in St Moritz, just outside the Upper Village. Two new Riccardo Tossani-designed condominiums in Hirafu Middle Village have been completed in time for this season – Aspect on the Middle Village bluff, and Haven on the village western border. Meanwhile a new Lower Hirafu condominium is under development – Terra by developer 22ème out of Singapore in collaboration with renowned Niseko architect Makoto Nakayama.



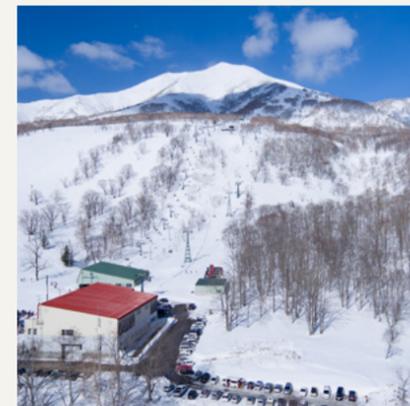
MAJOR HOTEL DEVELOPMENT

Hong Kong-based owner of Hanazono resort, PCPD, says construction is set to begin on its Park Hyatt Niseko hotel in summer 2017, with opening scheduled in time for winter 2019/2020. YTL Resorts, Malaysian owner of Niseko Village, said construction was hoped to begin on a Ritz-Carlton Reserve at the base of the resort in 2017 or 2018 for completion in 2020. New gondolas and chairlifts are complete this winter, with future residential development to form stage 3 of the masterplan.

ANNUPURI GONDOLA SITE PLANS

Planning is underway for an exciting new slopeside location at Annupuri, with Japanese-owned Annupuri Properties securing a five hectare site adjacent to the gondola (on the right below). The company is creating a master plan for a ski-in / ski-out village with a five-star hotel, residences, retail and restaurants.

annupuriproperties.com



FOXWOOD ESTATE FIRST HOME COMPLETE BY CHINESE NEW YEAR

Hokkaido Tracks Resort Properties is breaking trail at Higashiyama with the first master-planned house and land development in the village, which sits at the base of the Niseko Village resort in between Hirafu and Annupuri. Land development is complete and the first display home will be finished by Chinese New Year. The company is offering premium house and land packages with 3 and 4 bedroom options as well as 5-bedroom, 2-key options.

foxwoodniseko.com

NISEKO’S NEIGHBOURS GEARING UP

Niseko’s closest major ski resort neighbours all have masterplans underway to revitalise their offerings for international clients. Thai-owned Kiroro is expected to announce plans for its ski-in/ski-out village next year, while Japanese owner of Rusutsu Kamori Kanko has announced resort master planning and commercial and condo hotel development. Meanwhile Moiwa appears ever closer to announcing a masterplan for its resort and village, which is likely to include an Aman Resorts development.



OUTER HIRAFU RESORT PLANNED

Thai-based luxury real estate developer PACE is planning a US\$120m resort development just outside Hirafu. The developer plans to build approximately 37 holiday villas on the 14ha site, which is expected to be marketed to Thai buyers with a price range of US\$1.5-4 million per villa. Construction of the project is scheduled to start in 2017 with completion expected in 2019. PACE is also behind the development of Thailand’s new tallest building, currently under construction in Bangkok.

www.pacedev.com

LESS IS THE NEW MORE

SKYE NISEKO

LOCATION
UPPER HIRAFU VILLAGE

APARTMENTS FOR SALE



The desert heat surrounding the Presidential Palace in Abu Dhabi may be a world away from the powder-laden mountains of northern Japan, but designing luxury interior spaces in these equally exotic destinations involves a fundamentally similar process. Wilson Associates – world-leading architectural interior design firm – is currently fitting out both the aforementioned Middle Eastern palace, as well as hot new Hirafu condo-hotel Skye Niseko.

Skye Niseko safely claims king-of-the-castle title when it comes to location. At the top of the main street, it will become the only Hirafu property that has ski-out access to the resort’s two main lifts – the Hirafu Gondola on the east, and the Ace Quad servicing the west. Upon completion in 2018, Skye Niseko will undoubtedly attain icon status thanks to its slopeside prominence at the apex of the village, and its striking interlocking twin-building profile.

With such a premise, developer Summit Properties had an unofficial obligation to produce something special – something

that would befit its high-profile presence. Lead architect is award-winning Sydney firm Architectus, while Wilson Associates is the interior designer for the penthouse suites, lobby and public spaces, restaurants and cafe outlets, spa and wellness centre, and ski valet. Construction for the project is well under way, with foundations complete and framing going up this coming spring. The site and its progress can be viewed at the top of Hirafu Zaka Street – above the Welcome Centre.

Wilson Associates lead designer on the project, Associate Design Director James Lee, says the company creates new definitions

- 01 Penthouse onsen
- 02 Ski valet
- 03 Bedroom
- 04 Exterior view
- 05 Senior designer James Lee
- 06 Design Concept
- 07 Lobby



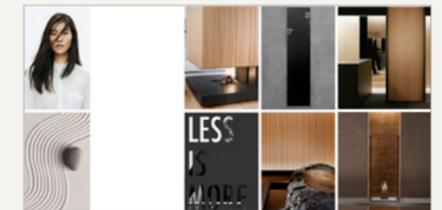
of luxury for an era that’s increasingly well-travelled, connected and culturally diverse.

“The underlying concept for the project is: Less is the new more,” Lee says. “Guests will have experienced five and six-star luxury all over the world. So we asked ourselves what we could do to make this place really stand out from anything else on the market. Rather than putting lots of finishes and lots of bling into the interior space, we decided to minimise the number of architectural finishes in each space, and really play with proportion and scale to create a luxurious yet minimalistic, Japanese design – less is more.” ■



05
JAMES LEE
ASSOCIATE DESIGN DIRECTOR

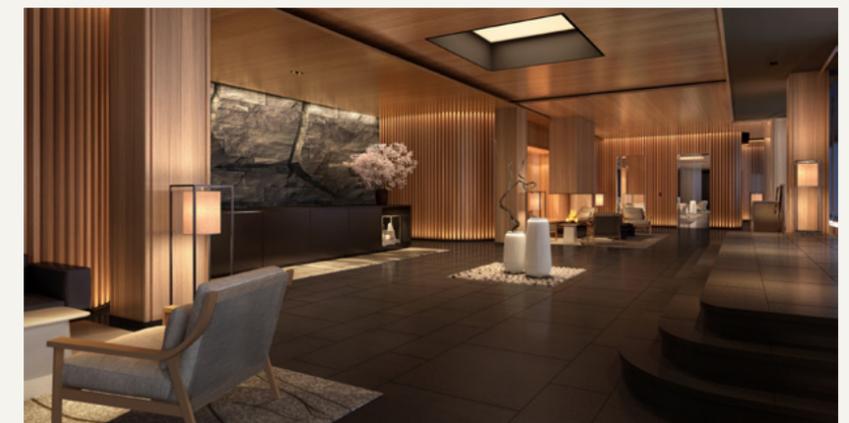
“With any project, we begin by evaluating the culture, religion and social aspects of the project’s location. We look at landmarks, cultural attractions and the physical features of the land surrounding the project. We evaluate the climate and weather, because that will inform many of the materials and finishes that are specified for the project. The era of designing an interior based on a geographic or generic cultural “theme” is over. We create a story for a property that’s bespoke and unique, and that drives the design. The common element in every project we do is that we



06
WILSON ASSOCIATES

always stay true to the concept (the story). Regardless of location, culture, or client, we’re creating a bespoke story and experience for each project, and our guiding principle is to be sure the finished product delivers that promise. We are storytellers.” ■

Wilson Associates’ design footprint spans six continents, 50 countries and includes an array of prestigious clients and operators, including more than 20 of the world’s top 100 billionaires. Clients include Armani, Four Seasons, Shangri La, Hyatt, Ritz-Carlton and many more.



DEVELOPER	ARCHITECTS	INTERIOR DESIGNERS	MINUTES TO SKI LIFT	COMPLETION DATE
Summit Properties	Architectus (Australia) ISA (Japan)	Wilson Associates (USA) Pike Withers (Australia)	Ski-in Ski-out	August 2018

ENQUIRIES	PHONE	EMAIL	WEB
Skye Niseko office: 3/F Hirafu 188 188 9 Hirafuzaka, Aza Yamada Kutchan-cho, Abuta-gun, Hokkaido, Japan	+81 136 220 221	enquiries@skyeniseko.com	www.skyeniseko.com





01



02

- 01 Chalet Hibari
- 02 Kawasemi
- 03 Oak

THE ESCARPMENT ESTATE

As the first deal fell over in October 2008, butterflies stirred in Simon Robinson's stomach. The metaphorical butterfly had flapped its wings above Wall Street, and an economic hurricane was about to sweep the world.



SIMON ROBINSON
PRESIDENT, [HOKKAIDO TRACKS](#)

As it tore through Niseko, it took with it all 17 reservations on Robinson's ground-breaking new 25-lot master-planned estate at the bottom of Hirafu.

Seven years later, a refined 15-lot plan has sold out, and is now home to the highest concentration of multi-million-dollar custom chalets in Niseko – literally Niseko's "millionaires row". The Escarpment has become a showcase of the exuberant, cutting-edge Japanese and international architecture now being built in Niseko by people from across the world. And it has become a model for other developments in the area. The Escarpment has infinitely surpassed Robinson's initial visions for the estate, and his company Hokkaido Tracks is once again leading the way in Niseko's evolution.



03



04 Shirofukuro
05 Entrance totem poles
06 Kitadori

“The Escarpment should have bankrupted me several times over,” Robinson now laughs. “I had huge bills to pay but all of a sudden there was no money to pay for it – I even had to sell my house (one of Hirafu’s first designer luxury homes, The Glasshouse).”

