



the biggest resorts in Japan. It's famous for its hot springs and thus has plenty of accommodation on offer.

OZE TOKURA

Oze Tokura is a small resort within 3 hours drive of Tokyo. It has become well known by dedicating itself to snowboarders and organising regular events. The mountain itself is nothing special, but freestylers should enjoy the funpark and halfpipe.

some excellent tree runs if you duck the ropes and because of the lack of Japanese who do this you're always able to make your own tracks. The best spots for doing this are below the No. 1 gondola, and of the No. 2 gondola.

Accommodation in Naeba is operated by the Prince Group, which offers a variety of modern slopeside accommodation (+¥81 (0) 237-89-2311). If you call in advance there are usually special deals, going including lift pass. Oji Pension (0237-89-3675) is just 5 minutes walk behind the Prince Hotel, and is run by the friendly Mr. Sakamoto. He has a stock of new rental boards and a Brazil shirt signed by Pele. A futon, breakfast and evening meal should cost around 7500 yen, and he can sort you out with lift pass discounts.

J
A
P
A
N

RIDE AREA: 400 acres **TOTAL RUNS:** 28
WIND DIRECTION: East 20% (snowdrift) 40%, Advantaged 30%
TOP LIFT: 1750m **BOTTOM LIFT:** 1600m
LONGEST TRAIL: 4km **TOTAL LIFTS:** 21 - 13 Gondolas, 24 chairlifts
LIFT PASSES: Half-day pass 3500 yen, Day 4000 yen, Night Pass 2000
CONTACT: <http://www.princehotels.com/ozetokura/naeba/en/index.html>
HOW TO GET THERE:

Take the JR Joetsu Shinkansen to Echigo Station (40 mins away) then pick up a Prince Hotel bus.
Get to the Tsukaguchi Interchange on the Kanetsuki Expressway, and Highway 17 for 33 kilometers. Take the Yuzawa Interchange onto Highway 17 and continue for 27km.

NOZAWA ONSEN

Nozawa Onsen is a major ski resort in Nagano with a big area and beautiful views. Riders were banned up till '98 and were only allowed on a few green runs in '99. Nowadays you can roam free and there's a terrain park & pipe. At roughly 1000 acres its one of



SEKI ONSEN

Seki Onsen is a resort which understands the needs of the powder hounds. Near the west coast in Niigata Prefecture it has a great snow record, offers with 1m plus dumps overnight in Jan/Feb. There's a decent pipe and some good natural hits and kickers. Locals or the patrol will advise you on back country riding - they'll also tell you that you have to take responsibility for yourself, although in the land of group culture it's cool to find somewhere that lets you do this. Seki Onsen is the home resort for Masanori Takeuchi, a well-known Japanese rider.

SHIGA KOHGEN

Shiga Kohgen includes about 10 separate resorts, among which is Yakobaiyama where the first Olympic snowboarding gold medal was won.

SHIRAMINE

Located in the prefecture of Ishikawa, Shiramine is a great little ski ground. Though small, the lifts offer access to some steep, deep, terrain with plenty of trees, and this place is never busy, and has been known for some awesome powder days.

ZAO

Zao is a major winter resort. The runs are long and well suited to carving or freeriding but with only a limited amount of off-piste and tree runs.

