

Argentina

looks different with LAN

Fields of

Dreams



South Island Mt Hutt

The Canterbury Plains provide the backdrop for Mt Hutt. On a clear day, skiers can see as far as the Pacific Ocean. An hour's drive from Christchurch airport, facilities for beginners are first rate with magic carpets, a dedicated novice chairlift and a 1.2km novice run for practice. The recently installed Summit Six high-speed chairlift means more time spent on snow and less time on chair.

The Rakaia Saddle Chutes, on 40 hectares of terrain, provide challenging skiing for stronger skiers and boarders. If conditions are good, drop off down the North Peak to be picked up by helicopter and dropped back at the car park for around \$140.

mountainfacts

- 365 hectares (plus 40ha at Rakaia Saddle Chutes)
- 1403 metres – 2075 metres
- 25% beginner; 50% intermediate; 25% advanced

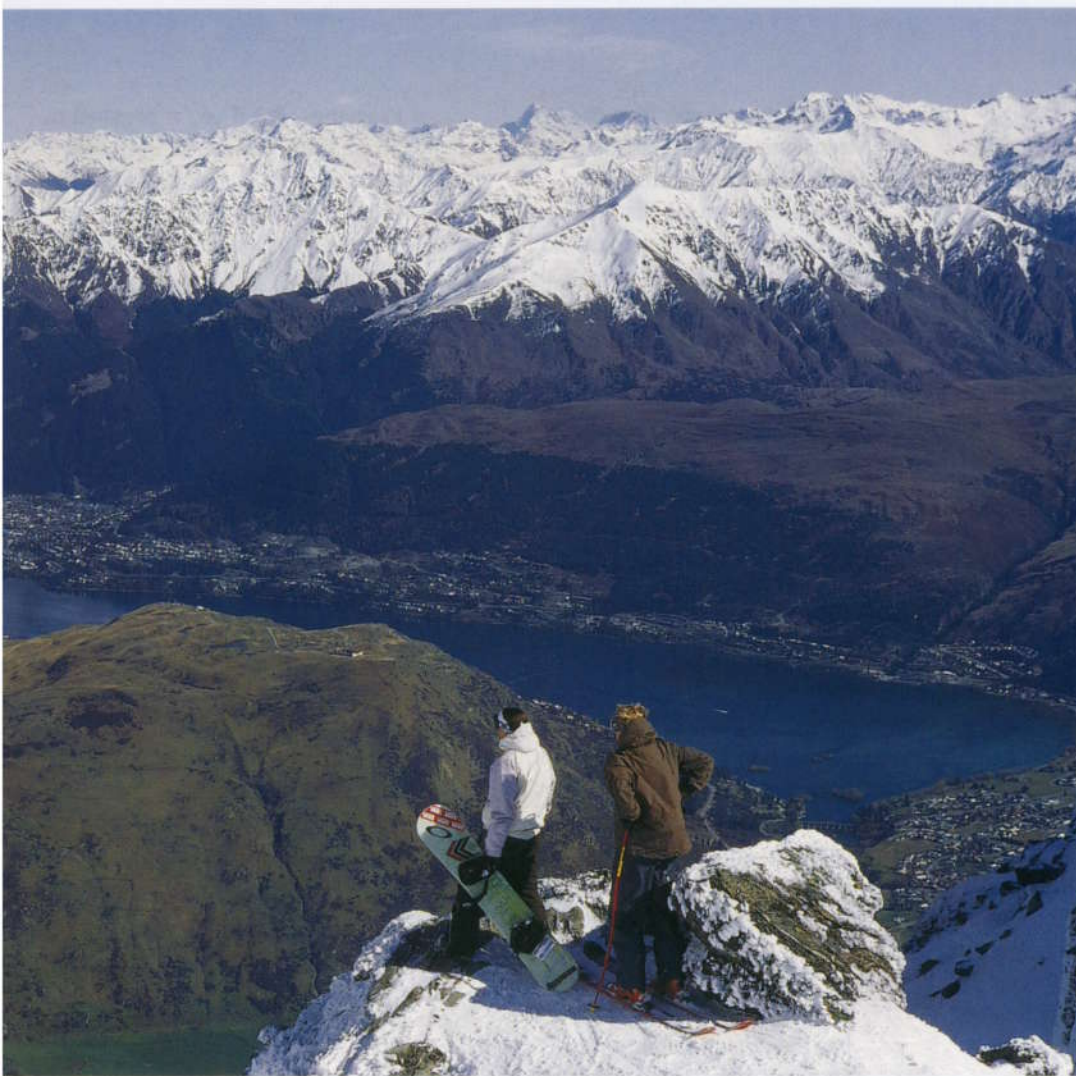
wheretostay

The nearest town is Methven, a sleepy village that comes alive each winter. Don't miss The Blue Pub – it's an icon and, even if you don't stay there, you should pop in for a beer. www.thebluepub.com

