



## Skiing and Snowboarding in Hokkaido, Japan

From its abundant nature to delectable food, or its diverse history to its welcoming people, Hokkaido is considered to be heaven by different people for different reasons. Without question, skiers and snowboarders claim that Hokkaido is heaven due to its world-renowned quality powder snow, breathtaking scenery and exhilarating slopes. Come see what they are talking about for yourself!

### Sapporo and Otaru Region

Visitors to this region can choose from Sapporo Teine, Sapporo Moiwayama Skiing Ground, Sapporo Kokusai Skiing Ground, Bankei Ski Area, Otaru Tenguyama Ski Area, Asarigawa Onsen Winter Resort, and Kiroro Resort. Beautiful mountains dividing and surrounding Sapporo and Otaru delight local, domestic and overseas visitors. Olympians also competed on Mt. Teine at the 1972 Winter Olympics!

### Asahikawa and Furano Region

Some choices for visitors to this region include Kamui Links, which has among others a course certified by the FIS and SAJ; Furano Ski Area, which offers terrific panoramic views of the area; Daisetsuzan Kurodake Ski Area, which boasts a long season that sees visitors on the slopes through early spring until May!

### Sahoro and Tomamu Region

Sahoro Resort and Alpha Resort Tomamu are popular choices in this region. The former is known for its quality powder snow even in Hokkaido, and the latter is popular because it allows advanced visitors to backcountry ski on fresh, untouched powder.

### Niseko and Rusutsu Region

Niseko Mt. Resort Grand Hirafu, Niseko Higashiyama Ski Area, Niseko Annupuri Ski Area, and Rusutsu Resort are some of the main reasons why this region is becoming increasingly popular. Altitudes just below and above 1000m create a very ideal powder snow, while temperatures remain surprisingly comfortable.

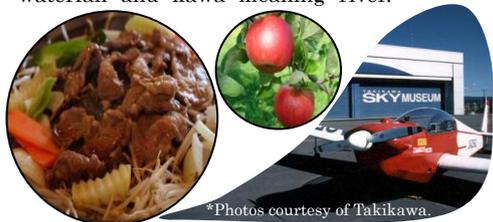


Winter may mean Hokkaido changes its dress from a lush green to a pure white, but it does not make Hokkaido any less exciting. If anything, it becomes even livelier! This is a natural result of combining long winters, adventurous people, and a love for the great outdoors. Depending on where you are in Hokkaido, winter can last for up to four or five months. Snow typically begins to fall in late November and accumulate by mid-late December. Consistent snowfalls and cold temperatures ensure skiers and snowboarders that their season will not be disrupted or cut short. Ski resorts are located all across Hokkaido, but four main regions are particularly noted for offering visitors beginner to world class level slopes.



**A City Close to Home – Takikawa**

Like many of Hokkaido’s municipalities, the city of Takikawa derived its name from the indigenous Ainu people’s language. In fact, it seems two Ainu words served as the origin for the name Takikawa: one meant “place where the waterfall descends” and the other meant “waterfall of the river.” The name Takikawa is essentially a literal translation of the latter, “Taki” meaning “waterfall” and “kawa” meaning “river.”



\*Photos courtesy of Takikawa.

Settlement and development of Takikawa began in 1891 with the presence of farmer-soldiers who worked to both cultivate and defend the land. In 1895, a major road was constructed to support the comings and goings of the farmer-soldiers, and supply of essential materials and everyday goods. In spite of receiving a dramatic blow due to flood damage in 1899, Takikawa managed to recover thanks in large part to the opening of a railway which connected Takikawa to eastern Hokkaido in 1913. This allowed Takikawa to serve as a major transporter of important commodities such as coal.

**Map of Hokkaido**



Located in the interior of Hokkaido, Takikawa has a flat terrain with gently rolling hills. It enjoys mild summers but endures harsh winters which often see days of minus 25 degrees Celsius and snowfall from late November until early April. During the winter, locals and visitors are able to go cross country skiing, snow mobiling, tobogganing, and can even make igloos in the Maruka Highlands. During the spring and summer, spectacular venues for canoeing, kayaking, camping, and swimming are available. In addition, Takikawa boasts one of Japan’s leading gliding centers where visitors can experience the thrill of flying without an engine. A number of museums and a petting zoo are also popular attractions. Depending on the season, a beautiful backdrop of soft snow, peaceful pastures, or fantastic flowers awaits!

