

Discover the hidden charm of rural Japan, where snowy landscapes, vibrant festivals, and unforgettable slopes await.

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## Winter in Nagano: The Slopes Less Travelled

Many start their journey in Japan by taking the stage transfixed by the bright lights of [Tokyo's](#) Shinjuku or blinded by the neon canals of [Osaka's](#) Dotonbori. We offer you a peek behind the curtain to experience the true heart of Japan with a taste of rural (*inaka*) life. Come wintertime, the charming [Iiyama](#) Valley in the mountainous [Nagano](#) Prefecture undergoes a breath-taking transformation, the towering snow drifts, not only heralding a unique selection of seasonal activities and world-famous ski slopes, but summoning the resolve of locals to overcome the trials of winter together.



It's this spirit of togetherness that we invite you to experience during your winter holiday. During the [Dosojin](#) festival beneath the ski lifts of Nozawa, wield fire to burn towering offerings to the Gods. Singing and drinking under the falling embers, bringing your bad omens down with them to melt away into the snow. Beneath the gates of the *Kamakura-no-sato* near the overlooking Togari ski resort, curl up inside igloos for a cosy winter experience. Watch the stark contrast of the pure snow and the azure sky fade to black, permeated by the glow of paper lanterns.

Not only the famed Nozawa but also Madarao, Togari, and Kijima-daira ski resorts offer a thrilling powder skiing experience. Their mountains are home to some of the highest rates of snowfall in Japan. Whether skiing or snowboarding, carve waist-deep tracks in snow as soft as anywhere you can find it in Japan. Craft beer pubs in Nozawa and delicious local eateries



like *Penticton* café enter the culinary fray each winter, eager to warm the frozen bones of those hitting the slopes.



In the town of Iiyama, the frigid air rebounding from the brisk Chikuma river drives the residents into vibrant local restaurants, *karaoke* bars, and businesses. For an expanded insider's look at Iiyama's hardy culture and the uniquely wintertime attractions it has to offer, see our blog post below:



## Winter in Iiyama

Head to our latest blog post to read all about winter highlights in the Iiyama region

[Read more](#)



## Expert Profile: Danielle

See what Danielle has to say about the Iiyama Valley...



WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE THING ABOUT THE Iiyama VALLEY?



It has to be the breath-taking scenery! Ranging from dense pine forests hiding secluded shrines, to sweeping rice paddies and the looming mountains that surround the valley - if you're interested in experiencing a different side of Japan outside of its bustling neon cities, Iiyama is a wonderful place to visit.

## **WHY IS PRESERVING THE LOCAL CULTUREAL HERITAGE IMPORTANT?**

Japan's rural communities place a great emphasis on spirituality, cultural heritage, and the connection between humans and nature; there is a real dedication to supporting ethical and eco-friendly tourism, whilst allowing visitors to truly feel like they're part of the community. In today's modern world, it's becoming increasingly important to remember the 'slow way of life' experienced in these small rural communities, along with their ancient traditions and unique understanding of the powers of nature.



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