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NISEKO-YO

AT NISEKO VILLAGE



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A close-up photograph of a woman's hand holding a small, wrapped gift box. The box is wrapped in clear tissue paper and tied with a dark blue ribbon that has the 'DE BEERS' logo printed on it. The hand is adorned with several pieces of diamond jewelry: a wide, ornate diamond ring on the ring finger, a thin diamond band on the middle finger, and two diamond bracelets on the wrist. The background is a deep blue, textured surface.

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The TUMI logo is displayed in a large, white, stylized font. It features a horizontal bar above the letters 'T' and 'M', which are connected by a thin line. The letters 'U' and 'I' are also connected by a thin line. The logo is centered over the image of the man and the suitcase.

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Elevate your dining experience




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SPARKLING

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Winter means many things. For us at YTL Hotels, the first snowfall turns hearts and minds to the wonderland that is Niseko Village, a continually evolving wintertime destination in an area that is known to many as the Aspen of the East. Niseko Village is many things to many people: their first ski experience, the spectacular Mount Yotei in the distance, endless soaks in the many *onsen* at our properties or even finding a fresh batch of handmade rich, flaky Milk Kobo cream puffs and taking a blissful bite.

With this special edition of *YTL Life*, we bring you exciting news of the latest and, by far, the most ambitious addition to Niseko Village. Right at the heart of the village, we have birthed Niseko-yo, the pulsating core of Niseko for all hours of the day and night. In order to introduce these unique and transformative experiences to the entire area, we relied on the power of youth, seeking advice, impetus and expertise from a list of tastemakers and globetrotters who know what it takes to add an extra layer of panache to Niseko Village.

Thus the name Niseko-yo, which simply means 'Niseko world'. The Japanese kanji for 'yo' means world, society and life, among many other meanings. In other words, when visitors to Niseko-yo are entering a world set by the world-class standards of Niseko Village, allowing them to live their life to the fullest among treasured friends, family and society from all over the world.

In the pages ahead, you will meet this cast of characters. They include one of Malaysia's brightest mixology talents, a trio of artists who have influenced the cultural and artistic make-up of the village, and the key team whose unwavering vision has helped to realise Niseko-yo as a living, beating hub of art, entertainment, gastronomy, retail and lots more.

With that, I wish you plenty of fun on the powder snow trails and runs of Niseko Village, and lots more enjoyable après-ski pleasures, all of which you will find in the shiny, bright and beautiful new Niseko-yo.



ESCAPE TO THE WORLD OF NISEKO-YO

EXPERIENCE THE BEST OF JAPAN AND HOKKAIDO'S
RICH CULTURE IN THIS NEWLY UNVEILED HAVEN, WHERE
GASTRONOMY, SHOPPING AND VIBRANT NIGHTLIFE CONVERGE.

Words by ALICIA CORBETT

The powder in Niseko is considered to be some of the best in the world.



On the south end of Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost island, lies the town of Niseko, nestled in the valley between the postcard-perfect mountains, Niseko-Annupuri and Yotei. Formerly known as Kaributo to the indigenous Ainu-Kaributo tribe, the first settlers arrived in the 19th century and agricultural practices became widespread. On 1 October 1964, it took on the name Niseko, originating from the Ainu word 'Nisekoan' meaning 'a sheer cliff jutting over a riverbank deep in the mountains'.

Thanks to weather fronts that come from Siberia, Niseko boasts perfect light dry snow, plenty of powder days and long winters that make it the envy of ski resorts across the world. The Niseko United ski area consists of four connected resorts: Niseko Grand Hirafu, Niseko Hanazono, Niseko Annupuri and Niseko Village, with a combined 2,191 acres of skiable terrain. Niseko Village, the most exclusive and private of the four, boasts a staggering 18-metre annual snowfall, which has earned it the title of the Aspen of the East.

Despite earning its name through its five-month winter spell, Niseko Village is in season year-round. It is a place to embrace nature while enjoying the creature comforts of the premier destination. In summer, it transforms into an idyllic getaway, making it the ideal spot for a tranquil cycle through the long quiet roads, white water rafting or strawberry picking. Niseko's charm also lies in its hot springs, or *onsen*, farm-fresh dairy products and abundant seafood spreads.

THE CURTAIN LIFTS ON NISEKO-YO

In winter 2023, Niseko Village will welcome Niseko-yo and its carefully curated collection of experiences that are aimed at making it the ultimate winter destination for discerning travellers. Its name translates directly to 'Niseko world', while the Japanese kanji for 'yo' (世) means world, society and life, among many other meanings.

When one enters Niseko-yo, one enters an elevated realm of the region that offers the very best of dining, shopping and nightlife.

The creation of Niseko-yo was spearheaded by Pei Tsen Yeoh, Director of the Architecture & Design team at YTL Construction, who was involved in conceptualising, brainstorming and setting the direction for the various projects.

"Niseko-yo is part of the Niseko Village masterplan. It is a reimagining of Niseko Village for travellers seeking unique, luxury lifestyle experiences," Pei Tsen said. "You could say that Niseko-yo is the lifestyle component of Niseko Village. By bringing together all these elements, we aim to inject energy, fun and vibrancy into life in Niseko Village."

Simultaneously contemporary while blending seamlessly with the pristine landscape of the outdoors, three brand new double-storey buildings that are set to be launched in December 2023 will accommodate these lifestyle offerings. The buildings will also become the gastronomic nucleus of Niseko Village, with an array of international cuisine and dining experiences.

THANKS TO WEATHER FRONTS THAT COME FROM SIBERIA,
NISEKO BOASTS PERFECT LIGHT DRY SNOW, PLenty OF
POWDER DAYS AND LONG WINTERS THAT MAKE IT THE ENVY OF
SKI RESORTS ACROSS THE WORLD.



Niseko boasts beautiful panoramas year-round, such as this view of autumn foliage lining a road that seems to lead to Mount Yotei.



FRANK WOO HAS CREATED AN
ENSEMBLE OF FASCINATING
CREATURES NATIVE TO THE REGION
INCLUDING THE HOKKAIDO BROWN
BEAR, RED FOX AND LONG-TAILED TIT.



NISEKO-YO - DECEMBER 2023

Additionally, Mandala Club—Asia Pacific’s most dynamic private membership club community—will open for a limited four-month duration only. It occupies a two-storey clubhouse as a dynamic hub in the heart of the Village. “Mandala Club is renowned for its rich cultural calendar, chef residencies and music programming,” Pei Tsen says. “It will further add vibrancy and excitement to life in Niseko Village.”

ART IMITATES LIFE

With its stunning mountain landscape, abundant nature and four distinct seasons, Niseko has inspired a plethora of artists over the years. Niseko Village is similarly dedicated to appreciating the beauty of the region through the arts. For this purpose, it has enlisted international talent including Hong Kong modern and contemporary artist Frank Woo and Hokkaido native Emi Shiratori, whose strong influence of her birthplace is reflected in her works. Their art pieces don’t just make visual statements, they also awaken the senses. Their works have added an evocative layer to journeys to Niseko-yo, allowing visitors to delve into the deeper story of its cultural and natural narrative.

Frank has created an ensemble of fascinating creatures native to the region including the Hokkaido brown bear, red fox and long-tailed tit. These larger-than-life sculptures serve to narrate Hokkaido’s rich folklore and traditions while guiding visitors through the surroundings. His artistry further extends to Higashiyama Niseko Village, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, with glimmering installations and pieces that pay homage to the magnificent outdoors.

Over at The Green Leaf Niseko Village, its rooms and spaces act as a canvas for Emi Shiratori and the late Shoichiro Tomioka. Dedicated to immortalising the snowy landscapes of Tomioka’s homeland, the 20th-century artist created his non-discolouring and non-cracking white oil paint, Tomioka White, which now covers the eponymous lounge and the hotel’s lobby. More than 190 of his original paintings framing the grand vistas outside are displayed in the rooms. Meanwhile, Shiratori is known for her inimitable hand-drawn style, motifs of indigenous animals and masterful paintings of the forest, all of which greet visitors at the entrance, line the corridors and adorn features such as the doors.

Poet Robert Frost may encourage travellers to go on *The Road Not Taken*, but at Niseko-yo, voyagers are guided to take illuminated pathways. Enhanced by cutting-edge projections, these serve as wayfinders with tales of yore and latter-day unfolding along the way.

A CULINARY SPHERE FOR GASTRONOMES

After a day on the slopes, whet your appetite at each of the noteworthy and sophisticated dining options at Niseko-yo, which will put the region on the map as a destination for epicureans. There’s no greater portal to Japanese culture than through its cuisine. For instance, Gogyo powered by Ippudo offers a taste of the iconic Hakata Tonkotsu ramen, which the brand is known for, by day. The space transforms into a buzzing *izakaya* at night with eclectic small plates and its signature Kogashi ramen.



Celebrated artists such as Emi Shiratori (this page) and Frank Woo (facing page) have left their indelible marks, offering guests a sensory exploration of nature and heritage.

This cocktail by Penrose by Jon Lee, called Ume Fuji, is available at Chuya Bar.

Facing page: savour Boiled Japanese Hair Crab at Yang Shu Ten.





FOOD AND BEVERAGE IS A SIGNIFICANT PILLAR OF NISEKO-YO.

Soak up the rustic ambience of the Baby Crosta pizzeria, the latest addition to the internationally acclaimed pizza brand Crosta Pizzeria, which has carved its name on the list of Top 10 Pizzerias in Asia-Pacific. Introducing the first Roman-style pizza to Niseko, Baby Crosta puts a fun spin on traditional Roman-style by-the-slice pizza by utilising some of the best produce in Hokkaido. Pizza aficionados will be further delighted by the first pizza *omakase* experience in the region fronted by Chef Yuichi Ito, who was bestowed with the award of Best Pizzaiolo 2022 in Japan.

With food and beverage being a significant pillar of Niseko-yo, it also brings to the table a variety of other fare such as authentic Shanghainese cuisine from Long Tang, tantalising and soul-warming Sichuan hotpot at Chuan, and exquisitely crafted sushi and flavourful tempura at Yang Shu Ten. Other noteworthy mentions include premium cuts at Hokkaien Yakiniku, as well as Moka, which unites the rich flavours of two of the world's most cherished cuisines, Japanese and Italian, and more.

SHAKEN & STIRRED

Over at Higashiyama Niseko Village, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, Chuya exhibits two distinct personalities at different times of the day, each with its own allure. In the daytime, Chuya Teahouse is steeped in Japanese tradition and serves perfectly brewed teas and meticulously crafted pastries. By night, Chuya Bar offers much more than just a nightcap; you'll be rewarded with a wealth of rare and intriguing cocktails by renowned bars such as Penrose by Jon Lee, hailed among Asia's 50 Best Bars of 2023.

The Niseko Village ski field is renowned for its signature dry champagne powder at low altitudes and diverse ski terrains.

A TOAST TO CHAMPAGNE POWDER

The snow at the skiing nirvana is likened to the champagne powder due to its quality, where each spellbinding turn will cast clouds of powder into the air. Riders of all levels from first-timers to adrenaline junkies can take advantage of one of the best mountain ranges in the world, where each day is an adventure.

With its internationally certified multilingual instructors, The Niseko Village Snow School (NVSS) offers a brilliant introduction to the world of snow sports with private lessons for skiing and snowboarding for children and adults alike. Advanced skiers and snowboarders are able to roam the mountains to their heart's delight along with an experienced guide via the NVSS All Mountain Explorer. An epic powder run down virgin snow awaits with a ride on First Tracks Cat Skiing, where skiers and boarders are transported up the mountain in a snowcat, a grooming machine with a cabin on the back. Daredevils who are confident in their abilities can head over to Mizuno-No-Sawa, a specially controlled terrain that provides some of the steepest runs and powder in Hokkaido.

A Snowmobile Adventure or a Jumbo Sledding tour will deliver the ultimate winter fun for the whole family. Visitors can also choose to dash through the snow in a one-horse open sleigh for a picturesque ride that will feel like a scene out of a storybook.







Higashiyama Niseko Village,
a Ritz-Carlton Reserve (left) and
Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse (below).



A HAVEN FOR STYLE MAVENS

The mountains can be a sartorial playground thanks to the two fabulous retail offerings at Niseko-yo. Turn heads on the slopes with some help from The Holiday Project, where holiday pieces have been curated to add a touch of refinement and luxury to your cold-weather wardrobe.

What's more, the ultimate winter shopping experience awaits at Village Sports for skiers and snowboarders alike with a custom boot lab, a premium ski rental catalogue and a stellar selection of outdoor luxury brands.

FIND REFUGE IN TOP-CLASS PROPERTIES

Wherever in Niseko Village visitors choose to rest their heads, there are indulgent accommodation options that some might say are fit for the emperor. The first is Higashiyama Niseko Village, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, the first in Japan and one of only five Ritz-Carlton Reserves worldwide. The intimate retreat offers front-row views of Mount Yotei through its glass walls accompanied by hints of the natural world threaded through the contemporary design of its 50 rooms and suites.

A testament to Japan's heritage townhouses that were inhabited by craftsmen and wealthy merchants toward the end of the Edo period, the exclusive Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse is a lush alpine oasis that can house up to six in each dwelling. Next, the Japanese design ethos of *wabi-sabi*, which promotes the beauty of the natural world and simplicity, imbues subtle beauty throughout the 79 elegantly furnished boutique apartments and in-house *onsen* at Hinode Hills Niseko Village. The height of personalised service awaits here as visitors can have their snowboards waxed while they sleep, paired with a ski-in, ski-out experience.

Another enchanting ski-in, ski-out retreat is The Green Leaf Niseko Village conceptualised by award-winning New York-based firm Champalimaud Design, whose résumé includes The Plaza Hotel in New York City. Hand-drawn creations by Emi Shiratori create a unique atmosphere throughout the spaces, which include a rooftop fire pit and an outdoor thermal pool.

Thrice voted Best Ski Resort Hotel in Japan by the World Ski Awards, Hilton Niseko Village at the foot of Mount Annupuri is only a 10-minute gondola ride to the top. The opulent hotel comes outfitted with all the amenities one could ask for, including a spa and *onsen* with two bathing areas and a colourful carp-filled pond.

With its captivating culture and endless offerings that never fail to cast a spell on all who visit, melt away the stresses of day-to-day life by embarking on a journey to Niseko-yo.



With its rich variety of terrain and beautiful winter woods, Niseko offers an unforgettable experience for all levels of skiers and snowboarders.



THE RHYTHM OF POWDER SNOW

PERFECT MARSHMALLOW-SOFT
SNOW CONDITIONS, CREATED
BY A MARRIAGE BETWEEN THE
WARM BREATH OF THE SEA
OF JAPAN AND THE ICY KISS
OF SIBERIA, IS ONE OF THE
MANY REASONS WHY NISEKO
IS A WORLD-FAMOUS SKIING
DESTINATION.

Words by JUNE MONG-LOFTIN

In 2021, a team of former British SAS soldiers came to the western terrain beyond the ski resorts of Niseko to test their new high-performance outerwear. In search of some of the harshest conditions on Earth, they found it in Niseko, which is about a two-hour drive southwest of Sapporo. Each winter, the coastline of the Sea of Japan receives a continental mass of cold air from Siberia, which turns into heavy snow in Niseko. This icy Siberian air mass traverses Hokkaido island to bring snow to the ski resorts in the south. The Russian coastline can be seen from north Hokkaido; in fact the closest point between the two countries is 40 kilometres as the island of Sakhalin lies just off the eastern coastline. This geographic and meteorological quirk is good news to skiers and snowboarders who are drawn to these resorts.

Since the late 1980s, skiers and snowboarders have been gravitating to Niseko, but not for the awesome *couloirs*, the steepest mountain slopes or the narrowest tree runs. They have come for Niseko's one ephemeral ingredient, powder snow, and lots of it. Ask any dedicated ski enthusiast or professional—it's probably the deepest snow you'll find on Earth.

It's safe to say that every powder snow enthusiast will want to ski on the Niseko slopes at least once. There are four main ski areas here (five if you include Niseko Moiwa) where you can enjoy both groomed and comfortable ski slopes as well as off-piste back country skiing in quality, fresh powder snow.

