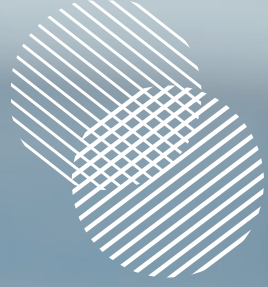


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## A NISEKO LIFE



# THE MAPLES NISEKO



## Niseko, Hokkaido.

Once a sleepy, mountainous village over a hundred years ago. Today, a world-class ski town that's gaining almost cult-like fame for its pristine champagne powder slopes and spectacular backcountry.

Set against the magnificent backdrop of Mt Yotei, also known as "Ezo Fuji" for its symmetrical resemblance to the legendary Mt Fuji, Niseko's unusually long ski season is blessed with consistently deep, powder light snowfall. Blanketing wide open runs, gladed areas, groomed and off-piste slopes and adventurous backcountry terrain, it's no wonder skiers of every level from around the world flock here religiously when the season opens from as early as late November to April.

Locals, including visitors who came and never left, however will have you know that there's more to Niseko than powder heaven. Extending well beyond winter, a deliciously fresh and flavourful food scene is revered, thanks to the region's abundance of quality produce, glorious seafood and proud artisans. The warmer months also present perfect conditions for outdoor activities such as golfing, tennis, fishing, kayaking, white water rafting, trekking and cycling. Or just simply taking time to savour a slower pace of life.

At The Maples Niseko, nestled in the popular Hirafu town on the lively main street of Hirafuzaka, every season is a beautiful and sensorially rich journey to be experienced. We share some of the residents' love for the Niseko life here.





(PART I)

## POWDER HOUND HEAVEN



Adrenaline rush. Heart pumping. Naoki the pilot's voice crackles in my ears, over the headphones: Watch out for the flurries when you get out, also when I take off! Great ride guys — Shiribetsu-Dake looks fabulous today! The attendant on the landing snowpad gives Naoki the thumbs up and away the bird goes!

Rising above the clouds at 1,898m tall,  
Mt Yotei's beauty is as magical as it is majestic.

雲の上にそびえる1,898メートルの羊蹄山。  
その美しさは神秘的で`壮麗だ。





The best part of snowboarding backcountry –  
finding your own pristine powder stash.

スノーボードバックカントリーで最高の部分 – それは  
自分だけの純白で手つかずのパウダーを見つけること。

(PART I Cont'd)

I hear the whirring of the heli fade into the distance. And then quiet... A deathly silence! Except the mountain sounds like it's booming with loud thumps! Ahh, it's only my pumping heart in my ears! My nostrils hurt as I suck in the cold air. I look around – it's panoramic. I see Mt Yotei and Hirafu in the near distance. I look down the north slope – that's where we're plunging today. Open powder lines, some cliff drops, birch trees to glide between – looks like it's gonna be a mind-blowing ride! Mind-blowing!

I check my bindings. All good. Press my jacket pocket to ensure my avalanche beacon's on. My shovel and probe are safely in my backpack. Eduardo, or Edu as he prefers to be called, gives the four of us final detailed instructions. We're the first to be up today plus last night's dump of snow had reset the terrain, so we'll have loads of chances to be scoring those freshies! Edu's from Argentina and has skied the Andes but says nothing compares to this! We'll be going down some 30-40 degree pitches – vertical bliss!

Ready! Set! Let's go man! The virgin powder is pristine – OMG, this is truly powder hound heaven! No tracks, an unwritten palette, I'm ready to carve my own patterns of adventure on the face of this mountain! Edu goes first – a figure that gets smaller as he moves down the slope, a jetstream of snow behind him! We follow each to his own destiny!





When all that snow's pushed out, blowing up and blinding you; caking your goggles and going up your nostrils, filling your lungs with icy, fresh air – that's what we call amazing.

