



Please read and understand this entire document!
There is a lot of relevant information that you will need inside.

February 2020

Hi Guys,

Not long to go now and you'll be riding powder in Japan in what is sure to be an amazing experience!

After another amazing year, we are excited to be preparing for another winter here in Niseko and we want to welcome you to all that the Niseko area has to offer. As Niseko continues to grow and become more well-established as a destination, some things may be slightly different from previous years: a new building here and there, some older buildings or businesses gone, swept up in the progress and change. But the overall scene and feel of Niseko is largely the same: great snow, a wealth of hot springs, and a wonderful variety of food and accommodations.

For some of you this year's trip to Niseko is one of many and you are well familiar with what is involved with a Niseko holiday and the kind of preparations that are necessary. For others this first trip to Niseko will require a little more thought in regards to preparation. For all travellers to Niseko this winter, it will be an opportunity to spend time with family and friends, to meet new people, and to experience the best of Niseko. To ensure that everyone gets the most out of their Niseko holiday and gets to their destination smoothly this winter we have put together some helpful information. So please have a look through and use this as a rough guide to help you pack and prepare.

We look forward to serving you during your stay with us at Moiwa Lodge.

Pre – Trip Information

The Lodge

Moiwa Lodge is one of the last traditional large Japanese ski lodges in Niseko, with 4 stories of facilities, including: restaurant, bar, ski room, drying room, TV's and DVDs, large communal areas, wireless internet, laundry facilities and games area.

The lodge has many of the mod-cons, but still has the cool Japanese feel that you come to Japan for. You will be able to keep some of your gear in your rooms but there will be storage provided for your board bags and racks for skis/boards. There is also a boot drying area and drying room.

Niseko and surrounding resorts

Niseko is on the Island of Hokkaido and is approximately 2.5 hours by road transfer from New Chitose Airport in Sapporo. Niseko itself is a town that you may not even see when you are in the Niseko area, as it is away from the ski resorts, and is only a small country town with a train station, and a few great restaurants.

There are many resorts in the Niseko area. Moiwa Lodge is located slopeside at the Moiwa ski resort. Moiwa is Niseko's hidden gem, and the reason why we believe Moiwa Lodge is the best located lodge in the Niseko area. Few see crowds at the resort - in fact most of the time you will be one of just a handful on the mountain, yet the resort boasts some of the best snow and terrain in the area.

Whilst the rest of the crowds are in the busy Hirafu area battling to find the last little bit of powder at 11am, you can be up to your waist in fresh powder for days over in Moiwa. You will not be disappointed!

The most popular resort is the Niseko-United area, which is approx. 3 or 4 minutes away from Moiwa Lodge. You can ski home from this resort to our door. Access to Niseko-United is via our free lodge shuttle to the Annupuri and Hirafu lifts in the morning. It's about 3-4 minutes in the shuttle to Annupuri, and about 25 minutes to Hirafu. The shuttles operate at 8am or 9am each morning to both Annupuri and Hirafu. Alternatively you can ski there using a one-time lift pass for the Moiwa quad.

Niseko-United is regarded as one of Japan's best resorts. The skiing area is made up of four separate resorts – Niseko Grand Hirafu, Niseko Hanazono, Niseko Village (formerly Higashiyama) and Niseko Annupuri. A [Niseko-United](#) lift pass gives you access to each of these resorts, however you can also buy cheaper single resort tickets.

Every one of the Niseko resorts are equipped with efficient lift systems. Lifts are often gondolas and covered chairlifts so even on the most extreme blizzard days, you can ride in comfort. Bad weather does not mean bad visibility in Niseko, as the resorts tend to have an abundance of tree runs, and being low in altitude they rarely experience true whiteout conditions that are often found in North American or European resorts of higher altitude.

Queues are rare in shoulder seasons, except for the Hirafu/Hanazono areas which can have massive lines due to its huge popularity and abundance of accommodation.

There are also plenty of alpine alternatives here to be enjoyed - snowmobiling, snowshoeing and relaxing in the natural hot springs (called Onsens). All of these activities and tickets can be arranged from the lodge reception.

Our Location

Moiwa Lodge is located in the Moiwa base area of Niseko, Hokkaido. We are slopeside at Moiwa resort, and within easy walking distance to ski hire, four onsens and various places to eat and drink.

