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NISEKO | SUMMER 2017



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There's long been a saying among Niseko residents, both Japanese and foreign, that many came for the winter but stayed for the summers. After a decade of growth and promotion of the "off-season", the opposite is now just as true.



■ KRISTIAN LUND

As the winter's first snows started to fall a few months ago, a new friend who recently moved here with his young family was telling me that while he doesn't dislike winter, it was most definitely the summers they moved here for.

As a keen cyclist previously based in an Asian capital city, Niseko offers him endless traffic-free mountain roads to inspire him and challenge himself on after the snow melts. Beyond that, there are countless other ways for him and his family to live a healthy, outdoor lifestyle unlike anywhere else they've lived before. Not to mention the clean air, pristine water and fresh local produce that form the foundation of healthy family life.

Niseko is actually defying population trends in Japan. Across Hokkaido and other parts of regional Japan, populations in general are declining at a faster rate than their city counterparts as elders pass away, and younger generations abandon the rural lifestyle in favour of the opportunity offered by different areas and cities.

However thanks in the first part to the booming ski industry, and secondly to the increasing year-round employment and lifestyle opportunities, the populations of the tiny farming towns of Niseko and Kutchan (in which Hirafu and Hanazono are based) are actually on the up.

And unlike almost anywhere else in Japan, much of the influx is international, breeding a rich multicultural community. Job opportunities are ever increasing, and for the entrepreneurially minded, business opportunities are endless. Housing offers incredible value outside the ski resorts, and the cost of living is otherwise really low – especially when you buy all your fruit and veges from the local farmers' markets.

The Hokkaido International School opened a Niseko branch in 2011 with just a handful of students. This year enrolment stood at 20, and proactive new principle Barry Mernin is aiming to double that over the next four years, with my two kids likely to add to that total.

The main reason we put Summerlife together is in order to promote Niseko as a holiday destination outside of the ski season. As you'll see in the pages of this magazine, every season offers a fresh and unique holiday opportunity.

But I've got no doubt some of you reading this now are thinking, "Hey, I can see myself living in Niseko – powder up to my armpits for four months every winter and eight months of fresh air and outdoor living." I can tell you, you're not wrong and you'd be welcomed with open arms.

Regardless of whether you think you might ever move here, I encourage you to lock in a trip back to Niseko later this year. Hokkaido last year topped Lonely Planet's Best of Asia list, and Niseko is at the heart of the action so you can't go wrong. Forget Thailand or Bali, Ibiza or the Bahamas, and check out this awe-inspiring island after the snow melts. I have no doubt you'll be amazed at what you discover. ■

THANK YOU FOR READING SUMMERLIFE

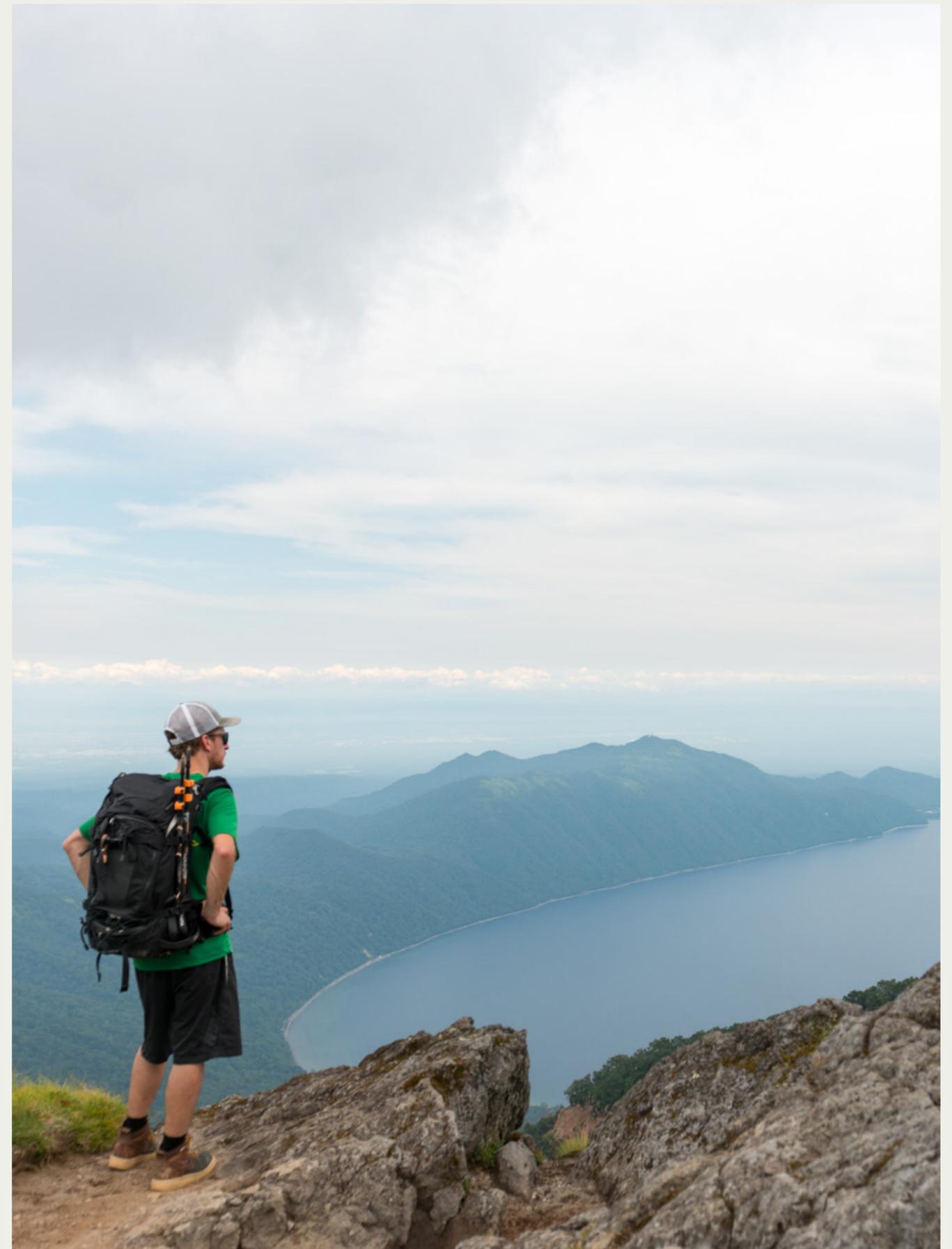
Summerlife is a privately funded, non-profit initiative by Powderlife publisher Niseko Media KK. It's designed to introduce visitors to Niseko's non-winter charms to encourage year-round tourism for the long-term benefit of the region and its people.

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WHERE ARE YOU HEADED THIS SUMMER?

Tag your summer adventures #summerlife

(RIGHT)
Associate Editor and Chief Adventurer Aaron Jamieson
Lake Shikotsu
PHOTO YUKO Ikegami



SPRING

Ahhhh, spring. After four months of winter, the spring sun's rays warming your skin feels like finding an oasis in a desert. Don't get me wrong – winter is great, but when it's as harsh as Niseko's with only a handful of sunny days, even the most hardened powder junkie has been known to squeal with delight at the end of a full winter and the first sunny spring day.

The Japanese spring officially starts on 5 February, but obviously that's not the case in the deep north. Niseko's unofficial "powder season" is basically all of January and February, with the first signs of spring – usually a sunny morning and the sound of snow melt dripping off the roof – arriving towards the end of February or in early March. The vernal equinox on March 21, however, marks the celestial middle of spring, when the sun crosses the equator (so to speak) and hovers over the northern hemisphere for the summer.

Within days of the snow starting to melt off the side of the roads, the first signs of the spring regrowth start to show. New plants start to shoot up instantly and rapidly head skywards. As the snow melts back, there's actually quite a lot of mud around, and the melting snow pack takes on a yellow or brown hue without the constant fresh top up. To be honest, while it has its moment, spring on the whole is the least beautiful of the seasons.

However if you've had enough of the snow to look past that and see what else is on offer, there is plenty to do.