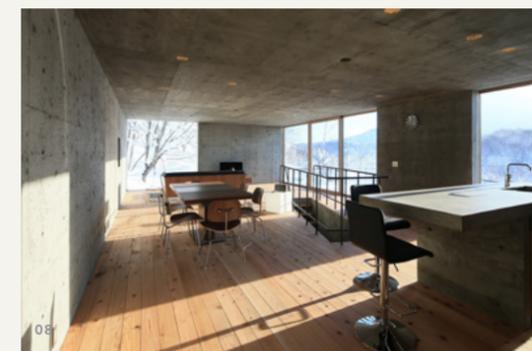
Ironically, the event that brought such heartache and disruption then has turned out better now than Robinson could ever have imagined. In 2009, “big money” was only just starting to find its way into Niseko, cautiously feeling its way around the frontier ski and four-seasons resort town. The Escarpment was very much a house and land product aimed at early Australian and Asian skiing enthusiasts.

In the years after confidence returned to global markets, Hokkaido Tracks discovered an entirely new calibre of clientele was ready to put cash on the table. The future of the resort had well and truly been consolidated post-crisis with a reuptake of big money investment across the area, both at the corporate level, and now more than ever amongst wealthy individuals looking for their own, year-round Hokkaido holiday retreats. They re-positioned the original 25 blocks as 15, and offered them for sale as land with the option of design and project management, all of which have been taken up.

“The concept for The Escarpment was put together at a time when it was completely out there – there was nobody doing anything like this, there was nobody even thinking of doing anything like this,” Robinson says. “At that stage, and still today, it’s all about ski-in/ski-out. We were ahead of the market and we got stung. But now we look back and we’re almost thinking “thank God it came out at the wrong time”.”

“The reason these buyers like it is because it’s private – it’s in the village but it’s not in the village, and the views can never be built out. A lot of people building with us are building the home they can’t have where they live – either it’s too expensive to have a large house or they just don’t have access to this sort of setting. It’s truly a special part of the world here and a majority of them have kids and this is a family retreat for them. A lot of them come in the summer and autumn, not just winter.”

“The owners we now have down on that estate are significant individuals throughout Asia – owners of some of the world’s biggest companies. The money they are spending is setting a standard that hasn’t been seen, and it’s continuing to go up. It’s becoming more like a north American ski investment or housing market than we ever envisaged.”



As plans come together for the remaining homes being built and planned in The Escarpment, Robinson is once again looking forward to other projects in Niseko – as always innovating and pioneering products, ideas and locations. While there is plenty of scope to build similarly impressive properties, he says there will never be anything quite like The Escarpment.

“It was bold. It could’ve failed – it should’ve failed – but didn’t fail,” he says. “We danced on our feet and remodelled ourselves around this product and it continues to succeed. This product is at the forefront of what the Asian market is looking for, which is premium quality housing in a place many now call their second home. When I retire, the thing that I look back on and will be most proud of will be The Escarpment Estate – it’s special.”

Hokkaido Tracks continues to lead the way, currently pioneering development at Higashiyama with work underway on its newest housing development project, Foxwood.



“Passing through a steep-walled valley, alongside a stream you finally come to a small bridge and two totem poles marking the entrance to the exclusive community.”

– SIMON ROBINSON
PRESIDENT, HOKKAIDO TRACKS



In early 2009, if you walked to the bottom of Lower Hirafu Village and gazed out over the river valley towards Mt Yotei, you could be forgiven for feeling like you were overlooking a landscape that time forgot. From here, mountains of powder snow tumbled down a steep, forested escarpment into plots of rice fields wedged into flat land between rolling hills below. Down here, it was hard to imagine that a snowball’s throw away were the bright lights and buzz of the world’s most exciting new international ski destination in central Hirafu Village.

The Escarpment Estate takes in the land either side of a short winding road that runs parallel to the border of the lower village bluff – almost as if the development holds Hirafu above on its shoulders. On either side of this master-planned avenue is some of Hirafu’s most sought-after real estate. Seven houses have been completed, to number 10 by the end of next year. The homes being built range from 150sqm to 1000sqm.

However, of the hundreds of thousands of visitors to Hirafu every winter, very few

will come across The Escarpment, let alone know where it is. To find it, you need to locate an inconspicuous road dropping off the side of Lower Hirafu Village, below the traffic lights and just past the “Fridge Door Bar”.

Passing through a steep-walled valley, alongside a stream you finally come to a small bridge and two totem poles marking the entrance to the exclusive community. Rounding the first corner you get a glimpse of the first houses and the ever-present Mt Yotei towering above them.

For The Escarpment’s grand architect, Simon Robinson – the man who built the first modern ski condominium in Niseko in 2003 – the estate holds a special significance. Shortly after the site had been excavated, powerlines buried, infrastructure, services and access installed – disaster struck. As financial markets around the world collapsed during the Global Financial Crisis in 2009, so too did 17 reservations on 25 of the lots originally slated for the development.

Image (below):
Annupuri Resort and village



SPECIAL
FEATURE:
ANNUPURI

REDISCOVER THE SOUL

The Annupuri Oasis

Annupuri bookends the four Niseko ski resorts on its western front – the front that is first in line to greet winter's snow storms as they roll in from the Sea of Japan, laden with moisture and ready to unload.

The gentle groomed runs here offer something for every member of the family, while it's no secret that for the more adventurous, the lift-accessible off-piste terrain is among the best in the region, and for that matter, the world – see those bowls to the left of the top lift station at the upper right of this image?

The village at the base of the resort is unlike any other on the mountain. It retains a healthy, organic village vibe with a mix of old and new chalets and accommodation houses. Add to this three Michelin-commended restaurants and nine onsen hot spring baths within a 2km radius, and you've got an unbeatable recipe for the ultimate traditional Japanese ski holiday destination.

Read on to discover why Annupuri will never be built out, and learn about the real estate and development opportunities on offer.



01

Hundreds of thousands of holidaymakers now choose Niseko for their ski trip each winter, but tucked away in the sleepy village of Annupuri, you would never know it. It's one of four resorts that share the ski hill (named Mt Annupuri as a whole), but the village of Annupuri is still very much an undiscovered secret.



02

Annupuri remains a quiet village with several hotels, a dozen or so pensions (family-run bed and breakfasts) and a handful of excellent little restaurants and onsen. It has more restaurants and accommodation options than Higashiyama and Hanazono, and is much quieter and less-crowded than Hirafu.

Where Annupuri really differs from the other resorts is that it is wholly located within quasi-

national park – development is restricted and strictly governed by national development guidelines. Lot sizes are much larger (minimum 1000sqm), meaning that no matter how hard anyone tries, it will never be built out. Some of the major developers actually specify minimum 2000sqm land size ensuring even more space for yards in the green season, and adding to the spread out feeling of the village.

Slopeside master planning and new lifts are likely to enhance the ski resort experience, with a master plan being developed for a large 5ha ski-in/ski-out site adjacent to the gondola. More premium chalets and low-rise condominiums will provide further opportunity for investment into the area and increased tourism expenditure within the village.



03

- 01 Slopeside views
- 02 Off-piste terrain
- 03 Annupuri Back Bowl
- 04 Annupuri Village Chalet
- 05 Yugokorotei Onsen
- 06 Lucky Fingers Bar

THE SKIING

Annupuri is the resort that most local powder hounds regard as their favourite. If you catch the lifts to the top of the resort and head out the marked gates, you will find the longest and most expansive “slack-country” (ie lift-accessed backcountry) anywhere on the mountain, with fresh lines to be had well into the day.

Meanwhile there is a gently sloping base area serviced by “magic carpet” conveyor belt for absolute beginners. And for those who are ready to take things to the next level, there are plenty of wide, open groomed trails to explore.

THE CULTURE

What sets Japan apart from other ski destinations around the world is the culture. As a largely undeveloped mountain village, Annupuri retains an authentic grass roots cultural feel for those who want to experience the essence of a Japanese ski holiday. Anywhere you stay in Annupuri, you are within walking distance of a traditional onsen hot spring bath house – all of which have rotenburo (outdoor baths) – and of course a variety of traditional Japanese and quality Western restaurants. Without much vehicular traffic, walking around the snow-covered village with the family day or night is an experience no one will ever forget.



04

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Most of the movement at Annupuri has been in the larger premium multi-million dollar chalet market, with the first signs of condominium and villa options. Several developers are now offering land and custom-designed homes. There are already two estates ([Annupuri Village](#) and [Niseko Annupuri Residences](#)) as well as one company offering standalone, off-the-plan chalets ([Seasons Niseko](#)). Another estate of 12 premium homes, each with private onsen, is under planning ([Annupuri Garden](#)). The first low-rise condominium was completed this year ([The Kamui Niseko](#)), with master planning underway for a ski-in/ski-out village adjacent to the gondola. ■



05



06

WORLD CLASS DINING RIGHT IN ANNUPURI



RAKUICHI SOBA
Quite simply one of the most exquisite traditional dining experiences in Niseko, recognised with a Michelin commendation and featured on Anthony Bourdain's No Reservations. Delicate soba noodle lunches or decadent course dinners. A bucket-list experience.



DEL SOLE PIZZA
Michelin Guide awarded Del Sole a Bib Gourmand recommendation – high praise indeed for an unassuming little pizza joint. The chef trained in Italy and imported the oven, which cooks his hand-shaped dough and fresh local ingredients to perfection in 90 seconds.



SUSHI SHIN
This newcomer has Niseko foodies flocking – Sushi Shin chef Masaaki Miyakawa was head chef at Hong Kong Michelin-starred restaurant Sushi Shikon. Located in new building The Kamui Niseko, Sushi Shin is Edo-Mae-style, a traditional Tokyo style.