We are NOT located in the busy Hirafu base area, which gives you many benefits:

- 1: Little or no lift queues
- 2: More powder snow than you will experience anywhere else in the Niseko area
- 3: A more genuine Japanese local experience – away from the crowds.
- 4: More flexibility in your stay with the ability to ski/ride at many different resorts during your stay.

Guests who arrive expecting us to be in Hirafu will be disappointed to find that we are 15-20 minutes 'away from the masses'. We stress: Unless you are after 70 different restaurants and a wide selection of bars open until 2am each night, there is little need to go to Hirafu whilst in Niseko. Everything you need is within easy distance from Moiwa Lodge, all at cheaper rates than Hirafu. Read more on transport around the local area below.

Ski Hire

Ski Hire can be arranged for your stay through Winter First ski rental.

Winter First have the best gear and prices in the area, and they will deliver and fit all your gear in the lodge at a scheduled time as part of the service. You don't have to go anywhere. If you are also hiring boots, they will bring numerous sizes so they're sure to fit you.

Please book direct with Winter First on their website at: <https://winter1st.com/en/>

Payment will be processed at the time of fit out at the lodge.

All hire companies in the area have up to date gear, so you will not be disappointed with the quality of your rental.

Lift Passes

Moiwa lift passes are available from reception at Moiwa Lodge at a discount to the ticket window price.

Many people ask us for Niseko-United 'All-Mountain' lift passes, but we would **not** suggest you get the large multi-day all-mountain tickets as they can be very expensive and limiting.

Our guests over a week would normally ski about 4 days at Moiwa (outside your front door), then probably another day at a different resort around the area (like Rusutsu for approx. 9900JPY including return bus and lift ticket), then the rest of the time at the larger Niseko resorts of Annupuri, Higashiyama, Hirafu and Hanazono. If you buy the big multi-day Niseko United lift pass, you are limited to just skiing Niseko United, yet there are so many other places, with far less crowds and more powder just waiting for you!

For example, Moiwa is 4400JPY per day (when bought from our front counter), and if you end up liking just one of the resorts from Niseko United, you can just buy a pass for that one resort. For instance, if you ski Annupuri and love it, or you just want to ski the Annupuri back bowls, then you can just buy a pass that covers the Annupuri resort - it will save you a lot of money.

Many of our guests who ride the Niseko backcountry only use a pass for Moiwa or Annupuri as these are where the majority of the gates are located – an all-mountain pass will be a waste of money.

If you buy the multi-day passes, you WONT have the flexibility to decide each morning what you want to do and where you want to go.

Passes for Moiwa are available at reception at a discount to the ticket window price, whilst Niseko United and other resort passes are available from their relevant ticket windows, or online at a discount at <https://www.niseko.ne.jp/en/online-liftpass/>

Airport to Niseko transfers

Booking options:

Most likely you will be arriving to Hokkaido via New Chitose Airport (Sapporo's main airport). The best way to organise a bus to/from Chitose airport and Niseko is to book it yourself.

Option 1: The first option should be the Niseko Moiwa Airport Shuttle. This offers direct services from New Chitose to the car park in Moiwa (across the road from the lodge). They operate 2 services each way, and if you find one of their service times appropriate, it will be very convenient and speedy for you.

Further details on this service are on the booking site

<https://cw4.roomboss.com/cw/gen/ins/order01.jsf?vid=2c98902a5f69fddc015f718f43eb10ab&uid=2c98902a5f69fddc015f718f3ca110a9&usr=2c98902a657d4e42016583d36b5d0746>

This direct service to Moiwa wipes 1 hour off other journey times from New Chitose.

