

SKI & SNOW GUIDE

JAPAN

○ **HOKKAIDO**
The Best Powder
on the Planet

○ **NAGANO
NIIGATA**
Heart & Soul of
Japanese Skiing

○ **TOHOKU**
The Deep North
Honshu's Wild Side



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WHY JAPAN?

Sure, the world's best and most consistent powder snow is the bottom line. 'Japowder rules!' was first recognised by Aussie skiers a generation ago. Now European, American and Asian skiers flock to Japan as well. But great snow is just the start.

- » The culture is so different, and yet so easy to experience.
- » The people are polite, welcoming, honest and helpful.
- » Japanese cuisine, sake and beer are world famous. Experience the many regional flavours, specialties, freshness and variety.
- » Exceptional value for money is another good reason to ski Japan. Lift passes are a relative bargain, half or less than you pay at similar size resorts elsewhere.
- » Accommodation covers the spectrum, from cheap comfortable ryokan to deluxe hotels. Ski school and kids' facilities are also good value.
- » Tipping is discouraged, adding up to big savings.
- » The shopping is amazing!
- » Getting around is fun, using the incredible rail network and excellent bus services. Or self-drive on good roads, just be aware of winter conditions.
- » Getting to Japan is stress and jetlag free, with lots of direct flights.
- » Oh, and did we mention onsen? You'll be the cleanest you've ever been, with no sore muscles, after a soak in a traditional Japanese hot spring bath. Especially outdoors with snow softly falling.

Useful Information



ATMS

You can withdraw cash using your international credit, debit, prepaid and cash cards nationwide at ATMs at post offices and most convenience stores.

Lawson, Family Mart & 7/11 convenience stores often have ATMs that accept overseas issued cards. The number of ATMs that accept overseas issued cards is growing.



INTERNET ACCESS

Free Wi-Fi Spots are available throughout Japan, and in most transportation hubs, such as airports and larger railway stations, as well as many individual businesses such as convenience stores. Search for Wi-Fi spots using the Japan Official Travel App www.japan.travel/en/app/



MOBILE PHONES

You can use your smartphone in Japan on SoftBank Mobile or DOCOMO's 4G/LTE and 5G service areas.

SIM cards can be rented from airports, or ordered online and delivered to hotels.

Wi-Fi router rentals, also known as 'Pocket Wi-Fi' usually offer unlimited data for a daily flat fee. Multiple devices can connect to the same hot-spot, so it's great for groups.



© Owain Price

EASY ACCESS

Japan is Australia's most accessible northern ski destination. Tokyo is 7.5 hours from Cairns, or 10.5 from Melbourne. It's a similar time zone, so ski from your first day to the last!

TOHOKU

Airports to Tokyo by rail/monorail
Narita Airport to Tokyo 60 minutes
Haneda Airport to Tokyo 20 minutes

JR Tohoku Shinkansen

Tokyo to Aomori from 189 minutes
Tokyo to Morioka from 137 minutes

JR Yamagata Shinkansen

Tokyo to Yamagata from 148 minutes

HOKKAIDO

Fly to New Chitose Airport
Haneda/Narita 90 minutes
Kansai Airport 110 minutes

Fly to Asahikawa Airport
Haneda/Narita 100 minutes
Kansai Airport 135 minutes

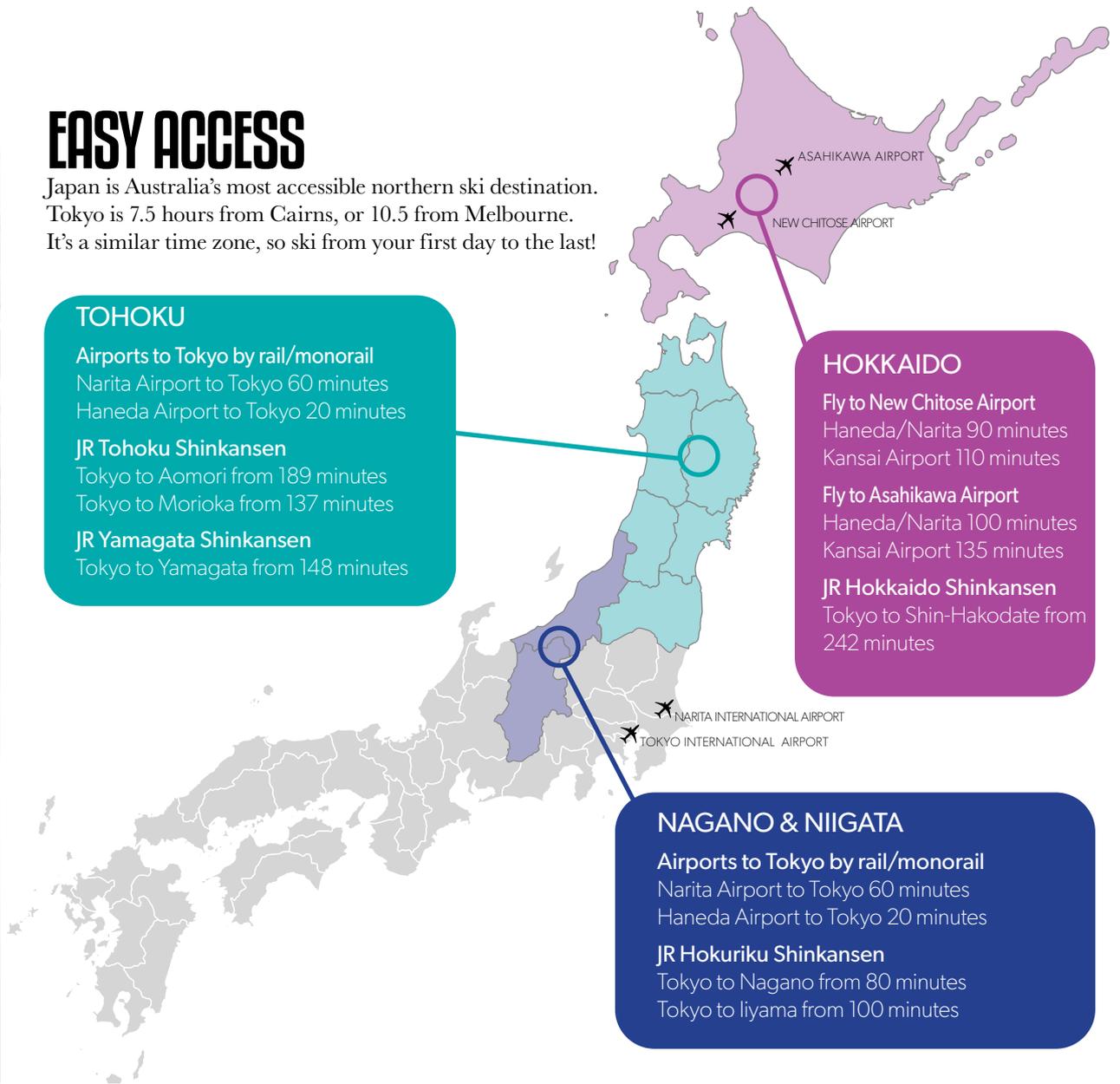
JR Hokkaido Shinkansen
Tokyo to Shin-Hakodate from 242 minutes