But for the winter sport dilettante, here is a quick introduction to everything you need to know about powder snow. The evocative term refers to a type of snow that offers soft, cloud-like powder pillows and tree runs, and is considered to be ideal for skiing and snowboarding. It is fresh snow that is dry, airy and is as comfortable as a feather duvet to fall into. The Japanese call it Japow, which is a portmanteau of 'Japan' and 'powder'.

IT'S SAFE TO SAY THAT EVERY
POWDER SNOW ENTHUSIAST WILL
WANT TO SKI ON THE NISEKO
SLOPES AT LEAST ONCE.

From December to May, Niseko Village receives an average snowfall of around 18 metres annually.





Niseko Village is located at Mount Niseko Annupuri, which has a peak elevation of 1,308 metres.



The secret to Niseko's powder is location. The area's proximity to the sea (the port city of Otaru is only an hour's drive away) means that ideal conditions are guaranteed for heavy snowfall. At the same time, northwest from Niseko and beyond the Sea of Japan comes the cold wind from the Arctic tundra of Siberia. When this icy wind meets the warm, moist air of the Sea of Japan, you get reliably heavy snowfall as well as the powder snow Niseko is so famous for from December to March. When the rest of Japan is starting its cherry blossom season in March, the powder snow ski season is still going strong in Hokkaido.

Niseko can turn you into a powder snob and soon you'll find it hard to ski anywhere else. You may be thrilled by 10 centimetres of light dry powder snow on your first visit. But after a few days of enjoying this, even 20 centimetres of snowfall a day becomes par for the course, and soon you will officially become a powder snob. But your snobbery is forgivable when Niseko enjoys up to six-and-a-half metres of snowfall in December and still be assured of six metres of powder snow a month later each year.

Powder pioneers first started coming to Niseko in the late 1980s, attracted by the talk on the snow-vine of light dry snow pistes and moguls for skiers as well as endless snow-covered fields and forests for snowboarders to claim as their own. However, it wasn't until the late 1990s that Niseko was

put on the winter sports map. Professional snowboarders such as Taro Tamai – founder of snowboarding gear outfit Gentemstick – remembers never encountering any queues for the lifts. Then one day in 1997, Tamai showed up in the morning, and someone said that he was here first, so please get in line.

CUSTODIANS OF THE PISTE

After a day of winter sports on the mountains, it's possible to see from your hotel window myriad shafts of lights moving like

**WHEN THE REST OF JAPAN IS
STARTING ITS CHERRY BLOSSOM
SEASON IN MARCH, THE POWDER
SNOW SKI SEASON IS STILL GOING
STRONG IN HOKKAIDO.**

Niseko Village is often hailed as the
Aspen of Asia.





Grand Hirafu is part of the quartet of resorts known as Niseko United.

giant torches up and down the pitch-black slopes. These are the custodians of the piste, who are hard at work grooming the slopes on large machinery.

After the resorts shut down for the day and the night-skiing lights are switched off, Niseko's fleet of snow caterpillars stealthily leave their homes at the resort bases. As the drivers find their way with the caterpillar's front lights, they collectively look like fireflies dancing on the dark mountain slopes. These groomers work throughout the night, shaping and stroking the slopes into pristinely lined furrows called corduroy for a skier's first turn the next morning. Sometimes working through blizzards, each driver covers approximately 30 kilometres to 40 kilometres each night.

A good portion of their night's work is spent managing and moving mountains of snow from around the lifts and base stations to keep the resorts operational. As there is not much

smooth terrain at Niseko, it's a challenge for snow groomers to create a surface that is safe for skiers of varying skill levels. However, thanks to these masterful snow caterpillar drivers, Niseko is the powder capital of the world's groomed runs.

SKIING IN NISEKO IN A NUTSHELL

Niseko United, which lies at the foot of Mount Annupuri, is a tapestry embroidered at its hem by four separately owned hotel resorts: Annupuri, Niseko Village, Hanazono and Niseko Grand Hirafu. They each contribute to the diversity and variety of this canvas, offering winter sport lovers a terrain that is distinctive to each of their personalities and character. There are few mountains that offer such a wide range of skiing landscapes.

Annupuri offers the most traditionally Japanese resort experience, which explains why it remains a popular choice



Niseko Grand Hirafu's chairlifts.

among locals who can nip in and out of the gates to ski on the open groomed slopes. It's also distinctive for its bowls, which give a skier open fields and powder-filled tree runs that morph into natural half pipes. Just make sure you have backcountry safety gear and know-how before you tackle these. (A bowl is a wide mountain basin whose slopes look as if they were carved from the side of a miso soup bowl.)

Niseko Village will welcome the novice skier and boarder with open arms, but it is also known for its steep off-piste powder runs and fast groomers. There is a reason why it's being considered for Olympic alpine events in Sapporo, for a future Japanese bid to host a Winter Games. The best time to take to the slopes here is before breakfast, when the runs have been freshly groomed and a new layer of powder has dusted the slopes.

Hanazono is synonymous with ski party fun, mellow pistes and winter games for young children. The man-made natural powder Strawberry Fields Park is also truly awesome for boarders who like to freestyle – they can jib, rail and jump to their heart's content. And the Hanazono Bowl base area is tailor-made for those experiencing snow for the first time with tubing, tobogganing and magic carpet lifts on offer.

Niseko Grand Hirafu is the first resort to be opened here and has the most variety of slopes in all of Niseko United. It is distinguished by its valleys and ridges that are filled deep with powder. It is also the main access route to the mountain's peak. But beware, as it still uses the old-school single chairlift known as the meat hook. For night skiing, nothing beats Hirafu for the largest area opened for after-dark ski and board sports.

A BRIEF SKIING HISTORY LESSON AND HOW TO MAKE YOUR WAY TO NISEKO

Hokkaido island was settled by the Japanese 154 years ago in 1869, when the threat of Russia's imperial ambitions threatened to swallow it and other neighbouring islands into Alexander III's empire. The Japanese thought that would be too close for comfort and built garrisons on Hokkaido island. The Japanese army enjoyed the springs and summers but found the winters very difficult. That is, until 1912, when a visiting Austrian-Hungarian military officer taught the Japanese how to ski in Niseko. The sport caught on with Hokkaido locals, and almost 50 years later in 1961, the first ski lift was installed in what is known as Hirafu today.

Niseko is in southern Hokkaido. Most visitors fly to Chitose Airport where they catch a coach for the 90-minute road journey west to Niseko. Sapporo is about 100 kilometres to the east of Niseko.

ART AT THE START

ARTISTS SOICHIRO TOMIOKA AND EMI SHIRATORI
CONTINUE TO DRAW ON THE PRISTINE NATURE OF NISEKO,
TRANSPORTING IT INSIDE THE GREEN LEAF NISEKO
VILLAGE SO EACH STAY IS AN UNBROKEN RENDEZVOUS
WITH THE AREA'S LANDSCAPES.

Words by KARMUN NG

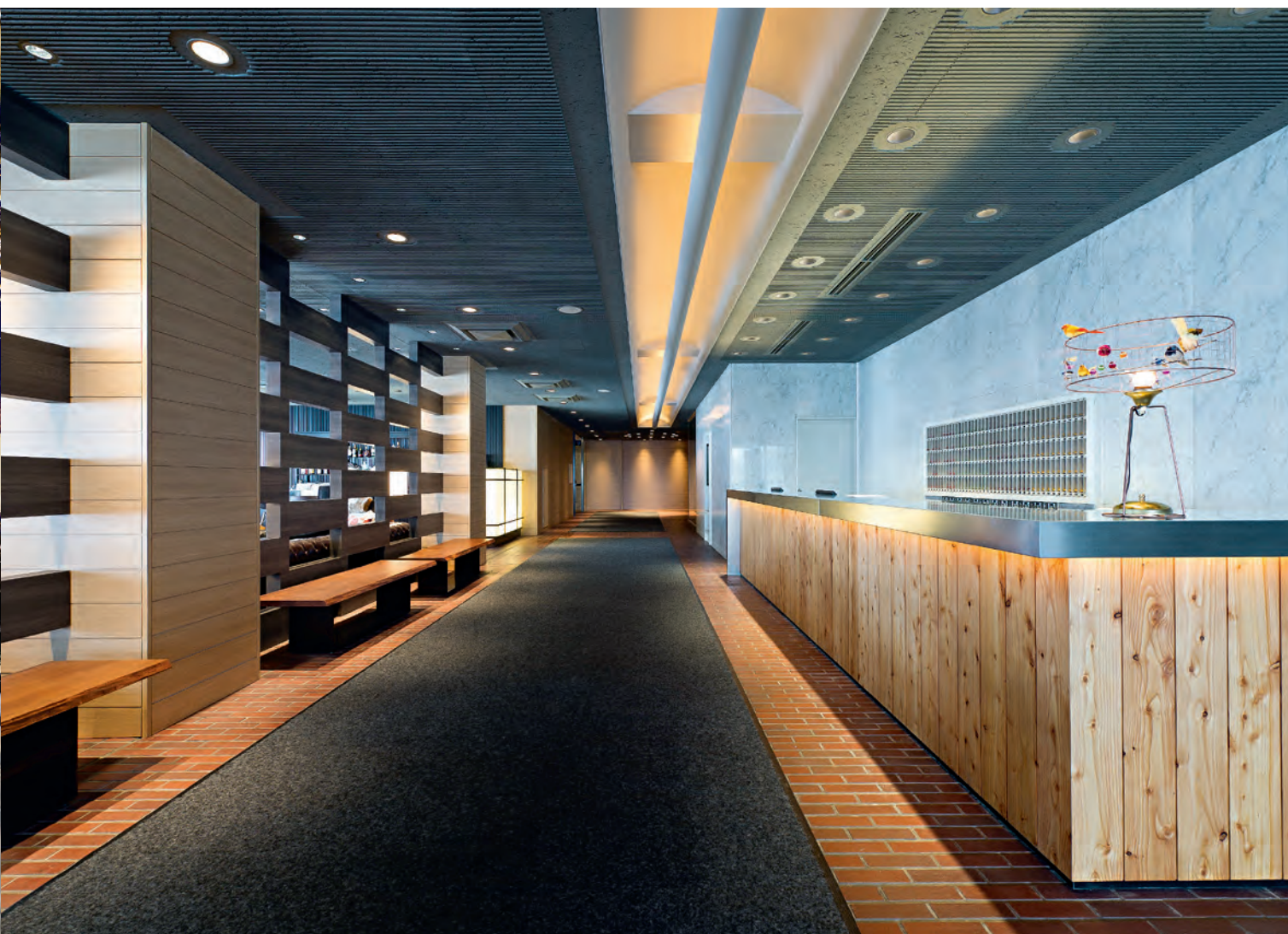


Where powdery white snow and sprawling snowcapped mountains paint the breathtaking backdrop of each stay at The Green Leaf Niseko Village, so too are the rooms and spaces inside - brought to life with equal reverence by Soichiro Tomioka and Emi Shiratori. The two artists pay homage to the flora and fauna of the world-famous ski destination in Hokkaido by inviting all who view their works to lose themselves in the intricate curve of trees, delicate strokes of leaves and calming bends of riverbanks.

The uninitiated would be surprised to learn that decades separate the two names. The late Tomioka is a pioneer of the past who dedicated his art to preserving some of his favourite snowy elements of Japan. Shiratori, on the other hand, is a present-day contemporary artist who uses modern art techniques to continue her predecessor's work.

Separated in time but united in the same artistic cause, both their works welcome and engage each guest at The Green Leaf Niseko Village.

The lobby (below) is named after the late Soichiro Tomioka, who loved depicting Japanese snow country that is typical of the area surrounding The Green Leaf Niseko Village (facing page).





Clockwise from above: *Lake Tagokura*; *Winter Trees*; Soichiro Tomioka.



SOICHIRO TOMIOKA'S SERENE SNOWY LANDSCAPES

Born 1922, in Takada in Niigata prefecture, Tomioka carved his artistic niche from the snowy landscapes. He came to be known for his microscopic study of naked tree branches, regal depictions of fog-cloaked mountain peaks and the snaking rivers connecting both.

An undying theme across all his works is his fascination for the white of snow, a reverence that he would come to term "the white world" following his pilgrimage to the snowy regions of Japan in 1972 to get the look, feel and touch precisely right. He even created his own non-discolouring and non-cracking white oil paint, Tomioka White, which he applied with an extra-long painting knife, custom-made for him by a blacksmith.

Following a career that spanned East to West, his first introduction to The Green Leaf Niseko Village was when he was commissioned to create pieces for its initial opening more than

40 years ago. Then managed by Prince Hotel, the property had the honour of having all its rooms feature a work by Tomioka.

When YTL Hotels bought the property in 2010 and refurbished it into an eco-chic 200-room resort, it named its lobby and adjacent lounge after Tomioka. It was, of course, cloaked in Tomioka White, drawing a seamless welcome from the snowy exteriors into the warm interiors, flanked by cosy leather sofas, a signature fireplace and a bar serving innovative cocktails, sake and fine wines. The perfect accompaniment when guests spend time in the space is the hotel's signature cocktail, also of the same name.

Today, more than 190 of Tomioka's original paintings in the rooms continue to be a fixture of each stay, a serene and scenic homage to the late artist and his impact on Japanese art as silent and soothing as the falling snow.

EMI SHIRATORI'S BOLD ORGANIC PATTERNS

In 2010, in the neighbouring Hilton Niseko Village, a young Shiratori was hosting an exhibition featuring a few of her latest artworks and products when she was noticed by designer Alexandra Champalimaud of New York-based Champalimaud Design. In particular, Shiratori's quirky yet elegant, organic yet contemporary aesthetic made Champalimaud, then spearheading the redesign of The Green Leaf, believe it would blend perfectly with the newly refurbished resort. More importantly, it was the perfect chapter two of continuity to Tomioka's original prints of Japanese snow country as the design language of the hotel.

Based in Sapporo, Shiratori is a Hokkaido native who, like Tomioka, has long drawn inspiration from the vast and ever-changing natural landscape of Japan's Northern Island. After graduating from the Hokkaido College of Art & Design in 2000, she began her career as a graphic design and illustration artist and has worked on various art projects, commercials, advertising illustrations and packaging, interior and brand design projects via her studio Nano Graphic that she founded in 2002.

An avid animal-lover, Shiratori looked to the four-legged furry friends of Hokkaido for her work on The Green Leaf Niseko Village, including the turn of their ears and the flick of their tails in her brand of hand-painted organic patterns. Her goal was to bring indoors the abundance of the area's nature and let them soften the edges to manmade fixtures. She achieves that with a 14-metre hand-painted mural at the entrance, depicting the forest and animals of Niseko. Her unmistakably bold and undeniably Japanese graphics also feature in the hotel's spa, where she created an illustration based on a swan and a fish diving into deep waters to bring home the spa's features of a natural *onsen* with a dedicated manicure and pedicure studio offering therapeutic care for all ages.

Her work also interacts with guests on a day-to-day basis—guestroom doors, key holders and the resort's ski lockers are adorned with her images of animals indigenous to Hokkaido. They serve as a playful identifier to the hotel's many rooms as much as Shiratori's love for nature. They are elements evoked from her thoughts of Hokkaido, imageries that spring into her mind at the mere mention of her home state.

By the hands of both Tomioka and Shiratori, past and present join paintbrushes through the corridors of The Green Leaf Niseko Village, connecting guests to Niseko's landscapes.

This page: the hotel embraces creative touches by Emi Shiratori, whose trademark hand-drawn style breathes life and warmth throughout the spaces.



LIGHTING UP THE WAY WITH ART

WITH STATE-OF-THE-ART PROJECTIONS COME NIGHTFALL
AND ENCHANTING ANIMAL SCULPTURES CREATED BY
CELEBRATED ARTIST FRANK WOO, NISEKO-YO IS A CANVAS
FOR ART THAT BECKONS VISITORS TO EXPLORE THE
STORIES BEHIND THEM.