Niseko Moiwa Airport Shuttle times for the 2019-20 season:

New Chitose airport to Moiwa

Departing Domestic terminal	Departing International Terminal	Arriving to Moiwa
11.00	11.10	13.30
17.00	17.10	19.30

Moiwa to New Chitose airport

Departing Moiwa	Arriving to Domestic Terminal	Arriving to International Terminal
7.20	9.55	10.05
12.20	14.55	15.05

Please book the Moiwa Niseko Airport Shuttle Bus on this link:

<https://cw4.roomboss.com/cw/gen/ins/order01.jsf?vid=2c98902a5f69fddc015f718f43eb10ab&uid=2c98902a5f69fddc015f718f3ca110a9&usr=2c98902a657d4e42016583d36b5d0746>

Option 2: If these times don't suit, then another option will be to catch the longer duration 'Resort Liner' service. This service passes via Hirafu and other resort areas before arriving to Moiwa, so takes about an hour longer. Further details are available:

https://www.access-n.jp/winter2019/en/skibus/detail/101chitose_rusutsu_niseko.html#000901

Steps to follow

Regardless of the bus company you book with, we will only pick up guests arriving in the Moiwa area, so book your bus to Lodge Moiwa 834 or Kanro No Mori hotel in Moiwa.

The steps to follow:

- 1) Book your transfer
Be sure to allow at least 1 hour between the scheduled flight arrival time and the bus departure time. Your destination should be booked as Moiwa (Lodge Moiwa 834 for direct transfers, or Kanro No Mori for Resort Liner or other services) – these are the bus stops in Moiwa.
- 2) Once you receive confirmation, please email this to us at info@moivalodge.com

IMPORTANTLY:

1. We will NOT be able pick you up if you do not let us know your arrival time, so make sure you let us know!
2. We do not pick up passengers in the Moiwa area after 10.30pm. After this time you will need to make your own way to the lodge. You will still be able to arrive to the lodge after 10.30pm.
3. You MUST book your transfer at least 4 days prior to your arrival (9 days for Resort Liner), otherwise they will not accept your pre-booking. If you miss this deadline, don't stress too much - you will need to just turn up to the airport and jump on the next available transfer. The buses run regularly during the times that most flights arrive.

Once you have booked your transfer, PLEASE notify us of your arrival time. Please email it to info@moivalodge.com

At the airport:

New Chitose Airport is a nice, modern airport that has plenty to offer. After you arrive, collect your bags and make your way to the relevant bus counter. Once you are checked in for the bus, you should have a bit of time to pick up some cash and snacks for the bus. There is GREAT food at the airport.

The trip to Niseko is approximately 2.5 hours from the airport depending on snow conditions (3.5 hrs for Resort Liner services).

In Niseko:

Arrival times to Niseko vary wildly depending on snow and weather conditions. If you arrive on the direct Niseko Moiwa Airport Shuttle, you can just walk straight to the lodge across the car park (100m from the drop point).

If you are on Resort Liner (or another service), we ask that on arrival to Kanro No Mori, you inform the front desk that you are headed to Moiwa Lodge. They will call us, and we will be down in a few minutes. If there are any changes to your arrival, please let us know via email or call 0136583003.

Sapporo City to Niseko transfers (NOT airport transfers)

If you are travelling to Niseko from Sapporo city, then the best option will be to catch either the Whiteliner or Resortliner bus services. The best way to organise this bus is to book it yourself. Here are the links to the best options to the Moiwa area:

https://www.access-n.jp/winter2019/en/skibus/detail/sapporo_rusutsu_niseko.html#000037

https://www.goodsports.co.jp/white_eng/ski-bus/niseko-sapporo.html

When booking either of these services, you MUST book the bus to Kanro No Mori hotel, which is about 500m from Moiwa Lodge. We only pick up passengers from these services at Kanro No Mori hotel.

The steps to follow:

1. Book your transfer on either the Resortliner or Whiteliner websites. Your destination should be booked as Kanro No Mori. This is the bus stop in Moiwa.
2. Once you receive confirmation, please email this to us at info@moiwaldodge.com

IMPORTANTLY:

- 1) We will NOT be able pick you up if you do not let us know your arrival, so make sure you let us know!
- 2) You MUST book your transfer at least 9 days prior to your arrival, otherwise they will not accept your booking.

In Niseko:

Arrival times to Niseko vary wildly depending on snow and weather conditions. Therefore we ask that on arrival to Kanro No Mori, you inform the front desk that you are headed to Moiwa Lodge. They will call us, and we will be down in a few minutes. If there are any changes to your arrival, please let us know via email or call.

Train arrivals

The train to Niseko town station is a less popular option, as generally the bus is a more direct and cheaper.

Train travel to Niseko is a little awkward as there are so many train changes involved, regardless of where you travel from. Whilst the rail map may make it seem appealing, it's often a long journey that still requires a taxi from Niseko station to the resort on arrival (about 15 minutes).

