



Bamboo Powder – Hokkaido Japan

Program Details

Join us for another powder ski safari to the fabled backcountry of the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido where we will enjoy powder skiing, fabulous food, hot springs and wonderful hospitality. Rumors of perfect powder and stable snow led us on our first ski touring group to Japan. What we found was astounding! Not only were the stories about the snow true (it snowed an average of 30cm each day we were there) but we also discovered a wonderful cultural ambiance that made this one of the most memorable trips we've ever done.

The food on its own made the trip worthwhile (did you know that Japan has more Michelin-rated restaurants than France?) and then there were the Onsens. These are Japanese hot-spring lodges and every day after skiing we were able to luxuriate in natural heated baths which was very welcome as it was actually quite cold skiing.

Binding these ingredients together was the hospitality of our guides and hosts. We were in absolute awe of how hard Hirofumi, Takeo and Minori worked to make this trip as perfect as they possibly could. The results were just awesome! Skiing among the deciduous forests typical of the region we noticed bamboo shoots protruding from the snow, hence the name of this ski adventure ... Bamboo Powder!

Sound interesting? Come and experience it with us!

2011 Date

January 7 - 15

Price

\$3550 CAD includes guiding, local transfers, shared room accommodation and most meals. If you would prefer your own room, a single-supplement charge of \$390 is available. Cancellation insurance is available for an additional \$178.

Meeting Time and Place

You will need to arrive in Sapporo on the evening of January 6 or at Chitose Airport by 10:30am on January 7. Sapporo's airport is Chitose and you can fly there from Canada or the States via Tokyo or Osaka that same day. We can book you into a hotel in downtown Sapporo for the night of January 6th.

Once we have everyone's travel itineraries we confirm a meeting place and time in Sapporo on the 7th.

Cost of hotel and airport transfer not included.

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Yamnuska Mountain Adventures

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Program Agenda

Day 1: Group meets at hotel in Sapporo in the morning. We drive to the Niseko ski region and check into the nearby Koikawa Onsen for the next four nights.

Day 2: We use the lifts at the Niseko resort (10 mins drive) to access nearby backcountry skiing. If weather permits we can ski from the summit of Annu'puri. Dinner at Koikawa Onsen. Niseko is one of the premier ski resorts on Hokkaido. This vast complex on the slopes of Annu'puri Volcano has really good off-piste runs.

Day 3: Drive (30 min) to the base of Mt. Yotei, Hokkaido's Fuji, where we enjoy some of the best tree skiing in the region. Dinner at Koikawa Onsen.

Day 4: Today we ski the traverse leading from Mt. Annapuri, the volcano on which the Niseko resort is located, to Iwaonupuri - a.k.a. the "Goshiki Circuit".

Day 5: If the weather permits we will ski the Niseko ski traverse to finish up at Niimi Onsen for the night. If weather doesn't permit we can ski in the Mekunnai Peak area and drive to the Onsen.

A very traditional lodge, Niimi Onsen, like many in Japan is quite plain from the outside but inside it's a different story. It was a big hit with the group last trip and it is known for its excellent traditional fare.

Day 6: We leave the Niseko region and head east to the Mount Furano region. En-route we can stop for some quick runs at Kiroro. We stay at the Barden Kami-Furano. the next two nights.

Day 7: Ski tour on Mount Furano with its cold dry snow.

Day 8: Ski touring at Mt. Sandan, possibly attempting some of the area's steep descents. Return to Sapporo for a final evening of Sushi and local nightlife. Hotel included. Next day head for Chitose Airport and flights home (shuttle included).

IMPORTANT NOTE: As always in the mountains safety is our biggest concern and where we ski each day will be governed by weather and snow stability.

Terrain and Skiing

You will be struck by the terrain. Imagine the Eastern Townships of Quebec with real terrain including high volcanoes. Relatively flat plains with lots of small towns and farms border the mountains. Much of the forest is made up of deciduous trees such as birches, a few hard woods and the odd fir and pine. This makes for excellent and unique tree skiing. The treeline is high, which is good, as it's often snowing and the visibility above treeline non-existent. If the weather is good we will try to get up into the alpine zone. Hokkaido is known for having lots of snow and for a relatively stable snowpack.

Our connections, Guides & Group Size

Yamnuska has specialized in running mountain tours for Japanese people in Canada for many years. Due to this we have excellent Japanese connections which we use in operating this tour. The trip will be guided by Hirofumi Ishizaka a well-established Sapporo IFMGA mountain guide.

In addition to guiding in his homeland, Hirofumi has guided extensively in Europe and North America. Takeo and Minori Asakawa help with guiding, good humor and produce really good breakfasts and meals.

The group will be escorted by David Begg, Associate Director of Yamnuska Mountain Adventures. David has been a fully-certified guide since 1983.

Minimum group size is 6 participants plus guides, maximum is 8.

Difficulty & Prerequisites

Participants should be able to ski in the backcountry at least to an advanced intermediate level as the terrain may be tight in the trees and snow conditions variable (it's often great powder but much as we'd like to guarantee lots of snow, that would be taking nature for granted ... not a good thing to do).

