

SKIING AND FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

Hokkaido is known for its powder and so you must be able to ski 15 continuous turns in off-piste conditions. You must be a solid black run skier who can negotiate most western ski resorts.

Fitness is important due to the effort required to ski powder for many days in a row. It helps to have some sort of skinning experience but it is not necessary. To make the most of your trip I recommend that you have a good level of aerobic fitness.

EQUIPMENT LIST FOR JAPAN 2009

The list here is a recommendation only. If you are an avid backcountry skier and have a system that works for you then bring it along. It does get really cold in Japan so come prepared for that. Please don't hesitate to email or call me with any questions on anything concerning the trip.

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SKIS

I have traveled with 2 sets of skis the last couple of trips to Japan. One is a mid fat and the other is a fatter backcountry ski. The mid fat is about 80 mm under foot and 174cm in length. My powder ski is about 90mm under foot and 185cm in length. If yours is fatter bring it.

I like to bring a smaller mid fat for the resort skiing and if it gets deep I can always ski the powder boards. I feel it gives me more options.

If you cannot bring 2 sets of skis or feel that one ski can fit all your needs then by all means bring one set. I would just make sure they are not too skinny under foot. There are no Telemark rentals available, so make arrangements to bring your own.

BOOTS

Boots are, to me, the most important item. Make sure they fit well, are comfortable and are something you can hike in. I wouldn't go out and buy new boots right before the trip. If you are prone to breaking stuff on your boots bring some extra hardware for the quick fix.

BINDINGS

If you can get your hands on a pair of free pivot bindings for the trip, that would be great. It's no big deal if you don't have them but they make hiking pretty damn easy. Give your binding a good look over and see if parts need to be replaced. And it makes good sense to bring a small repair kit for your bindings. Make sure you have heel lifters.

BEACONS

Bring your beacon and make sure it's on the newer frequency; they all should be by now. More importantly, make sure you can use it and practice a little before the trip.

SHOVEL, PROBE

It's no use having a beacon without the shovel and probe. If you don't have a probe and don't think you want to buy one, drop me a line and we will see how many we have in the group.

SKINS

With the new fat skis it's important that your skins fit your skis as best as possible. Buy them wide and cut them down, or better yet have the shop do it for you so it's done right. Due to the cold weather and snow I prefer to have a tail fix system to make sure they stay on.

PACK

A medium to small pack is all that is required. My general rule is that it must be able to fit all your items inside the pack. There should be nothing on the outside strapped on. We will be skiing through Birch trees a lot of the time and having branches hook onto equipment strapped on your pack is a pain. I have found that the hydration systems most packs have don't work in cold climates. If you have a system that works well in the cold by all means use it but don't go out of your way to purchase a camel back type hydration system. Bring water bottles.

OUTER WEAR

It gets cold in Japan and a good jacket and pants are essential. Gore tex or something similar would be great. Don't forget we will be hiking and thick lined pants and jackets get too hot.

THERMALS AND FLEECE

I have been taking medium to heavy weight thermals in order to keep it warm. I take several options of fleece to layer underneath my outerwear. One of my key items is a vest that I use while hiking to regulate temperature. A soft shell jacket is also a great item for layering or a jacket itself.

DOWN JACKET

I find this to be one of the most useful items I carry. It doesn't need to be the expedition weight Everest jacket, but one that can be carried in your backcountry pack easily. I quite often ski in the down and take it off when I hike.

GLOVES

When hiking I use a thinner glove, more towards the Nordic end and swap it for a thicker glove for the decent. If you are prone to getting cold hands bring extra gloves. If your hands get cold in the backcountry it can ruin your day, so come prepared. Hand warmers can make a good addition to your pack.

EYEWARE

Sunglasses are good for the sunny days but don't expect too many of those. A good pair of goggles with a spare lens is a must for the trip. I actually bring 2 pairs of goggles with

spare lens, because on snowy powdery days vision is everything. While in the backcountry I hike with my sunglasses and descend with my goggles. I make sure my goggles never fog.

THERMOS

This is one of my key items in my pack. I don't use the camel back type hydration systems so I take a medium size thermos and fill it with hot tea. I also carry a water bottle with me for extra water.

FIRST AID KIT

Bring your own personal first aid kit that has items specific to you. If you get blisters then bring some extra second skin. I will have a larger first aid kit that I will bring, but carry your own personal stuff.