**Furano**

**Categories**

**Good For**

Beginners

Intermediates

Experts

Snowboarders

Families

Non-skiers

Snow reliability

**Data**

**Beginner Runs**

10

**Intermediate Runs**

10

**Advanced Runs**

4

**Total Runs**

24

**Lifts**

11

**Chairs**

8

**Drags**

1

**Gondola Cable Cars**

2

**Parks**

1

**Pipes**

1

**Weather**

**Annual Snowfall**

9m (27ft).

**Overview**

One of the most highly regarded of Japan’s 500 or so ski areas, Furano, on the northern island of Hokkaido, lacks the international recognition its exciting slopes – and wonderful powder – deserve.

Along with huge amounts of desirable, light powder, Furano boasts one of the biggest lift-served verticals and some of the longest and steepest runs in the country. From the slopes, the resort boasts virtually unrivalled views looking across the valley towards the smouldering volcanic peeks of Mount Tokachi and Mount Asahi, the highest peak on Hokkaido Island.

Furano itself is a large pleasant city with good rail, road and air connections to the rest of the country. Aside from skiing, the area is famous for its colourful lavender fields, which paint the landscape in shades of purple, pink, yellow and green. It’s a 10 minute drive from the town to ski slopes - although there are additional accommodation options at the base of the slopes.

Furano's size means there's lots to do besides skiing, including *onsen* (hot spring baths) to dip into, over 100 bars and restaurants, an annual winter festival and weekly traditional Japanese theatre, music and other cultural performances.

**Location**

The city of Furano is located in the geographical centre of Japan's northern island of Hokkaido.

**Website**

http://www.furanotourism.com

**Piste Map**

http://www.snowfurano.com/photo/FuranoSkiAreaMap.jpg

**Hit The Slopes**

Furano has a growing reputation across the world, due in part, to its huge powder snowfalls, averaging 9m (27ft) each winter, which enable the resort to offer a near six-month-long ski season from late-November to early-May on average.

To make the most of the great terrain, Furano offers a free ski host service that’s unique to Japan. This service employs enthusiastic locals who guide visitors to the best terrain while detailing information about the culture and history of Furano, as well as recommendations on the best bars, restaurants and activities.

Furano's local ski area is divided into two linked ski areas: the Furano Zone and the Kitanomine Zone (which is open during the busier period from mid-December to late March). Each offers a similar mix of beginner and intermediate terrain, totalling 25km (16 miles) of pistes. On both sides of the ski area, cabin lifts carry skiers over the full vertical from the bottom up to the runs, which are up to 4km (2.5 miles) in length.

The steepest runs include the Furikozawa and Kumaotoshi routes on the Kitanomine side, both recommended for powder hounds. The challenging International Ladies’ Downhill run is also on this side of the mountain, while The Furano Zone has the resort’s longest black, the Challenge run.

Night skiing is popular, with about a third of the terrain floodlit for most of the season. A combined lift pass allows skiers to access the neighbouring resorts of Kamui Ski Links and Tomamu, each about an hour's shuttle bus ride away, at no extra cost.

**Furano**

**Resort**

245

**Base**

245

**Top**

1209

**General**

**Beyond The Slopes**

At heart a small Japanese country town, Furano is proud of its cultural heritage and is enthusiastic about sharing this with visitors and keeping traditions alive. So during the peak of the ski season, the town hosts various events, performances and festivals. During these, visitors are encouraged to try out traditional costumes, watch the resort's professional dance group perform, have a go themselves and then join in the various tea ceremonies.

Lots of other activities are available, including snowmobiling, snowshoeing, ice hole fishing and hot air balloon rides, as well as visits to one of the traditional *onsen* (hot springs).

**Family Fun**

Furano's strong community ethos and wide-ranging activity options make it a good choice for families. An international standard kids’ care centre is available at the resort for adults who wish to ski in the knowledge that their little ones will be well looked after. Dedicated English speaking ski schools are also available, and there are special 'children’s slopes' with easy-to-use lifts at the base of the hill. Costs for families are also very competitive, even on a global scale, with children aged 12 or younger receiving a free lift pass.

A trip to Asahikawa Zoo is worthwhile, particularly for its seals, polar bears and penguin parade. The zoo is about a 40-minute drive away by organised bus tour.

**Retail Therapy**

There is a good range of shopping in Furano, including many local shops selling traditional regional goods. The best place to find these is the delightful arts and crafts village, which is great to wander around after the ski day is over. For a wider choice, head to the nearby city of Asahikawa, which can be reached by easily accessible rail and bus links.

**Splashing Out**

Book an unforgettable experience with the Hokkaido Powder Guides (tel: +81 167 225 655; [www.hokkaidopowderguides.com](http://www.hokkaidopowderguides.com/)) to really make the most of the incredible – and under-utilised – snow for which the region is famous. Off-piste day tours and powder clinics are available. Alternatively, splash out and sign up for a back-country tour, which includes an option for an overnight stay at the Ryounkaku Hot Springs Hotel.