NAGANO & NIIGATA

Airports to Tokyo by rail/monorail
Narita Airport to Tokyo 60 minutes
Haneda Airport to Tokyo 20 minutes

JR Hokuriku Shinkansen

Tokyo to Nagano from 80 minutes
Tokyo to Iiyama from 100 minutes



RAIL PASSES

At speeds of up to 320km/h the shinkansen bullet train is the quickest way to get to most of the best ski destinations in Honshu. The nationwide Japan Rail Pass (JR Pass) is available in 7-, 14- and 21-day passes which all include unlimited travel, starting from ¥33,610. A more cost effective option, the JR East Passes include 5 consecutive days of unlimited travel in either the Tohoku or Nagano Niigata area, starting from ¥18,000.

The shinkansen extends as far as Shin-Hakodate in Hokkaido too, and the JR East South Hokkaido area pass, from ¥27,000, allows 6 days unlimited travel in 14 days, reaching as far as Sapporo and New Chitose Airport.

All the above include the Tokyo Monorail to/from Haneda or NEX to/from Narita. You can reserve seats free online and plan your whole itinerary to coordinate with resort buses etc. More details:

www.jreast.co.jp/multi/en/pass/
and
<https://japanrailpass.net/en/>

DRIVING IN JAPAN

Car rental requires a Japanese driving license or an international driving permit issued in the driver's own country. In Australia the NRMA, RACV and associated Members of the Australian Automobile Association (AAA) issue international driving permits.

In snowy areas vehicles come with winter tyres. Snow clearing is very efficient, but always drive to conditions.

Prepaid expressway passes save plenty on tolls, and can be picked up with rentals from major operators.

For Japan Expressway Pass, Tohoku Expressway Pass & Hokkaido Expressway Pass:

<http://en.driveplaza.com>



RESORT ICONS



NIGHT SKI



NIGHTLIFE



CULTURAL



FAMILY

RESORT TERRAIN



EASY



INTERMEDIATE



ADV-EXPERT

HOKKAIDO

THE BEST POWDER ON THE PLANET



OVERVIEW

Hokkaido has exploded onto the world snow stage over the past 20 years as one of the best powder snow destinations.

Sure, other places get good snow sometimes. Hokkaido gets good snow consistently, often day after day, from early December to late March. Why is it so? The 'Siberian Express', the prevailing winter wind blows down from the dry, freezing interior of north Asia. It picks up moisture crossing the Sea of Japan, then drops it slam bang on the island's ranges, which delivers Hokkaido's uniquely perfect conditions. The resorts closest to the west coast, like Niseko, Kiroro and Rusutsu, and those right behind Sapporo, like Kokusai and Teine, all receive ridiculous amounts of snow.

Those in the centre of this large island (bigger than Tasmania, smaller than Ireland), like Furano, Tomamu and Sahoro, average a bit less snow but more sunny days to enjoy it. Hokkaido is blessed in other seasons too. It's a rural paradise famous for fresh produce, superb seafood, and the vast wilderness areas. Space is the key word, this is the most sparsely populated part of Japan. Enjoy uncrowded resort slopes at the numerous ski areas. For even more, try great backcountry powder skiing in the Tokachi Mountains. With the shinkansen now whisking you from Tokyo to Hokkaido in just over 4 hours, or fast connecting flights to New Chitose or Asahikawa, it's never been more accessible.



HOKKAIDO

POWDER TIME

Nothing else compares to surging through fresh deep snow. Nowhere else gives you more opportunities for that than Hokkaido.
© Darren Teasdale / Niseko Photography & Guiding



NISEKO

One mountain, four resorts

SKI AREA
886,000m²



36%

38%

26%



SNOW STUFF

Niseko just gets better, with new facilities on the mountain helping keep pace with the ever growing popularity. The Ace Family quad lift at Niseko Grand Hirafu greatly improves access from the village.

Niseko Annupuri added a dedicated beginner's quad chair to their excellent learner slopes.

Hanazono now offers a gondola or 6-seat express lift from the base.

These follow improvements at Niseko Village and the launch of Niseko Weiss Powder Cats from Hanazono.

The four individual resorts linked as Niseko United are conscious of improving their individual products to maintain Niseko's status as a leading international ski resort.

Tip: night skiing at Grand Hirafu is fun. You can actually have better visibility at night in heavy snow!