A HOME FOR ALL SEASONS

SEASONS NISEKO

LOCATION
ANNUPURI VILLAGE

PRIVATE CHALET DEVELOPER



Private swimming pools, indoor-outdoor terraces, lounges surrounding fire pits, decadent gardens and water features. All within protected national park forest, alongside spring-fed streams and natural onsen hot spring baths. High-end private chalet developer Seasons Niseko believes Annupuri offers the landscape to make it the resort of choice for people looking to build big, beautiful year-round retreats, all of which you can ski straight into from the ski fields in winter.

Seasons Niseko is setting a new standard for indoor-outdoor living in Niseko. Their showcase property, Seasons 1, illustrates exactly what is possible and how to build the ultimate four-seasons property in Niseko. The sprawling, five-bedroom masterpiece features a 10m x 5m indoor/outdoor swimming pool (one of only two private pools in Niseko), and outdoor entertaining terraces over two levels. Not to mention a gold class eight-person cinema, games and entertainment area, bar, wine cellar and library.

Seasons Niseko Director Luciana Palmisano says there aren't many properties in Niseko

that are built as much for spring, summer and autumn as they are for winter. "We're utilising bi-fold doors that open up on to big terraces, meaning during the warmer months you can live as much outside as in," Palmisano says.

"In our place we have a wood-fired pizza oven on the lower terrace, barbecue, fire pits, and of course the pool. No one is really doing that kind of thing here yet – most of the places that have been built to date are designed predominantly for winter living. We come here throughout the year and we know a lot of people across Asia are looking for the same thing for themselves."

- 01 Pool deck
- 02 Living
- 03 Indoor/Outdoor
- 04 Upstairs terrace
- 05 Seasons 1 Exterior



WORKING WITH SEASONS NISEKO TRUST OUR LUXURY HOME DEVELOPMENT EXPERTISE

The team behind Seasons Niseko is passionate about building the world's finest lifestyle homes in what they believe is now the world's finest ski resort. CEO Michael Alexander was introduced to Niseko 15 years ago and was immediately sold on the unrivalled powder skiing and lifestyle.

With hands-on experience building premium homes, Alexander knows what it takes to build a property for the modern global citizen in exotic foreign locations. "One of the biggest issues in developing in Niseko is finding excellent local people to handle your project," Alexander says. "We've developed relationships with the best local suppliers and tradespeople so our clients can be confident of an excellent outcome. "We also project manage the entire operation on the ground in Niseko, ensuring quality control over the building

process. In Niseko there's a nine-month window to build a property between winters, and we can make sure that happens on time and on budget."

The design of Seasons Niseko properties is internationally inspired with furniture and fitting from Whistler to London. A majority of the build and fit out is sourced locally from the finest Japanese craftsmen, with selected items imported from overseas when superior quality can be attained.



Seasons Niseko is working on their next projects – similarly premium homes on an allotment nearby that are for sale off the plan, and a series of luxury apartments – all of them ski-in and all centred around the same multi-season philosophy.

Palmisano says Annupuri is the perfect village setup within Niseko for this. "We've skied all over the world and think Annupuri is similar to somewhere like Aspen where bigger blocks are ideal for lifestyle homes. We're ensuring it remains the charming, gentle, local village it is and adding more sophisticated homes for families to come in and enjoy for themselves."

DEVELOPER	ARCHITECTS	SALE TYPE	DISTANCE TO SKI LIFT	DISTANCE TO RESTAURANTS
Seasons Niseko	ALT-254 (Hong Kong)	Off-the-plan	Ski-in / 2 mins by car	5 mins walk / 2 mins by car

ENQUIRIES	EMAIL	WEB
Luciana Palmisano	info@seasons-niseko.com	www.seasons-niseko.com



NATURAL LUXURY

NISEKO ANNUPURI RESIDENCES

LOCATION
ANNUPURILAND AND HOUSE PACKAGES
FOR SALE

The rustic village of Annupuri is characterised by deep snow, outdoor onsen, and the quintessential Japanese mountain lifestyle. Niseko Annupuri Residences offers a custom-made opportunity to build the ultimate Niseko dream home.

At Niseko Annupuri Residences (NAR), you might spend more time bathing in an onsen than in your own bathroom – one of Niseko's premier rotenburo (outdoor hot spring baths) is right next door to the estate.

After a day on the mountain, you also won't need to catch a bus back home – conditions permitting, you can ski through a shirakaba (silver birch) forest right back to your door.

NAR is a master-planned development by Annupuri Properties, who are also creating a masterplan for 50,000sqm of ski-in/ski-out land they own alongside the Annupuri gondola.

Why Annupuri?

Annupuri is the hidden gem of Niseko, and attractive to those who value privacy, natural surroundings and a desire to get away from the increasingly congested other areas of Niseko.

There are half a dozen exceptional onsens within walking distance, and three restaurants that have been noted in the Michelin Guide, including two restaurants that were given Bib Gourmand recommendations – Rakuichi Soba and Del Sole Pizza – and new sushi restaurant Sushi Shin. It is a very peaceful village and perfect for families who want to spend holidays in Niseko year-round.

01 Bird's eye view by AES Partners
02 Exterior design by AES Partners
03 Exterior design by Takumi Saikawa Architects

04 Interior design by Nakayama Architects
05 Exterior design by Nakayama Architect

**Why Niseko Annupuri Residences?**

The 45,000sqm NAR estate offers 19 large custom home sites with the famous Yugokoro Onsen right next door.

"We've made it easier and faster for anyone who wants to build their Niseko dream home, as we've spent the last couple of years completing the heavy lifting associated with construction in the national park," says Annupuri Properties CEO Masahito Kato.

"All the environmental impact studies and permits have been completed, and we've heavily invested in infrastructure to protect the natural beauty of the national park.

"There are no electrical poles or power lines as everything is underground, and there is a fully paved private road to each lot.

"There is a dedicated on-site management office to cater to the needs of homeowners and their guests."

Natural splendor

The property is bordered by a natural stream to the east, and has spectacular views of Mt Annupuri to the north and the Konbu mountain range to the south. Mature pine trees dot the entire site with white birch trees surrounding it.

Large size lots

The development lots range up to 2700sqm, ensuring that each house will have a large yard, unlike higher density areas in Niseko.

As Niseko transforms into a year-round resort, having a large yard for outdoor activities will become increasingly attractive. For anyone that desires an even larger home and yard, NAR offers the option of combining multiple lots into one.

Design

We have a line of up talented architects, and we will work with owners to design and build their dream home from start to finish (see above). ■

“We've made it easier and faster for anyone who wants to build their Niseko dream home, as we've spent the last couple of years completing the heavy lifting associated with construction in the national park.”

LOCATION

Route 66, Annupuri

TOTAL LAND AREA

45,000sqm

DEVELOPER

Annupuri Properties

ARCHITECTS



TAKUMI SAIKAWA ARCHITECTS

AES PARTNERS

ENQUIRIES - CONTACT YOUR LOCAL AGENT OR:

Annupuri Properties (Niseko office)
434-5 Niseko, Niseko-cho, Abuta-gun, Hokkaido 048-1511

CONTACT

+81 (0)3 3479 8367
info@annupuriproperties.com

WEB

www.nisekoannupuriresidences.com
facebook.com/nisekoannupuriresidences



DIVINE LIVING

THE KAMUI NISEKO

LOCATION
ANNUPURI

APARTMENTS FOR SALE



01

Kamui is the word of the indigenous Ainu people. The Ainu people cherish the idea that some kind of divinity exists in everything around their lives, such as animals, plants, mountains, rivers, and even natural phenomena like snow and rain. The Kamui Niseko is a prestigious low-rise development of seven luxurious condominium apartment and penthouses set off the main road to the Annupuri Gondola and lifts.

The architectural design of The Kamui Niseko is strongly influenced by the surrounding environment. By using the same colors for the materials as the snow and trees, the building blends nicely with the unique tranquility of the Annupuri area. The shape of the building is designed to overlook the spectacular view from each room including the bedrooms, and the large floor-to-ceiling windows also provide magnificent views of Mt Yotei or Mt Konbudake. Each dwelling is also furnished with a private balcony, mainly for summer use.



02

The interior of The Kamui Niseko creates a comfortable space that blends with the majestic scenery of Annupuri. Harmonious natural materials have been used throughout, such as wooden flooring in the living and dining rooms, and wooden panels on the walls. The sophisticated furniture is all in natural colors to provide a relaxed atmosphere, creating a warm and liberating space in which to entertain guests. The luxurious, private rooms are perfectly matched with the natural beauty of the Annupuri area. ■

- 01 Front entrance
- 02 Aerial view
- 03-04 Sushi Shin



03



04

FACT SHEET THE KAMUI NISEKO

PROPERTY FEATURES

- Studio, 1, 2, 3, 4 Bedroom Apartments
- Dual key options
- Reception area, concierge
- Full-height glazed windows
- Ducted air-conditioning
- Individual ski storage
- 1-min drive to lifts
- Premier sushi restaurant

DEVELOPER

B-lot Co.,Ltd (Tokyo)

