



WHITE-HOT FUN YEAR ROUND

A holiday or second-home destination embracing four seasons might be closer than you think



Around the family dinner table, the chatter turns to a familiar quandary. Summer holidays are looming, and what's to be done? Everyone needs a break from the steamy, stifling heat, but nowhere nearby in the region seems to have a climate that's much different to home.

Thoughts turn into dreamy wishes of blue skies, mild sunshine and days so pleasant that you long to be outdoors.

Then mum recalls a friend saying that Niseko is fun in summer. The mountain resort area of Hokkaido, Japan, is renowned for its deep, powdery snow, allowing for winter sports of all sorts. But in summer?

After dinner, as the family began to search online, they discovered that Niseko not only has a booming tourism sector, it's also one of the most popular destinations for affluent foreigners to buy a second home.

As ski properties go, Niseko is one of the most accessible. Owners can take a direct flight from Hong Kong, Beijing or Shanghai, and within around two hours of landing at Sapporo's New Chitose Airport, arrive at their welcoming home away from home.

There, everything is just how you left it. Familiar furnishings provide comfort, and with no need to cart ski gear from home or hire bicycles etc, the family can immediately immerse themselves into whatever activity they choose. For those who vacation frequently, owning a property can be more cost effective than renting.

Since there are no restrictions on foreigners buying real estate in Japan, Niseko offers an easy entry point for investors building a property portfolio. Dubbed the "Aspen of Asia", Niseko's property market has seen strong appreciation in recent years – so while owners enjoy all the year-round attractions, they've also seen their investment grow.

In addition to capital appreciation, generous rental yields from villas and apartments on the slopes are another factor attracting property investors from around the world.

Although this region is most famous for its amazing snow, as the ground thaws in springtime, something magical happens: the mountains come alive with nature. The first sign is the wildflowers popping through the lush carpet of green, delighting all with their joyous colours of purple, pink, red, white and yellow. The trees, too, welcome the new season, bursting forth with cherry blossom.

Suddenly, the slopes that so many have skied down all winter long become a brand-new network of hiking and cycling paths. The gondola lifts are still running to take you to the top, so descent can be at the pace of your choice, pausing to observe the birds and other wildlife going about their forestry business.

As the melting snow turns rivers into torrents, white water action takes off. Adrenaline-seekers pump their rafts down the

mighty Shiribetsu River, before coming to rest in the crystal-clear waters that pool at the bottom. One of the cleanest rivers in the world, this waterway is also renowned for its great fly fishing – perhaps a fresh trout or salmon will be your catch of the day?

Of course, there is golf – this is Japan! Golfers have a choice of scenic and challenging courses, including the Arnold Palmer-designed Niseko Golf Course.

Great local food is one of the pleasures of any visit to Niseko, where produce is renowned as some of the freshest in Japan. Its main mountain, Mount Yotei, a tall and beautiful snow-capped peak that looks very much like majestic Mount Fuji, boasts not only top-of-the-world views, but the extremes of climate which gourmets credit for the delectable sweetness of the fruits and vegetables. And here, farmers are happy to open their gates and invite the public in.

Where else in Asia but friendly, cosmopolitan Niseko, where English is widely spoken and the residents are highly welcoming of visitors, could kids have the opportunity to pick apples right off the tree? Or See first-hand that milk really does come from cows, or eat organic vegetables hand-picked moments earlier from the field next door?

Niseko has never really been a year-round destination like other renowned alpine playgrounds, such as Whistler in Canada, and Lake Tahoe in California, US. But, it could be. Various branded developments underway or in the pipeline are poised to take Niseko to the next level. One particular masterplanned precinct, Aruku-zaka Street, is set to be the catalyst.

The visionaries behind it imagined a high-end walking street in the heart of lower Hirafu housing an elegant cluster of luxury hotel residences, private apartments, restaurants, shops and al fresco gathering spaces. Arranged as intimate, gently-scaled groups of different architectural styles, each section will form part of a cohesive neighbourhood with a cheerfully eclectic look and feel.

As a second-home destination for the well-heeled around

the region, this would become a dynamic community lifestyle hub throughout the seasons.

The international developers of this ambitious development say they are committed to Niseko for the long-term. “We all have houses here, our families love the four seasons,” they say. “We are all very invested in the area, and are driven to make Hirafu a year-round destination.”



