

SKI ON DOWN

The Land of the Long White Cloud is nothing short of spectacular. And the South Island in particular will leave you breathless. With a population of less than a million New Zealand's South Island is one of God's treasures. This realm of natural splendour together with the warm and often dizzy hospitality of the local people will change your life.

Skiing South of the Equator

In June as the ski season draws to a close in Europe and North America as the South East Asia summer starts to heat up, if you are looking for a cool break it's time to venture down to ice cool New Zealand's South Island and indulge in this exhilarating pristine powder paradise.

If its diversity you want when carving up the white stuff, it is here you will undoubtedly experience heaven. The island is dominated by the Southern Alps peaking at 3000m and running almost 500k along its length with 360 glaciers with a season that lasts to November.

Spread widely throughout the Southern Alps the ski fields comprise of commercial and club ski fields, Nordic cross-country and Heli-ski areas providing a broad range of skiing terrain from cool running on carefully groomed downhill, cross-country touring routes to the ultimate challenge of off-piste descents. Snowboarders will never be short of a challenge finding maximum buzz on 'go faster' downhills, higher on the half-pipe and more daring on the ramps.

Heli-Guiding operators cover an extensive range of off-piste skiing throughout the Southern Alps and guides will take you by helicopter to ski or board some of the most pristine untracked snow you can find on these world-class mountains. The Tasman Glacier near Mount Cook will provide a spine tingling adventure, enjoyed in small groups with a professional guide sporting the ultimate in modern safety gizmo's. Grit your teeth, suck down the adrenalin and know in the back of your head you're flying with the best.

If you are looking to party with the best on the après ski and board scene, then the three main centres to hang are **Queenstown, Wanaka** and **Methven**. All make an ideal base with fields close by and have wilderness Heli-skiing available.

Queenstown has its own international airport and is the

largest and most commercial of the three towns and is noted for its excellent shopping and range of luxury lodge accommodation surrounded by stunning alpine scenery. Being New Zealand's self-proclaimed extreme sports capital, bungee jumping, sky diving, white-water rafting, skiing and boarding are all here for the adrenalin junkies. The après ski scene is legendary with a huge number of bars, restaurants and night clubs which buzz throughout the season. Worth noting is Queenstown's Winter Festival during July offering 10 days of fun and festivities on and off the slopes with races, carnival fireworks, night skiing and music.

Coronet Peak and **The Remarkables** are the two ski fields closest to Queenstown. Coronet Peak situated 18km from Queenstown is blessed with varied terrain and outstanding views. There are many ways to get down Coronet through every type of terrain from the wide groomed run called M1, mogul runs, to wide open back bowls. Once you know the ropes you'll discover the secret verticals, dips and drops of one of New Zealand's longest established ski fields. If skiing all day isn't enough, on Friday and Saturday the fields are open into the night as well.

The 'Remarkables' are set in a vast natural amphitheatre high in the rugged ranges above Lake Wakatipu. It has altitude and a long reliable season. Being on a north facing aspect, it's a sheltered sun trap. Nearly three quarters of its slopes are ideal for beginners and intermediate skiers. Powder bowls and off-piste extreme runs provide a challenging run for more advanced skiers. In September the field hosts the 'Remarkables Spring Festival', a riot of snow sports and crazy events.

Wanaka is a picturesque jewel among New Zealand's major ski destinations. Lake Wanaka runs away to the north of this lakeside town providing stunning views of Mt Aspiring National Park and the bush clad West Coast towards Haast Pass. The north situation of the lake also enables sunshine to flood into the town even in mid winter providing a warm environment for the 'non' or exhausted skier to enjoy more leisurely pursuits. Wanaka is developing rapidly but is often likened to Queenstown 20 years ago. With only a 1.5 hour drive from Queenstown airport, Wanaka offers a more chilled environment to enjoy après skiing and is also base for both Cardrona and the Treble Cone fields.