ARCHITECT

Matsunaga Architect Firm

DESIGN

M&M Design Company

BUILDER

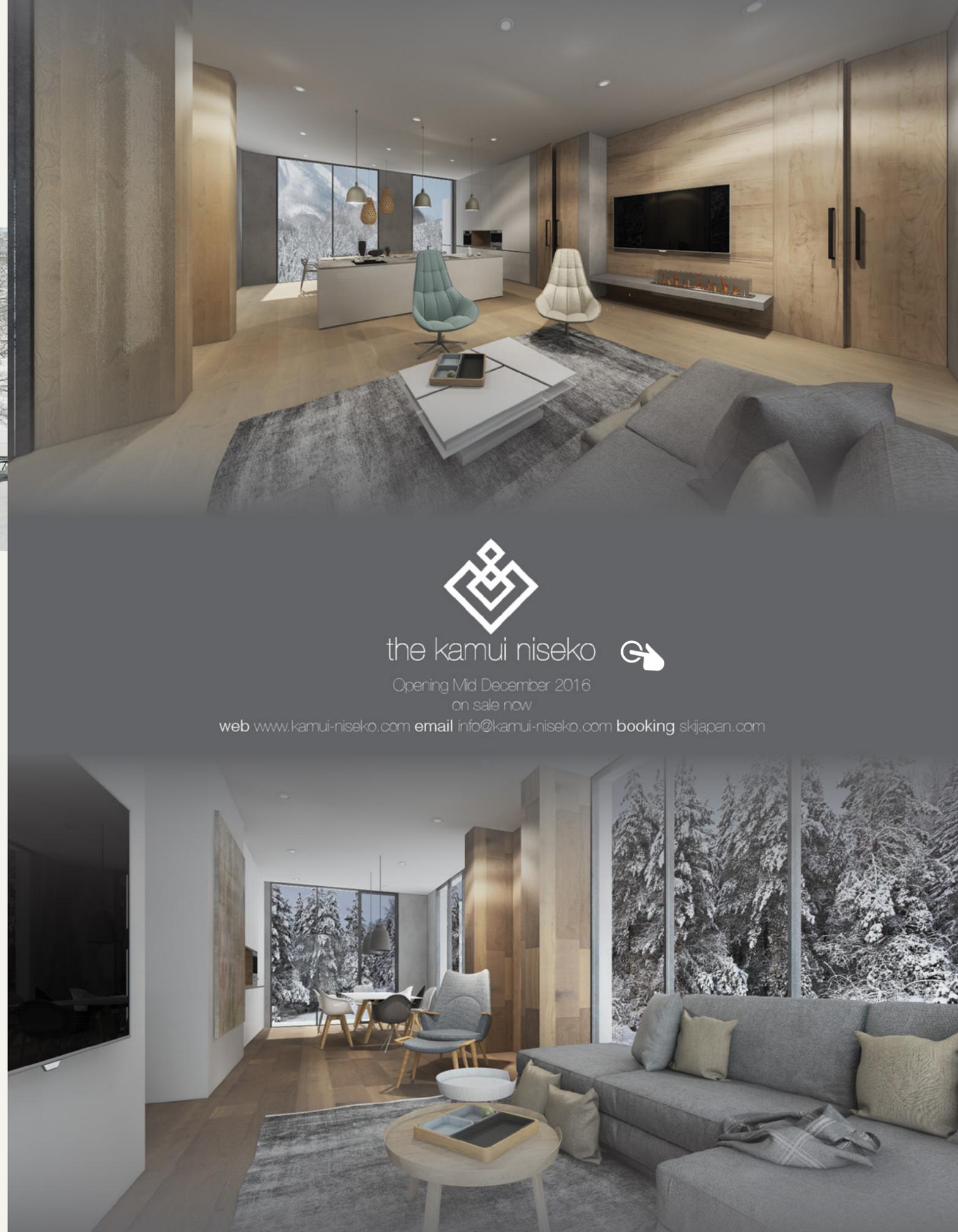
Iwata Chizaki

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Ski Japan

ENQUIRIES

info@kamui-niseko.com
www.kamui-niseko.com



the kamui niseko



Opening Mid December 2016
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NATURALLY CEDAR

LINDAL HOMES

LOCATION
GREATER NISEKO

CEDAR HOMES FOR DEVELOPMENT



01

Almost as iconic as the western red cedar trees that inhabit the ski fields of North America, are the grand cedar chalets owned by the rich and famous in the resort towns. And now more than a dozen Lindal cedar homes have been built in and around Niseko, with home buyers recognizing their suitability for the Hokkaido environment, thanks to more than 70 years of expertise the company brings to building in the mountains.

Lindal cedar homes are arguably the world's ultimate off-the-plan ski chalet. Every piece of timber required is imported from the company's US operations. Lindal provides a lifetime guarantee on its post and beam building system structure. There are more than 2000 different traditional and modern designs to choose from, and each design can be customized and built on any landscape. Like snowflakes, no two Lindal homes are identical amongst more than 50,000 built worldwide.

Local Lindal independent distributor, Niseko Cedar Homes, says the western red cedar houses offer all the convenience of a pre-

fabricated home design, with the flexibility of a custom-design, and are ideal for the Niseko climate.

"The walls, subfloors and roof are all 3/4 inch thick plywood – even if you didn't insulate them they'd still be warm," says Tom Vance, Niseko Cedar Homes operations manager.

"These homes are very easy to heat and they retain heat. The way they're designed and built, the wood is solid and really tight so there's never any drafts anywhere in the structure. Warmth is in the DNA of the Lindal homes design."

- 01 Turkel Design
- 02 Rusutsu Lindals
- 03 Elements Seafoam
- 04 Custom interior
- 05 Turkel Design
- 06 Sunlit interior



02



03



04

TALK TO NISEKO CEDAR HOMES

TOM VANCE
OPERATIONS MANAGER

“ Building in Japan can be daunting, but with Niseko Cedar Homes you can be confident you have the skills and knowledge of a team that's done it successfully many times before. As operations manager I will be on hand to guide you through every step of the process – from planning and design, through to ordering, delivery, construction and beyond. At the outset, it should be clear I work for you. My goal is to assemble the best team for the project based on your desires, personality, budget and timetable. I engage Lindal architects and others, negotiate with independent builders who have experience with previous Lindal projects, and can project



05

manage the entire project if you so desire, or represent you as your agent through the building process. Lindal homes can be built in size ranging from 70sqm to as large as you can imagine. We've used builders experienced in "Western" style homes with dozens of previous projects and more than 50 years of combined home building experience. You may contract directly with one of these builders to construct the Lindal home. We can represent you during the construction phase so you don't have to be present during construction. Normally the construction contract is a separate agreement between you and the builder; however, if you desire, the entire design and construction effort can be combined into a single agreement. ”

The Lindal building system uses kiln-dried timber, including cedar and fir, to increase strength and reduce warping. Low E/Argon double-glazed windows are standard.

Designs range from classic and traditional to contemporary and modern. In addition to homes that are designed by Lindal architects, there are plans designed by some of the most prestigious architects in North America.

Over the past 45 years more than 800 Lindal cedar homes have been built in Japan, with almost 40 now built in Hokkaido. ■



06



NISEKO CEDAR HOMES
Independent Distributor
for Lindal Cedar Homes

ARCHITECTS
Various

HOME TYPE
Custom Pre-fabricated

NUMBER PLAN TYPES
2000

ENQUIRIES
Tom Vance
Niseko Cedar Homes

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FOUR SEASONS STYLE

SHIKI NISEKO

LOCATION
UPPER HIRAFU VILLAGE

LUXURY SHORT & LONG STAY
HOTEL-SERVICED APARTMENTS



SHIKI NISEKO LUXURY ACCOMMODATION, UPPER HIRAFU

Shiki Niseko made an impressive debut when it opened in 2013 pioneering Niseko's first year-round integrated hotel, serviced residences and retail development. Following the success of this project, they tackled another gap in the market with MY ecolodge – a brand new boutique travellers lodge catering also for corporate, edu-vacation and general group stays.

If you draw a circle around Hirafu Village, you'll find Shiki Niseko marking almost the exact centre point – here, you're staying right in the beating heart of the world's hottest new ski destination. A few minutes' walk in either direction takes you to the Hirafu Gondola or the Ace Family Lift. A half dozen bars and a score of restaurants are within a short stroll, as are the all-important convenience stores.

And that's just outside the building. Within Shiki itself is a range of features that puts the building in a league of its own – first of all is Niseko's most famous restaurant, the Michelin-starred French restaurant

Kamimura. There is also another excellent restaurant/café, Iki, which offers barista-made coffee and à la carte breakfast, and in the evening traditional charcoal grill and teppanyaki cuisine. Shiki is also home to Hirafu's only deli-style supermarket, ATM, and Toyota Rent-a-Car office.

While the 68 apartments are fully self contained, Shiki feels more like a boutique hotel from the moment you step inside. Its luxurious lobby entrance wouldn't be out of place in an old established European or North American resort with its stunning modern alpine design.

- 01 Mt Yotei view living
- 02 Shiki exterior facade
- 03 Lobby Lounge
- 04 Deli Supermarket + Cafe
- 05 MY ecolodge's lounge
- 06 Green Bentoss



MY ECOLODGE BOUTIQUE TRAVELLERS LODGE, HIRAFU IZUMIKYO

First opened for the winter of 2016, MY ecolodge is a designer hostel featuring a range of environmentally friendly design features to ensure it leaves a minimal environmental footprint. MY ecolodge is also the first affordable boutique travellers lodge designed for savvy budget conscious skiers and holidaymakers. It offers guests a modern, clean and safe environment with all the facilities of a five-star ski resort at a fraction of the price. The boutique lodge boasts 50 double/twin rooms and 18 quad-share rooms with a total of 172 beds, free high-speed Wi-Fi, common lounge and onsite dining and catering by Green Bentoss Cafe and Dining, offering takeaway bento box meals, hors d'oeuvres and other catered dining options. MY ecolodge extends value-added packages for school educational trips or corporate retreats. Professional event planners can design fun-packed activities and corporate programs, for both short and long-term stays during all four seasons. ■

KEY ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

- Eco-friendly shower heads reduce water used by 35%
- Building-wide LED lighting reduces energy usage
- Motion sensors turn common-area lights off automatically
- Individual bedside lamps to reduce energy usage
- Onsite waste sorting bins to support local recycling efforts



Each apartment is luxuriously laid out and furnished, incorporating contemporary Japanese aesthetics and premium furnishings and fittings, enhanced with the luxuries of Asian hospitality. Living areas feature solid timber floors and full-height double glazed windows framing the famous views of Mt Yotei, the ski mountain and surrounding national park. ■

Shiki Niseko and MY ecolodge are managed by Fairlane Hospitality, ensuring the finest hospitality for guests across both properties. Both properties were developed by Malaysian developer Low Yat Group.