STAY & PLAY

New hotels and apartments are open every season, especially at the deluxe level on or close to the slopes at Hirafu. The lower village has more moderate options, and the ski shuttle service now goes to Kutchan for tighter budgets.

With over 80 restaurants and bars, Hirafu is après ski central.

Niseko Village has some nightlife, restaurants, and direct slope access.

Or if you like things quiet, with far less international visitors, stay at Annupuri. Deluxe slopeside accommodation at Hanazono delivers another choice.

DON'T MISS

There are lots of non-ski outdoor activities for a change of pace like snowshoeing, snowrafting, snowmobiling and scenic winter rafting. Check out one of the 15 local onsen, like the 100 year old Konbu Onsen.

FURTHER INFO

www.niseko.ne.jp/en/



© JNTO; Go snow Gondola Snowsports

NISEKO

If you know anything about Niseko, you know it has great powder snow. It also has fantastic international snow sport schools that make it perfect for families.



COURSES
70



LONGEST
COURSE
5.6KM



RUSUTSU RESORT

Hokkaido's largest single ski resort

SKI AREA
1,700,000m²



30%

40%

30%



SNOW STUFF

Sprawling over 3 peaks hooked up by an impressive lift system, Rusutsu offers endless variety for all levels. Magical 'snow mushroom' forests and powder glades are as good as it gets. Long, wide, and often empty immaculately groomed courses are perfect for relaxed family skiing. Park rats get beginner to expert parks, plus a spectacular 'side country' park. Night skiing till 8pm is a bonus: hire a 'glow suit' for extra fun at night!

STAY & PLAY

The completely self-contained resort village offers ski-in/ski-out convenience to the West Mountain slopes and kid's ski school facilities. Even better for families is the Disney-themed indoor entertainment village, full of shops, attractions and a magnificent carousel. Après bars, restaurants, onsen and activities are numerous here. At the resort centre choose from the budget Rusutsu Travel Lodge, mid-range to deluxe Rusutsu Resort Hotel, or Log Houses & Cottages. Or stay at the prestigious Westin Rusutsu Resort Tower, connected by a funky monorail to the resort centre, with its own restaurants and après. The little village beside the ski area has a Lawson convenience store, a couple of pensions with cheap accommodation, and the locals' favourite bar/restaurant, Rodeo Drive.

DON'T MISS

Snowmobiling from kids beginner to 'Expedition Course' levels, snowshoeing, horse trekking around beautiful nearby Lake Toya, and ice fishing for trout are easily accessed. Put the local produce to good use and have fun making ice cream or cheese.

FURTHER INFO

www.rusutsu.com/en/



RUSUTSU

The superb skiing is complemented by a unique Disney-style indoor theme village with wonderful attractions for families, restaurants and après entertainment.



COURSES
37



LONGEST
COURSE
3.5KM

© Rusutsu Resort



HOSHINO RESORTS TOMAMU

Hokkaido's No.1 family friendly ski resort

SKI AREA
145,000m²



40%

40%

20%



SNOW STUFF

Tomamu is pretty much the perfect all round ski resort - everybody gets well looked after at their own level.

Powder chasers should register (tip: do it online before you arrive) for an armband, and rental helmet if they don't have one, to allow access to the extensive Powder Area. For more deep snow thrills try Tomamu's cat-skiing. Nice long wide-open groomed runs and family trails keep beginners and cruisers very happy.

STAY & PLAY

Four soaring (up to 32 storeys!) towers at the resort centre provide superb on snow accommodation options:

Hoshino Resorts Tomamu The Tower; the all suites RISONARE Tomamu; and Club Med.

Mina-Mina Beach is one of Japan's largest indoor wave pools, the complex maintained at a balmy 30°C.

Gao Outdoor Activity Centre has adult and kid's snowmobiles, banana boats, sledding, snow-shoeing and more. Indoors, try the iconic Winter Olympic sport of curling.

The Ice Village is magical for all ages, complete with a popular Wedding Chapel - made from ice of course.

For the ultimate, upgrade with a night at the Ice Hotel during your stay.

Twenty restaurants provide varied dining and après options linked by enclosed walkways to the hotels.

Hotalu ('Fireflies') Street, is claimed as Japan's first ski-in/ski-out shopping and restaurant area.

DON'T MISS

Tomamu is the closest major resort to New Chitose Airport, and it's easy to day trip to other areas like Furano and Sahoro for more variety.

FURTHER INFO

www.snowtomamu.jp/winter/en/



TOMAMU

Powder skiers love the Experts Only Powder Area, while families get beautiful cruising runs and the amazing Mina-Mina Beach indoor wave pool complex.

© Hoshino Resorts TOMAMU



COURSES
28



LONGEST
COURSE
4.2KM



33% 29% 38%

KIRORO SNOW WORLD

Five star skiing in a pristine setting

SKI AREA
120,000m²



SNOW STUFF

Kiroro gets more snow than any major resort anywhere, an incredible average of 21.5m per season! But don't worry, much of the terrain is easy, so it's a great choice for first time or less confident powder skiers. Better riders can challenge their skills in the 5 tree run zones, which are open from 9.00 - 14.30 when conditions allow via their designated Access Points. Kiroro Kids Academy has great programs for 3 years and up. The Club Med programs run for 12 years and up. With just 2 hotels and the Yu Kiroro slopeside apartments, Kiroro is often uncrowded.

STAY & PLAY

Enjoy high levels of comfort and service at the slopeside Club Med hotel options, which deliver their famous inclusive packages. A large resort pool and indoor/outdoor onsen are features for guests. Or stay at the deluxe ski in/ski out Yu Kiroro Apartments, the only non-Club Med accommodation here.

DON'T MISS

The historic port of Otaru is just 30 minutes away for crafts, shopping and seafood.

