

Kutchan: Hottest Winter Town

A wonderland of powder snow, the resort town of Kutchan in wintertime is abuzz with the exuberance of skiers and snowboarders from around the world looking for a memorable winter experience

Kutchan is located in southwestern Hokkaido, about a two-hour drive from Sapporo or New Chitose Airport. This world-famous destination is the core resort town of the Niseko-Kutchan resort area. Its main attraction is its fluffy powder snow. The easily accessible ski slopes that reach as high as 1,300 meters often receive large dumps of snow from clouds carried by winds traversing the Sea of Japan. Kutchan's location guarantees a constant supply of virgin snow from December through February.

"If you visit Kutchan in the winter, you will certainly be awestruck," says Kutchan Mayor Eiji Nishie proudly. "Every morning when you wake up, virgin ski slopes are waiting for you. Come and slide down toward Mt. Yotei, Hokkaido's Mt. Fuji! It's an amazing and thrilling experience! In the afternoon, you can warm yourself by soaking in a hot spring. Then at night, there are bars and restaurants where you can share fun times with people from around the world. The hotels offer high-quality Japanese hospitality, and overall, it is a rare and unique experience."

The number of overseas tourists visiting Kutchan began to rapidly



At Hiraifu, the largest resort area of Kutchan, visitors can enjoy a dynamic skiing experience enhanced by the grandiose presence of Mt. Yotei (Hokkaido's Mt. Fuji).

grow from around 2000 onward, and the entire town suddenly began to transform. In winter, roughly 80% of hotel guests are from overseas. It is easy to get around town using only English, even at the hospital or town hall, with English used on road signs, and in bars and restaurants. Of the more than 15,000 registered town residents during winter, a significant portion, which may soon reach 20%, are foreigners comprising 47 different nationalities. Australians were the first foreigners to "discover" Kutchan and its first-rate ski fields. For some time now, the local community has grown accustomed to coexisting with the overseas visitors. The town's reputation soon reached Europe and North America,



"Visitors often marvel, 'What a wonderfully cosmopolitan town amidst such beautiful nature!'" says Kutchan Mayor Eiji Nishie. It is the town's pride that visitors from Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore, the United States and many other countries are so drawn to Kutchan.



Above: The condominiums around town come in various styles. Aya-Niseko's penthouses are equipped with a kitchen and private hot-spring bath, and offer gorgeous views of Mt. Yotei.

Right: With culinary treats on offer all year round, sitting down to a selection of dishes made from Hokkaido ingredients is a great opportunity to savor delicious food and enjoy multicultural exchanges.



and with this new-found fame has come a rapid influx of investment. Even today, the construction of luxury condominiums and hotels is continuing. Families are staying in condominiums with all kitchen amenities and blurring the line between tourist and resident. Some stay for weeks, while others settle in for much longer. For many, Kutchan is Asia's one and only winter resort.

Dominating the scenery at Kutchan is Mt. Yotei. Known also by its nickname Ezo Fuji (Hokkaido's Mt. Fuji), it appears as a solitary mountain peak whose base flares out widely and beautifully. Its pure and plentiful mountain-fresh water is the secret to the town's delicious produce. The vegetables, rice, wheat, livestock and dairy produced at the foot of the mountain are known throughout Japan for their exquisite quality, and Kutchan has the luxury of being able to use springwater for its water supply. From autumn through winter, with such delicious supply of flavorful in-season vegetables like special local potatoes, as well as cold-water fish and shellfish fresh from nearby fishing ports, the taverns, sushi restaurants and premium restaurants—some even bringing

in world-renowned Michelin-star chefs—dish up delicious, mouthwatering menus.

In 2019, Kutchan will take on a new role as an international host, having been selected to host the G20 Tourism Ministers' Meeting. "This is a precious opportunity for us, and we are working on a plan that will treat guests to everything that gives

Kutchan its special charm, including its amazing nature, international character, and Japanese hospitality. In addition to giving guests a special experience, I also want our efforts to boost Kutchan's attractiveness for the long term," explains Mayor Nishie. A bright future lies ahead for the town, which has prospered on people's love of pristine nature. ✨

G20 Japan 2019

Kutchan to Host Tourism Ministers' Meeting on October 25-26, 2019

In 2019, Japan will host the G20 Summit & Ministerial Meetings for the first time. In addition to the G20 Summit being held in Osaka, other ministerial meetings will be held as follows:

- Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors' Meeting (Fukuoka, Fukuoka Pref.)
- Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting (Matsuyama, Ehime Pref.)
- Tourism Ministers' Meeting (Kutchan, Hokkaido Pref.)
- Agriculture Ministers' Meeting (Niigata, Niigata Pref.)
- Ministerial Meeting on Trade and Digital Economy (Tsukuba, Ibaraki Pref.)
- Ministerial Meeting on Energy Transitions and Global Environment for Sustainable

- Growth (Karuzawa, Nagano Pref.)
- Health Ministers' Meeting (Okayama, Okayama Pref.)
- Foreign Ministers' Meeting (Nagoya, Aichi Pref.)

<https://www.japan.go.jp/g20japan/>



Kutchan's Hanazono area will be the main venue for the Tourism Ministers' Meeting. This cosmopolitan area is popular for its backcountry skiing and snowboarding.