大量の雪が押し出され、吹き上がり、視界を塞ぐ；ゴーグルを覆い鼻孔に入り込み、氷のように冷たい新鮮な空気で肺を満たす — これこそまさに「amazing (驚き)」というものだ。

(PART I Cont'd)



The snow's beyond description, the pitch steeper than meets the eye, I plunge at top speed and carve a turn to slow myself... then plunge again. Thank heavens for the hours put in to train up those calves! Hurtling down the steep slope, in between the birches, sweeping snow sprays, air lifted over the mounds – it's unbelievable! My breath comes in short spurts as I carve that deep powder snow, adrenaline flowing, my heart pumping. I hear the air blowing past me as we speed down the mountain, five figures like jetski riders with plumes of snow streaming behind each of us! Pause a while midway to catch our breath and the spectacular view especially up mountain, at the fresh curves we had carved.

A wefie for Instagram – the guys back at college are going to chew their hearts out! Cool!



Niseko backcountry. Where the softest, lightest powder imaginable makes every turn look and feel almost effortless.

ニセコバックカントリー。この上なく柔らかで軽いパウダーが、どのターンも難くこなせるように思わせる。





Quietly undulating, the mountains lie surreal as if in a suibokuga painting.

静かにうねる山々が、水墨画のように非現実的に横たわる。



One of the biggest plus points drawing powder hounds to Niseko is that skiing and boarding off-piste is actually allowed. Just be sure to go early for the freshest, deepest and unmarked powder.

パウダーファンを惹きつけるニセコの最大の魅力の1つは、コース外のスキーとスノーボードが実際に許されている事だ。手つかずで新雪のディープパウダーの為に、必ず早くスタートしよう。



(PART I Cont'd)



Later, we pour over our videos at dinner in Steak Rosso Rosso in the Middle Village, just several hundred meters down from The Maples, where we're shacked up. Tsutsumi-san the owner has prepared our steaks to perfection. I'm starving – could eat a horse! The videos don't do justice to the surroundings nor the heights we boarded down today. Edu's video of us is a magnificent testament to an experience to die for! The freshies we'd carved were beautiful curves on the most pristine of snows! But they were proof we'd done it – yay! I believe Edu – this is indeed the BEST place with the BEST snow. So glad Mom and Pappy bought the unit at The Maples – you'll see me here again for the next few years for sure!



Lunch break, Niseko style.  
ニセコのランチタイム。



Don't try these stunts at home unless you're a pro like these guys. Many of whom have been returning to Niseko year after year to slake their thirst for endless powder. Skiers and boarders of all other levels should stick to the slopes – there's more than enough terrain variety to make everyone very happy.

こういうスタントは、永遠に続くパウダーへの渴望を満たす為に毎年ニセコに戻ってくる彼らの様なプロに任せておこう。他のレベルのスキーヤーとボーダーは、スロープにこだわるべきだ。皆をそれぞれ存分に楽しませてくれるスロープが有り余るほどあるのだから。



Come après-ski time, everyone has their preferred scene.

スキーの後は、それぞれお気に入りの店がある。



(PART II)

## THE HIGH LIFE

**“Mary-Terese, you forgot to pack Benjamin’s hat!  
Now I’ve to go out to Rhythm to buy one for him”  
“Sorry Ma’am I thought you packed already”  
“Luckily Rhythm is close by to Maples”**

Usually Mary-Terese is very good at this sort of thing, better than I am. It was such a last minute decision to come over to Niseko to ski. Lincoln had a window of downtime for a few days and suggested that we fly over to get in a couple of runs on the slopes. Luckily, we bought the 3-bedroom unit at The Maples and it was available. Usually it’s rented out because of its location and Lincoln says the yields are good. I leave that sort of thing to him. Had to scramble for tickets – convenient also that Cathay Pacific flies direct from Hong Kong to Sapporo. What I love best is there’s no jet lag, especially for Benjie. Nothing worse than a tired jet-lagged toddler to spoil a vacation!

Too bad, I had to bring my last season’s ski suit – too late to buy anything new as everything in my size had already been sold out. Just hope being almost end-of-season, no one I know is here in Niseko – hate for anyone to see me in dated clothes! Luckily I have new clothes for this winter season to don as après-ski wear!

I heard that a new French dining room’s opened in Hanazono called Asperges, led by 3-star Michelin chef Nakamichi. I managed to make reservations for the last night they’re open for the season – what sheer luck! Looking forward to it.