The major benefactor of the melting snow is Niseko's rafting industry. The rivers are at their spectacular best in April, when the sun's warmth really starts to eat through the 3-4m snow pack and feed into the rivers. It adds up to a lot of run-off that whips up Grade-3 and sometimes up to Grade-4 rapids.

While this magazine is supposed to be about the non-skiing seasons, it needs to be said that spring offers excellent skiing opportunities. March is probably the best all round skiing month – there are still a few powder days and the temperatures and conditions are much milder than the depths of the powder season, making it perfect for families and fair-weather skiers who prefer a bit of blue sky with their snow. ■



PHOTO PAUL MALANDAIN



PHOTO DARREN TEASDALE

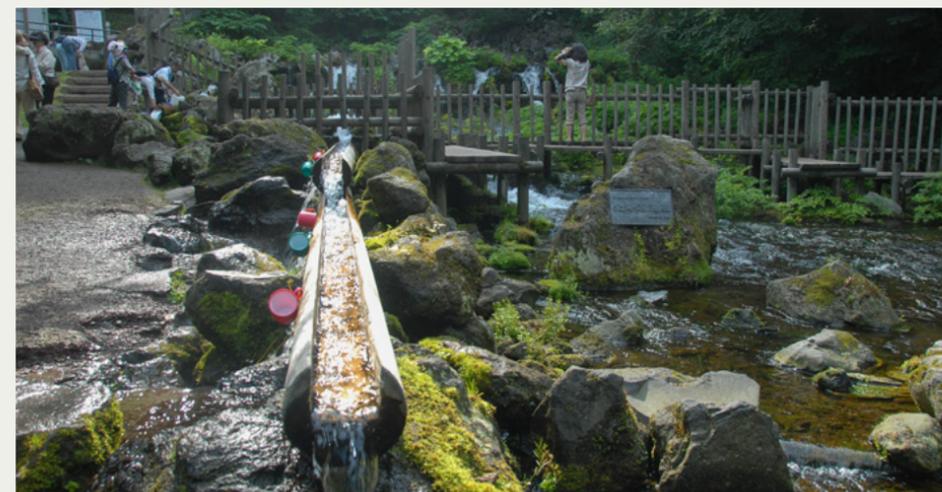


PHOTO KRISTIAN LUND





PHOTO AARON JAMIESON

SUMMER

It's a short summer in Niseko, but by gosh is it a good one. For two months of the year, Japanese and foreign residents alike get outdoors to celebrate summer like there's never going to be another one – probably partly due to the fact they know for the next 10 months it will feel like that could be actually true.

Temperatures can get quite warm during the day, averaging about 25 degrees but up around 30+ on a few of the really hot days. But it always cools down in the evening and can get quite chilly overnight.

Things kick off in June, when the spring melt is all but finished except for a few gullies of snow remaining on Mt Yotei. Soon after, what I call the "Matsuri Season" kicks off. Every weekend there is one or more matsuri (festival) going on in towns and villages in and around Niseko, and for that matter, the rest of Japan. Each weekend for about six weeks is a feast of fireworks, food stalls and beer, and matsuri-goers dressed in traditional yukata and jinbei dress.

Barbecues are another key feature of the sunny season, and you are likely to host or be invited to several every weekend and holiday period. Like the matsuri, it's almost enough to barbecue you out! The way it's done over here is generally small, bite size chunks of meat marinated or dipped in

"tare" sauce accompanied by fresh local produce like mushrooms, asparagus, onion, capsicum and. Grab a set of "hashi" (chopsticks), wait your turn then stake your claim. It's usually an all-you-can-eat-and-drink experience.

Day to day for holidaymakers there's plenty to do to enjoy the heat or ward it off, from swimming, rafting or Stand Up Paddle (SUP) boarding in local rivers and lakes, to hiking Mt Yotei and the other peaks to experience the cool air and breezes up there. There is also endless spectacular coastline to explore, with crystal clear seas to swim in and enjoy. A barbecue beside the sea is a great way to spend the day and relax into a cool summer evening. ■



PHOTO PAUL MALANDAIN



PHOTO DARREN TEASDALE



PHOTO DARREN TEASDALE





PHOTO DARREN TEASDALE



PHOTO PAUL MALANDAIN



PHOTO PAUL MALANDAIN

AUTUMN

Autumn is one of my favourite times of the year. Firstly the anticipation of winter is in the air. From late September onwards, after every cold, rainy night you could wake up to the first dusting of snow on the peak of Mt Yotei. Following that, the countdown is on for the first signs of white on the ski resort runs at the top of Mt Annupuri. Towards the end of October, you wait for the first snowflakes at village level, and usually the first solid dumping is not long after that.

Of course, the most spectacular thing about autumn is the changing colour of the leaves. Once again, anticipation is high in late September and early October as to when the autumn colours will appear. Very subtly, the rich green of summer starts to fade, and high up on Mt Yotei you notice the colour starting to take on an orange/brown hue.

Soon after a few leaves around the village level start to turn yellow, and as you drive around the area you notice more and more patches of colour until the green has almost disappeared for good. Just about the time you think autumn has arrived, the main event begins and kicks into overdrive. All of a sudden the mountains and forests everywhere around you burst into a patchwork of reds, oranges and yellows, and everything in between. It is truly a sight to

behold and envelops everything for a week or two before rain and winds sweep the final leaves from their branches, leaving them stark, bare and ready for winter.

Sometimes, as was the case this past autumn, you get some very early heavy snowfalls, which blanket the countryside providing another climactic spectacle – the white colours contrasted against the vivid autumn colours. It's the starkest sign yet that winter is on its way.

Inevitably the snow melts back, possibly topped up again several times, before late November when winter finally kicks off in full force and buries everything until the following spring. ■