Recently, Takikawa has become well known for a wide variety of goods such as its delicious apples and mouth-watering lamb dishes (known in Hokkaido as *Ghengis Khan*). The population of approximately 45 thousand people is engaged in a variety of industries such as agriculture, commerce, and craftwork.

In August 1993, Takikawa became sister cities with Springfield, Massachusetts (USA). The agreement was the first of its kind since Hokkaido and Massachusetts had become sister states in 1990. This sister city relationship has facilitated a wide variety of exchanges



\*Photo courtesy of Takikawa.

such as the twinning of Takikawa Nishi High School and Springfield High School of Science and Technology in 2003, and the agreement between Springfield College and Kokugakuin University Hokkaido Junior College in 2010.

In fact, there were numerous visits made between Hokkaido and Massachusetts in 2010 as it marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their sister-state affiliation. Having youth increasingly engaged in exchanges, the vibrant past between these states and cities will surely serve as a springboard into an eventful 2011 and beyond!

**AMERICANS**

**IN**

**☆H☆O☆K☆K☆A☆I☆D☆O☆**



**Krystal Cooley (second from right) is an ambitious 24 year-old American originally from Seattle, Washington who has been living in Hokkaido for**

three and a half years. After studying Japanese and earning a degree in biochemistry from the University of Washington, Cooley arrived in Hokkaido in 2007 as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) through the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme.

However, Cooley had previously been to Hokkaido in the summer of 2006. The adventurous young lady had been enrolled in an intensive Japanese language program conducted in Hokkaido’s main southern port city of Hakodate. It was there where she first experienced *Hokkaido charm*. She tells me how she had forgotten a jacket on a rainy day, and was offered one by a complete stranger who would not take “No” for an answer. This gesture of great kindness left an enduring impression on Cooley.

Much to her delight in 2007, she was offered a JET position in Hokkaido. Although a little far away from her home away from home, *Hakodate*, Cooley readily settled down in the town of Kuriyama. “Besides,” she reminds me, “Sapporo is a short train ride away.”

Having already laid down firm roots in Hakodate in 2006 and in Kuriyama from 2007 to 2010, Cooley continued to spread her Hokkaido roots even more this past August. She shifted gears and began working as a JET Coordinator of International Relations (CIR) in the city of Takikawa which is, “a 45 minute express train ride away from Sapporo.” She is now continuing where she left off by taking on new challenges and facilitating exchange in novel ways.



After about four and a half months as a CIR, Cooley says, “There’s still something new everyday!” She began in August with a Summer Fun Day which brought together local children and community members for a fun day in the sun. Since then, she has hosted a variety of foreign delegations from all over the world and made a television appearance, while also managing to organize and host a spectacular Halloween party in Takikawa. Both ALTs and Japanese locals came together to bring smiles to over 350 children, or chills causing nightmares to those who braved the elaborately decorated haunted house.

As for Hokkaido’s specialty foods, she loves a dish called *soup curry*. It is a curry-flavoured soup full of vegetables and/or meat, and has become a favourite among Hokkaido locals and visitors alike. In addition, Cooley also likes *soba*, a buck-wheat noodle dish often served cold with a soy sauce-based soup on the side. After being intrigued by the dish four years ago, she now finds herself honing her soba making skills as she now meets regularly with a local soba making group.

**“Hokkaido looks like a Christmas card!”**

After living most of her life in Seattle where “a little snow throws the city into chaos” and spending a summer in Hakodate, it took Cooley time to learn how people react to snow when living in Hokkaido: They don’t! Cooley believes the winter climate makes Hokkaido’s people stronger and gives them character. Having learned how to survive Hokkaido’s winter, she claims she can live anywhere!

She also suggests Hokkaido is more like her native America than Japan because its people are diverse: Hokkaido’s inhabitants come from all over Japan and America’s from all over the world. While differences once received most of her attention, Cooley has recently been focusing more and more on similarities between the different cultures. Wherever she goes when her contract ends in 2012, she assures me, “Hokkaido will always have a special place in [her] heart.”