FURTHER INFO
www.kiroro.co.jp


COURSES
21


LONGEST COURSE
4KM



40% 40% 20%

FURANO RESORT

Great snow, real Japanese town

SKI AREA
168,000m²



SNOW STUFF

Furano offers some of Japan's most consistent fall-line skiing on trails so good they have hosted numerous World Cup Downhill races, across 2 inter-linked mountain zones. Don't ski quite that fast? Don't worry, the uncrowded progressive beginner and intermediate terrain is excellent too. Even better, sunny days are common. Furano opened up their off-piste too, for some incredible powder skiing.

Furano's second Kitanomine base area village has very affordable accommodation options, and funky restaurants and bars.

DON'T MISS

Furano town, just down the road, is a real working rural town serving the thriving agricultural area. Local tourism groups have made a huge effort to make it very accessible to enjoy a range of fun and fascinating cultural experiences there, apart from the restaurants and bars.

STAY & PLAY

The fully self-contained new Furano Prince Hotel is a classic ski-in/ski-out experience, ideal for families.

FURTHER INFO
<https://www.snowfurano.com/>


COURSES
23


LONGEST COURSE
4KM

NAGANO AND NIIGATA

GREAT SKIING SINCE 1911



© Shaun Mittwollen

OVERVIEW

Home to Japan's highest mountains, Nagano and Niigata have been the heart and soul of Japanese snow sports since the Austrian officer Theodore Van Lerch introduced skiing in 1911. With so many mountains and so much snow, it was the obvious choice. Locals loved the new way of getting around on snow that he introduced, and he lives on as a cartoon character on everything from keyrings to underwear.

Today your problem is choosing where to go: the choice is amazing. Nagano is the primary gateway, just 85-100 minutes shinkansen from Tokyo. From here buses depart for the multi resort areas of Shiga Kogen or Hakuba Valley.

Or stay on the shinkansen to Iiyama for Nozawa Onsen, Myoko and Madarao-Tangram.

Between them they offer a tremendous diversity of ski options, linked by the common theme of plenty of great snow.

The region is full of fascinating sights and cultural experiences for a fantastic all round holiday.

Feel the power of the Samurai at Matsumoto. Discover the soul of Zen at Zenkoji temple. Laugh at the antics of Jigokudani snow monkeys. Get sake savvy at a brewery.



HIGHER TIMES

Shiga Kogen has Japan's highest ski lifts, for great conditions over a long season. © Prince Hotels





HAKUBA VALLEY

Magnificent mountains! 9 resorts, 1 lift pass

SKI AREA
941,000m²



30%

40%

30%



SNOW STUFF

Welcome to the Japan Alps! Soaring peaks tower over 3000m, for a magnificent alpine vista that fills Hakuba Valley's horizon from east to west. The stunning view sweeps past 9 fantastic ski resorts, all available on the one Hakuba Valley lift pass. Some are linked by lifts, but the efficient shuttle bus system connects all areas. You really need at least a week here to enjoy Japan's most varied multi resort experience. It's way bigger than anything in North America. From long groomers at Happo, to sensational steep trees at Cortina, or endless cruising at Tsugaike, to name just 3 of the areas, Hakuba has it all. But it does not stop there: unlimited back-country with excellent local guides, and even heli-skiing in spring too.

STAY & PLAY

Hakuba Valley boasts Japan's most complete and varied ski resort accommodation, après, restaurant and shopping scene. Stay in your choice of ski-in/ski-out hotels, modern apartments, traditional ryokan or western run lodges. Spend big for 5-star pampering, or do it on the proverbial shoestring. Popular areas include Wadano, next to Happo; Echoland a bit further away; slopeside at Goryu 47; or Cortina's iconic hotel. Party as hard as you want at a host of character filled bars and nightclubs. Many offer free hotel pick up/return.

DON'T MISS

Hakuba is surrounded by fantastic day trip opportunities. Matsumoto Castle gives you a taste of the Samurai era. Nagano's Zenkoji temple dates back to the 7th century origins of Buddhism in Japan. The Jigokudani Snow Monkey Park is a favourite for all ages.

FURTHER INFO

www.hakubavalley.com/en/



© Tsugaike, Evergreen International Ski School

HAKUBA VALLEY

Simply the largest one ticket ski option in all of Asia, plus heli-skiing!

That's backed up by the best après and restaurant variety. International snow sports schools make life easy for families.



COURSES
128



LONGEST
COURSE
8KM



SHIGA KOGEN

Japan's largest inter-linked ski region

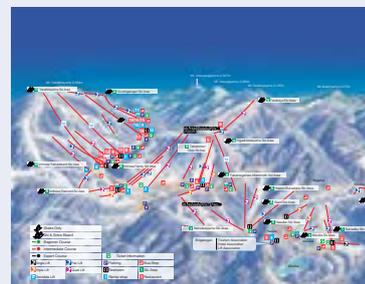
SKI AREA
607,000m²



46%

40%

14%



SNOW STUFF

Shiga Kogen links 19 individual ski areas that sprawl across the beautiful forested highland of Joshinetsu Kogen National Park. They spread over 5 main valleys and more than 600ha. The views may not be as spectacular as in the Japan Alps, but the lifts go higher, Japan's highest in fact, to 2300m, or 500m higher than in Hakuba. That extra altitude guarantees consistent snow quality over a long season.

Cruise endless rolling scenic trails between the areas, and enjoy lots of uncrowded family slopes.

Or plunge into the powder in the pine forests. More Shiga areas are opening up more powder options, especially Okushiga Kogen, where back and side country tours are also on the menu. Midweek many Shiga areas are very quiet, so there's less competition for first tracks.

One pass takes in the whole area, including buses that run end to end, which takes over an hour by road. For a challenge, try and ski it end to end in one day, and get the bus back.