DEVELOPER Low Yat Group Malaysia	SHIKI LOCATION Upper Hirafu Village	MINUTES TO SKI LIFT Walk 3 mins / Shuttle 1 min	MY ECOLODGE LOCATION Hirafu	MINUTES TO SKI LIFT Shuttle 3 mins
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TAIGA REAL ESTATE
**WHERE IS NISEKO
 ON ITS GROWTH
 TRAJECTORY?
 NOT EVEN
 HALF WAY**



HAKUCHOZAN NISEKO



BY KEITH RODGERS
 PRESIDENT, TAIGA REAL ESTATE

After arriving in 1997 as one of only five foreigners living in Niseko, Keith Rodgers has witnessed first hand the spectacular growth of Niseko from completely domestic to thoroughly international ski resort.

“Back in 1997, no one knew Niseko would turn into the international investment jewel it is today. Our customers were Japanese, and foreign investment wasn’t even on the radar. When I started in real estate in 2006, few of us anticipated the depth of foreign interest and investment to come.

And yet, for all the 50-plus years since the resort opened, Niseko still can’t be called a “mature” resort. 80% of all property in Hirafu

Village is now foreign owned, but much of that has yet to be developed. At the current pace, it would still take over 15 years for the village center to get built-out. Shopping is still limited and infrastructure and transportation could be better – one doesn’t have to look hard to see room for improvement.

When you look at the top custom chalets, budgets have grown considerably over the past five years, and clearly Niseko has become a bona-fide landing spot for the global elite. Recently Taiga Projects completed Hakuchozan, where no expense was spared to create the unique experience of a fully serviced European chalet. This type of proven investment, combined with the area’s potential to get even better, is why Niseko is so compelling as an investment destination.

Developing a property for a retirement couple gave me a glimpse into the next phase. The clients come for the temperate green season and spectacular food, and call Niseko “The Tuscany of Asia”. All of the parts are already here, and the growing recognition of Niseko as a summer destination will add further fuel to the rental and real estate markets.” ■

TIPS AND TRENDS

- Increasingly, we’re meeting property buyers who want to make a considerable investment outside the main resort bases. For some this is driven by a lack of available land at the resort base, and for others it’s the desire to get a bit further away and have a piece of privacy.
- Look for land that has some intrinsic charm. This might be a mountain view, a creek running through the property, or even an exceptionally large oak tree. On a basic level, if you can’t find the bit that makes it special, neither will the next buyer. Unless it is exceedingly cheap.
- In Hirafu, we’re seeing an increase in activity in St Moritz, reflected in increased transactions, and also new houses. Similarly, we anticipate interest to be high for some of the new residential developments just outside Hirafu and Annupuri.



ABOUT

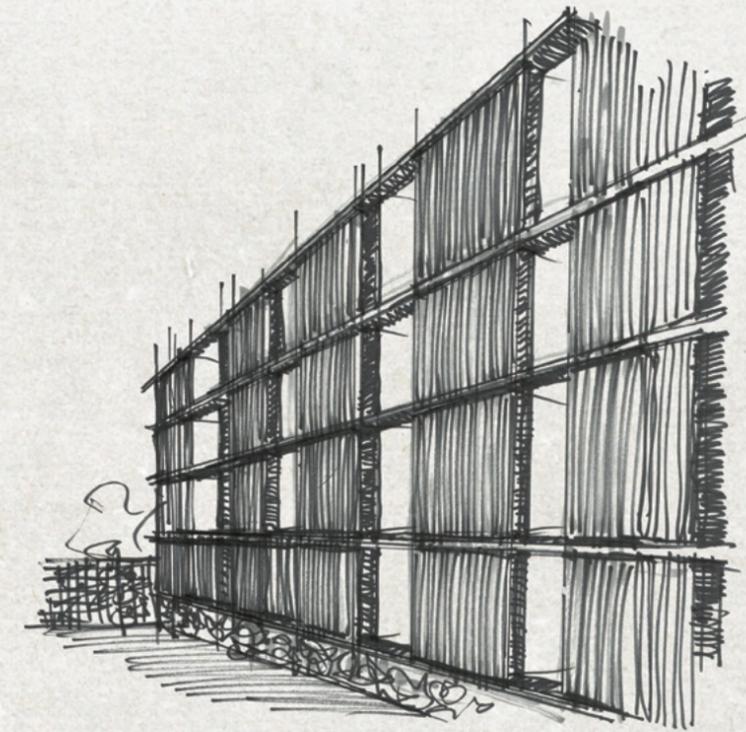
Taiga is a boutique real estate and development consultancy based in Upper Hirafu

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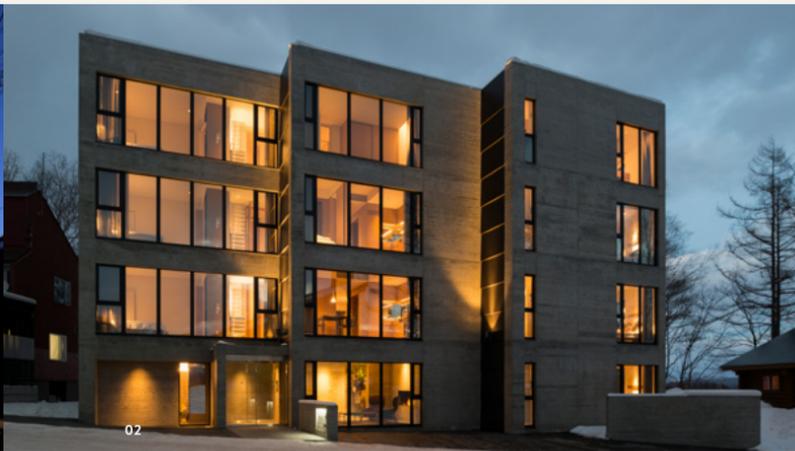


DEVELOPERS – 22ème / Atmospheric Development
PROJECT MANAGEMENT – 22ème
PROPERTY MANAGEMENT – Hokkaido Tracks Resort Properties
ARCHITECTURE – nA Nakayama Architects
INTERIOR – Poliform Contract (Italy)
www.22eme.com/terra22

NISADE
NISEKO –
CAN IT BE
SUSTAINED?



BY JONATHAN MARTIN
PRESIDENT, NISADE



A year to a 10 year old is a duration, two years to a startup is too long, five years to Niseko is but the beginning, 10 years to Powderlife is a story. So too is it a story for NISADE's 10th anniversary, for myself, my team, our owners and our guests to this little corner of planet earth.

Every year it changes and every year the changes get faster, to the point where I do wonder if Niseko as an area can indeed keep up. Like a teenage boy entering puberty and those potent years of the testosterone rush, Niseko is entering its own puberty. Emotive, non-communicative, easily distracted whilst being totally self absorbed.

As you have read and viewed in this very special edition for Powderlife, life in the powder has indeed changed. With a broad and experienced view of life in Niseko as a developer, a project manager, a hotel operator, a restaurateur, an employer and importantly a foreigner, this area touches so many different facets of my life it's often a struggle to comprehend what the initial "builders" of Niseko started all those years ago.

Step beyond the glitz and glamour though and its like so many resort destinations that, behind the thin veneer of tourism happiness, lies a world churning and swarming with a multitude of competing and often conflicting issues.

To understand, one must first understand. To first understand, one must ask the right questions and look at the facts

THE FACTS

1. Sewage

- Max sewage treatment capacity is 6,000m3
- As of December 2015 we were at 80% capacity. No planned upgrades/expansion.

2. Water

- Max capacity is 2,925m3 / day
- As of December 2015 we are operating at 73% capacity. In context, in 2018 the openings of Skye and Maples will push that to 80% capacity. Water however is plentiful and expansion easily managed.

3. Electricity

- Max capacity is 5,060,000 kw/day
- We are currently using 60-80% of capacity. Expansion is relatively easy to accommodate.

The key to the longevity of Niseko lies in the town planning, the narrow focus firstly on infrastructure – on how to accommodate the ever-growing inbound market, from transport, to sewage to medical facilities. As a developer I often shudder at the responsibility I shoulder onto Kutchan council. Always Niseko is by itself another quantum of litres of water in and out. The connection of Maples is another literal settling pond of raw sewage.

So these core components of input and output must first be addressed. To house and cleanse the populous that disembarks daily at Sapporo is an exponential growth profile. But first we need to get them to Niseko, to Kiroro, to Rusutsu. With a speed limit of only 50k per hour, traffic flow volumes will always be challenging so simply adding more buses to highways is not a long term sustainable, green solution.

Trains, one would think are the answer but not so. Slow, fixed schedule, not ski-tourism friendly. Can we wait until 2030 for the shinkansen connection? So we welcome our guests in resort via road, and as you read this very magazine you can see a world beyond comprehension when you think just about the simple fact of keeping these roads clear of snow. From main arterial roads to the small narrow corridors of Hirafu that snow has to be cleared. Kutchan melts its snow in under-street drains but Hirafu loads it into trucks and relocates it.