Words by ALICIA CORBETT



Niseko Village has a backdrop of mesmerising natural beauty, but guests will also be surprised to encounter painstakingly created artwork dotted around Niseko-yo that have been uniquely envisioned to enrich and echo the spirit of Hokkaido.

The first is *The Nightly Kaleidoscope*, a state-of-the-art projection that brings Niseko-yo's pathways to life once the sun dips below the horizon. These walkways blur the line between art and nature, becoming a canvas of light, colour and motion. Visitors can embark on an immersive journey and become part of its narrative while experiencing the illuminations of scenes drawn from traditional and modern tales.

Hong Kong-born mixed-media artist Frank Woo is the artist who masterminded many of the paintings and sculptures set throughout the picturesque terrain. Currently based in Malaysia, Woo has been collaborating with YTL Hotels since 1996 and has since created numerous pieces for its properties such as The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur and JW Marriot Kuala Lumpur. The 61-year-old's works have also been presented in renowned sites such as the annual Sculpture by the Sea exhibition along the Bondi to Tamarama Beach coastal walk in Sydney. In addition, Woo has been bestowed with various awards for his work, even being recognised at The Twelfth National Exhibition of Fine Arts, China in 2014.

Woo is also familiar with the local culture of Japan, as he lived there for more than 10 years, including studying at Tokyo's Bunka Fashion College for three years. After completing his studies, he worked there as a fashion illustrator for several years while travelling around Kyoto to explore their antique art and its influence to Japanese culture.



The advanced projections of *The Nightly Kaleidoscope* blend tradition and modernity, turning routes into immersive art-nature spectacles.



FRANK WOO IS ALSO FAMILIAR WITH THE LOCAL CULTURE OF JAPAN, AS HE LIVED THERE FOR MORE THAN 10 YEARS, INCLUDING STUDYING AT TOKYO'S BUNKA FASHION COLLEGE FOR THREE YEARS.





EZO ARTISTIC ODYSSEY

The first of his creations for Niseko Village is a trio of Hokkaido fauna sculptures. They are also narrative waypoints, each telling a story that pays homage to Hokkaido's rich tapestry of folklore, tradition and natural wonder. In the style of *The Nightly Kaleidoscope*, which uses light as a wayfinding strategy, these sculptures guide visitors from one fascinating focal point to another through Niseko's scenic vistas, immersing them in the region's distinctive culture.

Residents of Hokkaido share the land with a great variety of wildlife. In fact, visitors may be able to catch a glimpse of these fascinating creatures, some of which are unique to the region. It was one of these encounters with a fox during a trip to Niseko that inspired Woo to create the sculptures. He aims to transform these sculptures into interactive landmarks within Niseko Village, creating a dialogue between visitors and the depicted animals. His intention is to inspire guests to capture and cherish meaningful moments spent with these creatures, as opposed to fleeting sightings of Hokkaido's wildlife.

The first sculpture is a Sakhalin fox family painted in Chestnut Red, which is situated near the entrance arch at the village core. The two-metre-long mother fox wears a scarf bearing the words 'Niseko Village', with her two cubs tagging along closely. The representative animal of Hokkaido is one that visitors are most likely to encounter and is a larger species of fox than the Japanese red fox found on mainland Japan. The *Ezo Kitakitsune*, as it is known in Japanese, captures the playful spirit of the region and invites onlookers into a world of stories and legends.

Next, the *Hokkaido Brown Bear*, or *Ezo Higuma*, is a towering anthropomorphic figure standing at four metres in height with the apparent ability to indulge in snow sports as it dons goggles and a snowboard. Placed near the Banzai chair with Mount Yotei in the background, it is the result of the combination of many geometric pieces and even required assembly using a pulley. Painted in a striking Persian Blue, it is a consistent guide along Niseko-yo's pathways and acts as a symbol of raw strength.

The last is the adorable *Hokkaido Long-tailed Tit*, or *Ezo Shimaenaga*, with its Light Mauve body standing at 1.2 metres in height and its tail a further one metre in length. With white and fluffy feathers, the actual birds resemble cotton balls and are often referred to as the 'snow fairy'. This delightful bird, which can only be found in the region, is a whimsical nod to Hokkaido's natural heritage and the enchanting tales spun around campfires.

THE EZO KITAKITSUNE, AS IT IS KNOWN IN JAPANESE, CAPTURES THE PLAYFUL SPIRIT OF THE REGION AND INVITES ONLOOKERS INTO A WORLD OF STORIES AND LEGENDS.

Below: Frank Woo.

BREATHING LIFE INTO ART

Woo experimented with different styles and materials before settling on geometric shapes created from stainless steel to give a contemporary and modernistic appearance while blending into the environment. One of the major challenges encountered was the weather conditions of the outdoors, as snowfall in Niseko can reach up to eight metres annually. This posed a hindrance during the installation process of these sculptures. The sculptures were intentionally designed to stand out with a pop of colour and spray-paint, in order to prevent them from being overshadowed by the reflection of the sunlight onto the snow during winter. Woo's six-member team endeavoured for three months on the artwork, taking one month for design and two months for fabrication.

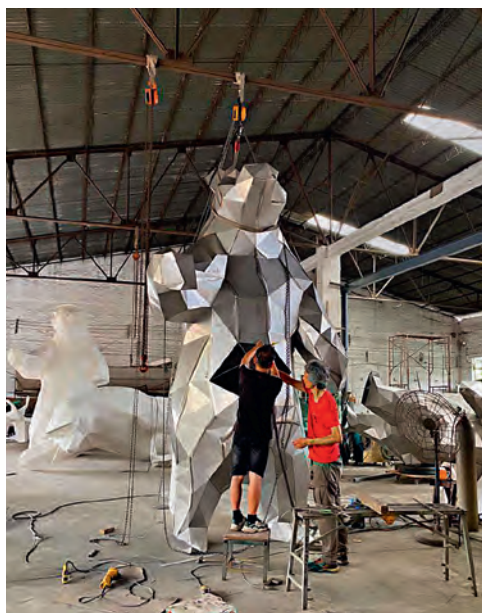
He started by hand-sketching the piece, creating a 3D drawing on his computer, before printing out small-scale and full-scale 3D models. Next, Woo and his team used polyform to carve out a four-metre model and then created computer-aided design drawings to form every geometrical piece of the sculptures. Lasers were then used to cut the stainless steel plates, which were finally welded together.

WOO EXPERIMENTED WITH DIFFERENT
STYLES AND MATERIALS BEFORE
SETTLING ON GEOMETRIC SHAPES
CREATED FROM STAINLESS STEEL
TO GIVE A CONTEMPORARY AND
MODERNISTIC APPEARANCE WHILE
BLENDING INTO THE ENVIRONMENT.



Ezo Shimaenaga (Hokkaido Long-tailed Tit).





Above: the making of Ezo Higuma (Hokkaido Brown Bear).

Facing page and opening spread: the completed sculpture is a consistent guide along Niseko-yo's pathways.

SELF-DISCOVERY AWAITS IN THE SNOWY REALM

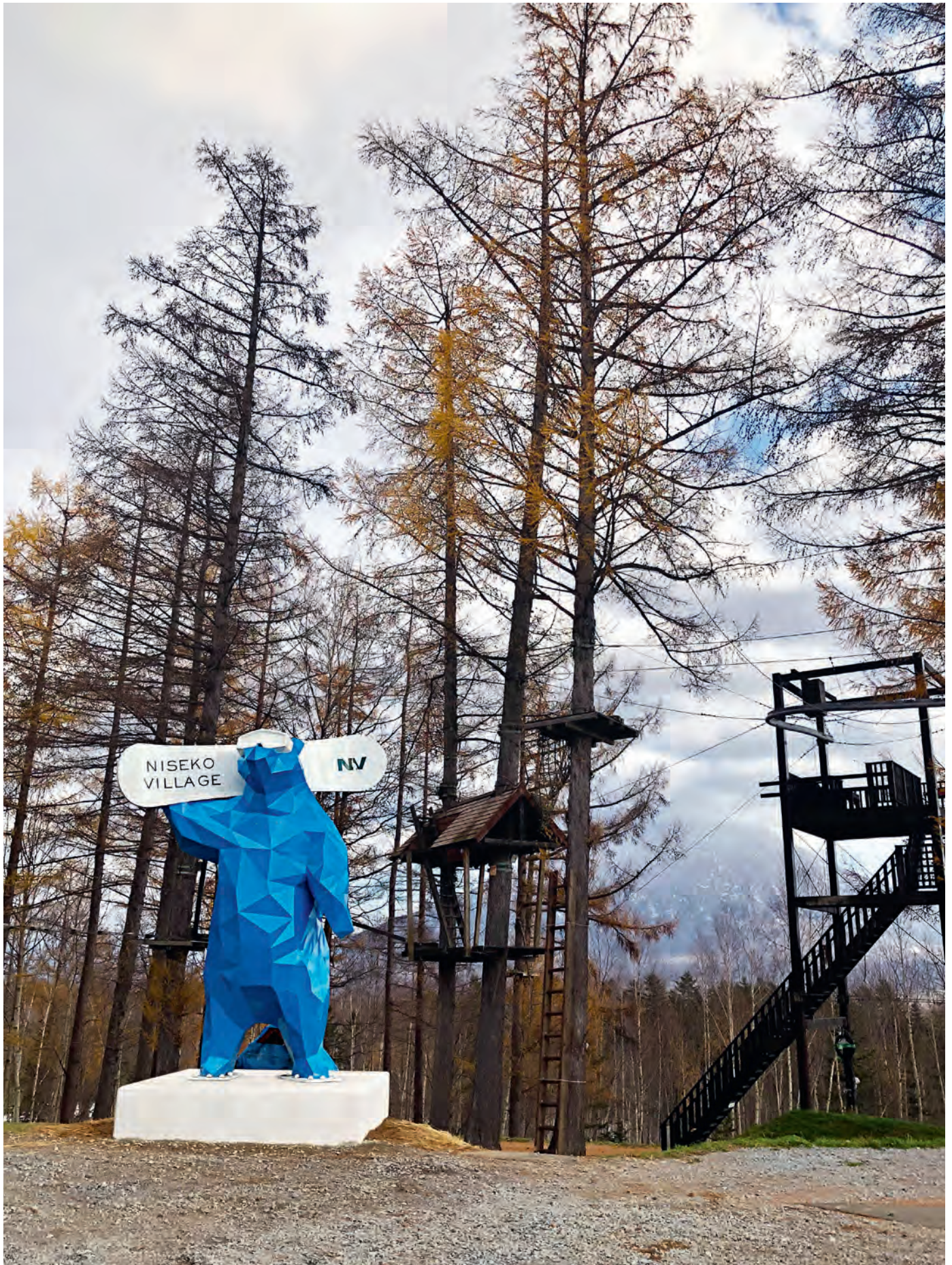
Woo's spectacular artistic vision is further imprinted on Higashiyama Niseko Village, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve. Each piece is influenced by the Japanese philosophy of Kachou Fuugetsu, or discovering yourself through new experiences with nature.

Upon driving up to the entrance, guests are greeted by a three-metre-high sculpture on a plinth, entitled *The Flow Of The Snow*. Then, behind the concierge desk is an immense 2.4-metre artwork of a skier against the backdrop of the magnificent Mount Yotei, bringing the beauty of the outdoors within. Fronting the lift lobby on Level 1 is *Golden Mountain*, an ensemble of mirrored pieces mimicking the light hitting the snow on a sunny day. Guests travelling up to Levels 2 to 4 will encounter a triptych of panels. One captures the distinct beauty of the Shirakaba (or white birch trees), which are a representative tree of Hokkaido, another the top of Mount Annupuri, and the last depicts the wind blowing on an icy mountain.

Upon descending the staircase to the ski locker, guests will encounter an abstract hanging sculpture of seven undulating lines and seven stones, which represent the seven children of the late Tan Sri Dato' Seri Yeoh Teong Lay, the founder of YTL Corporation. Throughout the lounge, Woo has also created tasteful LED lamps, which are an extension of the concept of sunlight reflecting on the snow.

This continuous celebration of nature's beauty extends to The Green Leaf Niseko Village, where Hokkaido native Emi Shiratori's creations resonate deeply with every brushstroke, paying homage to the region's natural marvels.

As a collective whole, these extraordinary pieces create a bold narrative that invites visitors to shift their perspective and find deeper meaning in the lush surroundings of Niseko.



UNCOVERING A WORLD OF LUXURY

PEI TSEN YEOH SPEAKS ABOUT THE NEW, EXCITING
OFFERINGS THAT AWAIT VISITORS TO NISEKO VILLAGE.

Words by LAE-HOON TAN



A graduate of the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London and a registered architect with the Architects Registration Board UK, Pei Tsen Yeoh is a Director in the Architecture & Design team of YTL Construction. The latest project her team has been involved in is the design of Niseko-yo, which will be launched in Niseko Village in December 2023.

Translated directly, Niseko-yo means 'Niseko World' and it comprises an array of international F&B, retail, entertainment and nightlife pursuits that aim to inject energy, fun and vibrancy into life in Niseko Village. Here, Tsen tells us how Niseko-yo reimagines Niseko Village for travellers seeking unique, luxury lifestyle experiences.

TELL US ABOUT NISEKO-YO'S ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN VISION.

Niseko-yo marries the refinement of traditional Japanese culture with modern lifestyle offerings. Originally, this retail street was designed as a village of traditional Machiya houses, and this winter season we have complemented and expanded the village by adding three double-storey buildings to house a variety of F&B outlets. The new buildings have been conceptualised to be contemporary while sensitive to the context. The spaces are open and flexible, with entrances at both the front and back, allowing convenient and easy access for guests.

The thing you will notice as you walk from the Machiya houses to the new buildings is that they have large windows, allowing natural light to flood the interior. This also helps the structures blend into the surroundings, creating a sense of seamless space. The focus is therefore on the happenings within the buildings. We're allowing the 'contents' of the buildings, the life within, to tell the story, rather than the buildings themselves.

Another key design feature is the use of light as a wayfinding strategy, where curated light projections on the ground will guide guests to the various lifestyle offerings of Niseko-yo. The lights create a dynamic path to and between the buildings, elevating the journey as guests traverse

Below: Baby Crosta, the latest addition to the internationally acclaimed pizza brand Crosta Pizzeria.

Bottom: Moka offers authentically crafted Italian delicacies prepared with Japanese precision.

Facing page: Chuya Teahouse is located at Higashiyama Niseko Village, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve.



"ANOTHER KEY DESIGN FEATURE IS THE USE OF LIGHT AS A WAYFINDING STRATEGY, WHERE CURATED LIGHTING PROJECTIONS ON THE GROUND WILL GUIDE GUESTS TO THE VARIOUS LIFESTYLE OFFERINGS OF NISEKO-YO."



through the snow. We have also installed sculptures of three Ezo characters—the Hokkaido bear, Shinagawa bird and the fox family—animals native to Hokkaido, at strategic locations in Niseko Village to create points of interest along the route.

WHO ARE YOU BUILDING NISEKO-YO FOR AND WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE?

Niseko-yo was conceptualised and developed to attract adventurous travellers, food lovers and families who seek unique, luxury experiences. Niseko-yo is about creating energy, vibrancy, excitement and interest in Niseko Village—a place where luxury, lifestyle and hospitality intersect.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE OFFERINGS THAT AWAIT GUESTS IN NISEKO-YO?

There will be a variety of F&B outlets from all around the world, offering exciting dining experiences. We've curated these experiences to ensure that there is something for everyone, all day long.

A new day-to-night concept has been introduced, informing the design of the outlets, from the interiors to the menu and tableware. For example, in one of our outlets, a ramen establishment transforms into a vibrant izakaya—Ippudo by day, Gogyo by night. Similarly, Chuya Teahouse & Bar, the F&B outlet in Higashiyama Niseko Village, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, will see a Japanese teahouse transition into a cocktail bar at dusk. This day-to-night concept is in keeping with the Niseko-yo philosophy of unique and transformative experiences.

