

WHITE OUT

SKIING IS SOOOO GAY. ALL THAT SCHUSSING, CARVING AND GROOMING WOULD HAVE CARSON ON *QUEER EYE* SALIVATING WHILE THE MAGIC CARPET, TBAR AND SUPER G MAY WELL BE LIFTED FROM *THE L WORD*. BY **RACHAEL OAKES-ASH**.

Queenstown (pun intended) was the appropriate destination for Gay Ski Week 2004. Picture 200 gay men, six lesbians (ok, four committed and two straight girls having a 'moment') plus US born, Australian adopted DJ Kate Monroe with her partner, and you've got the contingent.

I arrived, camera in hand at the opening party ready to capture the festivities for *LOTL* only to find a pseudo Aussie hetero bbq underway at the Copthorne Hotel. Read, men in one corner, women in another. Sadly, the women were outnumbered. One would think a town boasting bottle shops called Beaver Liquor and fast food joints called Furgburger (the first g is silent) would not be hard pressed to find female on female bunnies of the ski variety. Six it was, or sex if you're a kiwi and the majority of chicks were. All the more men for straight old me – though I was having flashbacks to my fag hag days comparing skin pores with the boys at the Exchange.

Opening night set the tone for the week. It was going to be male heavy with loads of cocktails, hilarity and number changing. Neck tags were distributed so you could find your fellow gay ski weeker at all hours, just look for the black knotted band and wave as you sashay down the mountain. One select group of revellers took to coding their band; knotting it one way or another determined your sexual position preference. How Sydney, I thought as I left mine loose and dangling.

Queenstown is party time with 120 drinking establishments to get one well and truly piste. The licensed venues are brought to you by the letter "B" – Bar Up, Bardeaux, Bunker Bar and Boiler Room are four of the most popular holes in town. Gay Ski Week kept the theme going with Buffy and Bimbo, two tired old drags from Auckland. Selling NZ drag to a room full of Sydneyites is like selling coal to Newcastle. Don't bother. Do sell us snow, however, and lots of it. The kiwis know how to do powder, the contingent weren't happy the town was dry but they sure were loving the dry powdered slopes of Coronet Peak and Cardrona Ski resorts. Champagne piste picnics and sunny skies had guests bathing topless in the sunlight. With the best



GUS AND KATE

NZ ski season in twenty years, this was one happy gay week – or is that gay happy week? In the south island ski fields apparently fifty centimetres really means fifty centimetres.

I have never been one for group tours defined by age, gender or sexuality as I think they create stereotypes. Contiki was never my thing in the eighties and still isn't now, but this week changed my mind. From opening night there was a camaraderie amongst the group that crossed country of origin, age, sexuality and gender bias. The stunning alpine *Lord of the Rings* (pun not intended) lake setting helped the mood along.

Never short of friends to ski with, I picked myself up a group of four young Bris Vegas boys who henceforth became known as my Hobbit Boy Band. When not with them I was accompanied by three 'masculine' looking men I met on the plane who revered me with tales of their encounters as we journeyed up the chairlift. Mad keen skiers, these gay boys were focused. When one dislocated his shoulder he simply strapped it up and was skiing the next day, minus his poles and one arm. Thankfully his doctor provided industrial strength painkillers which we all could enjoy.

The mid-week treasure hunt had the back lanes of Queenstown filled with party goers searching for clues. The wine tour had the bus filled with booze and the White Out party DJ'd by Kate Monroe had the room filled with sweat as the week peaked on Friday night before the Kiwi blokes refilled the town for homophobic week.

Next year I would like to see more events for the chicks ... a health spa crawl, complimentary blow wave and mulled wine around a fire. Forget that, next year I would just like to see some more chicks.

For further info on Gay Ski Week 2005 please visit
www.gayskiweeknz.com



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