STAY & PLAY

For western visitors the northern end is the best place to stay. You have ski-in/ski-out Prince & Okushiga hotel options, and a cluster of hotels and pensions at Ichinose. This is the heart of the available restaurants and nightlife. It's not party central, but from izakaya to Nepalese cuisine complete with tandoor oven, there's a growing choice. If you like a quieter all round experience, Shiga is ideal.

DON'T MISS

Iconic Nagano sights like the Snow Monkeys, Zenkoji temple, and sake breweries are close by.

FURTHER INFO

www.shigakogen-ski.com/en



© Prince Hotels

SHIGA KOGEN

Japan's highest lift-accessed skiing provides excellent snow conditions across a long season.

Nagano sights like the Jigokudani Snow Monkeys are nearby.



COURSES
121



LONGEST COURSE
6KM



© JNTO


COURSES
24


LONGEST COURSE
10KM



40% 30% 30%

NOZAWA ONSEN

SKI AREA
297,000m²

Classic snow, classic onsen town



SNOW STUFF

Nozawa gets regular big dumps of powder snow as it is close to the Sea of Japan. The skiing stacks up with Japan's best with one of the longest vertical drops at 1085m. There are beginner runs higher up the mountain, so all levels can enjoy the views and families/friends of different abilities can catch up at the slopeside mid-mountain restaurant area. Nozawa Ski Resort is run by a local co-op, not a company. They are focused on ensuring guests have a great time.

the 8th century, where festivals and culture are all part of the mix. Where else can you stay in a traditional ryokan whose owners can trace back 18 generations living there? Hotels and apartments do fill up, so book early for main season. Or go in March for lots of snow and less people. There are great restaurants, many shops, and lively bars.

DON'T MISS

There are 13 free community run public onsen around town, so take your onsen set and go exploring.

STAY & PLAY

Nozawa Onsen is a classic blend of tradition and great skiing, an onsen town since

FURTHER INFO

<https://en.nozawaski.com>



© Owain Price


COURSES
80+


LONGEST COURSE
8.5KM



40% 40% 20%

MYOKO

SKI AREA
300,000m²

Great snow and a lively village



SNOW STUFF

Mt Myoko volcano is home to 4 major ski areas, available on the Big-4 pass, plus the smaller powder snow paradise of Seki Onsen. Myoko Suginohara reaches highest, with runs over 8km long. Their top lift has the best gradient, and most snow. It and Ikenotaira Onsen next door have opened great tree ski zones in recent years. Akakura Kanko and Onsen are separately owned, but flow together above the main base village at Akakura to make one large single area. They all get lots of snow. Hiking higher opens up more opportunities. Local guides offer a range of trips.

STAY & PLAY

The Japanese royal family ski from the 5-star Akakura Kanko Resort & Spa, which dominates the slopes. Just down the hill, Akakura Village has plenty of hotels, pensions and western-owned lodges that cater for all budgets. A thriving restaurant and après scene has sprung up over the past few years, without losing the town's Japanese character.

DON'T MISS

Joetsu City is a short bus or train trip away for shopping, sightseeing and dining.

FURTHER INFO

www.myokotourism.com



© Madarao


COURSES
44


LONGEST
COURSE
2.5KM



30% 40% 30%

MADARAO-TANGRAM

SKI AREA
100,000m²

MadaPow! Tree-ski heaven



SNOW STUFF

Madarao was one of the first ski areas in Japan to open up 'Tree Courses', designated powder runs in formerly no-go terrain. Results were immediate, western skiers and boarders flocked to try them out. What was a quiet backwater is now a firm favourite. Recently Tangram Resort, which occupies the other side of Mt Madarao, also opened up tree courses. The joint area, skiable on one pass, now claims 13 of them - the most in Japan. The 44 regular trails include 70% suited to beginners and intermediates, so everyone will have fun in the relaxed smaller resort environment.

STAY & PLAY

Madarao village straddles a small forested ridge, and has woken up over the past couple of years as new restaurants, cafes, pubs and lodges have popped up. They add to the top value Madarao Kogen Hotel. At Tangram, the Madarao Tokyu Resort Hotel Tangram offers a more up market option complete with a large indoor pool complex.

DON'T MISS

Iiyama City is just half an hour bus or taxi ride to check out the shops and izakaya.

FURTHER INFO

www.tangram.jp/eng/outdoor/
www.madarao.jp/en



© Prince Hotels


COURSES
45


LONGEST
COURSE
6KM



40% 35% 25%

NAEBA-KAGURA

SKI AREA
365,000m²

Massive inter-linked ski area



SNOW STUFF

Ski powder mid-morning off an overnight flight into Tokyo! It's just over 70 minutes via shinkansen to Echigo Yuzawa, then 20 minutes on the bus to the Mitsumata base at Kagura. It's another 35 minutes by road to bustling Naeba, the jewel in the crown of Prince Resorts ski areas. Naeba is best known for great groomed runs accessed by fast lifts. It's busy weekends, but surprisingly quiet for the size of the complex midweek. Kagura offers more of a wilderness feel, and a sign-out-the-gate back country powder zone at the top, plus a broad network of

cruising runs. The 6km long Dragonodola, Japan's longest gondola, links the two areas.

STAY & PLAY

The Naeba Prince complex is like a large cruise ship parked on the snow for your enjoyment. Restaurants, bars, onsen, entertainment and even an indoor kids-learn-to-ski-area are features. There are some other options in the town, only a 500m walk away.

DON'T MISS

Echigo Yuzawa has great shopping at the station and sake breweries in town.

FURTHER INFO

www.princehotels.com/en/ski/naeba

TOHOKU

TAKE A SLIDE ON JAPAN'S WILDER SIDE

OVERVIEW

Head north from Tokyo to Tohoku and discover another world, a wilder world. Mountains, lakes and forests dominate the landscape.