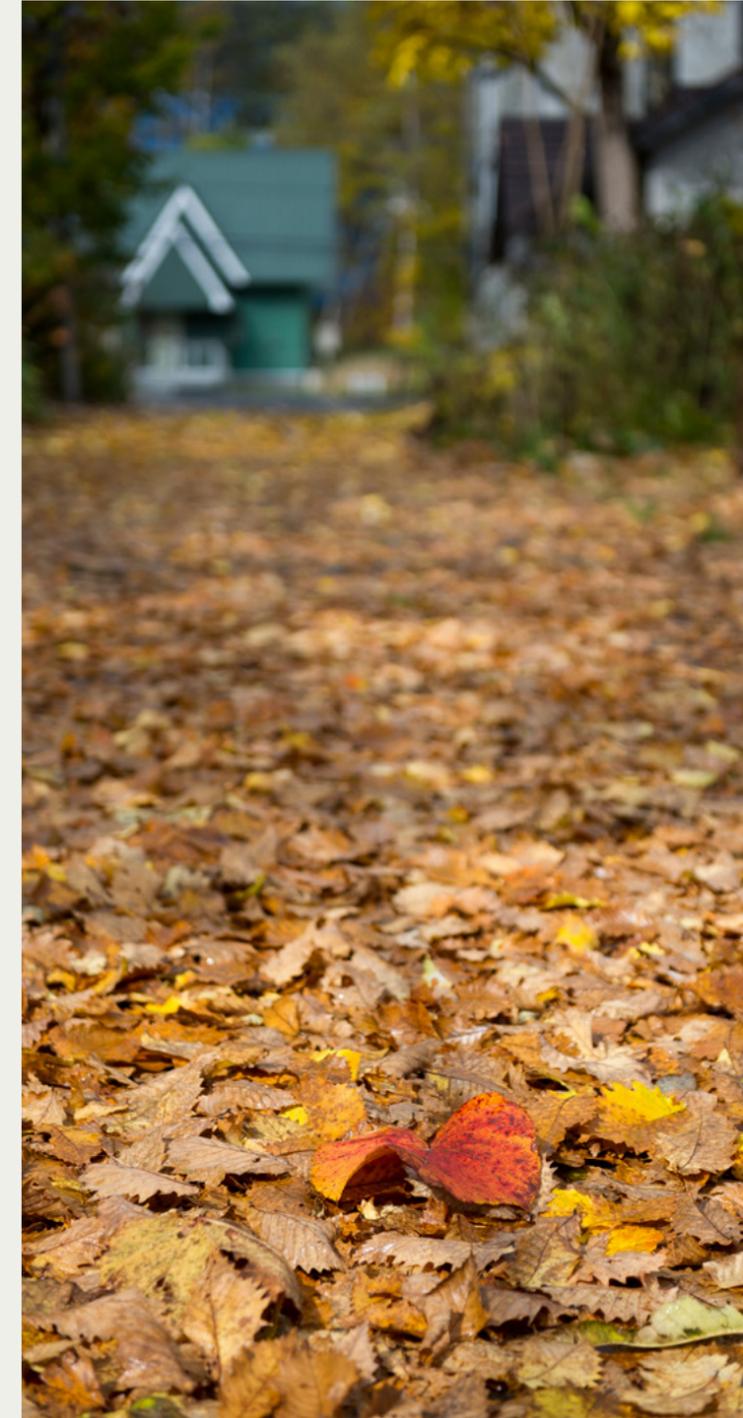


PHOTO AARON JAMIESON



PHOTO AARON JAMIESON

Unlike the shy and secretive tanuki (raccoon dog) Niseko's resident fox population is happy to make its presence known all year round. The opportunistic omnivores will also happily poach corn and other ripe produce from your veggie patch, and look at you with puppy dog eyes as you walk out of Lawson with something hot and juicy in your hand. Best not to encourage them!



MILK KOBO

From struggling farm
to tourism superstar

TEXT KRISTIAN LUND

While Niseko is a farming region, nowhere captures the romantic essence of the Hokkaido farming lifestyle more sweetly than the Milk Kobo. In the green season, the dairy goods and farm lifestyle attraction is one of the busiest hives of activity in the area. City folk from Sapporo and beyond flock to the farm in the ski resort village of Higashiyama to escape the big smoke and embrace the countryside – even if just for a few moments.

It's for this reason, says farm daughter and charismatic head honcho Yuko Takai, that Milk Kobo is such a success. It's obviously also largely thanks to Yuko-san and her family's talent for business and identifying a market, and also their honourable work ethic born from decades tending the dairy – the Takahashi Bokujou (farm) – that forms the backdrop to everything at Milk Kobo.





Yuko-san believes the reason Milk Kobo is so popular is because it encapsulates a different reality for people from the city. "It's a bit like Disneyland – it's somewhere people can go to escape reality," she says.

"People in Sapporo have to work all day every day and then come home and look after their family. They come out here on the weekend and they've got Mt Yotei, the beautiful scenery, the fresh country air, and they can indulge in some sweet choux cream or other treats. It takes them away from their every day for a few minutes or hours while they're here."

The action at Milk Kobo takes place in a collection of red, farm-style buildings spread out over one lush, green corner of the farm, up towards the Niseko Village ski fields and golf course. The attraction features the famous ice cream and choux cream "factory", which, separated by glass, doubles as the shop front for ordering your treats straight from the oven. In the same building is the ice cream servery, while across the

way another building houses the "Milkuchen" roll cake bakery and a café, alongside an outdoor store for all your summer sports needs. Another small angular building is home to an arts and crafts workshop and souvenir shop, with a small farmer's market attached. Just a few summers ago they built a magnificent new building on the Mt Yotei side of the farm to house new fresh produce buffet restaurant, Prativo. Alongside it is a workshop space for visiting groups, and opening this year is a cheese factory, which will double as a pizza restaurant and produce market.

All in all it's quite a significant little side-project for a dairy farm, but there is a very logical, fascinating and fortuitous story behind its existence.

Yuko-san's great-great-grandfather settled in the area and started farming the land in the early part of the 1900s when there was nothing else there – except for the sasa (bamboo) grass and vegetation that was so thick one would barely know Mt Yotei and Annupuri were looming

"When it came time to decide whether to kill some of their cows, the family banded together – including 6-year old Yuko-san – and came up with another idea. The Milk Kobo was born."

nearby. After Yuko-san's uncle raised several cows that went on to win local competitions, her dad, Mamoru Takahashi, decided he'd like to branch out into dairy farming. He founded the dairy in 1970 as a side-project but business was good and it became the main business.

However in the early 1990s, a combination of factors resulted in the demand for milk and milk prices plummeting to a point where the commodity was cheaper than water. There were too many dairy farmers, families were having fewer children, and there was some misinformation going around saying milk wasn't necessarily good for kids.

The cows they had couldn't stop producing, and they still all had to be hand milked every day. Yuko-san remembers making school lunches for her brothers and being dropped off at her grandparents to be looked after as a child because her parents were working from 5am until after dark, seven days a week. Then at the end of the day they still had to throw out much of

the milk they did collect. But Mamoru-san is not one to quit. When it came time to decide whether to kill some of their cows, the family banded together – including 6-year old Yuko-san – and came up with another idea. The Milk Kobo was born.

At first it was just a simple ice cream store, before they started making choux cream puffs. They started making just 30 a day, but within a couple of years they needed to make 10 times that just to service the demand that extinguished their supply by 2pm every day. After building the new factory, these days they sell up to 1000 a day, sometimes more than 2000 during peak periods. Fortunately, with the farm and bakery all on site, they can ramp up the staff and production schedule – all of which you can watch through the glass windows into the bakery as it happens.

These days Milk Kobo's products are in demand across Hokkaido. They are also about to open a new shop in Kichijoji in Tokyo. There are half the number of dairy

- 01 The main Kobo building
- 02 The boss, Yuko Takai
- 03 A warm welcome
- 04 Yuko-san taking care of business
- 05 Ranch-style Milkuchen bakery
- 06 The signature yoghurt drink
- 07 The amazing, must-try cheese tarts
- 08 The famous choux cream puffs

farms in the area now, with others looking to close their gates. But Takahashi Bokujou is thriving and is now the biggest dairy farm in Niseko.

Now 33, Yuko-san first started working at Milk Kobo during school holidays around the time she was in her final year of primary school. At that time she dreamed of becoming the manager of the business, but within a few years her plans changed and she wanted to become a counsellor. Milk Kobo is so busy now that she has had to give up on that goal for the time being and focus on the business. However she says managing more than 50 staff, she ends up doing her fair share of counselling as it is.

Milk Kobo is a family run business to its core – both of Yuko-san's brothers work there, as do her mother and father still today. But as manager and passionate contributor to Milk Kobo for so long, Yuko-san has played a key role in its success, always shrugging off praise of her dedication and the significance of what she's achieved.

When times were particularly stressful, Yuko-san would hike the ski mountain in summer and look down over the farm and all the different buildings. Then she would look up at Mt Yotei and out over all the landscape her eyes could take in, all the way out to the Sea of Japan. In that moment, she could take stock of the stresses in her life and put them in perspective of where they fit in the wider world.

I guess this allowed her to escape her reality for a few moments, before returning and getting on with the job of crafting the quintessential Niseko farming lifestyle for visitors. ■



The Takabashi Bokujou – forebear of the Milk Kobo and still thriving in its own right today. Cows are individually milked, bred on all-natural feed and the purest water in Japan, and exercised daily even in winter. It's no surprise the Milk Kobo and its delicious treats are such a bit.

PHOTO PAUL MALANDAIN

PIKININI STREET CAFÉ

A contribution to Local Happiness



KIMITAKA AND RIE OHASHI
OWNERS, PIKININI

One can't help but smile after chancing upon the Pikinini street café, set off to one side of the main road running through Niseko Town. Centred around the delightfully illustrated Pikinini food van, its gardens, terraces, bridges, water fountains and mystery doors provide a wonderland that keep children entertained for hours. Meanwhile, adults can sit back, relax, enjoy an organic coffee, cake or pita bread sandwich, and soak in the laid back pace of Niseko Town in the summer.