Importantly, many guests choose the 6.40am train services on departure, but its almost impossible to get to the station at that time of morning. Taxis are NOT available at that time, and it's a 15 minute drive away from the lodge, so walking is not an option.

From Tokyo or other areas on Honshu, the shinkansen (bullet train) terminates at Hakodate – the southern most city of Hokkaido. From there, it's roughly a 4 hour trip to Niseko station (including a change at Oshamambe station).

From the airport (New Chitose) or Sapporo city, it's a rapid train service to Otaru station, then a change onto the Hakodate line train for Kutchan. You will wait 20-30 minutes in Kutchan whilst the train 'splits' into a single carriage, and then the final trip to Niseko station.

We don't provide any train station pick-ups/drop-offs, however there is a taxi company directly across the road from the station in Niseko town, and they will be able to take you up to the lodge. If you need some snacks or cash from the ATM, do it at the 7-11 on the way up to the lodge from the station ... just ask your driver to stop.

Don't make the mistake of going to Kutchan station ... it is over 30 minutes away, and it will be an expensive taxi ride to make it out to Moiwa.

Local Transport in and around Niseko

There are options for getting around in the Niseko area, but its best to be organised. Regardless of where you stay, your own car will always be the best option, but if that's out of your budget, there are still ways to stay connected and mobile.

Moiwa Shuttle

We offer our guests free transfers to/from Annupuri and Hirafu each morning and afternoon. There are 2 services to/from each of Annupuri and Hirafu in the morning and 2 in the afternoon.

Most people will take the shuttle to Annupuri in the morning. From Annupuri, the entire Niseko-United area can be quickly and easily accessed. Most guests choose to ski back to the lodge at the end of their day - It's a very easy beginner traverse from Annupuri back to our door at Niseko Backcountry Lodge, however there are also afternoon transfers available if needed.

Moiwa Lodge Express to Annupuri & Hirafu Shuttle

Morning shuttles:

<u>Moiwa Lodge</u>	<u>Nook Annupuri</u>	<u>Moiwa Lodge</u>	<u>Hirafu Welcome Center</u>	<u>Moiwa Lodge</u>
08:00	08:10	08:20	08:40	09:00
09:00	09:10	09:20	09:40	10:00

Afternoon shuttles:

<u>Moiwa Lodge</u>	<u>Hirafu Welcome Center</u>	<u>Moiwa Lodge</u>	<u>Nook Annupuri</u>	<u>Moiwa Lodge</u>
15:30	15:50	16:10	16:20	16:30
16:30	16:50	17:10	17:20	17:30

(More bus options on the following page)

Shuttles operated from Lodge 834 (approx. 100m from Moiwa Lodge)

Shuttles also operate from Lodge 834 at the end of our street. Guests are free to use these buses, but note that they are not operated by Moiwa Lodge, and can be subject to change outside our control.

<u>Lodge Moiwa 834</u>	<u>Niseko Station</u>	<u>Hirafu Welcome Center</u>	<u>Hirafu Seiko-mart</u>	<u>Lodge Moiwa 834</u>
07:30		07:50	08:00	08:30
08:30	08:45	09:05	09:15	09:45
<u>Kutchan Station</u>	<u>Lodge Moiwa 834</u>	* Please be ready and waiting 5 minutes before all departure times *		
14:00	14:35			
<u>Lodge Moiwa 834</u>	<u>Hirafu Seiko-mart</u>	<u>Hirafu Welcome Center</u>	<u>Lodge Moiwa 834</u>	
15:20	15:45	15:50	16:20	
16:20	16:45	16:50	17:20	

1. Please be at the designated stop 5 minutes before the scheduled departure.
2. Shuttle will only stop at designated stops
3. First-come first served basis
4. Just always remember, Hirafu is always VERY crowded compared to Moiwa or Annupuri, so consider carefully whether you need to go in the first place!

Our free Lodge to Hirafu evening shuttle

On Wednesday and Saturday nights, we operate an evening shuttle service to Hirafu. It's a great way to have a change of scenery and visit some other restaurants in Hirafu, or catch up with friends in the main tourist area.

Bookings are essential!