In Chuya Teahouse & Bar, the evening will be run by Penrose, a cocktail bar based in Kuala Lumpur that was recently listed as one of Asia's Top 50 Bars. Here, guests will enjoy expertly crafted cocktails in a sophisticated and intimate atmosphere. We also look forward to the guest shift collaborations, where Penrose will work with some of the best cocktail bars in the region to curate unique cocktail offerings.

We're also pleased to welcome Baby Crosta, the latest addition to the internationally acclaimed Crosta pizzeria serving Roman-style pizza, a first in Niseko. Located above Baby Crosta will be an intimate and exclusive chef's table called Pizza Bianca, offering the first pizza omakase experience in Niseko.

In the new buildings, we will house Chuan, a Sichuan hotpot restaurant; Moka, a Japanese-Italian restaurant; and Long Tang Restaurant, which serves authentic Shanghainese cuisine. We will also have delectable Japanese offerings in Yang Shu Ten and Hokkaïen Yakiniku.

We're also extremely excited for the rich cultural calendar, chef residencies and music programming that Mandala Club Niseko will bring.

WHAT MAKES NISEKO VILLAGE DIFFERENT FROM OTHER SKI RESORTS IN NISEKO?

Niseko Village offers a sense of intimacy, privacy and exclusivity as well as an abundance of space. In Niseko Village, guests are assured of high-quality, luxury developments and products, coupled with specially curated lifestyle and hospitality experiences. And it will only get better—we are working on expanding the masterplan, creating new activities and accommodation offerings to cater to a diverse group of visitors.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART ABOUT BRINGING A PROJECT TO LIFE?

I find the conceptualising phase the most fun. It's when we are able to dream and envision spaces, and think about the design elements that would create the most impact for the end users.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR DESIGN STYLE AS AN ARCHITECT?

I love buildings that are contextually sensitive, that are evocative in design, yet serve their place and purpose.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY ABOUT YOUR WORK?

I find the cross collaboration between people in different fields exciting—it takes so many perspectives and so much knowledge exchange to successfully execute a project. The learning never ends. In my role, I'm fortunate to be exposed to the whole construction spectrum, from design and construction to operations and maintenance. In fact, for Niseko-yo, I was able to be involved in not only the design of the physical spaces but also in the branding, marketing, event programming and even the menu conceptualisation.

WHEN DO YOU DO YOUR BEST WORK?

When I'm working with like-minded people, whose visions are aligned and who are excited about the work and are, most importantly, having fun together. That's when the magic happens.

WHAT'S LUXURY FOR YOU?

Exclusivity. The feeling of being special, of being cared for. Attention to detail.

THE THRILLS AND SPILLS OF HOKKAIDO



FIVE REASONS TO TRY THESE
WINTER OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES:
HUSKIES, HORSES, SNOW LANTERNS,
ICE FALLS AND DIAMOND DUST.

Words by JUNE MONG-LOFTIN



Niseko is celebrated for its pristine, powder-covered slopes, which provide exceptional wintry experiences.

Winters in Hokkaido are a double-edged sword. It's hard to fault the freezing cold temperatures when it creates extraordinary meteorological phenomena such as diamond dust, sun pillars and snow rollers that only occur in Hokkaido. When water vapour in the atmosphere freezes below minus 10 degrees Celsius, you'll get fine ice crystals that glitter and reflect sunlight like diamond dust. On the other hand, sun pillars are the sudden appearance at sunrise or sunset of flame-like pillars of light that look like the swords of angels. Meanwhile, a snow roller is formed when lightly fallen snow is blown off the surface and picks up snow along the way, creating cylindrical giant snowballs.

However, even if you never glimpse a speck of diamond dust, Hokkaido remains a wonderland for unusual and exciting outdoor winter activities. Here are our five favourite wintry experiences.

DOGSLEDDING

Hokkaido proves that it's not just in Canada, Alaska, Finland or Norway where you can go dogsledding. From early December to mid-March, experience mushing and handling a dogsled in Niseko. You'll be greeted by 11 Alaskan huskies, all full of positive canine energy, but only two will be used in rotation for each sled. The other dogs stay back in their snow cave kennel-home to pull the next sled.

The first thing you'll do is be taken by one of the sledding guides on a snowmobile to familiarise yourself with the 400-metre racetrack, which has mini-hills to add to the fun. Before you start, you'll get to stand on a sled and learn how to negotiate the one sharp corner of the course. The huskies know that there is a reward of vegetable soup for them at the finish line, so the last leg is usually pulled with extra enthusiasm and excitement. Even young children can get involved as there is a small seat at the front of the sled for the junior members of your family.



Make space in your itinerary for dogsledding at Hilton Niseko Village.



SNOWSHOEING

The landscape of the great outdoors is magnificently different under snow. And one of the best ways to appreciate the beautifully shaped, tree-covered country that lies outside the resorts is by snowshoeing. It's not difficult to learn how to, and you will be able to find a tour that fits your skill and fitness level. Some tours even take in a visit to an *onsen* to soothe your chilled aching limbs.

Modern snowshoes permit you to walk even in the deepest snows, and you will be the envy of skiers and snowboarders. The traditional Japanese snowshoe is called *kanjiki*. It is made of a ring of bent wood with a lacing of rope and a simple binding of innertube tyres to affix it to each foot.

When out on a snowshoe trek, the first sensation you'll have is the wonderful solitude. And then you'll slowly begin to notice tracks of rabbits, foxes, *itachi* (weasels), *ten* (martins) and *tanuki* (raccoon dogs). If you walk silently and keep your eyes peeled near a patch of berries or a bend in a stream, you might catch a glimpse of one of these small animals.



Book a guided snowshoe tour to immerse yourself in the pristine surroundings.



WINTER RAFTING AND HORSE TREKKING

Another way to enjoy the beauty of winter without the speed and noise of a snowmobile is to go winter rafting. This is a popular winter activity for families in Niseko. As you float down a river on a raft, you can see wildlife on the banks and icefalls if you're lucky. These tours with a nature guide usually last two hours and often include being in a dry suit, which protects you from the cold. The winter rafting season is from December to late March.

If the thought of all that cold river water is too much to bear, there is another way to enjoy a winter river scene—on horseback, into sublime snowy countryside, where you can gaze at Mount Yotei, the highest peak in Niseko. There are experienced, trained horses at Niseko Country Farm that will take you on a half-hour horseback ride, which even a novice rider can enjoy.



Travel by horse or raft through magnificent wintry scenes.



ICE FISHING

Fishing on ice is a winter tradition in Hokkaido. Traditionally it is *Wakasagi tsuru* (smelt), a fish native to these waters that tastes delicious when it is fried in tempura batter. However, in Niseko it is rainbow trout that you'll be catching as the fish love the clear, icy waters of this region. Arata Matsumoto shares his extensive local fishing experience with visitors at his seven private ponds in Rusutsu. He has been operating the family-run Big Fight Matsumoto business for the past 20 years. You will fish seated in the middle of a frozen pond from a hole that has been drilled in the ice. You'll also be provided with fishing equipment and bait, and you'll be seated in a tent. Just make sure you're dressed warmly and have all the kit you need to stay cosy during a two-hour fishing activity. Ice fishing is available from late December to late March, and is run strictly on a catch-and-release system.



Ice fishing is a fun activity for people of all ages.



WINTER FESTIVALS

Attending a winter *matsuri* (festival) may just be the best outdoor activity of all in the cold season. One of the largest is the Sapporo Snow Festival, which attracts millions of visitors annually. However, we will be shining a light on two smaller winter events.

The Yukitopia Snow Festival takes place in Kutchan in mid-February every year. Nicknamed Niseko's Rio Carnival, it offers giant snowmen, snow slides, snowmobile rides and quirky competitions such as skiing across a pool of water and snow-tubing. Language tip: *yuki* means snow in Japanese. The festival celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2023.

The Snow Light Path Festival is held each February in picturesque Otaru, a harbour city about a 90-minute drive from Niseko. Otaru, with its distinctive canals and old warehouses, is lit up from 5pm to 9pm nightly with small snow statues and glittering lanterns. The city glows with white snow as it officially lights up two neighbourhoods, Unga Kaijo and Temiyasen Kaijo. However, many Otaru residents join in by displaying lanterns at the front of their shops and homes, so there is a lighted surprise around unexpected corners for the winter flaneur.

For more information, visit niseko-village.com



Otaru's picture-perfect charm is heightened during the Snow Light Path Festival (above), while Kutchan's winter festival, Yukitopia (above, right), is a hive of activity.



INSIDER TIPS

Dogsledding: Hilton Niseko Village offers this wonderful activity daily from 10am to 3pm, but we recommend booking in the morning when the huskies are at their freshest. The dog sleds are found on the golf course at the base of Hilton Niseko Village.

Snowshoeing: Enquire at Hokkaido Lion Adventure in Niseko and Niseko Adventure Centre in Kutchan Town for more information.

River Rafting: The following companies offer this activity:

- Niseko Adventure Centre
- Niseko Outdoor Adventure Sports Club. Contact this club to book the Niseko Winter Rafting on Shiribetsu River programme.

Horse Trekking: One of the prettiest places to go horseback riding is at Niseko Country Farm. Before you start your ride in the snowy fields, you'll get to do some practice riding in an enclosure. This experience is open to anyone aged 12 to 65 years, and weighing less than 85 kilograms (because of the deep snow).

Ice Fishing: Rusutsu Resort is about 40 minutes from Niseko. Its operating hours are from 9.45am to 12.45pm and 1.30pm to 4.40pm on Monday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday.

Winter Festivals:

- Yukitopia Snow Festival takes place at Asahigaoka Ski Hill in Kutchan Town on 17 and 18 February 2024. On Saturday, it is open from 10.30am to 5pm, and on Sunday from 10am to 3pm. There is a free shuttle from Hirafu to the festival venue.
- Snow Light Path festival will be held from 10 to 17 February 2024 .

Accessible Travel in Japan: This has improved greatly in recent years in Japan. For more info, visit the Basic Guide to Accessible Travel page on www.japan-guide.com.

SEASONS, SNOW AND SERENITY

THESE ARE THE THREE ELEMENTS
THAT MAKE NISEKO STAND APART FOR
THE CEO OF NISEKO VILLAGE, SHIAU WEE LONG.

Words by KARMUN NG



Visitors to Niseko can enjoy the peaceful surroundings, regardless of the weather.



Since being taken over by YTL Hotels & Properties in 2010, plenty of changes have swept through the landscapes of Niseko Village, the premier snow and ski resort located in the heart of Hokkaido. Where there were once only two accommodation options – Hilton Niseko Village and The Green Leaf Niseko Village – the group has added three more in the past 12 years: Higashiyama Niseko Village, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve (the first and only in Japan), Hinode Hills Niseko Village and Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse.

This year, it will be adding even more excitement with the all-new Niseko-yo, which will be an all-encompassing destination that focuses on lifestyle-centric offerings. Translated directly to mean ‘Niseko world’, the name is intended to reflect an exclusive world that visitors will enter with each visit, one that offers culinary adventures, wellness respites, trendy shopping and exhilarating nightlife on top of the winter sports that Niseko is already world-renowned for.

Despite all these changes, there is much that remains the same if you ask CEO Shiau Wee Long. Niseko’s changing seasons will always be charming, its powdery snow will always be one of the most breathtaking in the world of skiing, and its tranquil serenity will always provide a familiar welcome no matter how long you’ve been away.

She remembers vividly the day she arrived in Niseko Village as its Chief Financial Officer before being quickly promoted to her current CEO role. Its remoteness spoke of the opportunities for rest and recuperation, and its pristine nature offered a different world to escape from life’s hustle and bustle. Its changing seasons also mean a change in surroundings, each just as beautiful as the last, throughout the year.

We speak to Shiau Wee on the charm of life in Niseko and what makes it such a unique lifestyle destination.

“IT’S QUITE RARE TO FIND THIS ANYWHERE ELSE – EASTERN JAPANESE HOSPITALITY AND WESTERN WARMTH AND WELCOME.”

SHARE WITH US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR ROLE AS THE CEO. WHAT DOES YOUR DAY-TO-DAY ENTAIL?

I manage the resort so I need to make sure that it functions smoothly and provides the best experience to our customers. My job also covers crisis management. In the 12 years that I have been here, I also oversaw the development of new projects and also the facilities.

WHAT WAS YOUR IMPRESSION OF NISEKO VILLAGE THE FIRST TIME YOU VISITED IT?

I arrived in Niseko in August 2011. My first impression was that it was a really remote place. There was limited infrastructure and there was no public transportation to get into this location back then. But it is a very beautiful place, with the changing seasons and the snow. I wanted to contribute something to this location to make it better.

WHAT DO YOU THINK MAKES NISEKO VILLAGE SUCH A UNIQUE LIFESTYLE DESTINATION?

It’s a unique place that serves a combination of both Eastern and Western culture. It’s quite rare to find this anywhere else – Eastern Japanese hospitality and Western warmth and welcome. Because it is such a beautiful, peaceful place that

is pristine and untouched, it also offers some of the freshest produce that Hokkaido is known for. And since we’re in Japan, we also have the *onsen* experience, which is one of the most unique experiences in the world. With YTL building new accommodation and providing luxury international resorts of a higher standard, they all come together to give each visitor an all-encompassing experience.

HOW HAS NISEKO VILLAGE STOOD OUT TO YOU FROM ALL THE OTHER SKI RESORTS THAT YOU’VE VISITED IN YOUR CAREER?

I love skiing. I’ve experienced most winter sports at least once, even snowboarding, just to get the feel of it. To me, one of the most important things is safety. Within the resort, we have a very important team of snow patrols who are well equipped and who know the area very well, so they ensure all guests may enjoy the sport in the safest way.

I’ve been skiing in the US, Switzerland, New Zealand and France. I’ve learnt to observe how skiers who come from different parts of the world enjoy the facilities and what they look for, and try to improve our offerings in Niseko Village to the highest possible standard.

YOU SPEARHEAD ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SKI RESORTS IN ONE OF THE LEADING SKI DESTINATIONS IN THE WORLD. HOW DO YOU DRAW A LINE BETWEEN WORK AND PLAY?

Thankfully I enjoy what I do, so when you’re passionate about your job, it doesn’t feel like a job. You will not feel like there are boundaries. They just coexist. For me, the days are never the same – I can be on the slopes, touring the properties, visiting the restaurants and spas. They all come alive in different contexts as well with the changing seasons, each offering something new to look forward to.

IN THE MANY YEARS THAT YOU’VE BEEN IN THIS INDUSTRY, HOW HAVE TRAVEL TRENDS CHANGED?

After COVID-19, you see a lot of people looking for experiences that they can’t get back home, be it in Southeast Asia, Europe or the US. They come to Niseko for our famed powder snow, which is a memorable experience for many. They like our *onsen* offerings, which is an intrinsic part of Japanese culture. They also like our cuisine which is made from the region because our produce is like nowhere else.

AND WHAT HAS REMAINED THE SAME?

They still expect standards to be upheld according to what they pay for. They want value-for-money and incomparable experiences.

WHAT IS THE HALLMARK OF A GREAT LUXURY HOTEL TO YOU?

I’m an avid traveller and, for me, being greeted with a big smile makes all the difference. The people make the difference. I love it when I am remembered so we try always to remember the little things about our guests. We like growing along with our guests.

MOVERS & SHAKERS

The onsen at Higashiyama Niseko Village,
a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, and Niseko Annupuri
Yugokorotei (below).





SOAK IN THE SPLENDOR

IT WOULD TAKE A LIFETIME OF VISITS TO DISCOVER
THE FINEST HOT SPRINGS AND ONSEN IN NISEKO,
SO HERE IS OUR CURATED SHORTLIST OF THE BEST
FIVE FOR YOU TO IMMERSE IN AND ENJOY.

Words by JUNE MONG-LOFTIN



Enjoy a soak in an onsen to make the most of the natural healing powers that come from the water's mineral content.