Perhaps the biggest infrastructure change is the one least understood: the community, the very heart and soul of Niseko. The Japanese, perhaps older but born of a love of nature, of snow and of the quiet idyllic Niseko life, are the folk being confronted daily with physical and cultural change on their doorstep. It's tough on them. Flip the coin though, and it's equally tough on those that have put Niseko on the map, that have rebirthed her and now got her to puberty.

- 01 Terrazze, 2014
- 02 Kozue, 2015
- 03 The Vale Niseko, 2008
- 04 The Maples, 2018
- 05 Accepting another World Ski Award



"Kutchan-cho remains the area of highest capital land growth in Japan, a title long held."

– JONATHAN MARTIN
PRESIDENT, NISADE

Opportunistic, driven by profit, insulated, wordly and primarily foreign indeed they are. And more are coming. The divide between Japan and the foreigners is like an ocean fault – it's always there, it's just a question of how wide. Right now it's widening, the pace of change is bubbling issues to the surface – infrastructure, parking, litter and of course the winter horror around behavior and drinking. As developers, we comply with the building laws and the zoning regulations so we are entitled to build, but without comprehensive town planning every new building stresses the system and people.

Sure, the inflow of money has recapitalised the lives of many local Japanese. They have fortuneed from worthless assets held since the 1980s to multi-million dollar exits. Kutchan remains the area of highest capital land growth in Japan. Unbelievable. So why the divide? Why the chasm? Relatively uncontrolled progress verse the deep down sensitivity of Japan, the core values of neighbours, of friends, of their Niseko.

The whole before the individual. That's what survives this country, this place, these people. Much can be said about the ski mountain infrastructure and it will be improved. But the reality is that's a much easier end game simply driven by commercial interests. The greater challenge is in infrastructure, the ying and yang of a government stretching spending in every direction with an ageing population.

Is it all bad? Not at all. The foundation is strong, the core businesses in the area are all long term. Grand Hirafu has just gone 50 years, so at 10 years NISADE is at 20 per cent of that journey. There remains vested interests by each business shaping the future of the area.

We are far from over development – capacity exists. As in life, the compromise is always there, a few more minutes in a lift line verses enjoying a natural wonderland settled with fresh foods, blessed with clean air and water in world-class accommodations and facilities. The symbiotic nature of development and planning just needs us all to be aware and all to nurture.

So to close, to visitors, to owners, to employees, to the incoming, our piece of winter wonderland is there to be enjoyed. Exploited she can be but with the right collective we can all be part of shaping the next decade in our town and our home. ■

NISEKO PROJECTS
ALPINE DESIGN
GUIDE —
TOP 5 TIPS



BY DOMINIC WEHNER
DIRECTOR, NISEKO PROJECTS

As a licenced builder and construction manager in New Zealand and having lived in Japan for over 15 years, Niseko Projects founder Dominic Wehner has found his passion and niche helping clients navigate the issues of building in Hokkaido's snowy north. Coming from New Zealand, Hokkaido's extreme alpine environment was initially an eye opener, but after living in Niseko full time and completing over 20 new properties, Niseko Proects is now a specialist in alpine design and construction. Here are Niseko Projects' top 5 tips for designing your dream ski lodge in the mountains of Niseko.

01 THE JAPANESE GENKAN

In Niseko the entrance often combines features of the western 'boot room' and the Japanese entrance or 'genkan'. The entrance ideally provides a place where ski boots or snow shoes are removed, and slippers donned before entering the house proper. Wet weather gear is often hung up in this room, and under-floor heating helps melt snow off jackets and boots while also providing a warm welcoming atmosphere.



02 RESORT PLAN

With the resort averaging around 15m of snowfall every year, snow rapidly builds up around a property, often impairing views and light into the lower floors. By lifting the living areas to the second storey, views and light are maintained. Vaulted ceilings can add dramatic effect.

03 SKI LODGE LUXURY

The fireplace is often described as the heart of the home and is often the defining feature of a ski chalet or lodge. However as a holiday home, the fireplace cannot be the primary heating source of the property, and the owner would no doubt rather spend time with the family on the slopes than cutting, stacking and storing firewood and keeping a good fire stoked. Thankfully gas fires can be started with the push of a button and provide all the appeal of a log fire without the fuss.

04 ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Often overlooked, energy efficiency can only really be considered from the outset of a construction project, but can have a very large impact on the running costs of your property. As a rental property, energy efficiency will also help improve the returns on the investment.



05 ALPINE DESIGN

From a construction perspective, Niseko's extreme snowfall requires good alpine design considerations for a safe and low maintenance property. However increasingly as Niseko becomes a four season resort, we also need to consider landscaping, paved driveways (with road heating for the winter), dramatic outdoor lighting, and BBQ areas for enjoyment (and bookings), year round! ■

NISEKO PROJECTS

Partnered with Sapporo-based Japanese Grade 1 architectural firm CLA, Niseko Projects provides a single point of contact for architectural feasibility and design, construction contract facilitation, furniture procurement, and even landscaping. We will ensure all elements of your building or construction project are coordinated from initial concept through to final completion. Having been involved in projects such as Shiki Hotel, Akazora, MYecolodge and multiple private residences, Dominic brings a rare combination of skills and local experience to your project.



ABOUT

Niseko Projects is a design, construction and project management consultancy

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Welcome to the
neighbourhood