'Advanced intermediate' means that you are comfortable making parallel turns on most terrain at a ski hill and that you have enough ski skills to deal safely with all but the most extreme terrain found at a ski hill (that is to say you can stop, turn around then traverse out of areas you can't handle).

You also need to be in good aerobic shape, as you will have to "skin" up everything you ski down. You will get a good workout each day so need to be ready. You will be skiing with a daypack containing your lunch, water and spare clothing.

No prior ski mountaineering experience needed.

Training

Any training you can do will greatly enhance your experience. The ideal would be to do some ski touring or cross country skiing in your own area. Don't try to go too fast but concentrate on even breathing and pacing. The hillier the terrain the better and if you can carry a moderate day pack then better still. Running or cycling is also good training.

Transportation

Participants are responsible for getting themselves to Sapporo, Japan. If flying from Canada we can help you arrange this. Yuka at "Canadian Co-Co Tours" in Banff specializes in travel to and from Japan. Her number is 403 762 9444. You will need to arrive on January 6th to make the meeting time on the 7th, unless you are already in Japan.

During the tour we will be travelling by passenger van.

Accommodation

Accommodation is included in the tour price for the nights of January 7th to 14th/11. We use a mixture of modern hotels and traditional Japanese Onsen (Hot Spring) Lodges. In all lodges and hotels rooms will be double occupancy. We can arrange accommodation before and after the tour for you as well. If you would prefer your own room, a single-supplement charge of \$390 is available.

Meals

We include all breakfasts from January 8th to the 15th. Most evening meals are included. We will buy lunch food on a daily basis. Cost of lunch is not included.

Shopping for lunch is an experience unto itself. Usually we head to the locally ubiquitous 7-11 which in Japan features a wholesome range of takeout food in addition to other retail items not found in other countries.

Breakfasts will be a mix of traditional Japanese and Western. Dinners will be largely Japanese though with much wider choice than we might find in a Japanese restaurant at home.

Equipment & Clothing

You will need to bring your own clothing and gear for day ski tours.

The equipment and clothing you bring will have a big impact upon the quality of your experience. Please be sure to bring all items listed. If unsure about anything please don't hesitate to call and ask us!

Skis

There are two ski systems you can use: System 1 Alpine Touring skis are essentially downhill skis with a special touring binding which allows the heel to lift whilst going uphill or across the flats and then 'locks down' to become a regular downhill safety binding. We recommend this system to anyone with a background of downhill skiing who is not already an advanced telemark skier. System 2 Telemark skis. These should only be used for this program if you are at least an advanced-intermediate telemark skier with some backcountry experience. This system is more difficult and less forgiving than the other.

Which should you use? If you are a downhill skier then you should use Alpine Touring gear. Only if you are already an advanced Telemark skier should you bring Telemark gear. Both types of gear can be rented in Calgary or Canmore prior to the trip.

Equipment List

You need to bring:

- Skis We recommend a short (160 - 185cm) wide ski designed for powder
- Climbing skins
- Ski Poles
- Ski boots
- Avalanche beacon
- Snow shovel
- Collapsible probe
- Daypack (large enough for spare clothes, lunch & equipment)
- Sunglasses and ski goggles
- Thermos flask and water bottle.
- Sun block & Lip Cream
- Pocket knife
- Large Travel Bag (to bring all your other stuff in)
- Small Flashlight or Headlamp with fresh batteries
- Small Blister & 1st-Aid Kit
- Camera
- Family FRS radio (short range, multi frequency) (optional)

Clothing List

The climate in Hokkaido is cold and moist so it is important to have a range of layers with you. An essential item is a ski mask as it's easy to get facial frost nip in the prevailing strong moist winds found higher up. We suggest bringing light clothing of varying thicknesses that can be 'layered' to achieve comfort and versatility. The most important consideration for clothing is the ability to regulate temperature as you change from periods of activity to periods of rest and from the ascent to the descent.

- Polypro underwear (top & bottom)
- Warm pants (nylon blend, insulated or fleece)
- Warm shirts (not cotton)
- Medium weight fleece sweater
- Fleece Jacket
- Light insulated jacket or vest (it's a moist & cold climate)
- Waterproof jacket with hood (Gore-Tex or nylon)

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- Waterproof pants (Gore-Tex or nylon, with side zippers)
- Socks (wool outer & polypro liner), several sets
- Wool or fleece hat
- Waterproof ski mountaineering gloves or mitts
- Neck tube
- Ski Mask ... strongly recommended!
- Sunhat
- Casual clothing for travel and to wear in the towns at night
- Hut Slippers
- Snow boots
- Swim suit (optional in most hot springs)
- Bath and hand towel
- Soap and shampoo

CASH

Japan is largely a cash society and ATM's are scarce in the smaller towns. You will need cash to pay for lunches, drinks and other incidentals. We suggest you carry at least Y30000 = \$340.

Booking Information

Please book as early as practical to avoid disappointment. We require \$1243 CDN deposit at the time of booking. Final payment is due eight weeks before the start of the program. To avoid unnecessary cancellation penalties we suggest you take our cancellation insurance for an extra non-refundable **\$178**, this must accompany your deposit.

For detailed Booking Instructions and Conditions, please visit our website.

Please note that you will be required to sign our waiver before commencing the trip. A copy of the waiver can be viewed on our website.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you need to know anything else about this program.