The tradition of taking a bath in an *onsen* dates back thousands of years in Japan. Even Basho, the 17th-century haiku poet, penned one about pining for a hot spring:

*Tonight my skin
will miss the hot spring
it seems colder, at Yamanaka
it's not necessary to pluck chrysanthemums
hot spring fragrance.*

The idea of communal bathing in the West may raise eyebrows, but it is a deeply important part of Japanese culture. An *onsen* (温泉, which means 'hot water spring') is a natural hot spring bath. As Japan rests above the Pacific Ring of Fire, the plentiful volcanic activity has gifted its islands with approximately 25,000 hot springs in 3,000 *onsen* towns. *Onsen* water is geothermally heated beneath the ground and rises to the surface bubbling hot. The prerequisites of an official *onsen* are that the water must contain at least one of the 19 designated chemical elements that naturally occur in hot spring water. To qualify, it should also be at least 25 degrees Celsius when it comes out of the ground.

The *onsen* in Niseko are unique and take 100 to 200 years to be converted from snow water. A *rotenburo* refers to an outdoor *onsen*, while a *sento* is an indoor public bathhouse supplied by ordinary heated water. Although an *onsen* visit is generally looked on as a treat, *sento* are the everyday bathhouses of ordinary Japanese people.

Having explored hot springs on both faces of the magnificent Mount Yotei, here is our guide to help you take the plunge in Niseko.

GOSHIKI ONSEN

If you're looking for a hot spring with an otherworldly setting, far away from the boutiques and après-ski bars, go to the unpatrolled side of Mount Yotei where there are no ski slopes. Nestled at a 750-metre elevation on a saddle between the neighbouring mountains of Iwaonupuri and Annupuri is a huddle of weather-worn wooden buildings that are constructed of larch. That's how you know you've arrived at Goshiki Onsen, where your bathing experience will be enhanced by an old-world bathhouse. Constructed of aged larch wood, the baths have a rich traditional feel to them. There is an indoor bath and a large outdoor bath, both with mountain views for each gender. Because Goshiki is not on any shuttle bus stop, it is not impossible for you to have the *onsen* mostly to yourself. The bathhouse lies on land that belongs to Higashiyama Niseko Village, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve.



At Goshiki Onsen, visitors can fully experience the fresh, free-flowing natural spring water in the spacious indoor and open-air baths.







The onsen at Yukichichibu (above) and Niseko Konbu Onsen Tsuruga Besso (facing page).

NISEKO KONBU ONSEN TSURUGA BESSO AT MUKU NO SHO

The Konbu onsen is tucked away in a secluded area surrounded by forest and the Niseko Anbetsu River. And yet it is only a six-minute drive from the Niseko Annupuri ski area. It is located in Muku no Sho, an elegant hot spring inn inspired by the Ainu culture, an indigenous people of Hokkaido who have deep roots in this region. The association with the Ainu also explains why it is called 'konbu' (seaweed) when the onsen is set in a forest. It is said that the Ainu wrapped seaweed around tree trunks to find their way home. You have a choice of bathing in the main Meisen no Yu hot spring bath or in a private hot springs room which you can book for 50 minutes at a time for ¥2,000. In winter, you'll enjoy views of Mount Yotei under a duvet of pristine snow, and in springtime you'll hear birdsong accompanied by a bubbling stream as your musical background.

YUKICHICHIBU ONSEN

It may be difficult to find a legend of a fountain of youth linked with something as prosaic as mud, but at Yukichichibu, that is exactly how you may turn back the march of time. The mixture of grey clay and thermal mud found at some onsen is found only in a select few hot springs in all of Japan. This *iou-sen* (hydrogen sulphur water) has both skin moisturising and healing qualities. In the same way that visitors to the Dead Sea use the medicinal mud there, bathers at Yukichichibu apply this mineral-laden mud on their faces and body when they are resting in between soaks. It is said the mud can lighten freckles and that it offers ultraviolet protection as well. Although the aroma of sulphur takes some getting used to, you will soon adapt and enjoy dipping in and out of the seven different baths in this spacious complex. The 30-minute drive from the Niseko ski area affords you the tranquillity that is sometimes elusive in the busy winter skiing season.





Amazing views abound from the *onsen* at Makkari (above) and Yugokorotei (facing page).

YUGOKOROTEI ONSEN

Yugokorotei's *rotenburo* (outdoor bath) is surrounded by giant boulders, trees and, in winter, by mounds of soft snow, all of which create a delightfully intimate bathing experience. This *onsen*, nuzzled between the Annupuri and Moiwa ski resorts, offers a rare experience called *gensen kakenagashi* or 'fresh *onsen*'. This means its hot spring water comes directly from the *onsen* well only 20 metres away and is delivered untreated to the bathhouse. It's almost as if the bather is soaking directly in the source of the well and is thus benefiting from the mineral make-up of the water. This also explains why the water at Yugokorotei is likened to a skin lotion; bathers are advised not to shower after their bath to allow the minerals to remain on the skin.

MAKKARI ONSEN

A charming rural *onsen* surrounded by farmland in the tiny village of the same name, Makkari is as traditional as it gets. Its open-air bath was built from the area's local stones and has an unblemished view of Mount Yotei. It is off the beaten path and a favourite with locals, so if you made a day of it, you could combine hiking or snowshoe trekking with a hot spring soak. While you're in the village, keep an eye out for an artisanal bakery called Boulangerie Jin, as its wood-fired baked bread and pastries are eminently desirable. If a pastry tip comes as a surprise, then bear in mind that Hokkaido is so far north that it has a wonderful reputation for its dairy specialities and its vanilla-scented creamy milk.

A GUIDE TO GOOD MANNERS AT AN ONSEN

The Japanese have bathing down to an art form. First of all, ensure you know where you're going. The entrance to an *onsen* is marked by half-length curtains: a red *noren* means it's for ladies, while blue means gentlemen.

1. Japanese communal bathing also means soaking in the nude—neither bathing suits nor sandals are permitted. So take a deep breath and walk in.
2. Shower or wash before you bathe. Use one of the stools provided while you wash. It's considered bad manners to stand up as you might splash the next person.
3. The large towel is for drying yourself, so leave it in the changing room with your clothes. The small towel is for washing and drying off in between dips. Most people fold their small towel and rest it on their heads.
4. Don't rinse before leaving the *onsen* so that your skin can absorb all the goodness of the mineral-rich waters.
5. Tattoos are a taboo in Japan for their association with the *yakuza*, though this is slowly changing. For those with ink, a good tip is go to an *onsen* late at night or to book a *ryokan* with a private *onsen* bath.
6. Bathhouses are social places, so respect personal space and everyone else will extend the same courtesy to you.
7. Don't drink alcohol and bathe as it's easy to dehydrate in an *onsen*. Drink plenty of water before and after your soak.

EAST MEETS WEST

ANTICIPATING NEEDS, PROVIDING VARIETY AND
ERASING SEGMENTATION OF EAST AND WEST MAKES
NISEKO VILLAGE A TRUE ASPEN OF THE EAST IN THE EYES
OF RESORT DIRECTOR PANCH RATNAVALE.

Words by KARMUN NG



As with pretty much everything in life, a person's wants and needs can vary a great deal. The same holds true whether you are in your home country or abroad. Niseko Village embraces this fact by offering five accommodation options that cater to a distinct group of travellers.

Hilton Niseko Village is ideal for corporate groups as it offers a host of conference facilities; Higashiyama Niseko Village, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve is luxury at its finest that is bolstered by stellar concierge and personalisation services; The Green Leaf Niseko Village is a more approachable lifestyle hotel with 200 rooms catering to all manner of preferences; Hinode Hills Niseko Village offers luxury serviced apartments for longer stays; and Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse comfortably brings together multigenerational families looking to create cherished moments together under one roof.

Now, the resort is launching a development to bring even more options and a variety of attractions. It is known as Niseko-yo, which encompasses an integrated village offering culinary diversity, shopping destinations, nightlife and entertainment hubs as well as health and wellness centres. It leans into the 'yo' in its name, which is the Japanese word for 'world', bringing together the best in culture, nature, dining, retail and entertainment.

Ensuring the smooth running of it all is Panch Ratnavale, who is the Resort Director of Niseko Village. He has spent almost two decades in the hospitality industry, rising through the ranks within YTL Hotels & Properties across its locations in Malaysia.

We pick his brains on the changing hotel trends he has encountered over the years and how the combination of Niseko Village and Niseko-yo will make this destination a true Aspen of the East.

Skiers looking at snowy volcano on a clear day in early spring in Niseko.





WHAT IS THE MAIN DRAW OF NISEKO VILLAGE AS AN INTEGRATED RESORT?

Each product under our portfolio is geared towards individual market segments, offering luxuries based on their respective budgets. We have something for everyone in Niseko Village. Five accommodation options cater to five different target markets, and we have facilities that make that little bit of a difference, such as our properties' ski-in-ski-out feature and proximity to the slopes. Non-skiers have other snow activities from snow-shoe walking and snow-mobile riding to trekking and sledding. Those who are not outdoorsy may indulge in the spa, *onsen* and a great selection of dining options.

WHAT STANDS NISEKO VILLAGE APART FROM THE OTHER REGIONS YOU'VE BEEN TO FOR SKIING?

The strength of Niseko Village is the quality of the snow and ski conditions. We call the snow we get here 'champagne powder'. Other places in Europe have snow that is thicker and wetter. Here, it's like talcum powder: fine, soft and dry. The reason for this is that we get yearly winds from Siberia that come down to Japan. The winds dry the snow when it reaches Japan in this optimum temperature of -3 to -12 degrees. We get an average of 15 metres of snow every year. That is one of the main attractions for skiers.

WHAT DO YOU THINK MAKES NISEKO VILLAGE A TRUE ASPEN OF THE EAST?

We get skiers from Europe and the US as much as Asia. We have Western know-how and technology, which is perfectly balanced by Eastern attention to detail and sensibilities. It's the best of both worlds. Over the years, Niseko has been growing and attracting a lot of interest, particularly for this East-meets-West aspect.

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST LESSON YOU'VE LEARNT FROM YOUR FIRST JOB LEADING UP TO THE PRESENT DAY?

I have learnt to be adaptable and innovative in this fast-paced and changing world. There are many external influences that could disrupt our industry, from politics and natural disasters to pandemics. Over my career, I have experienced all of them and you need to be able to quickly shift your goals and objectives during these challenging times.

WHY DO YOU LOVE WORKING IN HOSPITALITY?

Hospitality is about meeting people from various walks of life. I love meeting people from different backgrounds, helping them find solutions to their problems and knowing that I made their holidays as memorable as possible.

IN THE MANY YEARS THAT YOU'VE BEEN IN THIS INDUSTRY, HOW HAVE HOTEL TRENDS CHANGED?

Over the years, the industry has changed with a growing demand for luxury that offers unique experiences and personalised services. Social media has also become an important marketing tool for hotels. It now allows us to target a larger audience and drive direct bookings to our website. And with COVID-19, there has been a huge change in the landscape to hire people and talent. This will be our main challenge in the years to come.

"I LOVE MEETING PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS, HELPING THEM FIND SOLUTIONS TO THEIR PROBLEMS AND KNOWING THAT I MADE THEIR HOLIDAYS AS MEMORABLE AS POSSIBLE."

HAS ANYTHING REMAINED THE SAME?

With hospitality, what will always prevail is the personal connection with our guests. Guest recognition is paramount and memorable experiences are a priority. We offer an all-encompassing experience from skiing to dining, so keeping up with the latest lifestyle trends is important. Customers expect more from us, so having a personal touch will always be revered.

WHAT ARE SOME UNSEEN ASPECTS ABOUT WORKING IN HOSPITALITY THAT YOU WISH MORE PEOPLE ARE AWARE OF?

To be honest, not many people take this industry as their first choice. It takes a certain breed of people who enjoy socialising and meeting people. Those who stick at it will see results that offer great advancement opportunities and career benefits.

WHAT IS THE HALLMARK OF A GREAT LUXURY HOTEL TO YOU?

All luxury hotels boast about their high-quality services, amenities, facilities and bespoke experiences. It's wonderful to have beds with the finest Egyptian cotton, chinaware and chic furniture—that's what I call 'hardware' in luxury. The 'software' is in the people who deliver the service. For me, real luxury is about a team of passionate people providing the right experience and a personal touch to the customer. This is why you're not able to replicate the human touch to make their stay a memorable one.



From above: Tomioka White at The Green Leaf Niseko Village; Ume Lounge at Higashiyama Niseko Village, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve.





THE HEART OF THE VILLAGE

NISEKO-YO BRINGS A
PLETHORA OF NEW DINING
AND SHOPPING OPTIONS TO
NISEKO VILLAGE, FROM THE
FRESH MOUTHWATERING
SEAFOOD OF HOKKAIDO AND
AN ELEVATED PIZZA OMAKASE
EXPERIENCE TO WORLD-CLASS
INNOVATIVE COCKTAILS.

Words by ALICIA CORBETT

Many visit Niseko Village for its champagne powder snow, premier snow sports offerings and *onsen*. But what may very well keep them coming back is its exemplary culinary experience and multitude of world-class F&B offerings. Already hailed as the Aspen of the East, the destination just got better with its brand-new culinary scene of international and Japanese specialties that feed its vibrant yet exclusive spirit. Paired with the introduction of two stellar retail destinations, visitors to Niseko-yo will have no reason to leave.

CHUYA TEAHOUSE & BAR

More than just a watering hole, this establishment at Higashiyama Niseko Village, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, will shape the way you drink in Niseko. *Ichigo-ichi-e* is an old Japanese proverb that means to treasure the moment for it may never come again. Don't just make a pit stop here, but instead mark your calendar to try out the day-to-night concept, which is part of Niseko-yo's philosophy of unique, transformative experiences.

By day, Chuya Teahouse is a serene enclave of simplicity and refinement set amid Niseko's captivating natural beauty. From the moment visitors step inside, their mind and body will enter a state of serenity from the zen principles applied in its interior. A testament to the spiritual essence of the country, it features both deep-seated Japanese traditions and the distinct touch of Niseko Village.

With tea being an integral part of Japanese culture, Chuya will allow you to discover new flavours and blends. Sip on Usucha (or 'thin tea'), made with high-grade ceremonial matcha, and paired with sweet *wagashi* (traditional Japanese pastries) for a balanced blend of bitterness and sweetness. Then take your time to fully appreciate the aromas of Sencha, Hojicha, Genmaicha or Gyokuru, or savour Tea Cocktails by Penrose, such as Genmaicha Fizz and Hojicha Highballs, while the sun is still high.

The selection of patisserie isn't an afterthought as they are meticulously crafted pastries that will enliven your daytime dining experience. Sample Choux au Craquelin with Hojicha

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custard and red bean paste or Kuro Goma, black sesame Madeleine with a dark chocolate shell.

As dusk falls, Chuya transforms into a bar that celebrates the art of mixed drinks, where each cocktail bears its own identity and a touch of elegance. This season, it is anchored by Penrose from Kuala Lumpur, which impressively placed on Asia's 50 Best Bars in 2023 list within a year of opening. A nod to the famous mathematician Roger Penrose and drawing inspiration from his Penrose Tiling pentagon, the immaculate libations here are based on five fundamental pillars: alcohol, flavour, taste, body and dilution.

Together with six other renowned cocktail establishments from Asia for 12 weeks only, the Taste of Asia après-ski will allow guests to appreciate cocktails in an elevated way through an unparalleled collaboration. This will include creative signature tipples from eminent bars across Asia such as Night Hawk (Singapore), Teens of Thailand & Mahaniyom (Bangkok), Zest (Seoul) and Indulge Bistro (Chinese Taipei).

From the ambience and seating to exceptional service and music, each luxurious detail is taken into account, such as the carefully chosen ingredients of the drinks. Liquid magic awaits as guests bask in the magnificent landscape blanketed with Niseko's famed champagne powder snow.

Each mixture is as extraordinary and exciting as the last. Order a Penrose Old Fashioned of bourbon, burnt sugar, angostura bitters and lemon oils, or try Vieux Carre, a mixture of cognac, sweet vermouth, DOM Bénédictine and burnt butter.



ITS SECRET RECIPE IS A COMBINATION OF A CREAMY, COMPLEX BROTH THAT IS BOILED FOR 18 HOURS AND THEN ROUNDED OFF USING A LOWER HEAT MATURATION METHOD FOR ANOTHER FULL DAY, WHICH IS COMPLEMENTED BY THIN NOODLES AND TENDER PORK SLICES.