Pikinini is another wonderful example of the creativity and positivity that Niseko attracts. Operators Kimitaka and Rie Ohashi have created the space from what would otherwise be an unwanted and lifeless little corner of dirt abandoned in the middle of the main street, and in the process added a world of character to the Niseko Town centre.

Kimitaka is from Sapporo, and Rie from Toyama, just near the famous ski area of Nagano on the mainland. Like many of Niseko's like-minded newer residents, they decided to move here after being overwhelmed by the various attributes that make up Niseko as a destination – abundant nature, inspiring scenery, clean air and water, fresh produce, onsen (hot springs), the ski resorts and the international atmosphere.

They have both devoted time in developing nations as Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteers and spent time volunteering in Papua New Guinea, which is where the inspiration for the name of their van came from.

“The people we met through our experiences left a deep impression on us because although they were poor, they were always smiling and happy,” says Kimitaka-san.

“Pikinini’ means ‘child’, and also carries with it a much deeper meaning – the implication of passing on the earth’s rich natural environment to our future generations.

“The fundamental concepts behind Pikinini are environmental consideration and food security. With these values in mind we consciously source locally grown, additive-free food that can be enjoyed locally.

“It’s our belief that eating healthy and delicious food contributes to the creation of a peaceful world in which everyone smiles. We opened Pikinini as our contribution to creating a happier society.” ■

PIKININI 113-15 HONDORI, NISEKO TOWN



WHEN IS A GREAT TIME FOR PIKININI?

(SOURCE: PIKININI)

1. If you would like a convenient and balanced meal.
2. If you are mid-work or drive and want delicious local food.
3. If you want to take a break mid-stroll around the town.
4. If you would like a delicious memory of your trip to Niseko.
5. If you are on a date!
6. If you want to enjoy an additive-free meal with your child.
7. If you would like to try organic coffee instead of your usual blend.
8. If you want to savour a hot drink outside with friends.
9. If you want a change of pace.
10. If your interest is piqued as you drive by.

TOASTING OUR WINE PIONEER

Niseko's bold first winemaker

TEXT KRISTIAN LUND

Japan's scotch whisky wins international awards. Its trademark brand of easy-drinking lager beer is as much loved abroad as at home. But there has never been a wine making or drinking culture in Japan so a local industry has never taken hold. The typical "wine" that most Japanese people would know is best described as sweet, alcoholic grape juice and sold out of the fridge of local convenience stores.

However, a small band of boutique wine growers is pioneering the industry both in mainland Japan, and increasingly in Hokkaido. And one has discovered that Niseko, notwithstanding short summers and meters of snow during a long winter, is remarkably suitable for a particular style of wine production.

In fact, Niseko's terroir bears an uncanny resemblance to that of the renowned Champagne region of northern France. Its unpredictable, cool summer climate means grapes struggle to ripen each year resulting in the balance, richness, extract and acidity that create the renowned French sparkling wine.

Like Champagne, Niseko has short, mild summers influenced by a nearby ocean, along with significant day-night temperature swings. Niseko Town sits at an altitude of 200m above sea level; Champagne's vineyards all fall between 90-300m above sea level. Niseko's rich volcanic soil differs from the chalky, clay makeup of Champagne, but it is already producing grapes with acidity and sugar concentrations at levels similar to typical Champagne wines.

On the face of it, it sounds almost too good to be true.

Niseko obviously has a little way to go before it reaches its French counterpart though: Champagne has a centuries-old grape growing tradition during which it has built its reputation and a current 15,000 vignerons.

Niseko's winemaker population currently stands at one. Yasunori Honma, a retired Yokohama businessman with a long-held dream to become a winemaker, and his wife Mayumi-san, are pioneering the local industry from vine to table. He planted his

first vines at his Niseko Winery vineyard in 2008 and after the first three non-fruited years has just completed his sixth full-year of harvest.

Given Niseko's similarities to the Champagne region, it's not surprising Honma-san is focussing on producing sparkling wine. He's using a mix of grapes that are producing good acidity levels (under 3ph) and high sugar content (20 per cent).

Honma-san says there are only a few types of grapes that can survive in a place like Niseko, and about five per cent of the vines die after every winter due to damage caused by very heavy packed snow. He is working with Bacchus, Zweigeltrebe, Sauvignon Blanc, Muller-Thurgau, Kerner, Gewürztraminer and Chardonnay.

"These are the only types that can survive because the season is so short – the first snow falls in late October and you only see the soil again in May," Honma-san explains.

"So obviously it's impossible to make a full-bodied red here, you



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YASUNORI HONMA
OWNER, YOTEI WINE

"Niseko's terroir bears an uncanny resemblance to that of Champagne... short, mild summers along with significant day-night temperature swings at 200m above sea level."



02



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04



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just don't have enough sunlight nor accumulated temperature in the season. The Zweigeltrebe produces lots of grapes, colour and aroma for red wine, even in this cool climate. As it's been getting warmer, others in Hokkaido are attempting Pinot Noir but it's definitely a less full-bodied wine, more like a Rosé but with a good bouquet, a bit like a Burgundy Pinot Noir.

"The grape I use most is Sauvignon Blanc, which is very resistant to disease and has a great fruity aroma, but because of the lack of sun it's a little green and acidic. Each variety has its pluses and minuses and at the moment we're really just experimenting to find out what works best in this climate and soil. There is no data to go on so we're really pioneering this industry."

Throughout his journey, Honma-san has had the dedicated support of Bruce Gutlove, a University of California at Davis-educated winemaker who has spent the latter part of his professional life helping Japanese wine growers improve their product and is now pioneering his own 10R Winery in Iwamizawa, northwest of Niseko near Sapporo.

With Gutlove's help Honma-san is learning all aspects of the agricultural side of growing grapes and the scientific side of producing wine. As there is no experience or experimentation of grape growing or wine making in Niseko, Honma-san's project is truly ground-breaking.

If his project is a success he will have laid the foundations for what could become a thriving wine-making industry. And that's exactly what he wants – with interest in farming among younger generations rapidly declining in rural areas like Niseko he wants others to join him and start their own vineyards so he can share his knowledge and expertise with a vision to making Niseko a wine belt.

Honma-san's interest in wine goes back almost half a century after studying at university in the US and visiting California's famous Napa Valley wine region. He liked the idea of becoming a wine grower but after seeing the scale of production in the vineyards, he figured it would remain a pipe dream.

"Each variety has its pluses and minuses and at the moment we're really just experimenting to find out what works best in this climate and soil. There is no data to go on so we're really pioneering this industry."

That all changed when he met a Japanese business associate who he discovered had her own small vineyard in Switzerland and was making wine as a hobby. After this revelation his dream took on a new life and direction and he began searching for land. His search took him across Japan and also to Australia and New Zealand. Then by chance Mayumi-san, who was originally from Sapporo, came across an opportunity via family connections to buy some land in Niseko. He knew Niseko as a skiing destination having visited many times to ski in the past, however he knew nothing of the summer. After spending time researching the geographic and climatic characteristics he decided to give the bold project a go.

There is already budding wine industry not too far from Niseko, in the fruit-growing town of Yoichi. Right by the ocean and almost at sea level, the beautiful green town of Yoichi is a couple of degrees warmer and is one reason why a wine industry has so far flourished there rather than Niseko.

Yoichi now has 10 wineries including the author's favourite

Occi Gabi, established by passionate winemaker Kiichiro Ochi from the mainland. Having studied in Germany he came to Hokkaido to take advantage of the favourable summer climate of less humidity and rain and more day-night temperature variation. The main grapes he uses are Kerner, Bacchus and Zweigeltrebe. With a clever combination of marketing and investment strategy, Ochi-san has established a significant wine production and storage facility – all underground to protect from snow and for aesthetic reason. Meanwhile above-ground he has built a stylish garden and restaurant overlooking the vineyard, really introducing wine culture and wine tourism to the region. Both the food and wine are excellent offering an ideal day-trip for summer visitors to Niseko in combination with a tour of the nearby international award-winning Nikka Whisky distillery.

