



Bamboo Powder – Hokkaido Japan

Program Details

Join us on our second 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.

Following rumors of perfect powder and stable snow we led our first ski touring group to Japan this past January. 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!

2009 Date

February 1 - 9 with David Begg

Price

\$2,975 CDN includes guiding, local transfers, accommodation and many meals. Cancellation insurance is available for \$149.

Meeting Time and Place

You will need to arrive in Sapporo on the evening of January 31. 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 that evening.

Once we have everyone's travel itineraries we will arrange a meeting place and time at the hotel in Sapporo the next morning (February 1).

Cost of hotel and airport transfer not included.

Program Agenda

February 1: Group meets at hotel in Sapporo in the morning. We drive to the Niseko ski region visiting the Hokkaido Jingu Shinto shrine en-route where we will participate in a ceremony invoking safe travel and snow! We check into the nearby Goshiki Onsen Lodge for the next few nights.

February 2: We use the lifts at the Niseko resort (30 mins drive) to access nearby backcountry skiing. If weather permits we can ski from the summit of Annu'puri volcano direct down to Goshiki. Dinner at sushi restaurant in nearby Kucchan.
"Dinner at sushi restaurant" sounds rather matter of fact. In fact it's likely to be the best sushi you've ever had!

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.

February 3: Drive (1hr) to the base of Mt. Yotei, Hokkaido's Fuji, where we enjoy some of the best tree skiing in the region. Dinner at Goshiki Onsen.

February 4: We drive to Niimi Onsen Lodge where we will spend the night after skiing on Mekunnai Peak. 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.

February 5: We ski back to Goshiki picking up as many downhill turns as we can en-route. Our last night at Goshiki. Dinner at Goshiki.

February 6: Ski the Niseko Circuit before heading back to the Sapporo region to the Kiroro Resort area. New this year we choose this region for its good tree skiing and to reduce travel times between destinations. Night at hotel, adjacent hot pools, own dinner.

February 7: Ski tour on Mount Yoichi-dake, the highest peak in the region if weather is good. If it's snowing then we ski in the trees! Night at hotel, adjacent hot pools, own dinner.

February 8: Our last day of skiing. Again if it's snowing we'll ski the tree lines. If weather permits, we have the chance of another summit, possibly Shirai-dake. Then we return to Sapporo for a final evening of Sushi and local nightlife. The Sapporo Snow Festival is on there's lots to do and see. Night at Susukino Green Hotel in Sapporo.

February 9: 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.

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Yamnuska Mountain Adventures

200, 50 Lincoln Park, Canmore, Alberta, T1W 3E9, CANADA
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The trip will be guided by Hirofumi Ishizaka a well-established Sapporo 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, Director of Yamnuska Mountain Adventures. David has been a fully-certified guide since 1983.

Minimum group size is 8 participants plus guides, maximum is 10.

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 31 to make the meeting time on the 1st.

During the tour we will be travelling by passenger van.

Accommodation

Accommodation is included in the tour price the nights of February 1 - 8. We use a mixture of modern hotels and traditional Japanese Onsen (Hot Spring) Lodges. Rooms at Goshiki accommodate up to 4 people ryokan-style (sleeping futons on floor) although we will try to keep it down to 2 per room. In all other lodges and hotels rooms will be double occupancy. We can arrange accommodation before and after the tour for you as well.

Meals

We include all breakfasts from the 1st to the 8th. Most evening meals are included except for the nights of the 6th, 7th and 8th. By that time you will be more familiar with Japanese food and able to branch out on your own. We will buy lunch food on a daily basis. Cost of lunches 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 ('moleskin', plasters & Tylenol is enough)
- 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.

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- 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)
- 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
- 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

Equipment Sales

As an authorized Petzl Charlet dealer we have a range of guide-recommended gear suitable for this program available for purchase. A 5% discount applies if you are booked on a Yamnuska program with greater discounts built into our gear packages. We can ship to you or have your gear awaiting your arrival here. Visit our website for more information and pricing.

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 Y3000 = \$280.
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Insurance

You will need to have travel insurance covering illness and accident. Should you need to be evacuated you may be liable for this cost. It is wise to ensure that your health plan will cover you in this case or in case of illness or accident whilst here. Obtain extra coverage if necessary.

Booking Information

Please book as early as practical to avoid disappointment. We require a \$1042 CDN deposit upon booking. The balance will be due eight weeks before the program start date. To avoid unnecessary cancellation penalties we suggest you take our cancellation insurance for an extra non-refundable \$149, 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.