The Lodge on Chertsey is bright, clean, new and value-for-money in the centre of town. www.thelodgenz.com

Treble Cone

This reputable mountain boasts the best view for skiers in New Zealand,



Story by Rachael Oakes-Ash. Photography various.

Main: The remarkable view from The Remarkables
Left: The fields of Cardrona

New Zealand skiing offers plenty of virgin snow, natural bowls, chutes and wide-open basins in which to play. The views from the mountains alone will have you booking a return trip before you've taken one carved turn down your first trail. Rachael Oakes-Ash has this overview of New Zealand's ski fields.

with impressive vistas of Lake Wanaka. This is serious skier's territory, providing both beginner and intermediate runs to nurture and challenge as well as something extra for advanced skiers wanting some bite.

This year sees the introduction of three-day programs for intermediate skiers – with a money-back guarantee if they don't improve. Trust me, you will improve.

Snowmaking has increased by 50 per cent and the six-seater high-speed chairlift opened last year

gives snow-lovers access to even more terrain.

The on-mountain catering is some of the best in the country, and the views tend to lead to long lunch breaks before hitting the slopes again. Be early for the hot muffins.

Wanaka township sits at the base of Treble Cone and is a mellower version of Queenstown, with plenty of accommodation and wine-and-dine options. Thursday night's indoor curling at the Bullock Bar is a Kiwi take on a Canadian sport favourite. Hilarious fun.

mountainfacts

- 550 hectares
- 1255 metres – 2088 metres
- 10% beginner; 40% intermediate; 50% advanced

wheretostay

Di and Doug Purvis provide a home away from home on the edge of Lake Wanaka at the exclusive Bluewater Lodge. Do not leave without trying Di's Ginger Crunch, truly addictive. www.bluewaterwanaka.co.nz

Cardrona

Cardrona is ego skiing, with wide, velvet runs that make even a beginner feel like an Olympian. Challenging chutes can be found near Captain's chairlift, and intermediates will be in heaven with more than half the resort catering to blue-run skiers.

Midway between Queenstown and Wanaka, Cardrona is known for its natural dry snow, terrain park and awesome kids' program, providing childcare and activities as well as snow sport instruction.

The only true on-mountain accommodation available for ski tourists in New Zealand is here, offering four apartments with three bedrooms, three with two bedrooms and three studios. All are self-catered, with easy access to the mountain's noodle bar, bistro and restaurants.

Finish the day at Cardrona with a mulled wine by the outdoor fire at the Cardrona Hotel, which is down towards the bottom of the mountain and turn right.

Queenstown is the place to stay. It's also fantastic for anyone who

appreciates a break from the leg-trembling demands of skiing day after day. The nightlife of Queenstown equals that of any European or North American ski town, hospitality is first rate, ski instruction world standard and there are plenty of great places to stay.

mountainfacts

- 320 hectares
- 1670 metres – 1894 metres (highest lift point)
- 25% beginner; 55% intermediate; 20% advanced

wheretostay

Grand Mercure St Moritz, Queenstown. Sitting high on a hill overlooking Lake Wakatipu, the St Moritz is known for its lobby with open fire to warm away the frostbite, award-winning restaurant and European atmosphere. Many of its rooms are apartment style. www.mercurestmoritz.nz-hotels.com/

The Remarkables

Ah, the sunshine. The Remarkables has the prime location in the Southern Alps. Three bowls of snow sit facing the sun, which means sun-filled lunches on the deck complete with a funky band providing a soundtrack to the glorious view.