Onsen are everywhere too!

They are home to some of the best ski resorts in the country, many of which are still off the radar for international visitors.

Yet the shinkansen makes them as accessible as those further south, so you lose nothing in convenience.

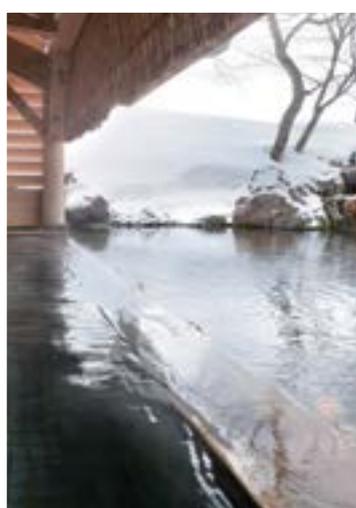
Start in the Aizu Region, which is promoting 18 ski areas (12 in Aizu & 6 in Minami Aizu), with some great package deals for international visitors. Options here range from budget to ski in/ski out deluxe hotels.

Next comes Yamagata, home to famous snow monsters and great skiing at historic Zao Onsen.

Keep speeding north to Morioka and you are an easy bus ride from Iwate Prefecture's 'Aspirin Powder' snow at Appi and Shizukuishi.

Then outside Aomori, Honshu's northernmost city, is the Holy Grail for deep snow skiers, Hakkoda.

Along the way, don't miss the regional cuisines, the castles (see where *The Last Samurai* story came from in Aizu), and some relaxed small city shopping between ski areas, which are easily combined using rail passes or self-driving.



NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Head north in Honshu to Tohoku, escaping the crowds and discovering great ski resorts in wild settings. © Owain Price





APPI RESORT

Powder perfect family favourite

SKI AREA
282,000m²



30%

40%

30%



SNOW STUFF

Appi is a less crowded all round resort that delivers on many fronts.

Start with plenty of famous Iwate Prefecture 'Aspirin Powder' snow. It's further north here, and being a bit further from the west coast the snow gets even drier. Their pro-powder policy, with several tree zones, helps you make the most of it, both within the resort and beyond thanks to backcountry and cat-skiing options. The main mountain is steeper on the top half and mellow lower down, neatly dividing the terrain.

Japan's best grooming keeps the main courses in prime condition. They even re-groom some runs at lunchtime, and again prior to night skiing, so for the non-powder skier it's a lot easier.

The ski-in/ski-out base complex with kids and beginners facilities right out front is ideal for families.

Appi runs a free bus to nearby Shimokura ski area twice a week.

STAY & PLAY

The self-contained resort/hotel complex at the base features restaurants, bars, an izakaya steak house, onsen, an indoor pool and sports complex and surprisingly lots of duty free shopping.

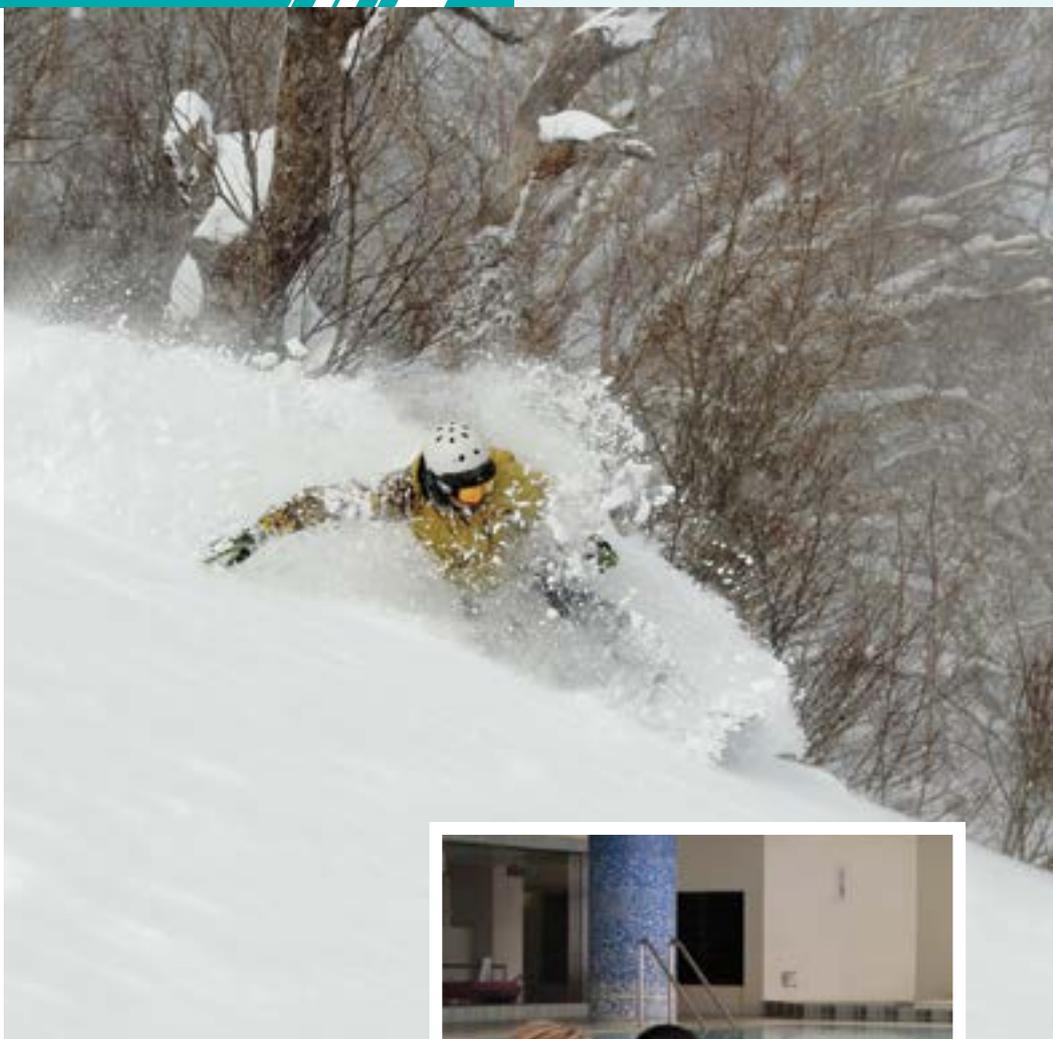
Accommodation ranges from standard rooms to deluxe suites, to apartment options with kitchenettes. Hachimantai City, a short local bus ride away, has cheaper options and a range of izakaya and traditional sake breweries, plus cultural activities.