While Yoichi's winegrowers are aiming to make their region the "Napa Valley of Japan", an interesting point of difference with Niseko is that because there are no other fruit farms

(or vineyards) there are few introduced fruit diseases. Honma-san says this has allowed him to keep his production totally organic which is great for the soil and the nutrients going into his vines and allows him to trial other varieties that are more susceptible to disease and wouldn't survive in Yoichi.

"Everyone is surprised to see how healthy the grapes and vines are, even in October when we harvest them. It's obvious when you see the colour in the leaves how healthy they are. I can say with pride that my vines are really healthy.

"Everyone is watching to see if this project will be a success. If it is, I'm sure other farmers will follow and I can share my techniques and help them like Bruce has helped me. If there are a number of brands of wine then Niseko could become a wine belt in its own right."

This year they harvested 700kg of grapes and were able to produce 470 bottles. The next target is 2 tonnes. As such, at the moment Niseko Organic Sparkling Wine is hard to get but

if you are lucky you might find a bottle at Mick's wine cellars in the J-Sekka building, next to Green Farm Café at the traffic lights, or even better, head out to buy a bottle direct from Honma-san at the vineyard. ■

GRAPE VARIETIES

BACCHUS

Aromatic flavour with high sugar content, often used in blends

SAUVIGNON BLANC

Light and slightly acidic with herbaceous aromas

MULLER-THURGAU

Widely grown German grape that is fresh, aromatic and floral

KERNER

Rich in flavour, with bright floral aromas and a full, fruity palate

GEWÜRZTRAMINER

Spicy and fruity with high alcohol content and deep gold colour

CHARDONNAY

Rich, creamy and full-bodied typically with notes of vanilla

ZWEIFELTREBE (RED)

Flavours of fresh berries with bristly tannins and a purple hue

01 Niseko Wine backdrop
02 Niseko Wine whites
03 Occi Gabi garden and restaurant
04 An entrée at Occi Gabi
05 2015 Occi Gabi Kerner



PHOTO DARREN TEASDALE

LABOURS OF LOVE

From Farm To Fork

TEXT: KRISTIAN LUND
PHOTOS: COURTESY OF TESS STOMSKI



TESS STOMSKI
OWNER, NISEKO GOURMET &
CO-AUTHOR, HARVEST NISEKO

There's often a direct relationship between chef and farmer in Niseko that adds a special significance and quality to the dining experiences on offer here. When long-time local chef Tess Stomski decided to dig a little deeper and learn more about these connections, she uncovered an incredible world of stories surrounding the lives of local farmers and what goes on behind the scenes of Niseko's now-famous food industry.

In this world a young "natural-cultivation" farmer massages and sings to his tomatoes; an older farmer extracts extra flavour and sweetness from his carrots by storing them under the snow in winter; and a rice farmer introduces ducklings to his paddies in spring to organically control insects, before selling them as ducks to high-end restaurants in autumn.

"There's the older original farmers who go by more conventional farming methods, then there's a younger generation who have moved here and are trying all sorts of modern techniques," Tess says. "They're all young and intelligent, they've studied in America and have travelled. Several actually

have degrees in engineering but they've decided what they want to do is live a simple farming lifestyle in the countryside in Niseko.

"An older guy Omichi-san grew up here and he talks about how there were no cars back then. In winter they didn't clear snow from the roads so everyone travelled everywhere on skis. All of them are so different but the one thing in common is that they just love this area and they're so proud to be part of the community here."

These stories and many more form the foundation of Tess's four-year labour of love – exquisite new recipe book *Harvest Niseko*. The book's 100 recipes have been created in collaboration with Chisato Amagai, another local chef and colleague at Tess's catering company Niseko Gourmet. Dishes are easy-to-cook modern Japanese, with some taking inspiration from French, Italian or Asian cuisine but incorporating local ingredients. "If you set yourself up with our suggested pantry it's very easy to go out to your local supermarket wherever you live and cook up an authentic Niseko-inspired Japanese meal." ■

(RIGHT)

KINPIRA GOBO

Kinpira means to sauté or simmer, and Niseko's sweet, earthy gobo (burdock root) cooked in this fashion goes beautifully alongside grilled meat or other dishes served with rice.



HARVEST NISEKO

JPY 5,400
Available at most major accommodation providers, tourism outlets, gift shops, Explore Niseko, Lucky Supermarket and other fine local retailers.



(LEFT)

RADISH, MUSHROOM AND BACON SALAD

You and your guests will love the combination of flavours in this modern daikon (radish) salad. Shimeji or eringi mushrooms are best, and the suggested dressing is perfect.

(RIGHT)

COD WITH ASPARAGUS AND CREAM SAUCE

This dish is perfect for an early evening meal in spring. Children love the creamy sauce and for adults, white wine is a great match.



"Dishes are easy-to-cook modern Japanese, with some taking inspiration from French, Italian or Asian cuisine but incorporating local ingredients."



Okonomiyaki - "Anything you like, fried"

"If you set yourself up with our suggested pantry it's very easy to go out to your local supermarket wherever you live and cook up an authentic Niseko-inspired Japanese meal."



(LEFT)
OKONOMIYAKI

Okonomiyaki means "anything you like, fried", referring to the ingredients you can mix with the batter. Perfect for an easy weeknight, family meal or party.

(RIGHT)
BRAISED DAIKON RADISH WITH MISO SAUCE

Chisato's super juicy braised daikon is Tess's favourite dish on Niseko Gourmet's traditional Japanese dinner menu. The salty miso sauce and yuzu are the perfect complement.



ROYAL FRUIT FEAST

Plundering the Northern Fruit Kingdom

For fruit lovers, there could be nothing more heavenly than an all-you-can-eat smorgasbord of bright, juicy, organic produce straight from tree or vine. And that is exactly what you can indulge in at Yoichi, a fertile slice of paradise hidden amongst southwest Hokkaido's rolling mountain ranges.

An hour's drive due north of Niseko, where the winding green mountain passes descend to sea level, a fertile river valley chock-full of orchards fans out towards the coastline of the Sea of Japan, encompassing what is known as "Northern Fruit Kingdom".

As its moniker suggests, fruit tourism is a big industry here with busloads of domestic and international visitors pouring into the area throughout the green season, keen to wrap their taste buds around Yoichi's famous

fresh fruit at its finest. With locally grown produce a scarce commodity across much of the world today, eating fruit direct from the source is a rare treat, and a reminder of just how good it's supposed to taste.

Dozens of Yoichi's orchards are open to the public, allowing visitors to wander the fields and – for a small fee – pick and eat as much as they like. For just a few yen more you can also fill a tub to take home for later.

One of the most popular orchards is the Yamamoto Fruit Farm, pictured here. Their speciality is cherries, with a wide variety so you can compare the subtle differences. And if you time your trip right, there could be several different types of fruit ripe for the picking. Check out the calendar on the next page and plan your Niseko summer holiday around your favourite fruits' season. ■



BEST TIME FOR FRUIT PICKING

STRAWBERRIES

Mid June – Early July

CHERRIES

End June – Early August

BLUEBERRIES

End July – End August

PLUMS

Early August – End September

PEACHES

Mid-August – End October

PRUNES

Mid August – End October

GRAPES

Early Sept – Early November

APPLES

Early Sept – Early November

CHESTNUTS

Mid-September – Mid-October

PEARS

End September – End October

YAMAMOTO FRUIT FARM 1102-5 NOBORI-MACHI, YOICHI

FLOW-ON EFFECT

Mountain biking gets on a roll

TEXT KRISTIAN LUND
PHOTOS GLEN CLAYDON, TEPPEI NAKAJIMA, KRISTIAN LUND

As the saying goes: “If you build it, they will come”. And that is exactly what happened after a team of enthusiastic local mountain bike riders, with the help of a Swiss mountain bike resort planner, transformed an under-utilised summer ski slope into a thriving mountain bike arena.

Asahigaoka Park is located on the edge of Kutchan town just behind the train station towards the Hanazono ski resort. It has an abandoned ski jump and a single chair lift that can be ridden for ¥100 a pop in winter, but until last summer, the mountain was largely unused in the off-season.