GOGYO POWERED BY IPPUDO

Established in 1985 by Ramen king Shigemi Kawahara, Ippudo has been hailed as the most famous *tonkotsu* ramen shop in the country and has played a role in elevating the love for the dish worldwide. Now, its classic Hakata Tonkotsu ramen has finally arrived in Niseko. Its secret recipe is a combination of a creamy, complex broth that is boiled for 18 hours and then rounded off using a lower heat maturation method for another full day, which is complemented by thin noodles and tender pork slices.

The establishment offers a cosy and traditional ambience to start your day or to take a midday break as well as a whirlwind of flavours, textures and sensations through its iconic ramen. Five ramen offerings feature on the menu, each displaying Ippudo's strengths in their own right, which will suit all palates and satisfy the cravings of even the most discerning ramen aficionados. This includes Spicy Ramen, with its signature silky pork broth as a base transformed into a medley of spices with a special spicy oil and a spicy mince with added tender slices of pork belly *chashu*.

For those seeking a change from the standard pork broth without compromising on taste, Veggie Ramen is a concoction of silky soy milk and Japanese kombu broth sprinkled with Japanese mushrooms such as *kikurage*. Diners can also find comfort in the steaming Mentaiko or Aburi Salmon rice bowls.

After dark, Ippudo's sophisticated sibling Gogyo takes centre stage with an *izakaya* dining experience. Its name is

the Japanese term for the five elements of earth, fire, water, metal and wood. Diners will find harmony in mind, body and spirit through its delectable offerings.

Its menu pays homage to Hokkaido's renown as a seafood lover's paradise, with the freshest catches from the region. The culinary creations of fish carpaccio, sashimi *moriawase* and grilled fish are taken from the ocean's bounty of the day. These are accompanied by small plates such as egg appetisers using a luxurious combination of sea urchin, crab, salmon roe and truffle.

Diners can also indulge in the signature Niseko *gogyo otsumami*, pickled quail eggs, and cream cheese marinated in soy sauce.

One of its stars is the miso-infused broth of the Kogashi Miso ramen, which is ignited in a billowing fire of 300 degrees Celsius to produce a rich, charred chicken broth and topped with minced pork, umami-flavoured soft-boiled egg, pork belly *chashu*, boiled cabbage, and spinach. Otherwise known as 'black ramen', it is a signature dish that has attracted legions of ramen fans.

Naturally, Japanese rice wine features heavily on the menu, with craft *sake* from independent breweries offering a taste of the magical ancient craft with every *kanpai* toast. Along with international favourites, draft beers and whisky highballs from the island of Kyushu where *tonkotsu* ramen hails from, these beverages will ensure that diners finish off the night on a high note.

**MOKA**

Celebrate your holiday with either a '*salut*' or a '*kanpai*' amid forkfuls of delightful bites here. Italian and Japanese cuisine are arguably some of the best in the world, and at Moka, East meets West for the ultimate gastronomic experience. It is helmed by a chef and his wife, who are from Kumamoto and Yokohama, respectively, who masterfully amalgamate Italian flavours and fresh Hokkaido produce with Japanese precision. Like the cuisines it is inspired by, Moka exhibits its duality by evolving from an Italian-Japanese casual dining spot during the day to a glamorous and refined setting in the evening, which reflects the allure of Niseko's majestic landscapes.

BABY CROSTA & PIZZA BIANCA

Steps from the Niseko Village gondola is the first Roman-style pizza in the region. Bestowed with the World Pizza of the Year 2023 award from 50 Top Pizza and listed among the Top 10 Pizzerias in Asia-Pacific, the much-lauded Filipino pizza brand Crosta Pizzeria unveils its latest extension, Baby Crosta. With unique flavours that are given a contemporary twist, each piece is a slice of heaven at this fun and vibrant establishment.

Upstairs in an environment of rustic elegance, Pizza Bianca is an intimate and exclusive chef's table that pushes the boundaries of pizza exploration with the first pizza *omakase* experience in Niseko. The country's number one *pizzaiolo* (Italian for 'chef') Yuichi Ito, who was raised in Japan and has a penchant for Italian cuisine, brings a unique set of senses and a fine-tuned level of expertise to the table. The enjoyment of the beloved dish is elevated to an art form by utilising exquisite ingredients from Hokkaido.

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LONG TANG

Long Tang, or Dragon Hall, brings an authentic taste of Shanghainese and Chinese culinary traditions to Niseko with a selection of dim sum. The establishment is run by a Shanghai-native chef-owner with a storied history of working in a restaurant in his home city who meticulously creates dumplings from working dough to form intricate wrappers. These encased balls of minced pork suspended in soup results in savoury and warm bites of *xiao long bao*. Besides cherished favourites such as wontons, this haven offers exceptional menu items that cannot be found elsewhere.

CHUAN

Pick up your chopsticks to indulge in Sichuan's most celebrated dish that originated during the Qing dynasty, its sizzling and spicy hotpot, or *huoguo*, which will tantalise your taste buds. The pots of simmering broth are a cold-weather staple thanks to their warming properties and a great communal activity as you cook and savour each bite together. Bold and vibrant spices are combined with the freshest ingredients including vegetables and meat in the pot of bubbling broth, with the flavours only intensifying as the night goes on. At Chuan, each bite encapsulates the essence of togetherness and centuries-old Sichuan tradition.





YANG SHU TEN

There is no better way to savour the bounty of Hokkaido's produce and ocean than through the sushi, sashimi, tempura and teppanyaki dishes at this authentic establishment. The charm and culinary excellence of the region unfold as diners revel in the breathtaking views of Mount Yotei. Gourmands can get in on the action with a seat at the sushi or teppanyaki counters for a taste of Grilled Kinki Rock Fish, Japanese Wagyu Steak or Boiled Japanese Hairy Crab. End the meal on a sweet note with the famous dairy produce of the region with soft serve presented on a sweet premium Japanese melon.

HOKKAIEN YAKINIKU

Bite-sized pieces of meat rich in taste with smoky flavours that offer melt-in-your-mouth goodness are the ultimate indulgence after a day of non-stop skiing fun. The culture of *yakiniku*, or 'grilled meat', blossomed in the early 20th century in Japan and has evolved into a time-honoured tradition beloved throughout the nation. At this gem in Niseko Village, premium cuts of meat noted for its intense marbling and the freshest local produce sizzle on the grill, thus releasing enticing aromas amid an atmosphere of camaraderie.





THE HOLIDAY PROJECT

With temperatures in Niseko hovering below zero, visitors will want to bundle up in style. The Holiday Project is an expert at providing 'the finest edits for modern adventures' and has made a name for itself as Asia's first and only one-stop destination for a refined holiday wardrobe. The meticulously curated garments function beyond shielding you from winter's brutal chill. In fact, these luxury pieces bring you to new heights as they are a trend-forward combination of premium materials, durability and insulation.

Beyond being merely retail offerings, The Holiday Project is also an embodiment of a passion-driven lifestyle. This ranges from swimming and surfing to tennis, with the spotlight being cast on skiing, après-ski and resort wear. These essentials ensure timeless transitions from the exhilarating ski slopes to the warmth of a dining room.

The boutique houses a plethora of brands, such as Anaak and Shortditch Ski Club. Make a statement with a stunning set of goggles and a down quilted body warmer with an all-over star print from brands such as Goldbergh, or master an effortlessly chic monochrome style with matching tops and bottoms from Fusalp.

The interior is at once sleek and modern, combining the cooler and more placid look of grey with the warming nature of beige. The carpeting on the floors in various shades of grey

THESE LUXURY PIECES BRING YOU TO NEW HEIGHTS AS THEY ARE A TREND-FORWARD COMBINATION OF PREMIUM MATERIALS, DURABILITY AND INSULATION.

appears like a snowy mountain viewed from a distance, with lighter streaks that suggest the rippling surface of the snow. The floor-to-ceiling windows offer an amphitheatre view of the winter wonderland outside while simultaneously illuminating the entire boutique.

VILLAGE SPORTS

The slopes are perfectly poised for sartorial self-expression, whether you're attempting a medal-worthy feat or executing an aerial flip freestyle. It doesn't matter if you're a newcomer to winter wear or a style icon who dresses like it's winter every day of the year, this ski-in, ski-out location offers endless options with a range of skis, snowboards and winter apparel.

With the store just a stone's throw from Hilton Niseko Village, sashay around Niseko Village in style by donning brands such as Burton, Danskin, Daiichi Gomu, Goldwin, Nills, Nitro, Icebreaker, Lange, Lenz, Lund Hugs, Peak Performance, Protest, Reusch, Smith, Sorel, Spyder and Technica. Each of the outdoor brands were carefully selected for the location and embody luxury, authenticity and performance.

Knowledgeable and convivial bilingual assistants are on hand to assist skiers and snowboarders of any type—park, piste or backcountry, from beginner to advanced—to select from the exceptional range. All the skis, including models from K2, Volkl and Atomic, are available for demonstration prior to purchase. The premium equipment is also available for rental, where patrons are encouraged to try out different skis throughout their stay at Niseko at no extra charge to match changes in conditions, learn what best suits them or simply change accessories according to their whims.

Village Sports also boasts the largest collection of winter footwear in the country with more than 120 models from 11 leading brands. The in-house team at Boot Solutions, the exclusive ski boot lab offering world-class custom boot fittings, includes qualified podiatrists and expert boot fitters led by a foot and ankle surgeon. This includes new boot fits and boot heating systems for either pre-booked appointments or walk-in customers.



FROM TOKYO WITH LOVE

OMOTESANDO KOFFEE IS OPENING ITS LATEST OUTLET IN NISEKO, BRINGING THE BEST COFFEE EXPERIENCE FOR CUSTOMERS AND BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS BETWEEN THEIR TEAM OF BARISTAS AND COFFEE LOVERS.



Whether it's a beautiful wintry day or a gorgeous summer evening, there's nothing like a great cup of freshly brewed coffee to reinvigorate the senses. And in the stunning natural setting that is Niseko, a perfect companion would be a delicious beverage prepared by Omotesando Koffee.

With outlets all over the world, including London, Singapore, Bangkok, Manila and Hong Kong (China), Omotesando Koffee originated in Tokyo, infusing passion and soul into every cup of coffee served. One of its core beliefs is in the role of the

shokunin, the Japanese word for 'craftsman'. In other words, all their baristas strive every day to become the best they can be. Together with the latest coffeemaking setups and armed with the right methodologies, they will be able to prepare the best possible cups of coffee. In addition, Omotesando Koffee partners with the best roasters from around the world, ensuring that only high-quality coffee beans are used in its beverages.

One cup, one cube, one community at a time. This simple yet profound philosophy is at the heart of every Omotesando Koffee store, from which baristas and all staff members desire to spread their passion for coffee to one and all. It all goes back to *omotenashi*, or the Japanese spirit of hospitality. By fostering

The iced selections at Omotesando Koffee include the signature Iced Cappuccino (right) and Iced Mochaccino.

interactions between baristas and customers, Omotesando Koffee becomes more than just a coffee store—it is a hub of coffee lovers and a nexus where the community can gather to exchange stories and experiences.

Omotesando Koffee was founded by Eiichi Kunitomo in 2012 in Tokyo with a minimalist pop-up concept. Soon, the store, its brand and its value would become one of the most highly sought-after all over the world, earning acclaim and awards from leading organisations. This includes becoming the first speciality coffee brand to be voted into the Asia Top 100 list in 2022 by Opinionated About Dining, the only dining survey that factors experience into its rating system.

The store in Niseko will be built and designed according to the minimalist, sleek aesthetics that have made it the darling of social media as well as the recipient of various design awards. Known as a 'koffee kube', this store design is inspired by Japanese tea ceremonies, *tatami* mats and an open concept that encourages conversations all around.

Highlights from the menu include the signature Omotesando Koffee, an Americano; Hand Drop Koffee, featuring bespoke selections tailored to personal preferences; Cold Brew, which is brewed for 12 hours overnight; and Iced Cappuccino, a favourite all over the globe thanks to its rich and creamy finish.

In addition, Koffee Mameya is the sister brand of Omotesando Koffee. It was launched in 2018 to be a coffee bean specialist that offers the finest brews from the comfort of customers' homes. Whether you're seeking the rarest micro-lot coffees or bespoke blends sourced from all over the world, you can be rest assured that the 'koffee sommeliers' at Koffee Mameya will help you craft a detailed recipe and a brewing method using the right beans for you to enjoy at home.

At Omotesando Koffee, 'there is a cup of koffee for everyone'.

Omotesando Koffee is located in Niseko Village.



THE SPIRIT OF OMOTENASHI

INTERNATIONAL OFFERINGS BALANCED BY
TRADITIONAL TOUCHES MAKE NISEKO VILLAGE A GLOBAL
DESTINATION THAT ATTRACTS BOTH EAST AND WEST,
ACCORDING TO AYA KANEKO, ROOMS DIVISION MANAGER.

Words by KARMUN NG



The 200-room Green Leaf Niseko Village boasts tranquil spa and natural onsen facilities as part of its all-season offerings.

Like most ski resorts around the world, Niseko Village – which calls the central-west of Hokkaido home – is no stranger to international visitors, ski enthusiasts and winter wanderers. However, it takes things up a notch by offering more than just ski and snow.

A new development known as Niseko-yo is opening up its offerings to gastronomy, shopping, nightlife, entertainment and more. The name, which means Niseko World, is intended to reflect the exclusive universe that visitors will enter with each visit, one that encompasses culinary adventures, wellness respites, trendy shopping and exhilarating nightlife. This is all on top of the winter sports that Niseko Village is already renowned for.

Visitors will continue to enjoy the resort's core values of personalised service, pristine nature, unique seasonal offerings and seamless melding of the best of East and West that have made the destination popular.

Aya Kaneko, Rooms Division Manager of Niseko Village, is tasked with seeing to that. A long-time team member of YTL Hotels & Properties who began her career with the group fresh out of university in its management trainee programme, she knows the brand's DNA like the back of her own hand. Her knowledge and insights only fuel her genuine love for hospitality in making things even more personable to elevate the guest experience.

We ask Aya how she is personalising the properties under her purview for unique stays and how the properties have evolved to welcome guests from all over the globe.

SHARE WITH US WHAT A TYPICAL DAY IN YOUR WORK LIFE LOOKS LIKE.

I ensure that all aspects of the hotel operations are functioning well. This covers rooms, F&B, housekeeping, front desk and all the intercrossing departments, so that none of them run into any issues.

WHAT ARE SOME SPECIAL TOUCHES OR UNIQUE SERVICES THAT THE PROPERTIES APPLY TO MAKE STAYS UNIQUE FOR VISITORS?

Guests, regardless of where they come from, always expect a certain Japanese hospitality and touch when they arrive. As a Japanese, I try to keep things authentic by striking up conversations with them to learn the little things about them. I pay more attention when I can and cater their stay around their whims and fancies.

WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR WHEN YOU TRAVEL?

I want to relax as much as I want to see something new. One of my favourite destinations is Koh Samui. It's so relaxing at The Ritz-Carlton, Koh Samui. I never have to worry about what I need to do next, such as will I miss the bus or what time the museums close. I just want to relax by the beach.

On the other hand, I love cities or places with culture. I like seeing museums and art, and I don't mind planning and booking in advance either. That's another style of holiday. I enjoy both: getting to switch off and having a lot to take in. They're completely different but give a good balance.



Nestled within the embrace of a private sun-kissed bay, The Ritz-Carlton, Koh Samui is managed by YTL Hotels & Properties.

WHAT MAKES NISEKO VILLAGE A DESTINATION THAT'S SUITED FOR VISITORS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD?

Niseko is truly a place where you can enjoy the opposites of things. It's catered for both Western and Eastern travellers with its diversity in offerings. Multiple languages are spoken here, different activities are always on offer, and diverse cuisines are served to meet all tastes and palates.

The tradition and authenticity of Japan continues to be upheld amidst it all. Our spa and *onsen* continue to be offered in the oldest practices. Our Hokkaido produce comes from local farmers and producers. Seafood and meats are all from Japan. That's why we attract guests from all over the world and not just a particular area.