Moiwa Lodge to Hirafu

Moiwa Lodge – Depart at	6pm	7pm
Hirafu – Lawsons Arrive at	6.30pm	7.30pm

Hirafu to Moiwa Lodge

Hirafu – Lawsons Depart at	6.30pm	9pm
Moiwa Lodge – Arrive at	7pm	9.30pm

Niseko United shuttle

The Niseko United Shuttle operates throughout the Niseko area, and is a way to get over to other Niseko base areas when you aren't skiing, or when you want to go at unusual times of day. The timetable is available here: https://moiwalodge.com/assets/Documents/Niseko_United_Shuttle_Timetable_2019-20.pdf

The closest stop during the day is at the Anupuri Resort Entrance which is about 1km away from the lodge. Given its distance, it's probably too far away to be convenient for everyday use, but is good for a one-off transfer.

Note that this service will take over an hour to get to Hirafu! It stops everywhere!

Restaurant Pick Up Services

A fantastic service that many don't expect are the free pick-up/drop off services from local restaurants. Many restaurants in the Moiwa/Niseko area pick up dinner customers, and return you to the lodge after your meal. If you are after a feast, or just a drink, these can be a great way to get out and about without the hassle. Many of these restaurants are away from the tourist traps of Hirafu, and provide an authentic local experience without the price tag. However, **MAKE SURE YOU BOOK EARLY**, as these fill up quickly. A lot of the time you can get in on the same day, but the earlier you book the better.

Whilst this service is free, many restaurants require at least one person in your group to drink at least one alcoholic drink at dinner.

Walking

Moiwa Lodge is within walking distance to many of the things you will need during your stay. There are numerous restaurants and onsens that you can access by foot, as well as ski hire and Moiwa resort.

Niseko's best onsens are in the Moiwa region. Read our recommendations below in the section on 'Onsens'.

Local taxi services.

Historically, the local taxi service in Niseko has had a bad name. Few speak English, they seemed to operate at the whim of the driver's dinner schedule, and they finish way too early at night.

This can still be the case, with taxis being VERY hard to find in the early morning, and between the end of skiing and dinner time. If you are relying on the taxis to get you somewhere at a certain time, be prepared for some troubles. The best bet is to be prepared well in advance.

If you are going out late at night into Hirafu, a taxi will be your only option to get home. These can close anytime from midnight to 2am. Don't be caught out, as you will have no way home!

The only other workaround is to organise a private transfer with a company like SkyBus which is a door to door service, and whilst good, it can be very expensive. <http://www.skybus.co.jp/en>

Your Own Car

If you have the budget, then we definitely recommend guests rent their own car whilst in Hokkaido. It will allow you the greatest flexibility in your stay, and will allow you to go the extra little bit of distance that will give you an authentic Japanese experience that is still available all around the Niseko region.

If you are a group looking to stay in the cottage, then the money you save on your transfers to/from Sapporo will go a long way towards the cost of a rental, and the flexibility will allow you to get your groceries whenever you want them. The savings from your transfers and food costs will offset your car rental expense, and you will gain the best possible experience of the Niseko area.

There are many places within Hokkaido to hire a car. We recommend you rent it from the airport in Sapporo, as you will save money on transfers to/from Niseko.

If you are interested in a rental car, some rental car options from the airport are:
<https://www.toyotarentacar.net/english/shop/n-c-airport/> or <http://www.nisekoauto.com/>

There are plenty of free parking spaces around or near the lodge to park your car. Given the amount of snow we receive in Niseko, the snow ploughs operate very early in the morning to keep things moving. Please be aware of parking in the dumping routes of the snow ploughs – we will quickly grind to a halt if we can't clear the 15m of snowfall each season!

If you are planning on driving in Japan, you MUST have an international driving permit. This is not optional, and you will NOT be allowed to rent a car without one. You need the grey/blue paper international licence!!

Permits from France, Belgium, Germany, Monaco, Russia, Slovenia, Switzerland and Taiwan are NOT valid (plus others). With these, you'll need an official translation, so make sure you ask about your requirements before you arrive!! Check before you arrive as to what you need to do.

Avalanche Safety

Due to the HUGE amounts of snow we receive in Niseko, many avalanche hazards can and do exist. Lodge staff have dug many people out of avalanches in Niseko back-bowls and the surrounding areas, and there have been recent deaths in the backcountry. Niseko's backcountry is not controlled or patrolled.