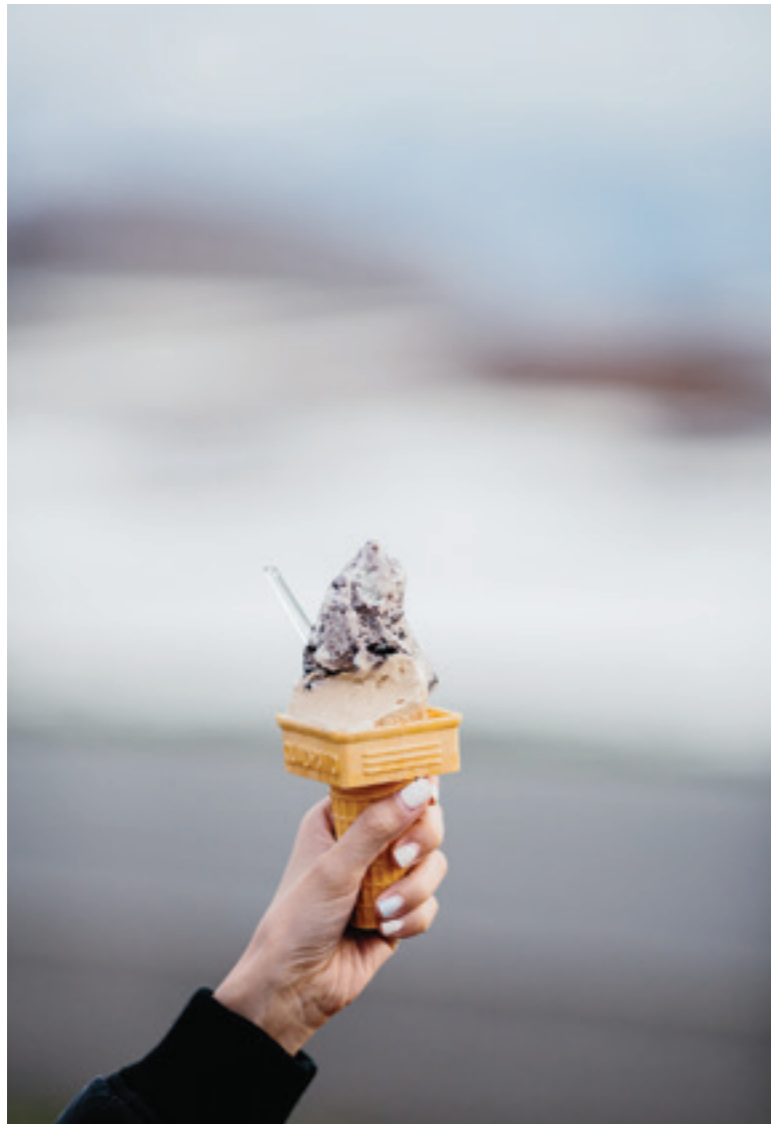


Nothing like family bonding over tobogganing in the hills of Hirafu.  
ヒラフの丘でのトボガンほど家族ぐるみで楽しめるものはない。

School's out. Snow's in. Best time and terrain for the young ones to decide if they love skiing or boarding more.

学校が終わった。雪が積もった。スキーとボードのどちらをしたいかを決める、子供達にとって最高の時と場所。





Over half of Japan's milk is produced in Hokkaido – famous worldwide for its smooth, creamy taste. While over half of that's for drinking, the rest is made into some of the freshest, most delicious treats you will ever savour. Just like this perfectly churned scoop of ice cream.

日本の牛乳の半分以上は北海道で生産され、その滑らかな濃厚な味は世界的に有名だ。そのうちの半分以上は飲料用だが、残りは、この完璧に攪拌されたアイスクリームのように、これまでに味わった中で一番フレッシュで美味しいスイーツに変身する。



The slower pace in Niseko translates into a tastier way of living, with artisans and farmers sharing a passion for quality produce.