Thanks to the foresight of local councillor Yoshi Tanaka, the development of a modern “flow trail” has turned the area into Niseko’s first vibrant mountain-biking hot spot, with dozens of mountain bikers of all ages

and abilities congregating on weekends. The car park is full and families set up picnics at the base, while riders from their parties take turns heading up for a ride, and kids ride their own bikes around the base area.

Flow trails are ingeniously designed to suit a wide range of skill levels from relative beginners right through to pros. Rather than heading straight down a steep mountain, the winding track allows for a gentle gradient featuring bumps, jumps and banked turns – almost like a terrain-based roller coaster – which riders can cruise down or attack according to their desire and skill level, with minimum pedaling and braking necessary.

Another key feature is consistent and predictable surfaces, meaning there is little risk of unforeseen obstacles or hitting a patch of gravel and sliding out, as is often



PHOTO GLEN CLAYDON

the case on raw mountain biking courses. Flow trails are what you make them: leisurely rides with your kids where beginners can roll over dirt features and bypass technical ones, or an exploration of skills and airtime for fast, talented riders who want to turn the trail into the ultimate playground.

An enthusiastic and tireless group of local mountain bikers has been developing a network of trails and organising events in the Niseko United ski resorts every summer for the past decade. But high up in the mountains or deep in the forests, they have never really been accessible to anyone except relatively experienced mountain bikers. Not to mention virtually invisible and with little way to monetise them.

Enter the expertise of Allegra Tourismus, and almost instantly it feels like Niseko has a mountain bike tourism industry that will no doubt thrive in coming years, as has been its unfulfilled destiny to date. Allegra director Claude Balsiger believes Niseko could make a name for itself as Asia's premier mountain bike destination within five years – largely because it has little competition.

“If you look at the Asian market you're already in pole position because you've got a name in winter for ski sports and action sports, and there's nowhere else that promotes itself as an Asian

mountain biking destination,” Balsiger says.

“Since you're already a brand in winter, it's easy to transfer that lifestyle to summer. If you set up a good business plan, it could be Asia's most successful mountain bike resort within five years. Australia, New Zealand, North America as well as the Alps – they're already far ahead in mountain bike tourism, but in Asia there's still not much around.”

The vision for the trail came about after Tanaka-san visited St Moritz in Switzerland, the sister city of Kutchan (which is home to the Hirafu and Hanazono ski resorts) and Allegra's hometown. Allegra has built three flow trails in the resort, and helped transform St Moritz and dozens of other resorts into viable year-round prospects thanks to their mountain bike tourism planning.

After Tanaka-san rode their trails, he knew Niseko needed a flow trail to boost the efforts of the local mountain bike fraternity. Allegra has drawn up plans for courses in Hirafu and Annupuri, but it was the tiny Asahigaoka ski hill that got Balsiger most excited.

“When I saw Asahigaoka I told Yoshi we have to do the first one here – this is the perfect location,” Balsiger says. “There's a building for a café here already, a big car park, it's really accessible, the



02

“Since you're already a brand in winter, it's easy to transfer that lifestyle to summer. If you set up a good business plan, Niseko could be Asia's most successful mountain bike resort within five years.”

train station is nearby. Since the elevation difference isn't so big it's not so expensive to build, and it's also accessible for beginners. And you can see the trail from all over town – what better location could you have?”

Allegra's experience developing socially engaging and economically sustainable mountain bike destinations should see the next sustained efforts to develop the local industry really bear fruit.

What Balsiger saw in Asahigaoka, no one here had seen before – or if they had, they hadn't acted on it. With a café at the base, the prototype at Asahigaoka demonstrates the foundations of the economic model.

“The base is where your value is created. You want to keep the mountain bikers close to where the shops and restaurants are. If



03

01 The trail from above
02 Attack mode
03 The vibe at the base

you build a flow trail to the top of Hirafu with a five-degree gradient, it would be 14km long and would take the average rider two hours to get down. So they might only come through your value zone once or twice. If there's a short 500m course, people are going to be down here every 15 minutes so they are much more likely to buy a drink or something to eat than on a very long trail.”

There is also talk of adding skateboarding facilities and even ziplines to add to the immediate amenity and economic objectives of the park. Not to mention the massive returns that will flow into the region when mountain bikers start to travel here specifically for mountain biking – accommodation, food, leisure, retail expenditure, etcetera. Everything the ski season has but on opposite sides of the year creating a year-round balance.

And that is the ultimate aim – to level up the difference between summer and winter to provide a much more stable, year-round economic environment for residents and workers. Canada's Whistler is the poster child for such a summer-winter transition, with its green season now busier than its long-famous winter.

Balsiger says there are an increasing number of destinations that have long winter tourism histories that have started to become successful in summer now. At the Swiss resort of Lenzerheide where they have been working, its gondola now carries a higher number of people in the green season – even though it only fits four mountain bikers as opposed to eight skiers.

One of Allegra's most successful projects has been in Livigno in northern Italy, which 10 years ago

had 93 per cent business in winter and 7 per cent in summer. After starting their first mountain bike concepts 10 years ago (alongside other resort initiatives), they're now at 70-30, and are aiming for 60-40 by the year 2020.

Longtime local mountain biker Teppei Nakajima has been one of the key driving forces behind the development of the mountain biking industry here and was one of seven core workers building the Asahigaoka trail this year. He deflects comparisons to Whistler, but believes there's no reason Niseko can't follow the same model as the Canadian powerhouse.

“A lot of my friends lived here for a few years but then went back home because they couldn't get stable work throughout the year,” Nakajima-san says. “We can't compare ourselves to Whistler because the area is smaller, the



04

mountains are smaller and the clientele is probably a little bit different. At the moment our business is probably 95 per cent winter, 5 per cent summer. Our first target is to make that 70-30, then our goal is 60-40. Then we can have more stable employment year round.”

Like all great achievements, it takes a long time and a lot of hard work to become an overnight success. Nakajima-san said this was his tenth year working on developing mountain biking in Niseko and he was surprised at just how successful Asahigaoka had been.

“We regularly have 50 or more people now – I thought it would take more time but they’re already here. Finally I feel the mountain biking industry is coming.”

Balsiger believes the four Niseko resorts – all owned by different

companies – should each create a different product but then link them all together. “In my opinion what Niseko should focus on in the next five to 10 years is families and complete beginners – having between four and eight super easy, very short trails up to 500m. That’s it. Then linking them all with a very easy cycling path so people can commute from trail to trail to trail, and into Kutchan Town.” ■



05

8 FACTS ABOUT THE MTB MARKET

- Mountain bikers are getting older and younger
- The mountain bike market has spending power
- Many mountain bikers are skiers and hikers
- Nature is the primary motive for mountain bikers
- Most mountain biking takes place away from mountains
- There is no such thing as an average mountain biker
- Most mountain bikers don’t compete
- The MTB “scene” doesn’t represent most riders

(SOURCE: ALLEGRA TOURISMUS)

04 Riders making their way down
05 Fun for the whole family



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a winter wonderland

stay



play



relax



enjoy




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NISEKO'S SUMMER BIG THREE

Rafting, Golf & Cycling

In the outdoor adventure wonderland that is Niseko, three of the core pastimes that have really gripped the locals and spawned industries in their own rights over past decades are rafting, golf and road cycling.

Rafting attracts domestic tourists throughout the spring and summer; the golfing kicks off as soon as the snow melts off the fairways and only ends when the snow sets in at the end of the year; and similarly the cyclists can't wait to get out there when the warmer weather returns.



PHOTO GLEN CLAYDON

PADDLE POWER

Water – what a magnificent substance. Frozen to a powdery consistency to ski through in winter, and melted to create pristine waterways to enjoy in summer. Niseko's flow starts in the mountains and ends in the ocean, but not before carving its way through the local landscape via crystal clear rivers and streams. There are many different ways to immerse yourself in the rivers' action so grab a paddle and get out there.