We HIGHLY recommend that all guests carry and are always prepared to use avalanche safety equipment when in the back-country and back-bowls.

Skiing and snowboarding is fun, but don't under-estimate the dangers mother nature can throw at you! Recent deaths have often been caused by people acting outside of the local rules and regulations. **THE DANGERS ARE REAL!**

Avalanche packs are available to rent from the lodge for 2000JPY per day, including the backpack itself, shovel, probe and DTS Tracker or Arva Neo avalanche transceiver. If you need just the transceiver, you can rent that for 1000JPY per day.

The Niseko backcountry map, and Niseko backcountry rules can be found here – as a reference, Moiwa Lodge is in the lower left corner of the Map: https://moiwalodge.com/assets/Documents/Niseko_Rules_2019-20.pdf

If you are intending to venture into the backcountry, stay up to date with the latest avalanche information: <http://niseko.nadare.info/>

Guiding

Make the best of your stay in Niseko and book a local guide.

A great way to explore Niseko is with a good guide. There are plenty of guiding companies that operate in the Niseko area, some good, some bad. It's vital to find the perfect fit. Whether you want lift accessed terrain, side-country, or are wanting to go deep into the backcountry with touring gear, we can arrange it.

For guiding and instruction, we prefer long time locals Todd, Kenji and co. They have all worked in the Niseko area for many years, and have been our most requested operators. Native English speakers, and years of experience in the Niseko area, you are sure to enjoy them. Importantly, they aren't limited to any one resort, so you can travel all through the Niseko area based on the best snow conditions on any given day.

Bookings are essential, as all guides in the area generally sell out well in advance - 53,000JPY per day for up to 3 people. Half days are also available for 34,000JPY.

Please email us at info@moiwalodge.com to arrange your day.

ABS and BCA Cylinders

It is possible to rent air cylinders for your ABS or BCA pack in Niseko.

Niseko 343 (www.niseko343.com) has both ABS and BCA air cylinders at their shop. It's 1000JPY for the first day, then 500JPY per day thereafter. The shop is in Hirafu, so if you want this for your first day of skiing, you need to make sure you arrange to pick it up.

Rules for the Mountain

The general rule of the mountain is to observe and abide by all signage and warnings on the mountain. They are there for a good reason and if you disobey them you will run the risk of having your pass confiscated by the ski patrol.

Stay away from areas that are out of bounds and do not duck a ropes that fence off a particular area of the mountain. This is for your safety. Going backcountry is fine, but if you go into an area that is permanently closed, you will find yourself locked up, or worse. The Japanese take this VERY seriously. Do the right thing, ride the backcountry where you should, and you will have more than enough powder to keep you happy. The key message is: Don't be an idiot!

The Niseko backcountry map, and Niseko backcountry rules can be found here:

https://moiwaldge.com/assets/Documents/Niseko_Rules_2019-20.pdf

Restaurants

Yukari (our resident cook) produces fabulous food from the lodge kitchen. Continental breakfast is served daily, including home-made bread, meats, cheese, yoghurt, etc.

Delicious dinners are served each night in our top floor restaurant. Both Japanese and western meals are available. Entrées are priced from about 450JPY, and mains start at about 1100JPY.

There are plenty of restaurants in the area to choose from. Here are just some of our favourites:

Matsuri – our closest neighbour in Moiwa is just 50m from our door. An izakaya (Japanese tapas style) restaurant with great vibes, and lots of choice. You MUST try the gyoza, salted cabbage and the wagyu which is the best going around.

Kobito – about 1km from the lodge, and our favourite ramen in the area. An izakaya restaurant with free pick-up/drop-off service. Try the ramen, aburi salmon sushi, and for some fun the Russian roulette gyoza. Open for lunch and dinner (pick up service for dinner only).

Taj Mahal – Indian – about 1km from the lodge, with a pick up/drop off service. They are open late and deliver.

Lucky Fingers – creative Japanese dining. Located in Annupuri, this is a favourite for a nice night out. Try their famous Okaki Asparagus and steak. Normally 2 sitting times for dinner (6 and 8pm), with a pick up and drop off service.