ニセコのゆっくりした時の流れの中で、職人と農家が良質の農産物への情熱を共有し、より味わい深い暮らしが創り出される。



(PART II Cont'd)

Linc loves Niseko because of the dining options. Being a bit of a wannabe chef himself, he likes the fresh seafood and his favourite dining haunts for this are Hanayoshi and Ezo Seafoods. James, the owner of Ezo, has become a great pal and always recommends the best seafare he has for the day. We even do takeaway some days when we're just too tired to go out to eat. Mary-Terese will go with Benjie to pick up a seafood platter for us and stop by Seicomart to get Benjie some Japanese snacks. The other firm favourites with Lincoln are Kaminura, Steak Rosso Rosso, Abucha 2, Izakaya Raku and Crab Dining Kanon, all within walking distance to The Maples!

Sometimes we go to Annupuri for the soba at Rakuichi, the pasta and pastries at L'ocanda and the cream puffs at Milk Kobo! Benjie loves them! I think he looks so cute when his face is all slathered with fresh cream! Linc and I make it a point to have one special night to ourselves where we'll venture further and Linc will usually take me to Maccarina or to Moku No Sho for dinner. Lincoln also loves his Kurabito Shu sake from Niseko.

Late spring weather in Niseko's gorgeous – we can almost ski in our t-shirts! The snow's a bit wet but up in the slopes around the King Bell Hut, it's still good especially very early in the morning once the lifts and gondola open. It's a good break for Lincoln – he's really been working his ass off the last few months with so many M&As to handle! I'm not complaining – my new 3-carat Tiffany canary diamond ring's a beauty! Benjie's having a good time with Mary-Terese in the snow! Life is beautiful!



At Sobatei Rakuichi, one would not be faulted for thinking soba master Tatsuru Rai-san has elevated the art of soba making to divine perfection. Freshly handcrafted to order using local ingredients, the almost poetic process is often witnessed silently in awe by diners at the counter seat-only restaurant that serves just 12 persons each time.

「そば処 楽市(らくいち)」の店主 頼立(らい たつる)さんがそば作りを神業の域までに完成させたと言っても誰も咎めはしないだろう。地元食材を使い、注文されてから手打ちする、そのほとんど詩的なプロセスを、わずか12人のカウンター席の客達が畏敬の念をもち沈黙の中にそれを見守る。



Owned by Takashi Dairy Farm, Milk Kobo is renowned for producing the most luxuriously rich cream puffs, cheese tarts, soft-serve ice cream and other delectable pastries. The magic, as many fans will attest to, lies in their use of impeccably fresh ingredients. Most notably, the creamiest of milk squeezed by hand daily from the farm just next door.

高橋牧場が所有する「ミルク工房」は、ニセコで一番贅沢なシュークリーム、チーズタルト、ソフトクリーム、その他の美味しいパストリーで有名である。多くのファンが言うその「魔法」は、使用されている完全に新鮮な材料にある。とりわけ、最高にクリーミーなミルクは、隣の農家で毎日手絞りされている。



On a clear day, you can savour stunning views of Mt Yotei with a side of cream puff and coffee.

晴れた日は、シュークリームとコーヒーと共に羊蹄山の素晴らしい景色も楽しめる。



(PART III)

## SUMMER AWESOME

**The barbie at the embassy in Washington was a blast!  
The Ambassador was pleased that we managed to  
showcase new Aussie cuisine with the traditional but  
it was such a hectic week! Man, I'm ready to chill!**

Sure glad to have this break in Niseko before getting back to the grind in Sydney. Been here before – it's a bit like coming home! Niseko's a mini Oz! Am glad to see Jon too. He's got a summer job at The Maples with guest services. Good to catch up with my mate! We've shared an adventure or two together over the years – some really crazy times! Maybe this trip we'll even get a hike up Mt Yotei, the little brother to Mt Fuji or drive round to Lake Toya, with a stay in an onsen midway.

Everything's green and lush, summer's so different to winter. Less rush, less busy but such a profusion of great produce. Potatoes, fresh diary, the cheeses, chooks and the beef. Niseko's got great tucker!



The Niseko/Kutchan area is famed for producing the best potatoes in Japan.

ニセコ・倶知安(くっちゃん)エリアは、国内で最高のじゃがいもの生産地で有名だ。



Niseko summers are lush with rich pickings of the highest quality produce.

