

Nitonupuri SW Hot Laps



 3hrs Time	 500m Total Climb	 900m Highest point
 5km Distance	 4/10 Difficulty	 Dec-Apr Best season

The south-west aspect of Nitonupuri is probably the busiest ski touring spot in the region, if not the whole of Japan. At the same time, if you're an early riser, it's easy enough to be the only one out there even in the peak of the season. It's busy for a reason; the terrain is well pitched and with good mature trees. It's a short skin from the 'car-park' and it's super easy to knock out a few laps before getting on with the rest of your day be that work or family skiing at the nearby resorts. If it's your first day out and about in the Niseko backcountry then you can't go wrong with this route.

LOCATION

Nitonupuri sits in the heart of the Niseko range, between the obvious conical peak of Chisenupuri to the west, and Iwaonupuri to the east. It is probably the busiest of the regions ski touring spots, and the trailhead will usually be obvious for the number of cars parked there on any given morning. The trailhead is at gate the which closes route 66 for winter; about 800m drive up the road from Chisenupuri village. Nitonupuri can also be accessed as part of a longer tour from Chisenupuri village itself.

ONLINE ROUTE GUIDE

Please visit the full route guide for GPS file, interactive map, and extra safety notes: <http://hokw.jp/nitoWlo>



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GENERAL NOTES

With the booming popularity of backcountry skiing, every region has a spot that's an order of magnitude busier than everywhere else. Think Grizzly Gulch in the Wasatch or Loveland Pass in Colorado. Nitonupuri is the Niseko Region's busiest ski touring spot, and for good reason. It's easily accessible, has a very short skin-in before climbing, and provides quality skiing on steep pitch slopes. Despite its popularity, Nitonupuri offers a large amount of skiable terrain primarily on W through S aspects. Even on a busy day it's usually easy enough to find some un-skied snow to enjoy. It's a place that works really well for a few hot laps in the morning with short pitches, nice steep downhill slopes and well spaced vegetation.

The quality of the skin tracks tends to be quite variable though. The most pleasant routes set a long traverse to the north, well away from the main downhill runs, before switching back and they will often make the transition spot with just a single kick-turn. The least pleasant skin tracks switchback-a-palooza their way straight up the SE aspect and involve much kicking and cussing. Don't get suckered into following some other muggles poorly set skin-track.

ROUTE TIMING AND NOTES

For a moderately fit group, you should be able to achieve something like the following for multiple laps.

- Car to first skin->ski transition ~60 minutes
- Downhill ~10 minutes
- Uphill ~40 minutes
- Ski/skin out to car ~10 minutes

The route starts from the winter road-closure gate on route 66. Please be considerate of others when it comes to parking. Stricly speaking it is illegal to park along the route 66 road. If you do decide to park on the road, park on the west side of route 66, leave plenty of room for the cars in front and behind to enter and exit, avoid blocking route 58 as it turns up the hill to Goshiki Onsen, put your skins on behind your car and not in the middle of the road, and just generally avoid being a selfish dick. You can see our backcountry etiquette tips here.

Skin up and along Route 66 for about 600m until the obvious bend in the road and then head north across a flat bench and begin traversing around the slopes of Nitonupuri. There will almost always be skin tracks in place already, maybe partially buried if you're the early birds of the day. Don't get suckered into skinning straight up the steep south facing slopes. Traverse around and up to the north before switching back; for hot laps of skiing you're aiming for the obvious false summit above those steep slopes (~850msl).

Rip. Ski. Rinse. Repeat.

That's really about all there is to it. There's no need to climb much higher than the false summit; fast transitions, a good skin track and reasonable fitness should allow you to get 2 to 5 runs in within a morning. There are descent options on other aspects as well, though you maybe be doing a bit of bush bashing depending on the snow level. If you come here often,

you'll build a good mental map of where the best skiing can be found. You may wish to skin all the way to the summit. Be aware that the snow conditions tend to be more variable once up above the tree line. See our Nitonupuri Summit route description for more detail.

TRANSPORT

By car: There is a small area at the end of the snow clearing at the Route 66 road closure gate, where four or five cars can fit without having to park on the side of the road along Route 66. If this small area is already full, you may see others parked on the side of the road, hard up against the snowbanks on the left (west) side of Route 66. Technically, this is illegal for a number of reasons – parking within the lane, parking too close to an intersection, etc. It can also effectively reduce Route 66 to one lane, causing traffic headaches. While we haven't heard of vehicles being towed, please obey any signs posted, and always make as much effort as possible to not obstruct traffic. As backcountry user numbers continue to increase, we hope to see a feasible solution. In the meantime, however, it's up to users to make good decisions and be careful not to cause inconvenience to others.

Public transport: There is no public transport to this route. A taxi from central Hirafu to the route 66 gate (24km) would cost around 7,500 to 8,000yen one way.

SAFETY NOTES

Nitonupuri is a heavily trafficked ski touring area. This may lead you to a false sense of safety/security. The area includes plenty of steep avalanche prone terrain and we've had days when we've turned around based on the snow stability.

- **The downhill ski terrain is steep;** it is absolutely avalanche terrain. Check the forecast and familiarize yourself with the snowpack conditions for the aspect you intend to ski.

- **It is a busy area;** be aware of backcountry users above and below you at all times. By following the recommended routes you'll have good spatial separation between skiing and skinning.

ONSEN NEARBY

There are two obvious Onsen options for this run. Goshiki Onsen 五色温泉 (800yen, 10am till 7pm) is a gorgeously rustic natural onsen a few km drive up the road (route 58) from the trailhead. It is a must visit onsen for the region, with 100% pure hot spring water, flowing into outdoor baths surrounded by meters of snow. Yukichichibu Onsen 雪秩父温泉 (700yen, noon till 7pm, closed Tuesdays) on the way back to Hirafu (800m down route 66) is also a good natural onsen option, with a larger outdoor bath area. Yukichichibu also has an attached restaurant (11am till 2pm). Yukichichibu is a very sulphureous onsen and so you do tend to stink for a bit afterwards. ■

PRINTING INSTRUCTIONS

STEP 1

Load your printer with A4 printer paper (210mm x 297mm). If you've only got Letter size (215.9mm x 279.4 mm), just follow the instructions below. You'll achieve an accurate scale, but the map will be clipped a little at the top and bottom.

STEP 2

Open the print window by clicking on File > Print (or hitting Ctrl + P on your keyboard).

STEP 3

Make sure "Actual Size" is selected.

STEP 4

For double-sided printing, select "Print on both sides of paper".

STEP 5

For best results, select the highest quality print option available on your printer (settings will vary).

STEP 6

You won't need this instructions page, so just select the pages that don't include this instruction sheet.

STEP 7

Click "Print".

PLEASE PRINT AT 'ACTUAL SIZE' (NO SCALING)

The 1:25,000 scale used in the map is accurate if the PDF is printed without scaling (i.e., ACTUAL SIZE). Follow the instructions on this page to ensure an accurate rendering of the scale.



Figure 1. Ensure "Actual Size", and Pages 1-4 are selected (Windows).

ORIGAMI INSTRUCTIONS