Chez Dou Dou – French – run solely by a lady and her dog, this is a lovely small French restaurant with all home cooked food, and it is delicious! If you are after a quiet night away from the crowds, this may be the place. Note that there are no transport options other than your own car, and bookings are essential.

Kushiya – yakitori/izakaya. The only yakitori grill in Niseko town, with great local Rusutsu pork and shitake skewers. Make sure you try the kitsune pizza. Located about 10 minutes away in Niseko town, they provide a pick up/drop off service.

Rakuda – Izakaya. A small restaurant in Niseko town, with terrific marinated fish, pizzas, and all sorts of delicious Japanese food. Pick up and drop off service available with notice.

White Birch – French. Unexpected, but an absolute delight. We marvel at how the chef can produce such fine food out of such a small kitchen by himself. A staff favourite, and not something you would expect in Japan. There are no transport options.

Haru Korean Kitchen. A small restaurant with amazing Korean food. It has only 2 tables, and is in a farm building about 3kms from the lodge. It's a unique experience, where the wonderful friendly chef will make everything from scratch. There are no transport options, and bookings are essential.

Rakuichi – Soba – One of Niseko's most famous restaurants, this soba restaurant is incredibly difficult to book into. If you want to get a taste of this amazing Japanese dining experience, bookings open 90 days before sitting via their website: <https://www.rakuichisoba.com/>. Located about 800m from the lodge.

Raphael – Italian – Located at the end of our street, this restaurant has a great range of Italian food – pasta, pizza, burgers, good coffee, etc. They are open for lunch, so are a good option when skiing/riding Moiwa.

Hanayoshi – Sushi. One of Niseko's busiest and best sushi restaurants. The chef visits the fish markets himself each day, and 3 set menus are available (10,000JPY, 15,000JPY and 20,000JPY). Bookings can be difficult, so get in early! Located in Niseko town,

Average Prices (when eating out)

If you eat modestly ¥5000 per person per day is plenty ... maybe more if you plan on taking down Japan's seafood, sushi & sashimi regularly. Expect to pay around ¥500-600 per pint or schooner once you hit Japan's pubs & bars. Spirits are also available. Tipping is not necessary in Japan the same way as in North America. Wine is quite expensive and not the quality you may be used to at home.

Lunch on the hill will be about 1500-2000JPY for a meal. Less if you want just a small bite.

Drinking Etiquette

In cozy and friendly Japanese-style bars, customers often pour drinks for each other from bottles of beer as a gesture of companionship. If you are a fellow beer drinker, reciprocate with your own bottle. A whiskey drinker may invite you to drink from his bottle and fix a drink for you. In this case, you need not reciprocate unless you have your own bottle.

If with a group, do not begin to drink until everyone is served. Glasses are raised in the traditional salute as everyone shouts Kampai! (Pronounced Cam-pie!) Which means Cheers.

Eating Etiquette

Mastering chopsticks may be challenging at first, but once you have learned, eating with this simple instrument is a genuine pleasure.

If you make friends with the locals and they happen to invite you out for dinner there are a few do's and don'ts when sharing a common plate amongst a group of people. If you are selecting food from a dish that others are also selecting from, use the end of your chopsticks opposite the end that you eat with. Move the food onto your plate first, and then flip your chopsticks around. Secondly, once you have picked up food from your own plate it is important that you do not put it down again. It must remain in your chopsticks until you have consumed it.

Smoking

Smoking is not allowed in Moiwa Lodge, however smoking is still very much a part of eastern society. Be prepared to find smokers in many bar areas in and around Japan.

Health and Security

The health care system in Japan is very much comparable to that of western standards. You can be confident of receiving a high level of care should you require attention or hospitalisation. We strongly recommend travel insurance to cover against emergency medical services, overseas medical and hospital expenses. Japanese health care is VERY expensive. A simple visit to a doctor will be about 10,000JPY, and a hospital visit much more.

There's a simple way to avoid surprises - Insure yourself!

Money

Ensure you have enough Japanese YEN in cash BEFORE you arrive into Niseko. This is not as crucial as it once was, but there are still many places that do not accept cards, and there are limited cash dispensing machines in the area. Sapporo airport has many ATMs that you may get cash from before jumping on the bus.

Moiwa Lodge accepts credit cards at reception.