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

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

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MOUNTAIN GUIDE

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

NISEKO VILLAGE

ANNUPURI

GRAND HIRAFU

MT ANNUPURI 1309M

HANAZONO

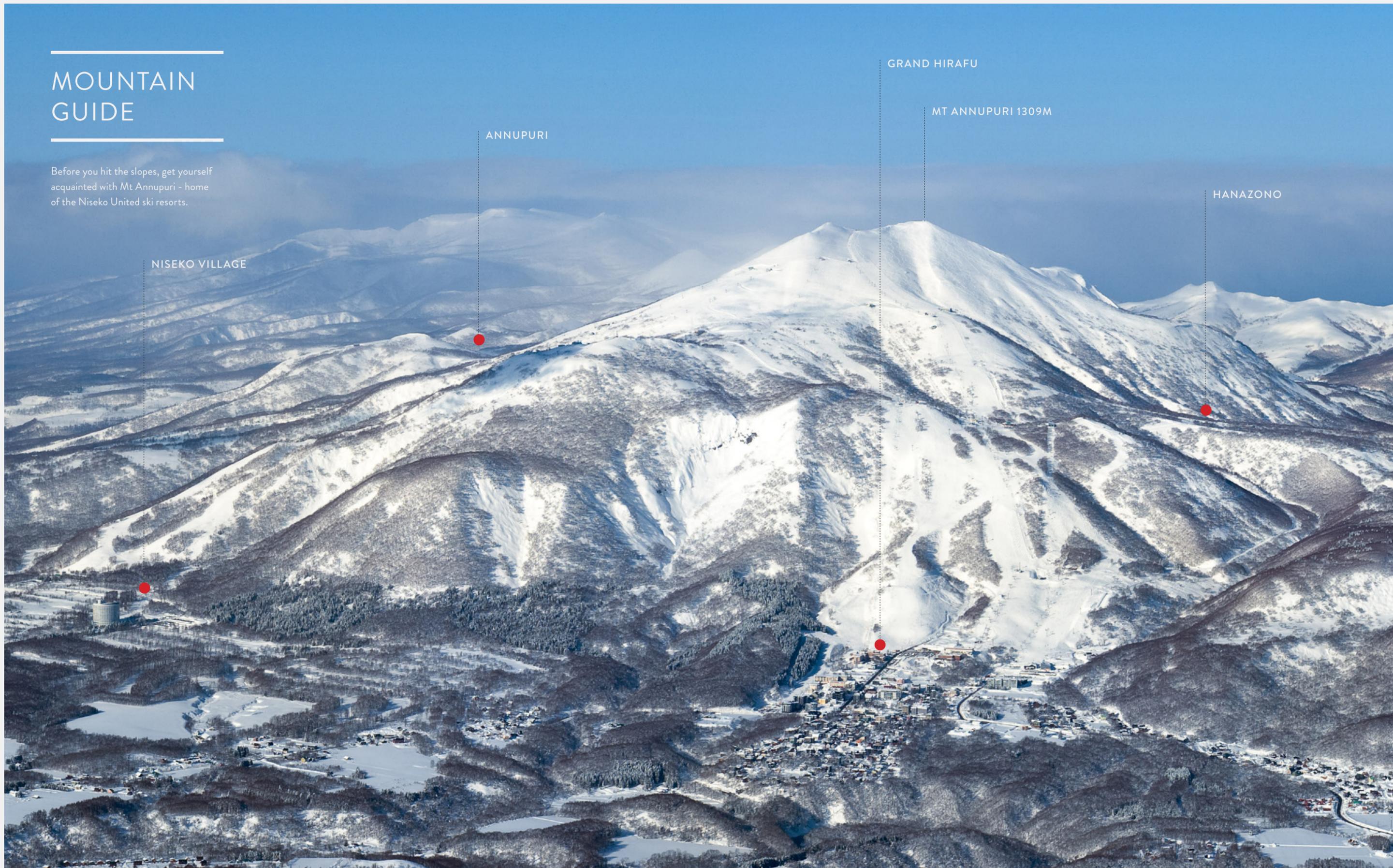


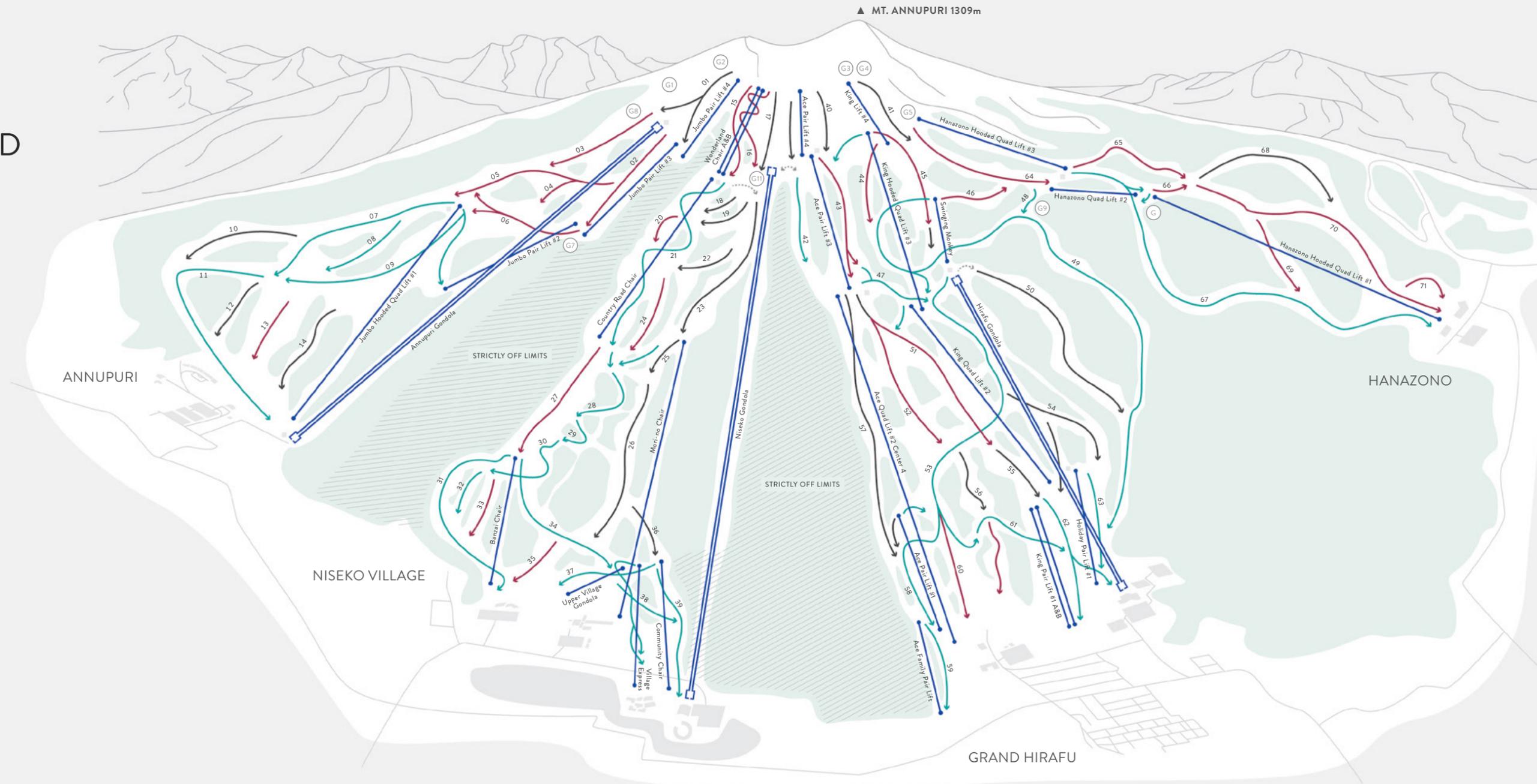
PHOTO GLEN CLAYDON PHOTOGRAPHY

POWDERLIFE NISEKO UNITED TRAIL MAP

ARTWORK BY SANCTUARY NISEKO

Please enjoy our easy-to-read course map to review your day or plan your next assault on the mountain. Niseko United is the name given to the four independently owned resorts on different faces of Mt Annupuri. The Niseko United Shuttle fleet connects the resort bases, and intermediate and advanced riders can ski or board between resorts from the upper lifts, weather permitting.

This map is to be used as a guide only and we take no responsibility for any incident occurring as a result of its use. Please refer to the official Niseko United Trail Map for full official mountain details.



LEGEND

- Gondola
- Lift
- Slope (easy)
- Slope (intermediate)
- Slope (advance)
- Gate to uncontrolled area

SKI RUNS

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| 01 Champion | 12 Challenge | 23 Superstition | 34 Banzai | 45 Jumbo | 56 Onsenzawa | 67 Silver Dream |
| 02 Utopia | 13 Dynamic | 24 Junk Yard | 35 Don't Blink | 46 Parallel | 57 Super | 68 Legend of Shinya |
| 03 Panorama | 14 Fukayuki-rinkan | 25 Jagaimo | 36 Yard Sale | 47 Beginners access | 58 Sennoki | 69 Hanazono Park |
| 04 Silver | 15 Wonderland | 26 Misoshiru | 37 Next Stage | 48 Renraku | 59 Family | 70 Stairway to Heaven |
| 05 "S" ji | 16 Ukairo | 27 Namara | 38 Shaky Knees | 49 Holiday | 60 Alpen | 71 Hanazono Adventure Park |
| 06 Shirakaba | 17 Snorkel | 28 Enchantment | 39 Final Fling | 50 Miharashi | 61 King Access Pass | |
| 07 Paradise | 18 Joppin | 29 Make sense | 40 Large | 51 Kokutai | 62 Kogen | |
| 08 Family | 19 Zangi | 30 Unforgettable | 41 Dynamic | 52 Furiko | 63 Boyo | |
| 09 Family | 20 Nekko no Kabe | 31 Cruiser | 42 Shirakaba | 53 Green | 64 Yotei Sunset | |
| 10 Merchen | 21 Dabesa | 32 Pure Magic | 43 Center | 54 Konayuki | 65 Crystal Garden | |
| 11 Junior | 22 Konbu | 33 Koguma | 44 Rinkan | 55 Ni-kabe | 66 Setsuzoku | |

NIGHT SKIING

Niseko's night skiing is among the best in the world

PHOTOS NISEKO PHOTOGRAPHY



BEGINNERS

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

INTERMEDIATES

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

POWDER HOUNDS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Ride where others haven't.

HAKKODA
AWAKEN YOUR SPIRIT



BACKCOUNTRY SAFETY

KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT SKIING AND SNOWBOARDING?

So your buddy took a different route down the mountain and now you're both lost and it's getting dark. You can't hike back up all that way. Where are you? How do you build a snow cave? What's the emergency phone number in Japan? Oh... does your phone even work?

Niseko works harder than almost any resort in Japan to allow safe, controlled access to the backcountry and off-piste areas. Sadly, every year we are brought stories of accidents and avalanches caused by the actions of skiers and boarders. The good news is that the motivation of the resorts to provide more freedom to ski and ride off piste has never been greater.

While every effort is made by the combined resources of the ski patrol, resort operations

and avalanche reporting to control the "high-risk" areas, the people most in control of safety is you and me – the skiers and boarders. Our decisions and actions determine our own fate, every day. Quite often it's the actions of one that triggers an avalanche that causes serious consequences for others. Ducking a rope early before the gate, or traversing further across the face of a bowl are two classic mistakes that constantly endanger the lives of others. The truth is that the individual making the mistake probably just didn't know better... this is an easy fix!

Niseko allows backcountry access through specific gated points on the ski area boundary with careful management and a 'ski-at-your-own-risk policy'. It's important to note that crossing through the open gates does not

mean the mountain is safe. It means that the risk is deemed manageable by sensible and informed skiers and boarders.

Stemming from the desire to create freedom for all mountain users, the Niseko Rules have been implemented by the local community thanks largely to local legend Akio Shinya. For 20 years, Shinya-san has been assessing avalanche conditions in Niseko. Without him, Niseko may not have such a liberal backcountry policy, and there would be much less terrain to ride.

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

WE'VE COLLECTED A FEW TIPS FROM LOCAL EXPERTS TO HELP KEEP YOU SAFE IN THE SIDE AND BACKCOUNTRY

1. OBEY THE NISEKO RULES

Listed on the official trail map and other places around the resort - read them and heed them.

2. CHECK AVALANCHE REPORTS

Know what weather to expect and be sure to read the avalanche report online or at the gates.

3. LISTEN TO & OBEY SKI PATROLLERS

They're the experts – they know what they're doing and are there to ensure everyone stays safe

4. HAVE ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT

If you're going out the gates, you need a beacon, probe and shovel... and know how to use them.

5. PLAN YOUR TRIP

Study the area you plan to ski and let someone know when you expect to be back.

6. DON'T ENTER CLOSED GATES

If the gates are closed, they're closed for good reason. Don't just duck down and go under a rope nearby.

7. NO GO ZONES

They slide and several people have died in avalanches here. Don't even think about it.

8. DON'T DUCK ROPES

They are the boundary between safe and potentially unsafe. Play by the rules for everyone's enjoyment

9. HIRE A GUIDE

A reputable guide will keep you safe, but also get you way more fresh than you'll get on your own.

10. GO WITH RELIABLE PEOPLE

Everyone in your party should have done an avalanche safety course if going out the gates.

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



Niseko's exclusive outdoor store
Higashiyama Niseko Village
PHONE 0136-44-1181

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Lifestyle store
Higashiyama Niseko Village
PHONE 0136-44-1182

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Niseko outdoor clothing and equipment specialist and Ski snowboard rentals
Hirafu-Zaka St
PHONE 0136-55-8560

iGATE niseko hirafu
IKEUCHI

Outdoor goods, grocery shop and GREEN BENTOSS Cafe and Dining
Hirafu-East Village in My-ecolodge
PHONE 0136-55-5536

iGATE niseko eco shop
IKEUCHI

Concept : Eco-friendly, small, green and natural

Niseko's exclusive outdoor store
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iGATE
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AVALANCHE SAFETY TRAINING

BY FAITH ROBINSON

Enjoying the backcountry is one thing, but being able to mitigate risk or respond to an emergency situation is quite another.