Treble Cone is about a 30 minute drive from Wanaka and has developed the reputation as an advanced skiers and snowboarders domain with great half pipes and lifts that reach the top of the mountain in six minutes. The 660m of vertical skiing over convoluted and changing terrain remains Treble Cone's greatest attribute and the regular north west snow throughout winter makes for awesome 'powder days'. In recent years New Zealand's second half pipe was put in place at Treble Cone to cater for the growing number of snowboarders. It should be noted that both the Norwegian Alpine ski team and the New Zealand freestyle team use Treble Cone as their base for training.

Cardrona

is approximately a 30 minute drive from Wanaka and is known as the family ski field offering three distinct ski areas each with it's own degree of difficulty. There are several purpose-built beginner runs which lead onto wide rolling trails for intermediates. If you think you are an expert you may wish to check out the Arcadia Chutes where the New Zealand Extreme Skiing competition is held each year. Cardrona runs several kilometres long but only has 390m vertical drop. A lot of emphasis has been placed on snowboarding and offers more in the way of specific runs for 'shredders' than most fields. New Zealand's first half pipe was built here in 1990 and the New Zealand Snowboard National Championships have been held at Cardrona for the past four years.

pure heaven!
Flights to Mt Potts Backcountry can be arranged from Queenstown, Christchurch or Tekapo.

The skiing in New Zealand is extensive and offers some of the best snow country south of the equator where magical views of glistening slopes and snow-capped peaks go on forever. There is something here for everyone.

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The South Island also boasts the largest number of club fields in the Southern Hemisphere which should not be overlooked by the demanding thrill-seeker. Whilst not offering the same standards of facilities as the larger commercial fields, they do however offer some of the best skiing around although it may be a little harder to get to. This extra effort can be what makes the skiing that much more rewarding. Some that are worth checking out are:

Craigieburn Valley – Craigieburn Range, Canterbury – rope tows only – Steepest ski area in NZ – NOT suitable for learners – Best chute skiing around – Outstanding native forest on field.

Temple Basin – Craigieburn Range, Canterbury – Most reliable snow in Canterbury – Lots of intermediate terrain – BEST SNOWBOARDING IN NZ – Awesome steeps – Special goods lift for your gear – 40-60 minute walk to ski slopes.

Ohau – Mount Cook Region – Fantastic views – great ski touring – Uncrowded and unpretentious Great value and great fun.

Amuri – Hamner Springs – Small area – great terrain
Brilliant for intermediates – Good constant fall line skiing – Snowboarders will enjoy.

Methven, situated 92kms from Christchurch is surrounded by the chequerboard fields of the Canterbury Plains, dwarfed by a magnificent backdrop of mountains. This once quiet, rural village and has a lot to offer snow lovers from within New Zealand and overseas. It is also the place to be if you wish to fish, play golf, jet boat, tramp or bike ride. Not all the excitement is focused on the great outdoors. Methven offers a lively nightlife with a variety of restaurants, bars and a nightclub.

The most noteworthy fields in this South Island region are **Mt Hutt** and **Mt Potts**.

Mount Hutt has developed the enviable reputation of being the first field to open each season. Within easy reach of Christchurch it has become a favourite destination for local skiers as well as hosting a number of international ski events each season which attract top class skiers from all over the world. Known for adrenaline-pumping Black Diamond runs on the South Face, powder-hounds just won't believe their luck.

Mount Potts Backcountry has been dubbed the new 'Spot X' by a visiting La Grave guide. Mt. Potts Backcountry is famous for being the highest snow field in the South Island and provides snow cat accessed powder skiing and snowboarding. Small guided groups are Heli-lifted from the lodge each morning and everyone on this extreme run is outfitted with an avalanche transceiver. Cat rides run all day, a picnic lunch and transport back down the mountain is all part of a days skiing. Being an extreme field for skiing and snowboarding you are dropped in at the highest point of 2254m and ski or board down to the top hut at 1750m –



Ice Cool
at the Top of the World!



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