Gourmets credit the extremes of climate for the delectable sweetness of the fruits and vegetables
極端的天氣變化也令蔬果作物更香甜可口，讓人大飽口福



雪國新貴

四季皆宜的度假勝地或第二家園，其實近在咫尺

晚飯時分，我們一家又為旅遊難題討論不休。炎夏將至，是時候擬定度假大計。人人也想到氣候清涼的地方避暑，但放眼鄰近地區，悶熱暑氣籠罩各地，教人無處可逃。我們繼而幻想置身於藍天白雲之下，和煦的陽光和晴朗的天氣令人巴不得馬上出門，到戶外暢玩。

母親忽爾想起有朋友推介新雪谷（舊稱二世古）是夏日消暑的好去處。這個位於日本北海道的度假山區本以遍山粉雪，雪質優良而聞名，是進行各項冬季運動的勝地。但到了夏天，新雪谷又是怎樣的一個光景呢？

晚餐後，我們舉家開始在網上搜尋資料，發現新雪谷不僅是旅遊熱點，還吸引無數外國富商到當地購置別墅。

就滑雪場物業而言，新雪谷可謂是交通最便捷的地點之一。業主可於香港、北京或上海乘搭直航機抵達札幌的新千歲機場，再坐約兩小時的車程，便可回到這溫馨的「第二個家」。

其後，萬事俱備。溫馨的佈置讓人有回家的感覺，一家大小毋須把全副裝備從家中運抵滑雪場，更不必租借單車，即可盡情投入喜愛的活動。若經常到此度假，自置物業也許要比租賃酒店或旅館來得划算。

日本並無對外籍人士設置物業限購令，因此，新雪谷是物業投資者的入門之選。這裏有「亞洲亞斯本」（Aspen of Asia）之稱，近年樓價大幅攀升，所以業主除了可欣賞一年四季的美景外，也可坐享資產增值。

除此之外，山上別墅及公寓帶來的豐厚租金回報，也是另一個招徠世界各地物業投資者的賣點。

雖然這個地區以迷人雪景聞名於世，但當春回大地，積雪融化，山上隨即回復生機，展現大自然的奧妙。漫山遍野的青蔥草地會開滿姹紫嫣紅、七彩繽紛的嬌艷野花，而櫻花也從枝葉中綻放粉嫩花蕾，迎接春日降臨。

在冬天長期深受歡迎的滑雪坡道，驟變

縱橫交錯的全新遠足步道和單車路徑，而登山纜車則會運作如常，帶你輕鬆往山上尋幽探勝；你也可選擇徒步下山，沿途且行且歇，有時間的話，大可駐足觀賞林中飛鳥和其他野生動植物。

當飄雪冰川融化，河流開始變得急湧，便是水上活動開鑼的季節。膽識過人之士會在急湍洶湧的尻別川上划艇漂流，最後在下游清澈見底的河水上歇息。這條河道的水質清澈，全球數一數二，並且是飛蠅釣（fly fishing）的勝地，只要花點時間，說不定能捕獲生猛鱒魚和三文魚。

身處日本，總有一家高爾夫球場在附近，景觀秀麗的高難度球場同樣不乏選擇，由阿諾德·帕爾默（Arnold Palmer）設計的新雪谷高爾夫球場便是其中之一。

來到新雪谷，當地美食絕對不容錯過，這裏的鮮美食材堪稱日本之最。積雪蓋頂的羊蹄山是當地的主要山脈，巍然高聳，風景美不勝收，與壯麗的富士山不遑多讓；而極端的天氣變化也令蔬果作物更香甜可口，讓人大飽口福。這裏的農夫更樂於開放農場予公眾入內參觀。

當地人親切友善且具國際視野，大多擅操英語，對遊客無任歡迎，孩子可直接從樹

上採摘蘋果，親睹擠牛奶的過程，更可自行收割有機蔬菜，隨即烹調入饌，環顧亞洲，哪裏能比得上新雪谷？

新雪谷未如加拿大的惠斯勒（Whistler）及美國加州的太浩湖（Lake Tahoe）等知名滑雪場，成為全年魅力不減的景點，但一切只是時間問題。當地多個大型發展項目正進行得如火如荼，有些則上馬在即，勢讓新雪谷進一步展現光芒，其中構思宏大的購物商業區Aruku-zaka Street定必令這裏氣象一新。

這個計劃旨在於比羅夫下村的核心地段構建優雅高級的步行街，雲集豪華度假酒店、私人公寓、餐廳、商店及露天公共空間。整體佈局溫馨舒適，按比例劃分為建築風格各異的地帶，讓各區域盡展多元繽紛的面貌與感覺。

隨着區內發展為富裕人士購置別墅的天堂，這裏將成為活力十足的社區生活樞紐。

負責這個宏大項目的國際發展商表示會全力推動新雪谷的長遠發展。他們道：「我們皆在當地置業，家人都熱愛這裏絢爛多彩的四時景致，對投資此區興致勃勃，因此我們會盡心打造比羅夫村成為樂趣『年終無休』的人氣景點。」

