



# My First Snowboarding Experience

by : Fadly Agustimahir (CIR from Bandung, Indonesia)



Since I was born and raised in Indonesia, a tropical country, I had never seen any snow before. When I was a child, I would wonder what snow looks like and also dream of playing with it. Around Christmas time, almost all the TV channels would be airing Christmas themed cartoons full of snowy scenes, like skiing, snowmen, making a snow fort, and so on.

But, there is no snowboarding in these cartoons. The first time I saw someone snowboarding was on an extreme sports channel, where skillful athletes were showing off their tricks. At that time, I thought that snowboarding would be easy, just stand on the board, keep your balance, and slide!

All of you already know that I was a fool. Snowboarding is not as easy as I thought. Like all other sports, you need to practice. But I only realized this during my first snowboarding experience.

I went with my friends to Sun Meadows Kiyosato Ski Resort, located in the highlands of Yamanashi

Prefecture, in Hokuto city. We brought our own snowboard wear, gloves, and goggles, and rented the snowboard and shoes on site. The staff were very friendly, and helped us to pick the shoes and board that fit us best, as I didn't know that the board length is decided by the height of its user.

Since none of us had tried snowboarding before, we took a two hour lesson and prepared ourselves for sliding. The very first words from our instructor were: "You must bear the pain because you will fall down often." The tension was getting high, and I kept wondering, "How hard is snowboarding really? Can I make it back home safely, without any broken bones?"

The instructor patiently taught us from the very basic steps. "Yes, that is how to put your shoes to the board safely. Make sure the board and shoes are tightly connected." We did the first part of our training inside the building, and after that we went outside to do the challenging part of the lesson.

On the snow, we were instructed about how to fall safely from the board. "There are only two possibilities: you either fall forward or backward. If you fall forward, stretch out your arms, like doing a superman pose, and slide forward. If you fall backward, bend your body forward and bring your arms together in front of your body. This is to minimize the injury."

Done with the falling off practice, next we learned how to move using

the snowboard. Again, there were only two choices: "When your left foot is attached to the board, slide using your right foot in front or back of the board. The second option is to do exactly the same with the opposite foot." I felt awkward because it was not easy at all. I couldn't move as smoothly as my friends. But it was just a matter of time. After few minutes, I was able to move a little bit smoother and got ready for the next step.

Then, the instructor took us to the training zone, where a moving walkway similar to a small conveyor belt helped us to get to a higher area of the slope. I was amazed by the view. Soon, after we got on the walkway, I could see the beautiful Mount Fuji to the south, Mount Akadake to the north, and the Minami Alps to the west. Yamanashi is surrounded by mountains, and I was astonished by the view of so many mountains covered by white snow, a view that until now I could only see on the television.

By the way, do you know that the highest and second highest mountain in Japan are located in Yamanashi? Number one is Mount Fuji, and number two is Mount Kitadake, in the Minami Alps. When the weather is clear, you can see both mountains. The clear weather ratio in Yamanashi is the highest in Japan, so there is a high possibility to see both of them from here.

Soon after I reached the end of the moving walkway, I thought we





would slide down through the slope right away. But of course it wasn't possible, it was too early for a beginner. Here the instructor taught us how to do a heel slide. All of us sat together on the slope and attached the boards to our shoes. Then we had to stand up. It was funny because none of us could stand up well at this point and barely got to keep our balance without falling off.

"Keep your shoulder straight, look down the slope, and raise and lower your toes to adjust the sliding speed." Yes, it is much easier to say it than do it. No matter how many times I tried, my body weight kept on moving to my right side and I couldn't control it well, so I kept falling again and again. Even so, I enjoyed it so much, and any time I fell off, I would lay down on the snow and enjoy the clear sky.

On this day, not only us but also many kids took snowboard and ski lessons. They seemed to enjoy it, and it was lovely to see them skiing together at the same time. It reminded me of the image of groups of little penguins playing together, another scene that I only had seen on TV. This sight became my motivation, "if the kids can do it, so can I." So I tried harder and harder to do the heel slide better.

When the instructor saw we were ready, he took us to snowboard down a higher slope. But before that, the instructor needed to show us how to ride on and get off the lift. Once again, I was pleased by the view of

the mountain full of snow, with many people skiing and snowboarding smoothly below our feet. What a view!

The last challenge awaited us at the end of the lift. We were instructed to do the heel slide in this slope, way longer than the slope we had used for training. Sliding down on this slope was the best part for me: I could slide better, enjoying the view, and, the most important thing, falling less often - maybe just once or twice.

What an experience! Despite being my first time snowboarding, I really enjoyed the entire experience, from the first steps to the last slide. Added to that, the view couldn't be better. Once you get to Sun Meadows Kiyosato and try snowboarding for the first time, it doesn't matter how many times you fall, I'm sure that you will want to come back and do it again and again.

The access itself is an important point. Before we finish, I asked the staff why even on a weekday there are so many visitors, to which he answered, "Sun Meadows is one of the closest ski resorts from Tokyo. People just need to drive about two hours to reach this place. And it's also close from the highway exit. Customers can also rent the ski and snowboard gear here, so they don't need to bring anything." It's so easy!

So, what are you waiting for? Come and experience snowboarding in Yamanashi!

#### Information

Information about Sun Meadows Kiyosato can be found here: [www.sunmeadows.co.jp/en/](http://www.sunmeadows.co.jp/en/)  
In summer, visitors can enjoy the Kiyosato Terrace, from where it is possible to see a panoramic view of Kiyosato highlands, Mt. Fuji and the Southern Alps.