IN THE MANY YEARS THAT YOU'VE BEEN IN THIS INDUSTRY, HOW HAVE TRAVELLER TRENDS OR HABITS CHANGED WHEN IT COMES TO WHAT THEY LOOK FOR REGARDING HOTEL FACILITIES?

Before COVID, people took for granted that they could always return to a place, so they didn't really soak up the experience. COVID showed that that can easily be taken away from you. Since then, people who return are more present and they really experience and enjoy their visit in all the aspects, big or small.

People also used to come here only for skiing. Now you see people come here for many purposes: maybe food, maybe the *onsen* spa, maybe just the nature. It is very quiet here. When I first got here, I was amazed by the amount of stars I could see in the night sky. I have never seen so many with my own eyes before.

WHAT HAS REMAINED THE SAME?

The power of the personal touch is definitely one. They still expect special experiences that are unique to them. This is especially driven by social media. You get a lot of information prior to arriving on site: this restaurant, this view, this spa. This pushes their expectations even higher for unique and special experiences.

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO LIVE WHERE YOU WORK?

Staying where you work may sound horrible, but work is relaxing and rejuvenating to me. I am on-site 24 hours, but there is always plenty to do and experience here in a single day. I can go skiing in the morning, I can take a walk and I can rejuvenate on different slopes. It doesn't feel like work when it's something different every day and every season.

WHAT IS THE HALLMARK OF A GREAT LUXURY HOTEL TO YOU?

It's the people. The hotel staff make all the difference. They're the first impression for most guests, which sets the tone for the rest of someone's stay. A warm greeting, a friendly hello or goodbye. It sounds simple, but people make all the difference.



A stay at Niseko can include skiing down its world-famous slopes, followed by indulging in a gourmet meal.



A NEW PLAYER ON THE SCENE

MANDALA CLUB IS SETTING UP CAMP IN THE HEART OF
NISEKO VILLAGE, WITH A PROMISE TO LIVEN UP THE
ESTATE'S SOCIAL, DINING AND CULTURAL SCENE.

Words by AARON DE SILVA



Snow Parlour will host the most talked-
about musical talent against a backdrop of
Japanese-inspired cocktails and spirits.

Mandala Club, the private members' club based in Singapore, is establishing a presence in Niseko this winter, amid the pristine powder snow, world-class winter sport experiences and stunning vistas that the resort is known for. Through a collaboration with YTL Hotels, the club is creating a two-storey, ski-in-ski-out clubhouse strategically situated in the heart of Niseko Village that will be open to the public. Mandala Club Niseko is set to become a prominent addition to the Niseko landscape.

Over its four-month residency, Mandala Club Niseko will function as a clubhouse not only for Mandala Club members, but also those of the YTL Estate. Guests of The Ritz-Carlton Reserve, Hinode Hills, Hilton, The Green Leaf and Kasara will be able to access the clubhouse and its myriad offerings, from culinary to cultural.

Similar to the Singapore clubhouse, food and beverage will be a mainstay of the Niseko outpost. It will feature a bar and lounge on the ground floor, and a restaurant on the second floor. The restaurant will take on the name of its Singapore counterpart, Popi's, while the lounge will be called Snow Parlour.

In Singapore, the club is renowned for its vibrant event line-up, typically hosting between 30 and 40 events a month for its members. Likewise in Niseko, there are plans to host events ranging from wellness-centric experiences—such as stretching, breathwork and yoga sessions—to music-focused programmes, such as live performances and international



Popi's, the namesake of Mandala Club's flagship restaurant in Singapore (above), will offer lunch, après and dinner experiences daily.



Since its launch in 2021, Mandala Club Singapore has succeeded in its mission to create a home of conversation, celebration, creation and connection.

DJ acts. With Niseko boasting a wealth of artisans and producers, the club also intends to showcase local talents and products, such as Gentemstick, which produces handcrafted skis and snowboards.

No doubt these curated programmes will add another layer of vibrancy to Niseko's cultural calendar. They will also enliven the resort's après-ski scene as club members, hotel guests and members of the public mix and mingle post-piste. After all, the Mandala brand is built on the idea of building community and connections.

POPI'S & SNOW PARLOUR

Popi's Niseko might have a namesake in Singapore, but that's where the similarities end. The 70-seat venue will offer lunch, après and dinner daily throughout its residency. On occasion, visiting chefs might stop by to collaborate on a four-hands dining experience as part of the club's iconic Cultural Calendar of event programming.

Paying homage to its location, Popi's menu will be a reflection of Hokkaido's bounty, with an emphasis on locally sourced seafood and vegetables. Menu highlights such as the Hokkaido Raw Bar and Hokkaido Oysters sections allow diners to savour the freshest seasonal seafood, while alpine classics such as rösti and fondue are given a unique Japanese twist. Popi's Signature Fondue, for example, will be made entirely from Niseko cheeses, local pork charcuterie and organic eggs. The Hokkaido Sea Urchin Rösti features grated potatoes grown in the nearby township of Kutchan, and sour cream from Niseko Takahashi Dairy Farm.

In a similar vein, Snow Parlour—which can accommodate a total of 80 guests and opens in the evenings—aims to be a showcase of the finest Japanese cocktails and spirits. This will be done in partnership with local, small-batch producers,

such as whisky and gin distillers. The lounge's sake collection will also be second-to-none thanks to a partnership with honorary Canadian Sake Samurai, Elliot Faber. The region is populated with well-regarded sake breweries and the idea is for Snow Parlour to spotlight the products and talents behind them as much as possible through tastings, pairings and masterclasses, among many others.

Against a backdrop that's inspired by mid-20th century ski lodge designs, and armed with their choice tippable, members and guests will be able to end their evening with inspiring talks, soothing wellness sessions and lively music or DJ events, depending on the day of the week.

IN CONVERSATION WITH BEN JONES, CEO & CO-FOUNDER, MANDALA GROUP

Since its establishment in Singapore in 2021, Mandala Club has been a runaway success, forging a reputation for diversity among its members, a strong sense of community, and being a champion of the arts in the city-state. As the Mandala Group embarks on its latest venture in Japan, CEO and Co-founder Ben Jones shares his thoughts on the famous ski resort, the group's founding philosophies, and what he hopes to achieve with Mandala Club Niseko.

"I'm very passionate about Niseko, given its renown as a world-class ski resort. As a club, we serve our members, we listen to our members, whom we consider our stakeholders. Bali is one of the destinations where we're developing a club because it's a very popular destination for our members. Niseko is the other one," Jones says. "If we can be present where they holiday, we think that's exciting for the community. So the community isn't just mingling and making connections at home, they're doing it abroad. We're always trying to position ourselves and react to what the community wants."



The Den at the Singapore club features plush leather armchairs that invite members to stroll in and make themselves feel at home.

Jones also explains that the Mandala brand has six pillars: Taste, which refers to its F&B programmes; Purpose, which is all about doing the right thing for people and place (“not only sustainability but also philanthropy”, Jones says); The Arts, which encompasses visual arts, music and even design; Well-being, because the entire Mandala team believes that looking after oneself, whether you’re in the hustle and bustle of modern working life or not, is critical; Play, which refers to how Mandala does everything with a sense of fun (“we like to say that we’re here for a good time, not a long time”); and the last pillar, Futures. “This pillar is often the most important in Singapore. It’s everything business-related, from entrepreneurialism to thought leadership to networking,” Jones explains. “In the Niseko context, however, it’s about family because you will be away from all of that for the short period of your stay, so the focus is on family. And your family is your future as well.”

Jones is keen to emphasise just how important that last pillar is not only to Mandala but also to its newfound partner, the YTL Group. “Our business is built around curating and connecting the community. That’s our core philosophy, and then the pillars dictate how we do that,” he says. “With Mandala Club Niseko, we really want to create a world-class après-ski experience for people, especially within the YTL Estate. It’s been a really cool journey so far because the Yeoh family are just amazing to work with and are very like-minded to us.”

EXCLUSIVITY & LUXURY

The modern ideal of luxury goes beyond mere possession of high-end goods and services. Increasingly defined by access, it emphasises the privilege of effortlessly and conveniently accessing personalised, unique experiences and curated opportunities tailored to individual preferences and desires.

At the same time, luxury can also be described as the enjoyment of high-quality, well-crafted and thoughtfully designed experiences or items that enhance one’s comfort, convenience and the enjoyment of life, without the need for ostentation. This could mean relishing the simple pleasures of everyday life, whether it’s a leisurely afternoon spent with loved ones or the freedom to pursue one’s passions and interests.

By those definitions, the après-ski experiences that Mandala Club Niseko aims to deliver—the pop-ups, the tastings, the guest DJs—are the last word in luxury. Imagine interacting with a third-generation sake brewer, swapping tasting notes with a whisky maker, indulging in a four-hands dinner with a rising Japanese culinary talent or dancing the night away as the world’s most sought-after DJ spins on the deck. Such memories stay with you for a lifetime.

The clubhouse is well placed to entice the discerning traveller. Niseko is already a brand name in itself, especially among the well-heeled. The clutch of properties that are nestled within YTL Estate are also geared towards high-end visitors. Such a demographic is likely to be very fluid and experienced in a luxury environment, so there is little doubt that the experiences offered by Mandala Club Niseko are going to be well received.



Mandala's Co-founder and CEO Ben Jones

THE NEXT CHAPTER

With philanthropy being one of Mandala Club’s founding principles, the idea to give back to the local community is never far from its founders’ minds. One way of doing that is by extending the clubhouse’s residency beyond winter to drive more business to the region. Although the majority of travellers are familiar with the resort’s winter offerings, far fewer are aware of the experiences that can be enjoyed during summer, such as hot-air ballooning, trekking, mountaineering and many other outdoor activities.

Awareness is increasing, however, thanks to developers such as YTL, whose Niseko Village Golf Course is among a handful of businesses responsible for giving the local economy a boost during summer. By working with outdoor activity providers and curating a much broader holiday experience for its customers, Mandala Club Niseko hopes to do the same.

With family being a central focus for the club, one idea that the team is considering is holiday camps for children. This would entice its members to return during the warmer months and to experience something completely different. For example, while the kids are preoccupied at the campsite, the adults would be free to explore the wealth of outdoor activities that Niseko has to offer.

Another idea that has been bandied about is the establishment of a small community of members in Niseko, comprising hospitality professionals, F&B industry executives, and local growers, makers and producers. The aim, as with that of the club in Singapore, is to drive more genuine connections, ultimately creating a meaningful sense of community.

PORTFOLIO OF LIFE

ニセコ世

NISEKO-YO

AT NISEKO VILLAGE



NISEKO-YO - DECEMBER 2023



SIP. DINE. SHOP. NISEKO-YO REPRESENTS THE EPITOME OF REFINED ELEGANCE IN THE HEART OF NISEKO, PROVIDING A HARMONIOUS BLEND OF TRADITIONAL AND MODERN EXPERIENCES. IT'S A SANCTUARY WHERE CULINARY MASTERY MEETS LAVISH LEISURE, FEATURING ECLECTIC NIGHTLIFE, ELEVATED SHOPPING, AND A MYRIAD OF DINING OPTIONS, ALL AMIDST THE BREATHTAKING LANDSCAPES, PROMISING UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCES FOR EVERY VISITOR.

Higashiyama
NISEKO VILLAGE A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE



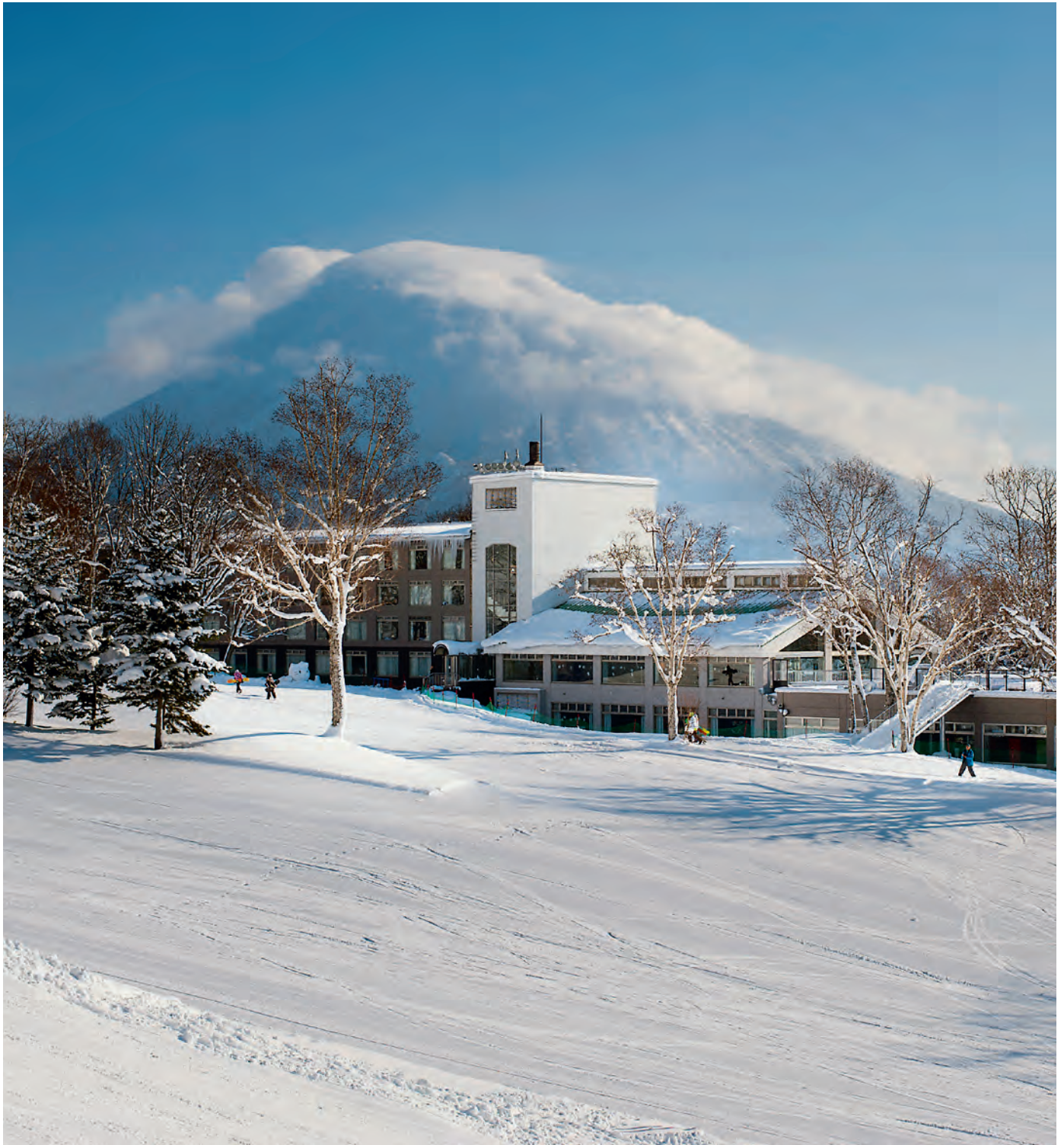


THE FIRST RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE TO GRACE JAPAN, HIGASHIYAMA NISEKO VILLAGE RESIDES AT THE BASE OF MOUNT NISEKO ANNUPURI, WITH PANORAMIC VIEWS OF MOUNT YOTEI AND THE SURROUNDING MOUNTAIN RANGES. HOKKAIDO'S SEASONS TRANSFORM THE UNIQUE LANDSCAPE, SETTING THE SCENE FOR UNFORGETTABLE ADVENTURES INTO THE SOUL OF NISEKO. EMBRACE A NEW LEVEL OF BESPOKE LUXURY IN HOKKAIDO WITH THE EXQUISITE REFINEMENT OF A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE TO RETURN TO EACH DAY.