DON'T MISS

Traditional Matsukawa Onsen in Hachimantai National Park offers old school outdoor mixed bathing. Iwate Ice Festival in February has great food and ice sculptures.

FURTHER INFO

www.appi-japan.com



APPI

Famous 'Aspirin Powder' snow and fantastic family facilities make Appi a favourite.

They work hard to constantly update and improve the offering for western guests.

© Appi



COURSES

21



LONGEST COURSE

5.5KM



© Grandeco


COURSES
29


LONGEST COURSE
4KM



ALTS BANDAI

Discover 18 ski areas in Aizu

35% 45% 25%

SKI AREA
121,000m²



SNOW STUFF

The historic Aizu region is still a largely undiscovered gem, amid beautiful lakes and mountains only a couple of hours north of Tokyo via shinkansen to Fukushima and local train or direct airport bus services.

It boasts some first class medium size ski resorts, and many smaller ones, with excellent deals.

For international visitors Alts Bandai, which boasts glorious views over Lake Inawashiro, is the largest of 6 ski areas on the region's dominant peak, Mt Bandai. Enjoy runs for all standards, great parks, and free cat-skiing. A short hike or free bus takes you to Nekoma, skiable on the same lift ticket, is a powder secret

tucked away on the shady northside of the peak. Nearby Grandeco gets lots of snow, with mellow powder runs to find your 'Japow' legs.

STAY & PLAY

Hoshino Resorts Bandaisan Onsen Hotel offers self-contained ski-in/ski-out at the base. Cheaper options available in Bandai town down the road. Grandeco has excellent ski-in/ski-out.

DON'T MISS

Visit Tsurugajo Castle in Aizu-Wakamatsu City and Higashiyama Onsen Village.

FURTHER INFO

www.alt.s.co.jp/en
<https://fukushima.travel/>




COURSES
26


LONGEST COURSE
10KM



ZAO ONSEN

Ski with the snow monsters!

40% 40% 20%

SKI AREA
305,000m²



SNOW STUFF

Even if you don't ski you will love to check out Zao's famous snow monsters, the snow covered pines that cover the upper slopes. View them floodlit at night and ski past them by day.

The ski area is one of Japan's oldest, with a strong Austrian connection, and largest, sprawling over several distinct zones with runs up to an astonishing 10km long.

Having snow monsters is a sign they get lots of snow, and there is good powder (though access to it remains limited), plus great beginner and intermediate runs with lots of variety discovering the different areas.

STAY & PLAY

Zao Onsen Village is a historic onsen town whose therapeutic hot springs have been known since 110AD. Three public baths are available, as well as many in the big selection of hotels and ryokans. The town straddles the side of the mountain, with views over Yamagata in the valley below. Not much nightlife, but several izakaya.

DON'T MISS

Yamagata City is famous as a castle town. The castle and its walls are well-preserved.

FURTHER INFO

www.zao-spa.or.jp/english/



© Owain Price



HAKKODA

A deep powder paradise

20% 30% 50%

SKI AREA

Large backcountry areas




COURSES
5


LONGEST COURSE
5.5KM

SNOW STUFF

Aomori Prefecture at the northern tip of Honshu gets the same great quantity and quality of snow as Hokkaido, most famously at Hakkoda. A single ropeway takes you to a lonely powder ski paradise. There are no groomed runs here, just a series of marked back country courses that run down from the top. You can ski the two main courses following the trail markers, but get a local guide - available at the base - to safely discover more. A small area with a short chairlift, a couple of groomed runs and nice short powder lines operates next to the ropeway, for times when the ropeway is closed by weather.

STAY & PLAY

The mid-range Hakkoda Resort Hotel and budget Hakkoda Sanso Lodge are at the base, there is no village. Several delightful hotels are along the road past Hakkoda. These include historic Sukayu Onsen, where you bathe in a 300 year old traditional mixed onsen. When the ski routes are open you can ski back to these hotels, and they run shuttles.

DON'T MISS

Sukayu Onsen is a must as above. Aomori City has great seafood and good shopping.

FURTHER INFO

<http://hakkoda-ski.com>



© Owain Price



SHIZUKUISHI

Powder Prince!

40% 40% 20%

SKI AREA

65,000m²




COURSES
11


LONGEST COURSE
4.5KM

SNOW STUFF

Shizukuishi gets similar 'Aspirin Powder' snow as nearby Appi. It's still undiscovered, so you can enjoy it with less competition. There are nice tree runs at the top, long open runs, plus old courses above and to the side of the resort that provide plenty of powder turns. The long groomed courses suit all standards, including a kid's area and easy course out front of the hotel that is open for night skiing too. For something special, take the Sunrise Cat Ski Tour on the otherwise now closed Downhill Course from the 1993 FIS Ski World Championships.

