

A trip to the Japan Ski Museum, with its church-like design surrounded by typical European mountain lodges, is like stepping into an Austrian village. Once inside you can gaze at ancient skiing equipment from various parts of Asia, learn about the development and changing fashions of skiing, pore over historical documents and see plenty of memorabilia such as posters and medals won by local stars of bygone Winter Olympics. Even a pair of skis once owned by Imperial Prince Takamatsu are on display. For ski enthusiasts, the Japan Ski Museum offers unparalleled insight into the history of the sport—from its introduction to Japan in 1911 (when it was brought to Nagano's neighboring prefecture Niigata by a former Austro-Hungarian army officer), through the adoption of the classic Arlberg skiing technique two decades later, to its development as a modern, elegant sport. And Nozawa Onsen has a special place in that history: in 1930 the Austrian creator of the Arlberg technique, Hannes Schneider, was invited to Japan by the Imperial Prince Yasuhito to explain the new style he had been popularizing across the world. Schneider held a demonstration of his method at Nozawa Onsen in front of hundreds of Japanese skiers—a moment that would become a major milestone in the development of professional Alpine skiing in Japan.