ニセコの夏は、極上の農産物が豊かに実り、青々としている。

(PART III Cont'd)

It's Sunday, we decide to do a short circuit on our cycles round the back roads to Annupuri. Cycling's become a hot sport here. The air's crisp, clean and fresh, really conducive to bikers. The scenery is amazing with the wildflowers all abloom. It's a riot of colours. We stop at Milk Kobo for a cuppa of long blacks and the best cream puffs ever. The roads wind through potato fields, up forests of pine and on a lazy Sunday like today, it's quiet with hardly any traffic. Perfect cycling conditions!

Jon's suggesting that we take part next year in Tour de Hokkaido, which is gaining fame. He wants to come back to The Maples next season. He likes the summers here in Niseko, says we should take advantage while it's still one of the best kept secrets for cycling. Winters are too busy for him – my friend's become a bit of a hermit. Methinks it's because of Yuki, who works the front desk at The Maples.

I might think of starting a casual grub place, been talking to some people interested to invest. Niseko's perfect – so much fresh produce, a chef can really whip up some good Aussie fare here. Good seafood from Hokkaido, potatoes, corn, veg, fruits, dairy! Chef's paradise. And the place is up and coming for the dining scene, growing in popularity – makes sense to think seriously about it. Perhaps next year!





In addition to being an important stage for Tour de Hokkaido, Niseko also hosts several local cycling races and events like the Niseko Classic.

ニセコはツール・ド・北海道の重要ステージである他に、ニセコクラシックなど地元のサイクリングレースやイベントもいくつか開催している。

Having fallen in love with café culture during his pro snowboarding days, it was only natural for Ihara-san to open Mountain Kiosk Coffee Stand when the opportunity arose. His barista apprenticeship began in a café in Kutchan, which led to a stint understudying a champion barista friend. The rest, as they say, was history.

プロのスノーボーダー時代にカフェ文化に魅了された井原さんが「Mountain Kiosk Coffee Stand」をオープンしたのは、自然な成り行きだった。バリスタ修行は倶知安(くっちゃん)のカフェで始まり、それが友人であるバリスタチャンピオンの見習いへとつながった。それが始まりだった。





The beans used at Mountain Kiosk are chosen and roasted through a special collaboration between Ihara-san and Takano-san of Takano Coffee; both consummate individuals sharing a single vision to serve consistently great coffee. Takano-san and his wife had arrived in Niseko to escape the monotony of Tokyo living. Free to do what they want, the couple have taken coffee roasting standards to exemplary levels.

Mountain Kioskで使用するコーヒー豆は、常に美味しいコーヒーを提供するという唯一のビジョンを共有する2人の達人、井原さんと高野珈琲店の高野さんの特別なコラボレーションで選別され、焙煎される。高野さんと奥さんは、東京の単調な生活を逃れる為にニセコにやってきた。二人は自分達のやりたい事を自由にやり、コーヒーの焙煎基準を模範的なレベルにまで引き上げた。







Throughout Hokkaido, the farmers' dedication and efforts can be seen in the superior quality of the local produce.

農家の献身と努力は、北海道の全域でその優れた農産物の中に見る事ができる。



The abundance of fresh seafood is matched by sheer variety and beautiful flavours. As seen here at the Nijo Fish Market of Sapporo.

ここ札幌の二条市場で、新鮮な海産物の量の多さは多様な種類と素晴らしい風味とまさに一致している。

(PART IV)

## A SEASON FOR REUNION

**Sek Lin and I retired about the same time. It was good to finally leave the corporate world behind us.**

We had looked forward to it, planned what we would do with all the time in the world on our hands, and where we would like to have our second home. The decision was unanimous.

We had enjoyed all the times we visited Japan, for both business and vacation. So it was a no-brainer to buy two units at The Maples for many reasons. As a second home to spend quiet weeks here in the off seasons, to have the grandchildren come in the winter to ski, the prices suited our budget as an investment and the area is really picking up. Many well-known Singaporean, Malaysian and Hong Kong investors have bought properties here. And my property nose tells me Niseko will one day become the premier ski resort in Asia.

Come autumn, Niseko takes on a different shade of serenity.

