**Hakuba**

**Categories**

**Good For**

Beginners

Intermediates

Experts

Snowboarders

Non-skiers

Après ski

Snow reliability

**Data**

**Beginner Runs**

45

**Intermediate Runs**

60

**Advanced Runs**

44

**Total Runs**

149

**Lifts**

115

**Chairs**

110

**Drags**

0

**Gondola Cable Cars**

5

**Parks**

5

**Pipes**

1

**Weather**

**Annual Snowfall**

10m (32ft).

**Overview**

Hakuba is one of Japan’s best known and best loved ski regions, accessible from the capital in a little over three hours by bullet train – an option favoured by hundreds of thousands of Tokyo residents each winter.

Hakuba itself is not one ski area, but rather a mammoth valley home to 10 separate ski resorts of varying size. Each of these resorts is significant in its own right, but when combined, the 10 offer around 150 ski runs and over 100 ski lifts - almost all chairlifts - the largest number for one ski region anywhere on earth. Add to this skiable verticals and a seasonal average snowfall in excess of 10m (32ft), and Hakuba ski resort's myriad of snow sports attractions becomes evident.

Guests have the choice of staying in Hakuba village itself, or as most prefer, at the base of one of the individual ski areas that are dotted around it. The village is a sprawling affair but, as one would expect for a ski region of this significance, it is equipped with hundreds of accommodation options, restaurants and shops.

**Location**

Hakuba ski resort is in the Nagano prefecture of central Japan. It is located on Honshu, Japan's largest island, about one hour from Nagano city.

**Website**

http://www.hakubavalley.jp/

**Piste Map**

http://www.happo-one.jp/gelande/

**Hit The Slopes**

Nine of Hakuba ski resort’s 11 ski areas are located directly around the Hakuba Valley; the other two, Yanaba and Kashimayari, are a little distance away. The sheer extent of the skiing available combined with the competition between the areas means that there really is something for everyone – and all of it delivered to the highest standards.

Skiers here will find gentle beginner slopes, long, groomed runs, steep blacks, mogul fields, heli-skiing, many terrain parks and pipes, and hopefully the famous waist-deep powder after one of the resort’s big, fresh snowfalls.

The biggest and best known of the ski areas is Happo-one, directly above the village, which boasts more than 20 lifts and runs up to 8km (5 miles) in length. Adjacent to Happo-one's slopes, are the smaller Hakuba Goryu and linked Hakuba 47 ski areas, which boasts 19 lifts between them. Hakuba 47 has a particularly high standing amongst boarders, operating a great terrain park and one halfpipe– this facility was completely overhauled for the 2011/12 season with new lines created for all ability levels. It also has a reputation for some of the steepest runs in the region (alongside plenty of gentle terrain) and the double black diamond R-3 course for some of the largest moguls of any ski area.

Continuing beyond the valley, visitors will find another large Hakuba resort, Kashimayari, as well as the smaller Yanaba. Experienced skiers will perhaps want to put aside a whole day at the former to enjoy its extensive slopes.

Back across the valley is a smaller area, Minekata, which is unlikely to be worth a special trip – except for beginners who will find a quiet location, or for cross-country skiers who can check out the beautiful trails. The remaining ski centres are linked: Norikura and Cortina with 18 lifts between them, and Hakuba Iwatake and Tsugaike with 16 and 22 lifts respectively.

Due to its huge snowfalls, Hakuba has a long ski season that typically lasts from late November to early May.

**Hakuba**

**Resort**

760

**Base**

760

**Top**

1831

**General**

**Beyond The Slopes**

Hakuba's off-slope attractions include guided snowshoe tours, tubing, tobogganing, snowmobiling and snow rafting (sliding down the hillside on an inflatable boat). Of course, the *onsen* (hot springs) – for which Japan is famous – are here in abundance too, with many of the larger hotels offering their own; and plenty more available to the paying public.

A visit to the Olympic ski jumping hill above the village is a must. Take the lift up to the top of the jump for the amazing views the jumpers are afforded before they start their descent.

**Family Fun**

Facilities for families have improved greatly in recent years and in the wider Hakuba area, there is a large array of family-friendly facilities and attractions.

The Hakuba 47 Activity Centre (tel: +81 261 753 533) offers childcare for children aged two to six, a ski school for older children, and family activities such as snow rafting. At Happo-one, the Kids Park Snow-Chao offers a safe place for kids to learn the basics and also offers tubing and sleigh rides. There are also childcare facilities in Happo-one at the Happo Kids Club (tel: +81 2612 727 940), which looks after children aged eight months to four years. Reservations are required.

**Retail Therapy**

There are dozens of shops in Hakuba covering the essentials, as well as regional specialities. The options include supermarkets, large outdoor sports stores and a post office, which has a cash machine accepting most international credit and debit cards. There are smaller shopping centres dotted around the separate ski areas, such as the Escaru Plaza at the base of Goryu Toomi, which has a ski shop, a couple of souvenir shops and grocery stores.