Almost no one takes American Express or Diners Club. Visa and Master Card are slowly becoming more widely accepted, but you should still obtain Japanese Yen in Cash (traveller's cheques also not accepted) before you arrive. There are limited ATMs in Niseko.

The closest ATM when staying in Moiwa is at a 7-Eleven near Niseko Town, which is about 6 km from Moiwa. A taxi will cost around 2000-2500yen one way.

Weather and snow conditions

We are often asked about snow conditions.

We find snow-forecast.com the best and most reliable forecasting site. It will normally under-report the expected snowfall, so don't be surprised if a 4cm overnight prediction becomes 25cm or more.

Clothing and surviving the cold

Much of Hokkaido is quite cold with persistent wind and a few sunny days that rarely get above minus 10 degrees Celsius, and with night conditions being around 5 – 10 degrees colder than day temperatures. This unique weather makes for the best most reliable dry powder snow in the Northern Hemisphere.

We strongly recommend that you dress in layers e.g.: thermals followed by fleece warm-retention layers and an outer windproof/waterproof shell. Goggles with a double lens designed for low light are a must as is a fleece neck-warmer & hat. We also suggest that you bring a spare hat & two pairs of ski gloves if you have them.

In addition to offer extra protection, a quality helmet is a great way to keep your head warm and protected from the elements. WEARING A HELMET IN THE BACKCOUNTRY WILL BE MANDATORY FROM 2020-21.

As the roads are extremely slippery, please ensure you have suitable footwear such as rubber soled winter boots in addition to your normal winter clothing.

Most chairlifts and gondolas are covered to protect you from the snow and wind however you will need to dress appropriately to keep you warm.

If you do not have these vital items they can be rented at 'Winter First', or at the local ski hill.

Important things to bring:

- Japanese Yen in cash
- Paracetamol such as Panadol or similar, and Cold & Flu tablets

The Onsen Experience

One of Japan's most cherished customs is a hot mineral bath called an Onsen. Onsens are a unique experience to a Westerner...most notably that any type of clothing (except for modesty towel) in the Onsen is considered unhygienic and therefore unacceptable. 99% of all Onsens have separate male/female baths (the exception being the Niseko Grand which is about 1km away) and usually cost around 700yen. Towels are available to hire at the Onsens. Ask at reception and they can guide you to all the best nearby onsens – some are a few minutes away by foot. Most Onsens will also have a lunch and dinner menu you can purchase from.

Our recommendations are:

Yugokorotei – Probably the best onsen in the Niseko area. Separate mens/womens onsen. This is about 1km from the lodge.

Niseko Grand – Mixed onsen where men and women can all bath in the same onsen area. There are separate change rooms for each, and separate onsen baths inside, however the large outside onsen is mixed. Modesty 'suits' are provided for women.

Basic Japanese Words and Phrases

The Japanese language can be very confusing to most people. It can be very daunting when signs and posters are written in foreign characters. However, most Japanese people in transit speak Basic English and will be able to understand you if you speak slowly and clearly. Keep your sentences brief and to the point. You will find that they are very helpful and will try their best to answer your questions in English. Below are a few helpful words and phrases to get you on your way.

Hello	Kon-nichi-wa	How are you?	O-genki-desu-ka ?
Good Morning	Oh-hayo gozai masu	Good Evening	Konban-wa
Good night	Oyasumi –nasai	How much is it?	Ikura-desu-ka
Please	Kuda – sai	Thank you	Arigato gozai -masu
Excuse Me	Sumi-masen	I am sorry	Gomen – nasai
Can I have this?	Kore-wo-kudasai	What is this?	Kore-wa-nani desuka
I don't understand	Wakari-masen	Where is the toilet?	Toire-wa-doko desuka?
Look out	Abu-nai	Good Bye	Sayonara
1 Ichi	8 Hachi		
2 Ni	9 Ku		
3 San	10 Jyu		
4 Shi (or Yon)	100 Hyaku		
5 Go	1,000 Sen		
6 Roku	10,000 Ichi man		
7 Nana (or Shichi)	20,000 Ni man		

Lastly

We trust that you will have a brilliant time in Niseko. It is one of the great ski areas of the world, and we are sure you will love it!

We look forward to seeing you in Moiwa very soon!