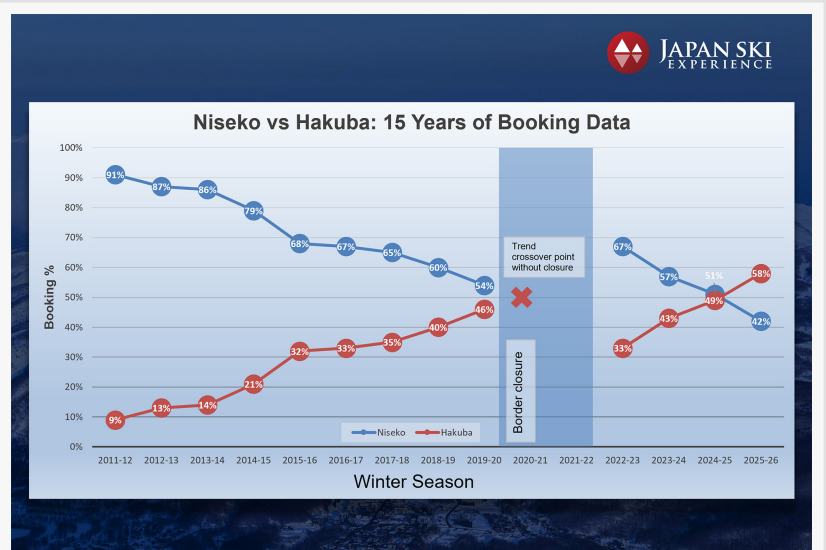


Hakuba & Niseko Booking Trends: Evolving Preferences

Japan Ski Experience data shows that for the first time in 15 years, more customers are booking Hakuba over Niseko showing a shift in traveller preferences.

KUTCHAN, HOKKAIDO, JAPAN, October 31, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Over the past decade, [Japan Ski Experience](#) booking data has shown a steady evolution in where international skiers choose to spend their Japan ski holidays. While [Niseko](#) has long dominated as Japan's most recognised resort internationally, the 2025–26 winter season marks a notable shift: for the first time, more of our guests travelled to [Hakuba](#) than to Niseko.



Japan Ski Experience Booking Trends: 15 Years of Data

This trend is not about competition between the two resorts. Both continue to attract strong demand and deliver exceptional ski experiences. It reflects how Japan's winter tourism landscape continues to mature and diversify, as travellers become more familiar with the country's range of world-class destinations.

Trends Interrupted

From 2011 through 2020, our booking data revealed a clear pattern: Niseko's share of customer bookings gradually declined as Hakuba's share increased. By the 2019–20 winter season, the two resorts were on track to converge, with Hakuba projected to overtake Niseko during 2020–21. That crossover never happened, as Japan's border closure during the pandemic halted international travel entirely.

The disruption effectively froze resort preferences in time. For two full winters, foreign visitor numbers fell to almost zero, breaking what had been a long-term trend. When borders reopened, booking ratios between Niseko and Hakuba reset to roughly 2016–17 levels, with Niseko again leading by a comfortable margin.

Japan Ski Experience Hakuba and Niseko traveller booking trends

Post-Pandemic Rebalancing

What followed was a remarkably consistent recovery; and an acceleration of the earlier pattern. Each year since Japan's borders reopened, Hakuba has gained share while Niseko's proportion of total bookings has declined at a faster rate than before 2020. In the 2024–25 season, Hakuba and Niseko were almost evenly matched among Japan Ski Experience guests, signalling an approaching turning point.

That season also coincided with record snowfall and visitor numbers in Hakuba. According to tourism officials, the resort welcomed approximately 1.7 million winter visitors, a 12 percent increase over the previous year. Meanwhile, Niseko's 2024–25 winter saw around 2.2 million total visitors, the highest ever recorded by the Niseko Promotion Board, slightly surpassing its previous record from 2018–19. These parallel records demonstrate that interest in Japanese skiing overall continues to expand, even as individual resort shares evolve.

"Many skiers and snowboarders who have experienced Niseko are drawn to explore other resorts that offer a stronger sense of Japanese culture. Hakuba is a natural next choice; it differs greatly from Niseko, with expansive terrain and stunning Alpine scenery. Visitors often ask whether Hakuba is as westernised as Niseko, and the answer is no—but the experience is as immersive or as international as you want it to be. Central areas such as Happo and Echoland cater mainly to overseas visitors, featuring a wide range of modern accommodation and both Japanese and international dining options. Yet many of Hakuba's smaller resorts—accessible on the same ski pass—retain the nostalgic atmosphere of a traditional Japan ski resort. The ability to enjoy such contrasting experiences within one valley, together with great snow conditions, is what makes Hakuba so unique, and has led to a surge in popularity over recent years." – Lindsay Colbert, Japan Ski Experience Director

Niseko Ski Resort

The 2025–26 Shift

In 2025–26, Hakuba overtook Niseko for the first time in our company's booking history, reaching 58 percent of Japan Ski Experience accommodation bookings compared with Niseko's 42 percent. While our data reflects only one segment of the international market, it aligns with broader indicators showing Hakuba's growing visibility among both domestic and overseas travellers.

The trend does not indicate a decline in Niseko's appeal. The resort remains one of the world's best-known ski destinations, with exceptional snow reliability and advanced infrastructure. Hakuba's increase represents the broadening of Japan's appeal to international skiers who now have access to more information, improved travel connections, and a growing number of high-quality properties across Honshu.

Looking Ahead

While tourist preferences may be changing for the Japan ski season, both Hakuba and Niseko continue to invest in infrastructure to enhance the visitor experience and to accommodate the growing number of skiers each year. New gondolas, upgraded lifts, and expanded accommodation options are helping Japan's ski resorts meet global standards while maintaining their distinctive atmosphere.

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