**Splashing Out**

Hakuba 47's ‘First Tracks’ program offers early-morning privileges, including breakfast and guided untracked skiing and snowboarding before the crowds reach the slopes.

**Apres Ski**

There are more than 100 bars for lively après-ski in Hakuba. The traditional *izakaya* pubs are a great place to meet the locals and get a taste for regional traditions, including sampling local sake. Karaoke is also popular here, with numerous bars crammed with customers belting out tunes. Among the most popular après-ski joints is The Beer Bar, at the base of Hakuba 47, bustling most evenings with its trendy clientele.

Away from the bars, shopping, hot springs and snow activities such as rafting, tubing, snowmobiling and night skiing are all popular evening activities.

**Eating Out**

There’s a great choice of dining around Hakuba with over 150 different establishments now listed. As the resort’s popularity continues to grow internationally, the dining choice is also expanding.

Hummingbird (tel: +81 261 727 788) is a small family-run restaurant housed in a beautiful traditional building, that has established a reputation as one of the best in Hakuba thanks to a strong Japanese and international menu. There are several vegetarian options but it’s so popular it gets booked out early, even low season, so reserve well in advance.

Another good choice for fans of authentic Japanese cuisine, especially sushi, is Sarugaku (tel: +81 261 727 133) which is again small and popular making reservations advisable. The buckwheat pancakes and blue cheese tofu come highly recommended.

**Transport**

**Getting There**

Nearest airports: Matsumoto Airport (MMJ); Tokyo Haneda Airport (HND); Tokyo Narita Airport (NRT).

Distances to resort: 63km (39 miles); 274km (171 miles); 350km (217 miles).

Driving times: 2 hours; 5 hours (by bullet train, then bus); 5 hours 50 minutes (by bullet train, then bus).

**Getting Around**

Scheduled bus services operate during the day to various points around the villages. In the evening, the Genki-go shuttle bus covers a wide area of the Hakuba Valley. Tickets must be purchased in advance at one of the resort's hotels and shops, rather than on the bus.

Visitors may need to walk, take a hotel shuttle, taxi or use the public bus service to the lifts, depending on the location of their accommodation.

**Hotels**

There are plenty of hotels in Hakuba, with around a dozen situated at the base of the Happo-one resort ranging from alpine-style moderately priced 2- and 3-stars to more modern luxurious options. For a more authentic Japanese experience, there are *ryokan* (traditional Japanese hotels), guest houses and lodges scattered across the resort.

**Hotel Villa Hakuba**

This comfortable 3-star hotel has convenient ski-in/ski-out access from Happo-one. Hotel Villa Hakuba also boasts a range of good facilities, including indoor hot baths.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

4777 Hakuba-Happo

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Hakuba

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

339 – 9301

**Country**

Japan

**Telephone**

+81 261 727 211.

**Website**

XXX

**Hakuba Alps Backpackers**

This friendly and affordable hostel with dormitory and cottage-style accommodation is located at the bottom of the Goryu area ski slopes.

**Category**

Cheap

**Thoroughfare**

22407-4 Kamishiro

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Hakuba-Mura

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

339 – 9301

**Country**

Japan

**Telephone**

+81 261 754 038.

**Website**

http://www.hakubabackpackers.com

**Hakuba Tokyu Hotel**

One of the most exclusive properties in Hakuba, the 5-star resort has French, traditional Japanese, and buffet-style restaurants in addition to its natural hot springs.

**Category**

Luxury

**Thoroughfare**

4688 Hokujo

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Hakuba

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

339 – 9301

**Country**

Japan

**Telephone**

+81 261 723 001.

**Website**

http://www.hakuba-r.tokyuhotels.co.jp

**Aqua Alpine Hotel**

This recently renovated hotel benefits from an excellent location, just 300m (980ft) from the ski lifts, is co-owned by Australia’s first Winter Olympic Gold Medallist – Steven Bradbury. On-site facilities include free Wi-Fi, a large lounge with open fire and a theatre and karaoke room screening nightly movies.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

22203-151 Kamishiro

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Hakuba

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

399-9211

**Country**

Japan

**Telephone**

+81 261 75 3571.

**Website**

http://www.aquaalpine.com

**Hakuba Hifumi**

A popular 13 bedroom, family-run, guest house with *onsen* style baths and a karaoke room; the Hakuba Hifumi is well presented and located close to the Happo one ski area.

**Category**

Cheap

**Thoroughfare**

4998 Hokujo

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Hakuba-Mura

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

399-9301

**Country**

Japan

**Telephone**

+81 261 728 411.

**Website**

http://www. hakubahifumi.jp

**La Neige Higashikan**

This luxury 5-star complex draws inspiration architecturally from Frank Lloyd Wright’s design. Loved for its beautiful, spacious rooms (some with hot tubs), the La Neige Higashikan is a two minute shuttle ride to the Sakka lift with Happo village 15 minutes away.

**Category**

Luxury

**Thoroughfare**

Happo-wadanonomor

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Hakuba

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

339 – 9301

**Country**

Japan

**Telephone**

+81 261 727 111.

**Website**

http://www.laneige-higashikan.com