



This page: It's easy to make like a pro on Cardrona's powdery slopes. Opposite page: Cardrona boasts 320 hectares of thrills (left) and chic hotel options like The Spire Queenstown (right).



MT RUAPEHU

Ski there until ::
27 OCTOBER
:: Turoa and Whakapapa
ski fields
+64 7 892 3738
www.mtruapehu.com

BED DOWN

:: Igloo Megaplex
+64 7 892 3738
www.mtruapehu.com
:: Miro Ridge
+64 6 385 8413
www.miroridge.co.nz
:: Powderhorn Chateau
+64 6 385 8888
www.powderhorn.co.nz

CHOW DOWN AND DRINK UP

:: The Projection Room
+64 6 385 8664
:: Turoa Lodge
+64 6 385 8274
www.turoaskilodge.co.nz



Play the field

THE POWDER MIGHT BE TURNING TO SLUDGE IN AUSTRALIA, BUT ACROSS THE TASMAN, IT'S FALLING AFRESH. **RACHAEL OAKES-ASH** SKIS THE STILL-SNOWY SLOPES OF NEW ZEALAND.

Snow addicts lament the first signs of spring, fearful the high of peak season and knee-deep snow is gone for another year. However, spring skiing in New Zealand can be the most fun you have all season, with blue-sky days, shorter lift queues, good snow and discounts on spring lift passes.

Across the Tasman, the New Zealand ski season has always started and ended later than it does in Australia. On the North Island, between Auckland and Wellington, lies Mt Ruapehu's generous ski fields, which have even been known to still be open for business at Christmas.

The South Island is split in two by the Southern Alps, a 500-kilometre mountain range of various altitudes, reaching heights of more than 3,000 metres. The terrain here is high enough and cold enough to retain the snow much longer than in Australia.

Whether schussing the commercial Southern Island's slopes around Cardrona, Treble Cone or Mount Hutt, there's enough to keep snow lovers extremely happy this September – and beyond. And while you can't always rely on Mother Nature, if history is anything to go by, there's no reason to pack up the skis and snowboards just yet. There's plenty of fun still to be had.

MT RUAPEHU

The dormant volcano of Mt Ruapehu, four hours' drive from Auckland or Wellington, is home to New Zealand's largest ski fields, with more than 1,050 hectares of skiable terrain across Turoa and Whakapapa.

Tolkien fans will remember Mt Ruapehu as Mordor in *Lord of the Rings*, but skiers and boarders know it for open bowls, glaciers and natural lava half pipes. ▷



CARDRONA

Ski there until :: 12 OCTOBER

+64 3 443 7411
www.cardrona.com

BED DOWN

:: Crowne Plaza Hotel
+64 3 441 0095
www.crowneplazaqueenstown.co.nz

:: The Dairy
+64 3 442 5164
www.thedairy.co.nz

:: The Spire Queenstown
+64 3 441 0004
www.thespirehotels.com

CHOW DOWN AND DRINK UP

:: Amisfield Wine Company
+64 3 442 0556
www.amisfield.co.nz

:: The Bunker
+64 3 441 8030
www.thebunker.co.nz

:: Captain's Pizzeria
+64 211 258 281
www.cardrona.com

:: The Cardrona Hotel
+64 3 443 8153
www.cardronahotel.co.nz



“ Spring skiing in New Zealand can be the most fun you have all season, with blue-sky days, shorter

On average, the mountain receives more snow than any other commercial field in the country and it's open longer, with the official 27 October closing date often extending into November. In 1992 and 2005, Mt Ruapehu was still open for skiing at Christmas.

Skiers and boarders often choose to stay in the quirky town of Ohakune – the gateway to Mt Ruapehu. Known as New Zealand's carrot capital, Ohakune has a giant fibreglass carrot welcoming visitors at its main road gateway. Thames Street hosts all the après-ski action, with cool cocktails and DJs at The Projection Room and fireside beers and pool at Turoa Lodge.

After a big night on the town, stumble back to the Powderhorn Chateau for some shut-eye. The luxury hotel has two restaurants, a bar, ski and board shop, and indoor heated pool. Alternatively, be hosted at Miro Ridge's intimate lodge. Or, for a more unusual way to spend the night, book into the mountain's purpose-built Igloo Megaplex, located at 2,290 metres above sea level.

CARDRONA

After a full day on the impeccably groomed slopes of Cardrona, riding the Federation International Ski (FIS) Super Pipe and dining on pizza at the slope-side

Captain's Pizzeria ski-in, ski-out cafe, it's time to hit the historic, and extremely popular, Cardrona Hotel.

Nestled in the Cardrona Valley, six hours' drive from Christchurch, the hotel is one of New Zealand's oldest, dating back to 1863. The back garden, complete with an open fire, fills with skiers and boarders swapping the day's war stories over a glass of mulled wine. Cardrona is like that – just one big, friendly family.

The area's 320 hectares of skiable terrain allows for an easy transition between beginner, intermediate and advanced levels, making it perfect for families to ski here. A kids' program and centre caters for children aged between three months and 14 years, while the Kids Festival – which runs from 28 September to 1 October – features obstacle courses, treasure hunts and the Mini Games. Ideal for keeping the little ones busy.

And for the second consecutive year, the resort is hosting the FIS Snowboard World Cup in September. This event sees the world's elite snowboard champions descending on the mountain to battle it out and increase their competition points on the world cup circuit.