STAY & PLAY

Shizukuishi is a self-contained Prince Hotels resort, with the hotel the only accommodation option. Packages with meals are great value. There's no nightlife, apart from sharing the day's experiences with friends, but for couples and families it's a quiet getaway. The excellent Kobushi French restaurant is a small, well worth it, upgrade from a package with buffet dinner.

DON'T MISS

Morioka city is only 50 minutes away by bus.

FURTHER INFO

www.princehotels.com/en/ski/shizukuishi/

DAY TRIPS

SNOW CLOSE!



GOT A DAY TO SPARE IN TOKYO?

If you are in Japan on business, a stopover, or a more general holiday and want to see what all the snow buzz is about, why not just take a day or half-day trip? When time is short try these.

GALA YUZAWA

Snow special trains to Gala Yuzawa, just 90 minutes from Tokyo, depart every few minutes on winter weekends. The resort base station is built right on top of the shinkansen station - big lifts take you up to the plaza level, where a massive gear hire and English language snow sports school operates. With gear sorted, hop on the gondola up to the ski area, which is quite a decent size and connects to two neighbouring ones.

Echigo Yuzawa, 5 minutes before Gala Yuzawa, is a thriving town with 11 close ski areas, one a short walk away, the rest accessed by buses or taxis. The station has a great shopping and restaurant complex. Highlight is the sake tasting centre with over 90 varieties on offer via token machines. It's easy to store ski gear if you are lugging it, or just hire everything.

<https://gala.co.jp/winter/english/>

KARUIZAWA

Even closer than Gala, Karuizawa is just over 60 minutes from Tokyo on the Hokuriku shinkansen, with the slopes a short walk from the station. The ski area has 10 cruisy runs up to 1.2km long and terrain parks. The snowmaking is potent, enabling it to be one of the first areas to open in Japan in November each year.

Around 200 shops, including outlets, are on offer at Karuizawa Prince Shopping Plaza.

www.princehotels.com/en/ski/karuizawa/

JOETSU KOKUSAI SKI RESORT

With 25 lifts and a wide variety of courses, plus half-pipes, parks and a kids area, there's something for everyone from beginners through to advanced. The variety of restaurants mean you are able to relax with your choice of Japanese or Western food. Take the shinkansen from Tokyo to

Echigo-Yuzawa, then transfer to the JR Joetsu Line to Joetsu Kokusai Ski Jo Mae station, 110 minutes from Tokyo. www.jkokusai.co.jp/english/

KUSATSU

Kusatsu Kokusai Ski Resort is situated a short walk from Kusatsu Onsen, one of Japan's best hot spring resort areas. It has 12 lifts and is a nice, small resort perfect for part-time skiers. The best way to finish a tiring day on the slopes is to soak in the onsen.

Highway buses to Kusatsu depart from Tokyo, Shinjuku and Shibuya Station. The journey takes approximately 4 hours.

WHITE WORLD OZE IWAKURA

Oze Iwakura is one of the biggest ski areas in Kanto, a ski resort with 16 different courses and offers various choices for a wide range of visitors, including skiers, snowboarders, experts and families.

From Tokyo take the shinkansen to Jomo Kogen and then the Oze Kikou bus to the resort. Total travel time is approximately 150 minutes.

MINAKAMI TOWN

Sitting just south of the Tanigawa mountain range, there are many ski resorts to truly suit all levels in the Minakami region - spectacular Tenjindeira offers world-beating expert tree skiing, while Minakami-Hodaigi is perfect for families for example.

Minakami is a year-round onsen town and outdoor destination, with a variety of activities during green season too. Take the shinkansen from Tokyo to Jomo Kogen, from where there are a variety of shuttle buses to Minakami Onsen or the ski resorts directly. Travel time from Tokyo is around 2.5 hours.

<http://www.visit-gunma.jp/en/>



MORE INFO/BOOKINGS

Travel Agencies

ALL JAPAN SKI

www.alljapanski.com

AMPED

www.amped4ski.co.nz

AWL PITT AUSTRALIA

www.japanpackage.com.au

BLUE POWDER TRAVEL

www.bluepowder.com.au

DEEP POWDER SNOW HOLIDAYS

www.deeppowdertours.com

EXPERIENCE JAPAN

www.experiencejapan.com.au

H.I.S. AUSTRALIA

www.travelsnow.com.au

INSIDEJAPAN TOURS

www.insidejapantours.com

JAPAN HOLIDAYS

www.japanholidays.com.au

JAPAN SNOW ACCOMMODATION

<https://japansnowaccommodation.com>

JTB AUSTRALIA

www.japanski.com.au

MOUNTAINWATCH TRAVEL

www.mountainwatch.travel

MINT TOURS

www.minttours.com

MOGUL SKI WORLD

www.mogulski.com.au

NISEKO SKI TOURS

www.nisekoski.com.au

NIPPON TRAVEL AGENCY / SACHI TOURS

www.nta-sachitours.com.au

OZ SNOW

www.ozsnowadventures.com.au

POWDER HOLIDAYS

www.powderholiday.com

SAIZEN TOURS

www.saizen.com.au

SCOUT

www.scoutski.com

SKIJAPAN.COM

www.skijapan.com

SKIMAX

www.skimax.com.au

SKI TRAVEL COMPANY

www.skitravelcompany.com.au

SKI TRAVEL SPECIALISTS

www.skitravel.co.nz

SNO'N'SKI HOLIDAYS

www.snonski.com.au

SNOWCAPPED TOURS

www.snowcapped.com.au

SNOWPAK

www.snowpak.com.au

SNOWSCENE HOLIDAYS

www.snowscene.com.au

TRAVEL&CO

www.travelandco.nz

TRAVELPLAN AUSTRALIA

www.travelplan.com.au

WHITEROOM TOURS

www.whiteroomtours.com



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www.japan.travel/en/au



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