秋になると、ニセコは異なる静けさを帯びてくる。



The odd blossom adds texture and interest to an oasis of calm in Konbu.  
奇妙な花が昆布町のオアシスの静けさに風合いと趣きを加える。





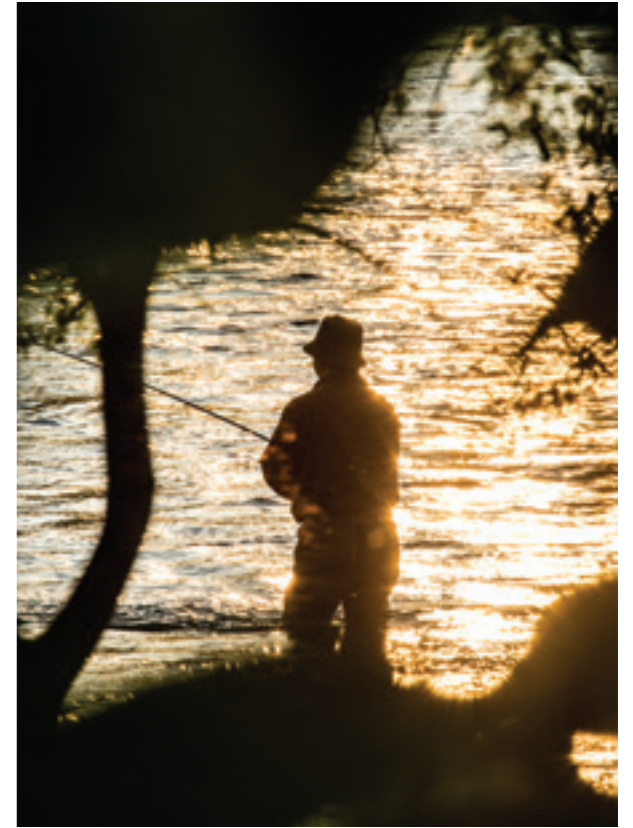


(PART IV Cont'd)

We like to come in early autumn, which is becoming a popular period for cyclists and those seeking some adventure, like climbing Mt Yotei as more people from Asia are slowly discovering it. Sek and I like it because we can take long walks past potato fields, see the autumn colours of the forests, go down to Otaru for fresh seafood and have good Japanese food in Kutchan. We use The Maples as our base and we explore new areas around Niseko driving along the backcountry roads or just going on hikes to take photos. The soft autumn light is particularly good for photography.

We find it so relaxing. Friends have units here too and we play golf at the nearby Niseko Village Golf Course, near to the Hilton Hotel. The weather is just perfect and we regularly play 18 holes. It is a par-73 course and opens from May till the end of October. Not too difficult a course. It is certainly invigorating exercise! Lunch at the Hilton has a variety of offerings but we like to stick to Japanese food. So cheap in comparison to what we can get in Singapore.

Sek likes to go down to the Max Valu Supermarket in Kutchan or sometimes to the Farmer's Market in Niseko View Plaza to buy the wonderful seasonal vegetables, meat and fruits. We cook in our 2 keys (2 bedrooms plus studio) unit and we usually invite the Pohs, Queks and the Gohs down from their units to dine with us. Good food, good company, good wine – what more can we ask for!



Kazuo Ikeda was on his way to become a painter before finding his true calling in glass art at the foot of Mt Yotei.

池田かずおさんは、羊蹄山の麓で自分の天職となるガラス工芸に出会うまで、画家を目指していた。



Off season, the snow gives way to courses perfect for golfers of every level. On the Niseko Golf Course, one can enjoy teeing off to the awe-inspiring sight of Mt Annupuri.

オフシーズンは、雪があらゆるレベルのゴルファー向けのコースに道を譲る。ニセコゴルフコースでは、壮大なアヌプリ山に向けてティーオフできるコースが楽しめる。

Farmers' markets showcase the best of Niseko's natural resources.

ファーマーズマーケットは、ニセコの自然資源の最高の品を取り揃えている。









A base for hikers of Mt Annupuri and Mt Iwonupuri, Goshiki Onsen is named and famed for having "five kinds of spring qualities".

アンヌプリ山とイワオヌプリ山のハイカーのベース、五色温泉はその名の由来の「5種類の湧水」で有名である。



The images featured in this book are based on real places. Though inspired by true events, the stories and characters are fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, are purely coincidental.