

Niseko Summer special

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Cool temps, various activities and delicious food await

Coronavirus international travel restrictions may have scuttled many a summer vacation plan, but there has never been a better time to embark on a domestic adventure and support local businesses. The Hokkaido town of Niseko, most famed for its snow-capped peaks and popularity as a world-class ski resort, has increasingly become a summer season destination of choice for discerning travelers.

Niseko's abundance of space is a perfect antidote to close-quartered city spaces and related stressors. Rolling landscapes and pristine waterways are an ideal backdrop for engaging in fun-filled activities or getting some much-needed rest and relaxation while maintaining appropriate social distancing. Temperate climes are a welcome escape from the humid, sticky and languid days that summers elsewhere in Japan typically bring. A dynamic and multifaceted food scene that speaks of plentiful harvests and passionate producers is a significant contributor to Niseko's appeal.

Getting there and away

Flights connecting Tokyo and Osaka to Niseko run daily and clock in mere hours away. Niseko is located roughly 50 kilo-

meters from the Hokkaido capital, Sapporo, and is 80 kilometers west of New Chitose Airport. Reaching Niseko from the airport is easiest by car — renting a car allows for a more in-depth exploration of the region — but public transportation is also available.

Mountain views await

Hokkaido's world-famous wilderness translates to fresh and clean air, idyllic vistas and natural landmarks perfect for stopping and spending time.

Mount Yotei dominates the Niseko landscape. Once the snow melts, its grasslands come alive with blossoms and wildlife. Surrounding hiking trails that vary in length and intensity are ideal for walking and making discoveries, whether taking in the area's 100 designated alpine flowers or happening upon local wildlife such as mountain hares or Siberian flying squirrels. It is recommended to plan accordingly and be mindful of changes in altitude and weather. Respite can be found at the mountain's impressive 2-kilometer crater during the height of summer, where spectacular views of farmland and countryside scenery can be seen.

Variety of activities

Summertime visitors to Niseko can further enjoy in lofty heights with a trip to a natural, local attraction that is only "open" at this time of year, the Shinsen Marsh district. The marsh is a distinctive, high-altitude wetlands located on a plateau 750 meters above sea level and inaccessible during times of snow. Trails fashioned out of wooden boardwalks traverse the area's numerous ponds. The area is famed for wildflowers such as lilies and irises, but if timed right, visitors may possibly have the marsh to themselves. This is considered fitting as the origin of the marsh's name is said to evoke an aura of mystery (*shin*) and hermitude (*sen*). Walking and hiking maps are available from local information centers and some places of accommodation.

Down below, waterways such as the Shiribetsu River are the setting for kayaking, canoeing, stand up paddleboarding, rafting, fishing and swimming. Such water-filled, leisurely pursuits are ideal for those concerned about maintaining distance and safety and want to have fun and perhaps keep fit.

There's a great cycling culture to be found in Niseko — slow and leisurely — where old tracks have been converted to



bike trails, allowing riders to coast between popular spots and enjoy nature on the way. There are also steeper climbs for the altitude-minded adventurer; in previous years, Niseko has hosted endurance and other cycling competitions. These events attract both enthusiasts and casual visitors alike.

Hiking and trekking, water sports, road cycling, golf, fishing and more — as temperatures increase in Niseko, so does the number of outdoor activities that visitors can choose from. All fitness levels are catered to, whether one participates in a relaxing game of golf or embarks on a journey of long-distance cycling against a changing backdrop of alpine scenery.

Photographers will delight in displays of sunflower blooms and other expansive landscapes, with plenty of opportunities to indulge in their hobby.

Hot spring relaxation

At the end of an eventful day spent in the great outdoors there is nothing quite like spending some rest and relaxation in the warm geothermal water of a local *onsen*



A cyclist on a trail with Mount Yotei in the background. Niseko hosts a variety of competitions and is home to an array of trails for various skill levels.

(hot spring). Niseko is famous for its crystal-line waters with unique mineral content and healing properties. Some larger accommodations allow day-use of their *onsen*, while other establishments offer rooms with private baths.

Delicious dishes

Hokkaido is said to be the food bowl of Japan, and Niseko's flourishing food culture has a marked philosophy of remaining simple, sustainable and local. The terroir lends distinctive elements to award-winning sake and wine. Crops planted in spring are harvested and sold at local farmers' markets and roadside outlets such as Niseko View Plaza Michinoeki and Chokubaikai.

Fruit picking is a popular way of partaking in local delicacies; during summer, visitors can indulge in collecting cherries, blueberries, peaches, prunes and grapes.

Succulent corn and tomatoes also make an appearance this time of year.

Local restaurants, their menus bursting with flavor from seasonal produce, are adhering to coronavirus safety measures and precautions. Diners have the option of eating in or grabbing food to go. Establishments cater to all kinds of cuisines, health preferences and budgets.