Niseko's rivers are at their spectacular best in spring when the sun's warmth burns right through the snow pack to create massive amounts of runoff. A snow layer of up to 4m thick covers the whole region, adding up to a

countryside-load of melt whipping up grade-three and sometimes grade-four rapids.

Not surprisingly, the water is literally icy cold. But don't worry, before you set off you will be suited up in a dry suit with tight rubber seals around your ankles, wrists and neck. You can even jump in the water and not feel too cold.

After the spring runoff has subsided, the river calms down (see above), and the focus is more on relaxing and enjoying the summer scenery. The water even warms up enough to jump in and enjoy a refreshing dip.

GLORIOUS GOLFING

TEXT JOHN BARTON

Golf in Japan – crowded and expensive? Not if you're lucky enough to have discovered Niseko.

In fact, up here it's very much the opposite. Hokkaido is home to a staggering 172 golf courses – a third as many as Scotland, the home of golf – nine of which are within easy access of Niseko.

Every course feels like it's secluded deep in the Hokkaido wilderness, with rolling green hills and picturesque mountain peaks at every turn. Courses are well-maintained and interesting with some famous designers making their marks here too. Take it all in at the laid-back pace



IMAGE YTL'S NISEKO GOLF COURSE

CYCLING

Summer in Niseko is tailor-made for exploring the countryside on two wheels. Whether you want to mountain-bike offroad, cruise on road, race competitively or go for a long-distance tour, there's a saddle to suit everyone.

Niseko and its surrounds have some of the best road biking in Japan, and the competitive and leisure cycling scene is growing rapidly.

The roads are wide and beautifully maintained, traffic is sparse and mellow, the temperature is mild, and the air quality is outstanding. Put it all together and you've got one of the best recipes for high-calibre road biking in Asia.

Several high-profile annual races are now staged in Niseko including the Hanazono Hillclimb from Kutchan up over the mountain pass between Mt Annupuri and Mt Goshiki.

The Niseko Classic, a UCI Gran Fondo World Series event, heads into its third year with Boardman Bikes as new major sponsor. Niseko has also hosted stages of the Tour de Hokkaido and nearby Lake Toya has staged Ironman triathlons.



PHOTO GLEN CLAYDON

"As a training destination, Niseko makes a great base for an array of day trips. The altitude isn't overly high but the variety of courses will challenge the hardest of legs."

HEADLINE EVENTS

THE NISEKO CLASSIC
8-9 July 2017

HANAZONO HILLCLIMB
6 August 2017

For more information on races email Hokkaido Events on info@hokkaidoevents.com.

GOLF COURSES: TOP PICKS

Niseko Hanazono Golf Course | Par 72
(C'ship: 7003 Blue: 6760 Reg: 6343
Forward: 5278)

This beautiful course offers four tees for different abilities and a real test from the championship tees. It has some beautiful holes that please the eye and challenge the mind.

Niseko Village Golf Course | Par 73
(Blue: 6845 White: 6422 Red: 5313)

Located at the Hilton Niseko Village, between Mt Yotei and Mt Annupuri, this is a scenic, wide and somewhat forgiving course with a signature 721-yard par-6 hole!

Niseko Golf Course | Par 72
(Black:6805 Blue:6306 White:5833
Red:5072)

This Arnold Palmer-designed course is a local favourite with incredible views and gradient changes to test your club selection. Great risk/reward par 5s and stunning par 3s.

 vacation niseko

John Barton is the Director of Vacation Niseko and a former golf teaching pro who has been living in Niseko for eight years. Get in touch with John to help you plan your Niseko golf holiday. Email info@nisekomanagement.com

5 WET & WILD FAMILY ACTIVITIES TO EXPERIENCE THIS SUMMER

For those who are looking for something a little different, you don't have to look far in Niseko in the summer time. The mountains, forests, rivers and lakes provide the perfect landscape to enjoy a great variety of activities in the great outdoors.

Adventure options range from the extreme to the sublime, with everything in between. Every year more activities start up, with adventure parks and tour companies providing plenty of options for visitors to take advantage of.

So book your trip, pack a sense of adventure and jump on in.



PHOTO VACATION NISEKO

01

CANYONING IN THE CREEKS

Jump, slide, tramp and swim down a network of canyons, creeks and rock pools deep in the mountain wilderness around Niseko. This is Vacation Niseko's most adrenaline-fuelled, physically challenging adventure activity. Start with a slow river section followed by slightly more turbulent waters, finishing off with a 6m cliff jump into a deep blue pool.

6600JPY for 3.5 hours. Ages 13 and above.



02

ZIP LINING AT PURE

Niseko is now home to the longest zipline tour in Japan! The Zip Line Tour around Pure at Niseko Village covers a distance of 1.4km via 10 expanses of zipline, crossing open fields, hurtling through forests and skimming over sections of ponds and lakes up to 20m in the air. Once you've done that, Pure offers plenty more action for the whole family.

4400JPY Adults / 3300JPY Kids. Takes 2 Hours.

BEAUTIFUL, ALL YEAR ROUND



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03

TREE TREKKING AT PURE

A forest adventure for thrill-seekers to traverse along the treetops with a safety harness using zip lines, ropes, hanging bridges and nets. Made up of elevated platforms installed non-invasively around the trees, the courses in Pure at Niseko Village are an environmentally friendly way for all ages to appreciate nature while having fun.

From 2300JPY Adults / 1800JPY Kids.



04

PARAGLIDING ABOVE NISEKO

For adrenaline junkies, paragliding is an activity that soars above the rest. Launch off the peaks of Mt Annupuri or Rusutsu and enjoy a gentle glide and a soaring bird's eye view of the lush, colourful Hokkaido countryside below. Fly above the uncovered ski slopes with views to the ocean, and even over Mt Yotei's crater when conditions and thermals are right.

From 11,500JPY for a tandem flight.



PHOTO GLEN CLAYDON



05

SUP BOARDING AT LAKE TOYA

Gliding across Lake Toya on a stand-up paddleboard (SUP) board takes this new activity to another level. Not only are the smooth waters ideal for beginners and youngsters, but the underwater features viewed through crystal clear blue waters are stunning from a standing vantage point. Paddling around the islands in the middle (above) is breathtaking.

From 8640JPY/person or Monster SUP from 7400JPY/person.
Bookings: SUP Niseko guide.co.jp or 0136-54-2820.



Explore Niseko can book all these activities and plenty more. Go to Explore-Niseko.com, or drop into their booking office at Odin Place, 1F to book now.



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iGATE niseko eco shop
IKEUCHI

Concept : Eco-friendly,
small, green and natural

Niseko's exclusive outdoor store
AYA NISEKO in Hirafu

iGATE
IKEUCHI

New open!

Lifestyle store & Café restaurant
Odin in Hirafu

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PLACES TO VISIT WITHIN 60 MINUTES OF NISEKO

Summerlife's recommendations

With Niseko as your base, south-west Hokkaido is your oyster. Within an hour or two's drive there are enough day or overnight trips to keep you occupied for a dozen summer holidays. The best way to get around is by hiring a car and hitting the open road. The driving is easy so it's no trouble to head out from Hirafu or one of the other villages for the day, before returning to your luxury apartment or chalet in the evening.



PHOTO DARREN TEASDALE

OTARU PORT

Otaru is a small, historic port city about an hour's drive over a mountain range and back down to the ocean. Explore and shop around the beautifully preserved canal district by rickshaw or boat, and admire the old stone warehouses and other Japanese architecture including mansions built by early herring tycoons. Eat fantastically fresh sushi straight from the port in a converted old warehouse.



PHOTO NIKKA BAR RITA

NIKKA WHISKY AND YOICHI

Yoichi is another seaside village near Niseko, most famous for its orchards, apple juice and Nikka Whisky distillery, whose 1987 single malt was voted world's best in 2008. There is a fascinating history behind the distillery, whose Japanese founder travelled to Scotland to learn the secrets of whisky making from the masters, before marrying a local lass and returning to build the distillery in Yoichi.