People love snow for many different reasons. The ice-cold, exhilarating thrill that runs through the mind of anyone deep in the silent ripples of Hokkaido powder is without doubt a very strong one – while adventure, exercise and straight-up fun are others. Some people love snow for its magnificently simple beauty. But one thing that connects us all is the overwhelming force that snow has to humble even the most experienced backcountry rider on a sunny afternoon.

After years of following others into the off-piste (with little more than adrenaline and an excited sense of confidence), it might be time to make a real effort in appreciating the ever-changing mood of the mountain. If every day is a lesson, then the more we ski, the more we know. But if you aren't blessed with the luxury of a lifetime to absorb that necessary knowledge through experience, then investing in a basic avalanche skills course is an awesome way to make the most of your time in the snow. What's more is that this opportunity is available to anyone spending time in Niseko, whether on holiday or here for the season.

Several companies in the area run these courses, with the most accessible option



PHOTO MARK BARSEVSKIS

being the two-day AST 1. This accredited qualification (formulated by Avalanche Canada) delivers a carefully structured survival kit of theory and experience – and another huge bonus is that it can also serve as a wonderful tour of the local backcountry areas. The first day is based primarily in the classroom with terrain evaluation, weather analysis, snowpack assessment and risk analysis forming the essentials of an intense pen-to-paper learning experience in the morning, followed by an afternoon of companion rescue training. On the second (and final) day of the course, you'll head into the mountains for real to embrace the previous day's learnings while studying snowpack, hiking techniques, and the real-life protocols of an emergency situation.

Avalanches are a very real part of freeride skiing or snowboarding wherever you may travel in the world, and beyond the typical backcountry aspirations of face-shots and amazing views for Instagram, the study of them is essential to becoming an accomplished mountain maverick. Japan's powder offerings are some of the best in the world, and with that, it demands the respect of well-informed riders to safely wonder at the beauty and the bounty available. If every day is a lesson, then getting ahead in theory means getting to the top of the summit, rather than the classroom. ■



02

- 01 Testing for stability
- 02 Digging a snow pit

AST 1 & 2 COURSE DATES

Rising Run Guides runs several courses over winter. More info at RisingSunGuides.com.

AST 1
December 10-11 / 15-16 / 17-18
January 5-6 / 21-22
March 4-5 / 10 & 11

AST 2
December 12-15
March 6-9

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Next to Monty's Restaurant

www.nisekowinter.com

NISEKO, UNITED.



An advertisement for Explore Niseko. The background shows a large, snow-capped mountain peak under a blue sky. In the foreground, two snowboarders are standing on a snowy slope. The text "choose your adventure" is written in white and blue. Below it, it says "Niseko's only independent booking centre". At the bottom, it says "Visit our booking desk at Odin Place or book online." and provides contact information: phone number 050 5309 6905, email bookings@explore-niseko.com, website www.explore-niseko.com, and social media handles @exploreniseko and @ExploreNiseko. The Explore Niseko logo is in the top right corner.

SEARCH NISEKO'S LEADING ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS IN ONE PLACE

powderlife.com
Niseko Booking Engine 

An advertisement for Niseko Photography & Guiding. The background shows a snowboarder in a red jacket carving through deep snow. The text "THIS COULD BE YOU" is written in white. Below it, it says "NISEKO PHOTOGRAPHY & GUIDING" and provides contact information: Social: @nisekophotography, Web: www.nisekophotography.com, Email: info@nisekophotography.com, Phone: +81 (0) 136 22 5764, and Location: The Basement Niseko. The Basement Niseko logo is in the bottom right corner.

TRANSPORT GUIDE

There are basically three options for getting around Niseko: shuttle bus, taxi and rental car. If you're staying in Hirafu, pretty much everything you need will be on the free village shuttle bus route. If you want groceries or to head out of town at night you might want to take a taxi. And if you want ultra mobility, think about hiring a car.



TAXIS

Taxis are at capacity during winter and very often it's not possible to book at short notice. Therefore, at the same time as you make a restaurant booking out of town, you need to confirm you can get a taxi to the restaurant and back to your accommodation.

Cost

Starting fare approx ¥550 for first 1.4km
Approx ¥240/km after that.

General tips

- Book as far in advance as possible
- Pre-bookings taken up to 3-days in advance
- Be ready for pickup when calling
- Drivers wait two minutes before cancelling
- Cancel bookings if plans change
- Most taxis stop 2am, last bookings 1.30am
- Taxis only accept cash
- If roof light is on, taxi is available
- Do not jump in front of taxis to stop them

SPRINT Taxi | 0136 555 400

SPRINT Taxi has the best foreign customer service with English and Japanese operators.

Things to note:

- Operates 5am - 2am
- Has best English customer service – press 2
- Or download TaxiCaller (Apple/Play Stores)
- App pinpoints position & sends closest taxi
- Once booked, you can feel confident you have a taxi on-call to take you home
- Pay by credit card within the app

Other Operators

If you can't get the app or there are no SPRINT Taxis available, try calling:

Hachiriki 0136 21 2508

Niseko International Transport 0136 22 6180

Niseko Hire 0136 44 2635

Smile Kanko Taxi 0136 48 2700

Yotei Hire 0136 45 2740

Things to note:

- Ask a Japanese person to call if possible
- Have pickup and drop off address ready
- Call from quiet area, speak slowly & clearly
- Be polite, patient and understanding

BUSES AND SHUTTLES

Shuttle buses connect the resorts and different areas of Niseko including nearby Kutchan. Full details in Wine & Dine Guide.

Niseko United Shuttle

Connects Hirafu, Niseko Village and Annupuri. Free with an All Mountain Pass; one point on a point pass; or ¥500/¥300.

Hirafu Grand Shuttle

Free Hirafu and Izumikyō shuttle every 15 minutes in peak season 8.30am-8.30pm.

Hanazono Shuttle

Circles Hirafu Village then heads out to Hanazono for kids and non-skiers.

Kutchan Night Go Bus

Leaves Hirafu to Kutchan Station so you can drink, dine or just look around Kutchan Town.

Yumeguri Onsen Bus

Two departure times for this bus that runs past various local onsens for ¥500.

Other Resorts & Transfer

We recommend our advertising partner Hokkaido Resort Liner for all your longer distance trips (see ad opposite page).

RENT-A-CAR

Rental cars are readily available but can become fully booked in peak periods.

Toyota Rent-a-Car | 0136 21 2005

Located in Shiki Niseko building, Hirafu

Nippon Rent-a-car | 1036 23 0919

Located inside Alpen Hotel

Car Rental Hokkaido | 090 1521 4040

Located in Niseko Town

We want to hear about your taxi and transport experiences. Please email kris@powderlife.com and we will provide feedback to relevant parties.



A journey as exciting as the destination

Hokkaido Resort Liner is the largest ski bus network in Hokkaido, providing comfortable and affordable transfers to over 300,000 guests each winter.

Hokkaido Resort Liner bus transfers are the ideal way to travel from the airport to your resort accommodation, linking to every major resort and popular tourist destinations. Regular daily services depart from **Sapporo**, **New-Chitose Airport** and most airports, and connect to major ski resorts such as **Niseko**, **Rusutsu**, **Kiroro**, **Furano**, **Tomamu**.



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All different styles of massage available for body and feet. 30-minute, 60-minute and 90-minute courses are available. Groups are welcomed.

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grand-hirafu.jp/nisekofoot
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*We do not see fractures, dislocations or other serious injury. These conditions should go directly to Kutchan Hospital.

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gyubar.com
0136 23 1432

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(Last order 11pm)
Open 7 days

kougetsuniseko.com
0136 22 6028

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Lunch 11am-3pm (Last order 2.30pm)
Dinner 6pm-1am (Last order 10.30pm)
Open 7 days

facebook.com/jamcafebar
0136 23 0700

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Life's too short to drink bad wine See you at Mick's for a glass or 2!
We stock current release, organic and biodynamic, rare vintage wines from all over the world. Craft beer, ciders & rare Japanese whiskey. Local cheese, Hokkaido charcuterie and world sundries.

2pm - 10pm
99% chance of wine
7 days a week

micksniseko.com
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rhythmjapan.com/glorious-coffee
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bentoss.biz
0136 55 5733

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All your favourite Japanese dishes All Hokkaido grown vegetables
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6pm - 11pm
(Last order 10.30pm)
Open 7 days

nisekokushiya.jp
0136 55 8863

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. Experience a wide range of flavours with a delicate balance of fresh vegetables, meats and seafood.

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Monday to Saturday

kamimura-niseko.com
0136 21 2288

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Delicious 28cm wood-fired, handmade pizzas with organic homemade sauce and fresh Hokkaido toppings. Minimum order ¥5000. See menu on Facebook page below.

6pm - 11pm
(Last order 10pm)
Open 7 days

Facebook@Niseko Mountain Pizza
0136 44 1212

TUK TUK  MIDDLE HIRAFU VILLAGE



Yummy, tiny Thai restaurant— Spicy food makes you warm!
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Occasionally closed

tuktukniseko.com
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Thanks for reading Powderlife - we hope we added to your connection with Niseko. We'd love it if you took this magazine home as something to remember your time in Niseko in 2016/2017.

Be sure to pick up Summerlife and discover what an amazing place Niseko and the rest of Hokkaido is when the snow melts. Pack your surfboard, your swimmers, hiking gear and a sense of adventure. And follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) to keep your powder dreams stoked year round.

Happy skiing, happy travels!



SURFER RICHIE CAROL PHOTO AARON JAMIESON

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