For people staying in self-contained accommodations and who may be particularly concerned about reducing potential risk, consider available services such as Niseko Gourmet that allow for personalized grocery shopping and menu planning. Local knowledge of the area's best suppliers, finest ingredients and artisanal produce results in meals and gourmet experiences that may become etched in memory.

www.nisekotourism.com



Above left: The Shinsen Marsh district is only "open" during certain times of the year and is teeming with wildlife. Above right: Ikoino Yuyado Iroha hot spring is one of many local spots where visitors can relax after a day of exploring.



Resort committed to guests' safety

Summer in Niseko has it all, with mild temperatures and low humidity, breathtaking scenery, amazing produce, activities at every turn and outstanding self-contained accommodations. The latter are ideal for family vacations, romantic sojourns, golf trips or spacious and solo workations alike.

Reaching the Niseko area, more popularly known as a mecca for snow sports, is easier than many think. Daily flights from Tokyo see visitors touching down on Sapporo soil within 90 minutes. From

there, visitors can reach Niseko in under two hours by car.

Local accommodation provider MnK Niseko has long catered to guests in search of a resort experience. The company's Country Resort and The Orchards provide spacious homes, food and beverage options as well as on-site activities such as nature trails, dedicated play areas and EdVenture summer camp experiences. MnK also takes pride in its focus on cleanliness and safety, concepts that particularly resonate during

the coronavirus crisis.

The Orchards is located amid the fertile plains between Mount Yotei and Mount Niseko-Anupuri offering stunning views of both mountains. The award-winning development features a selection of light-filled and contemporary two to six bedroom fully furnished homes. At Orchards Clubhouse, the on-site concierge can help guests reserve a Michelin-starred restaurant, rafting trip, cycling excursion or share the best hiking paths and fishing spots.

MnK's Country Resort chalets are situated alongside the Shiribetsu River, surrounded by a tranquil forest. Many properties boast views of Mount Yotei, while others lie in proximity to the peaceful Osawa Stream.

On-site restaurants, Tomo Niseko and J'ai la Patate, provide for memorable resort dining experiences; MnK also operates a BBQ rental service, perfect for enjoying the best of local produce and eating outdoors.

For the young and the young at heart, there is something for everyone to enjoy during the summer in Niseko.

<https://www.mnkniseko.com/>





BEAT THE HEAT AND ESCAPE TO NISEKO

Award-winning accommodations and unforgettable experiences in Niseko, Japan. There is something for everyone – outdoor adventures aplenty, nature to relax in and incredible food at every turn.

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Far left: The Niseko Autumn Food Festival boasts a variety of dishes. Left: The festival is a celebration of the area's harvest and restaurant scene, organized with local event production partner Made in Hokkaido.

Festival boasts local brews and eats

Autumn marks a sense of accomplishment for Niseko's farming community. The district is renowned for its fertile landscape and nutrient-rich volcanic soil, which contributes to some of the best produce to be found in Japan.

A direct beneficiary of this ample harvest is Niseko's local food and drink scene that is growing every year. From under-the-radar breweries to producers of artisanal food-stuffs — Niseko caters to all.

All that and more is the focus of the Niseko Autumn Food Festival, an annual event that celebrates Niseko's incredible produce and turns the bounty into a street

party.

Running from Sept. 17 to 21, the 2020 festival is a delicious showcase of the region's robust dining scene and seasonal wares.

Participants, such as Niseko Pizza, represent the best of the town's restaurants, bars and food service providers.

Klass Kitchen wowed festival visitors in 2019 with a vibrant fresh potato gnocchi, romesco sauce, smoked beef cheek and salsa verde. Will they repeat their success again?

Visitors can talk with staff from private catering and grocery delivery business, Niseko Gourmet, who have published a

harvest cookbook, a delightful compendium of recipes and local stories.

Lovers of a decent brew, whether that be of the alcoholic or caffeinated kind, are well advised to search out festival participants Niseko Tap Room or Cedar Coffee.

Visitors staying in Niseko are welcome to attend the official after-party event at Musu once festival proceedings wind down for the day. Live music is also a big staple of the festival, spanning jazz, *taiko* drumming, rock and bossa nova performances, among many others.

www.nisekotourism.com/2020-naff



NISEKO AUTUMN FOOD FESTIVAL

2020

ニセコの味覚が大集合!!
ニセコ オータムフード フェスティバル

9.17 THU 18 FRI
3pm-9pm

9.19 SAT 20 SUN 21 MON
11am-9pm

場所 ヒラフ坂交差点横
(リズムジャパン向かい)

Location Hirafu crossroad
(Right across from Rhythm Japan)

FOR MORE INFO nisekotourism.com/2020-naff Facebook [niseko.autumn.fes](https://www.facebook.com/niseko.autumn.fes)