There is plenty more to do in the area as well such as visiting the Space Apple Museum, built in honour of Japan's first astronaut who was born in the town. You can also witness the Fugoppe Cave paintings, believed to be the first signs of prehistoric life in Hokkaido. And as you may have read earlier in this magazine, there's plenty of opportunity to go fruit picking or you can visit the Occi Gabi Winery for lunch and a tour which is also highly recommended.

KAMIMURA RESTAURANT

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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SHAKOTAN PENINSULA

Shakotan is a compact, rugged peninsula that juts out into the Sea of Japan to Niseko's west. Drive along the coastline and admire some of the most spectacular coastal scenery in Japan. Venture out along the spine of Cape Kamui (pictured left). Jump in a glass-bottom boat and marvel at the clarity of the Sea of Japan or kayak along the coastline and explore caves in the cliffsides.

LAKE TOYA

Lake Toya is a stunningly beautiful volcanic caldera lake just 45 minutes' drive from Niseko, famous for the onsen resort town on its southern shoreline and the luxury Windsor Hotel perched on the rim of the caldera above. Swim in the crystal clear waters, cruise in powered or non-powered water craft out to the deer-inhabited island in the middle, or visit the active Mt Usu volcano.



RUSUTSU RESORT AMUSEMENT PARK

Just a leisurely 30-minute drive through Niseko Town and the flower fields of Makkari is Rusutsu – an amazing powder resort in winter and Hokkaido's biggest amusement park resort in summer. It boasts more than 60 attractions including eight roller coasters, and often hosts events like 1200-burst fireworks displays and cartoon character shows.

One-day pass – Adults 4950JPY / Kids 3950JPY.



Want to hire a car or find out more on things to do and places to see in and around Niseko? Go to Explore-Niseko.com, drop into their booking office next to Seicomart, or call +81(0)136 55 8848.

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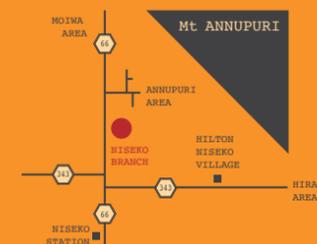


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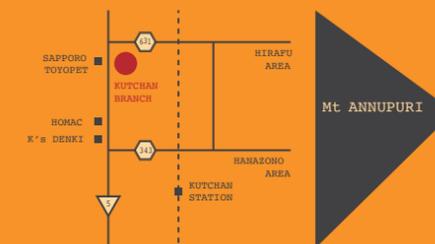


Hokkaido is known as "The Food Bowl of Japan" for its fresh, bountiful produce. Daniel Mansukhani (the dude on the left) has been serving his authentic Indian curries & naan breads to residents for 35 years.

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



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MY ECOLODGE

BOUTIQUE TRAVELLERS LODGE, HIRAFU

Upmarket boutique hostel MY ecolodge, along with its slightly older condominium hotel sibling Shiki Niseko, are two of the accommodation houses helping to build Niseko's year-round tourism offerings. Rather than just providing accommodation for travellers, they are also providing a wide range of retail, F&B, services and activities – all year round!

MY ecolodge is based in East Hirafu Village which is arguably the most vibrant wing of Hirafu in the offseason. Between Shiki, in the centre of the village, and MY ecolodge are most of Niseko's best year-round restaurants – Ichimura Soba, Locanda Italian, Tsubara Tsubara soup curry, Graubunden sandwiches and cakes, and JoJo's Café in the Niseko Adventure Centre – which also offers rafting and indoor rock climbing all year round.

Along with MY ecolodge and Shiki, these outlets and more liven up the area for summer visitors and locals alike and extend the village right out towards the Kutchan side of the village past MY ecolodge.

MY ecolodge is more than a hostel with a specific focus on adding value to the area and for visiting guests. This summer MY ecolodge kicks off Phase II of its plans with the redevelopment of its creekside activity space which will be the key focus of their summer activities, barbecues and events specifically for edu-vacation and group bookings. The lodge can organise all of Niseko's summer activities for guests, and customise them to groups' individual needs including student camps, adventure camps, seminars and team building exercises.

The lodge has a specific focus on group accommodation in the summer time. After taking part in activities and group exercises, MY ecolodge offers guests a modern, clean and safe environment with all the facilities of a five-star 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. ■

EDU-VACATIONS

- Language
- Cultural immersion
- Sports
- Arts
- Combination

Enjoy the beauty of Niseko through the various types of edu-vacation concepts that can be customised to your needs. Rest assured that accommodation and activities are all about fun learning.

Custom activities: Student camps, outdoor team building, adventure experiential learning, seminars, creative problem solving, treasure hunting, eco challenges, fruit picking, canoeing, character building, team bonding, eco-walk hunts, kayaking, park trekking, explore-races, farming games, sunflower festival, horse riding, and more.

HALF-DAY & FULL-DAY TRIPS

- White Water Rafting
- Sea Kayak
- Usu-zan geopark (Active Volcano)



CONVENIENT LOCATION



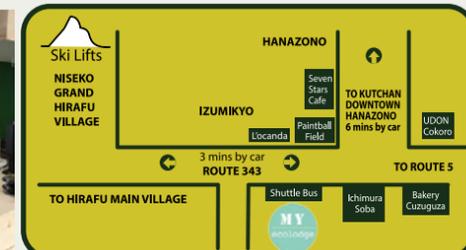
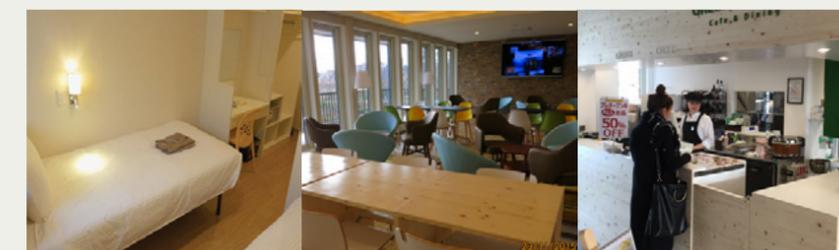
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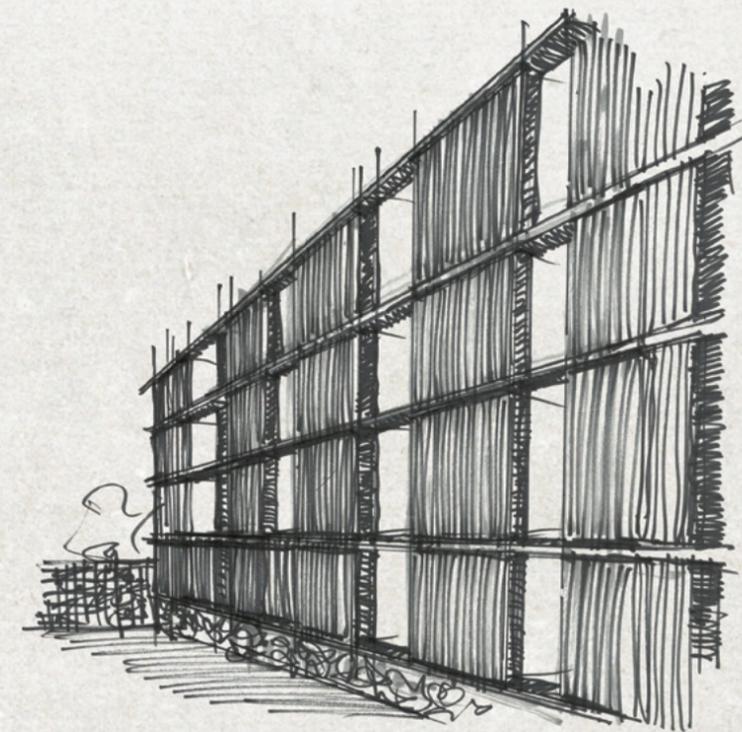
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Thanks for reading Summerlife
– we hope we've tempted you to
come back and visit in the green
season. As you can see, there's a
lot more to Niseko than just skiing.

Happy seasons, happy travels!

PHOTO AARON JAMIESON



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