[RITZCARLTON.COM/HIGASHIYAMANISEKOVILLAGE](https://ritzcarlton.com/higashiyamanisekovillage)

PORTFOLIO OF LIFE

THE
GREEN *gb* LEAF
Niseko Village





LOCATED AT THE BASE OF MOUNT NISEKO ANNUPURI, THE GREEN LEAF LIES AT THE HEART OF NISEKO VILLAGE, AN INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED POWDER MECCA AND A SUMMER DESTINATION FOR DIVERSE OUTDOOR PURSUITS. INSPIRED BY A FUSION OF WORLD-CLASS DESIGN, LOCAL ARTISTRY AND BREATHTAKING SCENERY, THE 200-ROOM ALL-SEASON DESTINATION HOTEL PROVIDES SKI-IN SKI-OUT ACCESS DURING WINTER AND A CONVENIENT BASE TO EXPLORE THE GREAT OUTDOORS DURING SUMMER, TRANQUIL SPA AND NATURAL ONSEN FACILITIES, AND A FANTASTIC VARIETY OF BAR AND DINING OPTIONS FEATURING LOCAL SEAFOOD AND SEASONAL HOKKAIDO PRODUCE. THE HOTEL EMBRACES CREATIVE TOUCHES BY EMI SHIRATORI, A RENOWNED LOCAL GRAPHIC ARTIST WHOSE TRADEMARK HAND-DRAWN STYLE BREATHES LIFE AND WARMTH THROUGHOUT THE SPACES.

THEGREENLEAFHOTEL.COM

PORTFOLIO OF LIFE

HINODE HILLS

NISEKO VILLAGE



NISEKO-YO - DECEMBER 2023



DAWN BREAKS THROUGH THE MIST THAT SHROUDS THE MAJESTIC SILHOUETTE OF MOUNT YOTEI, CASTING ITS GOLDEN RAYS TO SOFTLY ILLUMINATE THE LAND. WELCOME TO A NEW DAY AT HINODE HILLS IN NISEKO VILLAGE. NAMED TO PAY HOMAGE TO THE RISING SUN, THE LUXURIOUSLY APPOINTED APARTMENTS OF HINODE HILLS EMBRACE WABI-SABI AESTHETICS BY REVEALING THEIR SUBTLE BEAUTY THROUGH AUTHENTICITY, NATURAL FORMS AND AN APPRECIATION OF NATURE. DISCOVER HINODE HILLS, A UNIQUE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT WITH LUXURY HOTEL SERVICES, NESTLED WITHIN AN ALPINE DESTINATION THAT IS ALWAYS IN SEASON.

HINODEHILLS.COM





THIS AWARD-WINNING SKI RESORT IS LOCATED AT THE FOOT OF MOUNT ANNUPURI AND IS ADJACENT TO THE NISEKO GONDOLA THAT WHISKS GUESTS STRAIGHT TO THE TOP IN ONLY 10 MINUTES. THIS LUXURY NISEKO HOTEL PROVIDES OUTSTANDING RESTAURANTS, A SPA, ONSEN, WI-FI ACCESS, A SKI VALET SERVICE, FITNESS CENTRE, BUSINESS CENTRE, MEETING ROOMS, A BALLROOM AND A PLAYGROUND FOR KIDS. NISEKO VILLAGE GOLF COURSE IS ALSO LOCATED CLOSE BY, WHILE SUMMERTIME ACCESS TO HOT-AIR BALLOONS AND HORSEBACK RIDING PROVIDES FUN FOR ALL AGES. HILTON NISEKO VILLAGE FEATURES A VARIETY OF RESTAURANTS AND BARS FOR BOTH CASUAL AND FORMAL DINING, WITH EXPERIENCED CHEFS SERVING INNOVATIVE CUISINE MADE WITH SEASONAL SPECIALITIES. THE ONSEN IN HILTON NISEKO VILLAGE HAS AN INDOOR BATHING AREA OVERLOOKING THE CHANGING SEASONS, AS WELL AS AN OUTDOOR BATHING AREA FRONTED BY A COLOURFUL CARP-FILLED POND.

[HILTON.COM](https://www.hilton.com)

KASARA
NISEKO VILLAGE
TOWNHOUSE





PERSONALISED SERVICE STANDARDS AND AMENITIES INHERENT TO A DESTINATION HOTEL WITH PRIORITY PRIVILEGES MAKES KASARA NISEKO VILLAGE TOWNHOUSE AN ULTIMATE PLACE FOR SKIERS AND DISCERNING WORLD TRAVELLERS. EIGHT EXCLUSIVE TOWNHOUSES SET A NEW BENCHMARK IN ALPINE LIVING AT NISEKO VILLAGE, WITH SKI RUNS AND LIFTS A MERE HEARTBEAT AWAY. EMBODYING AUTHENTIC JAPANESE CHARM WITH CONTEMPORARY ELEGANCE AND SENSITIVITY TOWARDS NATURE, THE DWELLINGS ARE AN ODE TO JAPAN'S HERITAGE TOWNHOUSES THAT WERE INHABITED BY CRAFTSMEN AND WEALTHY MERCHANTS NEAR THE END OF THE EDO PERIOD. A PERSONAL RESIDENCE CONCIERGE ASSISTED BY A DEDICATED TEAM IS ALWAYS AT HAND, ATTENDING TO GUESTS' NEEDS FROM THE ARRIVALS GATE UNTIL THE DAY OF DEPARTURE TO ENSURE A MEMORABLE STAY WITH THEIR INTUITIVE STANDARD OF SERVICE.

KASARA.COM

Higashiyama
NISEKO VILLAGE A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE



YUKIBANA

ALPINE MORNINGS AT YUKIBANA ARE GREETED BY THE SOUL-WARMING AROMA OF HANDCRAFTED BAKED GOODS AS WELL AS CREATIVE LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL BREAKFAST OFFERINGS. AN EXQUISITE COLLECTION OF HOKKAIDO'S NATURAL BOUNTY GRACES THE TABLE IN THE EVENINGS.

LOCATED IN HIGASHIYAMA NISEKO VILLAGE, A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE.

Higashiyama
NISEKO VILLAGE A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE



SUSHI NAGI

CULTURALLY INGRAINED IN THE HISTORY OF JAPANESE CUISINE, THE FINE ART OF SUSHI IS MASTERFULLY SHOWCASED BY THIS RESTAURANT'S ITAMAE CHEF THROUGH OMAKASE-STYLE DINING.

LOCATED IN HIGASHIYAMA NISEKO VILLAGE, A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE.

Higashiyama
NISEKO VILLAGE A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE



UME LOUNGE

UME LOUNGE EXUDES WARMTH AND ELEGANCE WITH ITS CONTEMPORARY AND NATURAL DESIGN ELEMENTS INSPIRED BY THE NATURE THAT SURROUNDS THE RESORT. UNWIND BY THE COSY FIREPLACE WITH A CLASSIC COCKTAIL CUSTOMISED BY THE LOUNGE'S ALPINE MIXOLOGIST.

LOCATED IN HIGASHIYAMA NISEKO VILLAGE, A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE.

THE
GREEN *gb* LEAF

Niseko Village



TOMIOKA WHITE

WITH ITS SIGNATURE FIREPLACE AND FULL-SERVICE BAR OFFERING CUTTING-EDGE COCKTAILS, THIS LIVELY LOBBY LOUNGE IS THE PERFECT GATHERING PLACE FOR COFFEE, APRÈS-SKI OR SNACKS WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS. RELAX ON AN ECLECTIC MIX OF CHESTERFIELD SOFAS AND COWHIDE-UPHOLSTERED LOUNGE CHAIRS WITH WHIMSICAL LIGHTING FOR A COSY AMBIENCE.

LOCATED IN THE GREEN LEAF.

THE
GREEN *gb* LEAF

Niseko Village



GOSHIKI

BRINGING TOGETHER VARIED INGREDIENTS AND UNIQUE FLAVOURS, THIS INTERNATIONAL AND JAPANESE FUSION BUFFET RESTAURANT OFFERS THREE MEALS A DAY, FEATURING FRESH LOCAL SEAFOOD AND SEASONAL HOKKAIDO PRODUCE. THE DINING ROOM BOASTS FANTASTIC MOUNTAIN VIEWS, VAULTED CEILINGS, A SIGNATURE FIREPLACE AND A VARIETY OF CONTEMPORARY SEATS.

LOCATED IN THE GREEN LEAF.

HINODE HILLS

NISEKO VILLAGE



THE BISTRO

THE BISTRO OFFERS A COMFORTING TAKE ON YOSHOKU CUISINE, WHERE JAPANESE MEETS WESTERN IN A COSY SETTING. ENJOY STEAKS, ROASTS AND PASTA DISHES ALONGSIDE A SELECTION OF SALADS AND PIZZAS, ALL WITH A TOUCH OF JAPANESE FLAIR. THE ATMOSPHERE IS RELAXED AND INVITING, MAKING IT A GO-TO SPOT FOR THOSE LOOKING FOR SATISFYING, UNCOMPLICATED FARE AFTER A DAY OUT IN NISEKO VILLAGE.

LOCATED IN HINODE HILLS.



YOTEI RESTAURANT

THIS BUFFET RESTAURANT OFFERS ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT SHABU-SHABU. A WIDE VARIETY OF BROTHS IS PREPARED AND SERVED, SO THAT GUESTS CAN GATHER AROUND A HOT POT AND ENJOY AMAZING CUISINE AND LIVELY CONVERSATIONS.

LOCATED IN HILTON NISEKO VILLAGE.

THE LOOKOUT CAFÉ

SITUATED HIGH ABOVE MOUNT ANNUPURI AND ADJACENT TO THE WONDERLAND CHAIR, THE LOOKOUT CAFÉ OFFERS THE PERFECT VENUE TO REST AND RECHARGE WHILE ENJOYING THE SUPERB VIEWS. ITS AWARD-WINNING INTERIOR IS ANOTHER PERFECT PLACE TO ENJOY ITS SNACKS MENU, HOT DISHES AND DELICIOUS BEVERAGES.

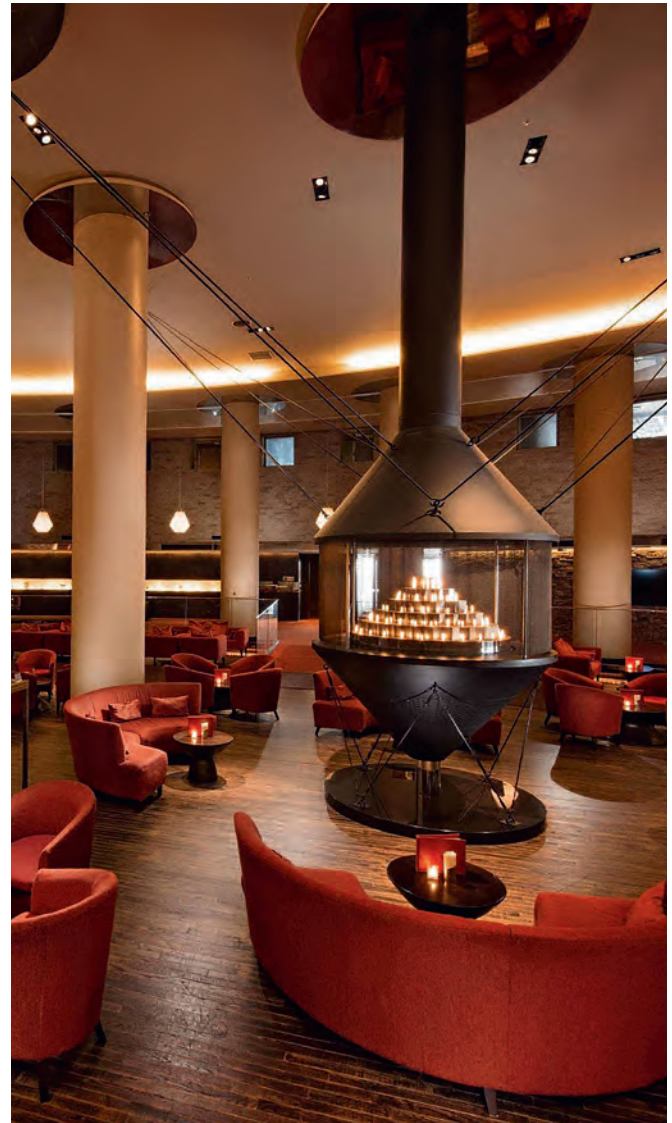
LOCATED IN HILTON NISEKO VILLAGE.



RERA

SAVOUR A TRADITIONAL JAPANESE SUSHI COUNTER EXPERIENCE AT RERA. LET THE EXPERIENCED SUSHI MASTERS PREPARE THE FRESHEST OCEAN DELICACIES THAT ARE DELIVERED TO THE RESTAURANT DAILY.

LOCATED IN HILTON NISEKO VILLAGE.



THE FLAME, BAR AND LOUNGE

THE SENSATIONAL HANGING FIREPLACE IS THE CENTREPIECE OF THE FLAME, BAR AND LOUNGE. GUESTS CAN ENJOY THE WARM GLOW, SIT BACK, RELAX AND ENJOY THEIR DRINK FROM THE EXTENSIVE MENU.

LOCATED IN HILTON NISEKO VILLAGE.



PIRKA

THE FINEST QUALITY BEEF, SEAFOOD AND LOCAL VEGETABLES ARE PREPARED AT THE TEPPAN COUNTER IN FRONT OF DINERS.

LOCATED IN HILTON NISEKO VILLAGE.

EZO

EZO IS A THRILLING APRÈS-SKI PUB THAT OVERLOOKS THE NISEKO VILLAGE SLOPES AND FEATURES PRIVATE ROOMS, DAILY LUNCH SPECIALS, SNACKS AND MORE.

LOCATED IN HILTON NISEKO VILLAGE.



MELT, BAR AND GRILL

WITH BEAUTIFUL VIEWS OF MOUNT YOTEI, MELT, BAR AND GRILL OFFERS GUESTS A SUPERB SELECTION OF LOCAL CUTS OF PRIME BEEF, SEAFOOD AND MORE IN A CHIC DINING ENVIRONMENT.

LOCATED IN HILTON NISEKO VILLAGE.

SISAM

THIS DINING VENUE CELEBRATES THE ARTISTRY OF JAPANESE CUISINE WITH FRESHLY PREPARED SUSHI AMID MINIMALIST DECOR AND A SERENE AMBIENCE.

LOCATED IN HILTON NISEKO VILLAGE.

FOUR GEMS ON THE HEM OF MOUNT YOTEI

KNOWN AS A POCKET MOUNT FUJI BECAUSE OF ITS PERFECT CONICAL SHAPE, MOUNT YOTEI IS AN ACTIVE VOLCANO THAT LAST ERUPTED THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO. BESIDES NISEKO, THERE ARE FOUR OTHER TOWNS AT THE FOOT OF MOUNT YOTEI THAT ARE AS VASTLY DIFFERENT AS THEY ARE ATTRACTIVE.

Words by JUNE MONG-LOFTIN



KUTCHAN

Perched on the northern slopes of Mount Yotei, Kutchan is famous for ski sports and softball. For about four weeks from the middle of May each year, the town puts on its own display of lawn cherry blossoms when the Shibazakura or pink moss phlox carpets the ground in a vibrant spectrum from chiffon pink to fuchsia.

KYOGOKU

To the east of Mount Yotei lies the tiny town of Kyogoku with just a little more than 3,000 residents. The local spring water originates from the mountain's melting snow and the town's famous soba noodles are made with it. Visitors to Kyogoku can also luxuriate in the flowing mountain water at the well-known Fukidashi Park.

KIMOBETSU

The small agricultural town of Kimobetsu is known for two things – asparagus and potatoes – but there is a third well-kept secret. If you drive along route 276 where two national highways cross at Kimobetsu, you will be treated to one of the best views of Mount Yotei, which seems to rise higher and higher towards the clouds as you approach it.

MAKKARI

This charming rural village south of Mount Yotei is a great place to cast a line when the fishing season starts in June in Hokkaido. The rapids from the snowmelt means that you can catch rainbow trout, Dolly Varden trout and leaping landlocked salmon. Delightful hiking trails start here and end in traditional *onsen* in Makkari.



TONDA *PF* XIALI CALENDAR
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PARMIGIANI
FLEURIER



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