You can stay in self-contained units on the mountain at Cardrona, but if you're not the type to hit the pillow as soon as the sun goes down, you can opt to bed down in



lift queues, good snow and discounts on spring lift passes. So there's plenty of fun still to be had. ”

Opposite page, left and right: Mt Ruapehu is home to New Zealand's largest ski fields. Above: Treble Cone's slopes cater for the young and young at heart (left), while Lake Wanaka's The Edgewater Resort is the ideal place to keep out of the cold (right).

Queenstown – 40 minutes' drive from Cardrona. If you're in the mood to splash out, you'll find your name scrawled all over the super-stylish hotel The Spire Queenstown. Or relax after a hard day's skiing at either The Dairy, a private boutique lodge and hotel, or the lakefront Crowne Plaza Hotel. From here you can take to Queenstown's cobbled back lanes to sip cocktails and indulge in fine dining at The Bunker, or rub shoulders with wine connoisseurs at Amisfield Wine Company.

TREBLE CONE

Ski there until :: 5 OCTOBER

+64 3 443 7443

www.treblecone.com

BED DOWN

:: Edgewater Resort

+64 3 443 8311

www.edgewater.co.nz

:: Oakridge Resort

+64 3 443 7707

www.oakridge.co.nz

:: Lime Tree Lodge

+64 3 443 7305

www.limetreelodge.co.nz

CHOW DOWN AND DRINK UP

:: Barluga

+64 3 443 5400

www.goodbars.co.nz

:: Botswana Butchery

+64 3 443 6745

www.goodbars.co.nz

:: Bullock Bar

+64 3 443 7148

:: The Cow

+64 3 443 4269

:: Speight's Ale House

+64 3 443 2920

TREBLE CONE

Standing tall and proud, Treble Cone overlooks the pristine waters of Lake Wanaka, three-and-a-half hours' drive from Dunedin airport. Stand atop this ski area, renowned for dry powder and plenty of it, and marvel at nature's vista. With more than 500 hectares of terrain for beginners, intermediate and advanced skiers, plus back country, knee-trembling chutes for the foolhardy or expert skier, Treble Cone delivers the goods. Strong intermediate to advanced skiers new to the area have the option of taking a guided tour of the groomed runs to familiarise themselves before hitting the slopes.

The resort town of Wanaka is a relaxed, upmarket village with friendly locals who are committed to their



MT HUTT
Ski there until :: 19 OCTOBER
 +64 3 302 8811
 www.nzski.com

BED DOWN
:: Ski Time
 +64 3 302 8398
 www.skitime.co.nz

:: Terrace Downs
 +64 3 318 6943
 www.terracedowns.co.nz

CHOW DOWN AND DRINK UP
:: The Blue Pub
 +64 3 302 8046
 www.thebluepub.co.nz

:: Forest Lodge
 +64 3 302 8116
 www.forestlodge.co.nz

:: The Last Post Cafe
 +64 3 302 8259

:: Steel-Worx
 +64 3 302 9900
 www.steel-worx.co.nz



Above: Mt Hutt's The Blue Pub is one of many places for après-ski delights (left). Gearing up for another day on Mt Hutt's slopes (right).

mountain. They get together every September for the Wanakafest event, when brave folk dress up in crazy attire only to throw themselves off a jetty into a freezing lake in the name of entertainment. Add degustation dining, drive-in movies, wheelie bin races and fireworks to the mix, and you have true spring madness.

Post Office Lane is the place to be seen off the slopes with casual dining at The Cow restaurant, fine dining at Botswana Butchery, cocktails at Barluga and jugs of beer at Bullock Bar and Speight's Ale House.

Lime Tree Lodge has hosted accommodation on a rural property 10 minutes' drive from Wanaka, while the Edgewater Resort offers lakeside relaxation with water and mountain views. Or you may like the Oakridge Resort, with its choice of nine heated swimming pools to ease those aching muscles after a day on the slopes.


MT HUTT

The last week of September and first week of October are legendary at Mt Hutt – 90 minutes' drive from Christchurch airport. The annual Mt Hutt Spring Festival from 27 September to 5 October is an action-

packed week of mayhem, with the highlight being the famous Peak to Pub event. Competitors start with a 100-metre dash to their skis or boards for a ride down the mountainside, before an 18-kilometre mountain bike ride, and finally a 10-kilometre run to The Blue Pub.

Half an hour's drive from Mt Hutt sits Methven, the base town for Mt Hutt's 365 hectares of skiable terrain. The Austrian ski team trains on the mountain each winter, in preparation for FIS World Cup held in Cardrona. After a day's training, you may find them at the Bavarian-style Forest Lodge, slapping backs with the bar's proprietor and former Austrian coach, Ian Mclean.

At Ski Time, you can sleep over in comfortable double rooms and enjoy the resort's sensational dining without breaking the bank. But folk looking for something swankier may prefer Terrace Downs, if only for the helicopter ride to the ski field the next day. The town has plenty of dining options too – head to Steel-Worx for a warming curry, The Last Post Cafe for gourmet à la carte dining or The Blue Pub to catch the rugby action.

So with this much snow still on the ground in New Zealand, who wants to stop skiing this September? 

BOOK YOUR FLIGHT :: Pacific Blue offers several convenient flights to Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin and Wellington. To book your flight, visit www.pacificblue.com.au or call 13 6789 (in Australia) or 0800 67 00 00 (in New Zealand). For all your travel insurance needs, from as little as \$5 per day, visit www.virginblue.com.au or call 1800 010 457 (in Australia).

BOOK A VEHICLE :: Hire some wheels to explore some of New Zealand's best ski areas. Europcar offers great deals on car hire around Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific. Pacific Blue Guests booking with Europcar will receive special discounted rates. Visit www.virginblue.com.au/travelextras or call 1300 13 67 37 (in Australia) to speak to a consultant.

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