**Apres Ski**

Strong traditions mean the city is most appealing to families and more mature skiers and boarders rather than the young crowd; although with about 100 bars (including a few Western-style establishments) to choose from, there's still plenty of choice for lively après-ski in Furano.

Kumagera (tel: +81 167 39 2345) combines a popular bar and restaurant, try the homemade *sake* (traditional alcoholic drink). Of the available Western options, The Bridge Bar (tel: +81 050 1365 8825) is one of the most popular night spots downtown, an American-style pool bar that was fully refurbished in 2013 and is open until 0200 nightly. Its clientele include both Japanese locals and young Australian, European and North American skiers who find their way to the resort each year.

For a big night out, take a bus or train to Asahikawa (about 45 minutes away) where there are around 1,500 bars and pretty much every kind of entertainment imaginable around its San-Rokugai area. *Sake* is brewed on the spot in several establishments here.

**Eating Out**

Dining out is a major pastime in the region and, as such, there are around 100 small restaurants in Furano – most serving traditional Japanese and regional specialities. Among the dishes to try are *shojin ryori*, a vegetarian meal popular with Zen Buddhists; *yudofu*, a low-calorie tofu based dish ideal for winter; and *kaiseki ryori*, an artistic and authentic regional dish.

Good choices for sushi include Masa chan (tel: + +81 166 92 1171) or for hand-kneaded buck wheat noodles try Ichigen (tel: +81 166 92 2065).

Visitors with more international tastes can find Indian, Korean and Chinese restaurants, as well as cuisines from further afield such as Italy and North America. Good examples include Restaurant Niji (tel: +81 166 95 2492) for authentic Korean food or Douglas Fir (tel: +81 166 92 1806) for homemade pasta created with locally sourced produce. The homemade chiffon cakes here are additive-free and delicious.

**Transport**

**Getting There**

Nearest airport: Asahikawa Airport (AKJ).

Distance to resort: 48km (30 miles).

Driving time: 1 hour.

**Getting Around**

Many facilities in Furano are within walking distance of the accommodation. Hotels typically provide shuttle bus services to the town.

**Hotels**

There is a good selection of accommodation in Furano, from family-run hotels to chain brands, a backpacker hostel for those on a budget, and a good selection of lodges and apartments to rent.

Furano is also home to a range of guest houses for those looking for a more authentic Japanese experience. These include *minshuku* (Japanese inns), where guests can sample home-cooked Japanese food and sleep on traditional futons.

**Kitanoyado Mone**

A small traditional Japanese hotel where the main attraction is the convenient location, being situated just a few steps from the main lift. The hotel boasts facilities including flat screen TVs in rooms and laundry services.

**Category**

Cheap

**Thoroughfare**

Kitanomine-cho 14-25

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Furano

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

076-0034

**Country**

Japan

**Telephone**

+81 167 22 4247.WebsiteNone

**Website**

Not to be confused with the New Furano Prince Hotel, this - now slightly dated – moderately priced hotel has spacious rooms affording great views over the city and is located just 200m (650ft) from the slopes.

**Natulux Hotel**

A modern hotel with a reputation for its relaxed atmosphere, which includes jazz in the lobby, the Natulux Hotel is centrally located in Furano next to the coach and train stations and provides guests with friendly, efficient service. It’s a 10 minute drive to the slopes.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

1-35 Asahicho

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Furano

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

076-0026

**Country**

Japan

**Telephone**

+81 167 22 1777.

**Website**

http://www.natulux.com

**Edel Warme**

Boasting its own *onsen* and a restaurant, Edel Warme is a short walk to Furano’s ski area and around half an hour from the town itself. It is therefore a good option for skiers who are planning to hit the slopes most days.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

9-20 Kitanomine-cho

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Hokkaido 076-0034

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

Japan

**Telephone**

+81 167 22 1161.

**Website**

XXX

**New Furano Prince Hotel**

Furano's largest and best known hotel, the New Furano Prince Hotel has more than 400 rooms and provides direct ski-in/ski-out access to the slopes. There are several on-site cafes, bars and restaurants, and downtown Furano is just a short shuttle ride.

**Category**

Luxury

**Thoroughfare**

18-6 Kitanomine-machi

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Furano

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

Japan

**Telephone**

+81 167 22 1111.

**Website**

http://www.princehotels.com/en/newfurano/

**Furano Youth Hostel**

This is a standard youth hostel with dormitories and communal bathroom facilities and two private rooms with en-suite bathrooms.

**Category**

Cheap

**Thoroughfare**

3-20 Okamachi

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Nakafurano

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

Japan

**Telephone**

+81 167 44 4441.

**Website**

http://www4.ocn.ne.jp/~furanoyh