**Rusutsu**

**Categories**

**Good For**

Beginners

Intermediates

Experts

Snowboarders

Families

Snow reliability

**Data**

**Beginner Runs**

10

**Intermediate Runs**

12

**Advanced Runs**

15

**Total Runs**

37

**Lifts**

18

**Chairs**

14

**Drags**

0

**Gondola Cable Cars**

4

**Parks**

1

**Pipes**

0

**Weather**

**Annual Snowfall**

8.4m (28ft).

**Overview**

The largest ski area in Japan’s Hokkaido prefecture, Rusutsu is a full-service slopeside resort that’s dominated by a large hotel complex – the giant Rusutsu Resort Hotel – that offers multiple facilities, including dozens of shops and restaurants as well as Canadian-style log cabins.

Despite its low altitude (compared to the Alps or Rockies), Rusutsu ski resort is famous for its remarkable natural snowfall. Hokkaido is on the same latitude as the European Alps, and regularly accumulates 1m (3.3ft) of snow on its beaches. Indeed, the only issue here has been of too much snow, with some visitors complaining of snow falling for weeks on end.

Downhill skiing has been ‘big’ in Japan for a century, since Austrian pioneers were imported to train local ski instructors. Winter sports boomed in the country in the 1980s, but an economic downturn 20 years ago left many of the country's 600 plus ski areas in financial difficulties.

In recent years, however, a new market of skiers – initially from Australia and now the United Kingdom – has revived the fortunes of some of the best Japanese resorts. Lift ticket prices, once the most expensive in the world, are now cheaper than at most major resorts in Europe or North America, while practical problems for English speakers 20 years ago (such as all signage in Japanese) are gradually being changed.

**Location**

Rusutsu is located in southwest Japan's most northerly island, Hokkaido.

**Website**

http://en.rusutsu.co.jp

**Piste Map**

http://en.rusutsu.co.jp/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/trailmap.pdf

**Hit The Slopes**

Rusutsu's ski area is spread across three mountains. Skiing directly above the resort is available on West Mountain, while the majority of terrain is spread across the gondola-linked East Mountain and its lift-linked neighbour, Mount Isola, which together have about three-quarters of the 42km (26 miles) of runs.

There is skiing for all ability levels in Rusutsu ski resort and, in common with most major Japanese ski areas, all lifts are either chairlifts or gondolas.

Beginners, who can make use of English-language ski lessons, will find easy green trails close to the resort, but also runs to progress on to further away from the complex. Intermediates have most of the resort's terrain open to them, while advanced skiers and boarders should be pleased with more challenges than most Japanese ski areas offer.

Among the other options is tree skiing and a glut of off-piste terrain – in fact, Rusutsu has a reputation for untracked powder lasting longer than at other major Japanese ski area. There’s also a terrain park to explore for boarders and freestylers, while night skiing is a regular activity on West Mountain.

Thanks to its legendary snowfall, the ski season in Rusutsu is long and runs from early December until late April.

**Rusutsu**

**Resort**

286

**Base**

286

**Top**

994

**General**

**Beyond The Slopes**

On the snow, there's cross-country skiing, snow rafting (riding down the slopes on large inflatable rafts), snow tubing, orienteering, snowmobiling, and dog sledding to choose from.

Options in the warmth range from the chance to try traditional Japanese methods of bread baking and an insight into Japanese crafts to the various facilities within the Rusutsu Resort Hotel. Among its features is a gym, swimming pool with wave machine, amusement arcade, games room and a carousel ride.

No visit to Hokkaido is complete without a soak in a traditional Japanese *onsen* (hot-spring baths), which can be found in the resort.

**Family Fun**

Rusutsu ski resort is a good choice for families due to the safe and convenient nature of the giant complex as well as its easy-to-ride lifts, high service standards, affordable dining and non-ski family fun activities.

Rusutsu’s ski school can provide group and private lessons for children aged four and above, who can then progress on to the numerous green runs when proficient.

The hotel has an indoor nursery for children up to six years old.

**Retail Therapy**

All of the shops in Rusutsu are within the hotel complex, concentrated in a central retail shopping centre. This manages to accommodate nearly 30 shops, so most needs can be met. Local products to look out for include wood and leather crafts.

**Splashing Out**

A day trip to provincial capital Sapporo is a worthwhile outing and is relatively easy to reach by bus; although it's best to be accompanied by a Japanese speaker. The annual Sapporo Snow Festival ([www.snowfes.com](http://www.snowfes.com)) sees the creation of amazing snow carvings the size of large buildings. This week-long event, which is usually held during the month of February, attracts visitors from around the world.

**Apres Ski**

Après-ski in Rusutsu is low key. Visitors may like to start the evening with a visit to the traditional *onsen* (men and women shower and bathe separately in the communal volcanic pools, but they might then meet up in a mixed-sex thermal pool).

Alternatively, opt for a traditional Japanese tea ceremony in the Dolce tearoom, or visit one of the karaoke rooms for a bit of a knees-up.

There are half a dozen bars and night spots in the Rusutsu Resort Hotel, including the Obrist bar; or for sports events, check out the bar named after the one sport guests are unlikely to see played here, Cricket. The Kakashi Tavern has a relaxed atmosphere with local beers.

**Eating Out**

Each of the 12 restaurants in Rusutsu is located within the large Rusutsu Resort Hotel building. However, the resort does manage to offer a great range of global cuisine, enabling guests on half-board deals to eat at a different establishment each night.

For traditional food from the local Hokkaido region, try Sekkatei. Kazahana also specialises in Japanese cuisine using the fresh and natural ingredients for which Hokkaido is renowned, but served in a Western-style dining room.

Venture a few floors up in the hotel and guests will find Kanten, which serves Chinese fare. Other choices include Belle Vue and Bon Appetit for French and international food respectively, while Italian is offered at the Costa Terrazza.

**Transport**

**Getting There**

Nearest airport: Sapporo New Chitose Airport (CTS).

Distance to resort: 100km (63 miles).

Driving time: 1 hour 30 minutes.

**Getting Around**

As all facilities are concentrated within one large complex, all of which can be easily reached on foot; there is therefore no need for transportation between facilities.

**Hotels**

The Rusutsu Resort Hotel is the main option in terms of accommodation in Rusutsu, albeit with a number of options to suit different tastes and budgets.

**Rusutsu Resort Hotel**

This 4-star hotel can accommodate more than 2,000 guests and has a remarkable range of facilities. The hotel is divided into four main sectors: Rusutsu Tower has the best accommodation, offering extensive suites; North and South Wings offer more conventional hotel rooms; while the fourth option is Canadian-style log chalets.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

13 Izumikawa

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Rusutsu

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

Japan

**Telephone**

(0136) 463 111.

**Website**

http://en.rusutsu.co.jp