It's a relatively small ski area, just 220 hectares, and the longest groomed run is a mere 1.5

kilometres. But if you're prepared to hike a little, then you'll open up a plethora of rock-lined chutes and wide, ungroomed playfields. Snowboarders will love the long terrain park.

mountainfacts

- 220 hectares
- 30% beginner; 40% intermediate; 30% advanced
- 1620 metres – 1943 metres (highest lift point)

wheretostay

The Spire, Church Lane, Queenstown for hi-tech, hi-glam comfort. Ten suites, all with glass balconies sporting outdoor furniture on which to people-, mountain- or lake-watch. Degustation dining in the intimate restaurant is courtesy of Kiwi celeb chef Rex Morgan. www.thespirehotels.com

Coronet Peak

Get here early for first tracks or stay back late under the night-skiing lights and you'll witness the locals at play, as Coronet Peak is just a 30-minute drive from Queenstown and the closest ski field to town.

Snowmaking to keep extensive coverage on the hill is a serious art at Coronet. A high-speed, six-seater launched last season gives skiers access to a full range of ski and board terrain. This is a mountain for



Main: Coronet Peak

Above: Mt Hutt glows at night



travelfacts

gettingthere

Air New Zealand offers a special schedule during the ski season to help Australian skiers get to the NZ slopes. During the peak ski months Air New Zealand operates direct services into Queenstown from Sydney (three times a week), Brisbane (twice a week) and Melbourne (once a week). This is complemented with 33 direct flights a week into Christchurch from the East Coast and 79 flights a week into Auckland from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Cairns and Adelaide. Return airfares to Queenstown start from \$667 ex Sydney including taxes and surcharges, \$699 ex Melbourne, \$701 ex Brisbane, \$898 ex Adelaide and \$1,095 ex Perth.

For more information or bookings visit www.airnewzealand.com.au or call 13 24 76 (for flights) and 1300 365 525 (for holiday packages).

Value Tours, phone 1300 361 322 or visit www.valuetours.com.au

Ski Express, phone 1300 130 524 or visit www.skiexpress.com.au

furtherinformation

South Island

Mt Hutt - www.nzski.com/mthutt

Treble Cone - www.treblecone.co.nz

Cardrona - www.cardrona.co.nz

The Remarkables www.nzski.com/remarkables

Coronet Peak - www.nzski.com/coronet

North Island

Mt Ruapehu - www.mtruapehu.com

Tourism New Zealand - www.newzealand.com

For a copy of the 2006 Winter Holiday Planner for Mt Hutt, Coronet Peak and

The Remarkables, visit www.nzski.com

Main: Treble Cone

all levels, with easy transition between each.

For the brave, the Back Bowls are literally a drop-off behind the highest chairlift point. Freestyle expression sessions are on offer for those older than 10 and provide a safe environment in which to try out new moves.

mountainfacts

- 280 hectares
- 20% beginner; 45% intermediate; 35% advanced
- Highest point - 1649 metres

wheretostay

Kick back in the plush surrounds of The Sofitel, Queenstown. It's Queenstown's first international five-star hotel, with Juliet

balconies, boutique suites, day spa and central location.

www.sofitelqueenstown.com

North Island

Mt Ruapehu is New Zealand's largest active volcano and home to the country's two biggest ski areas, Whakapapa and Turoa.

Whakapapa

A strapping Scotsman known as Scottie, who married an Australian and settled in Taupo, volunteers as a mountain host at this ski field. Grab him if you can for a free half-day tour of all the runs. With 550 hectares to explore, you might want to set aside a few days.

Beginners have a totally

SNOW. SCENERY. EXHILARATION. WWW.NZSKI.COM

CORONET
Peak

Mt Hutt

RE
remarkables

For all your New Zealand winter holiday needs. Book online now @ www.nzski.com

separate ski area, which means nervous Nellies need not worry about big, bad black-runners knocking them down. The daring head out of bounds to the natural lava half-pipes and wide-open virgin territory. A blissful ski mountain experience.

mountainfacts

- 550 hectares
- 1630 metres – 2300 metres
- 25% beginners; 50% intermediate; 25% advanced

wheretostay

Bayview Chateau Tongariro is old-world charm with elegant luxury, chandeliers, casual and fine dining and views of the mountain. www.chateau.co.nz

Turoa

Here's where you'll find the longest run in New Zealand to test thigh muscles – four kilometres of it. It also boasts terrain parks and half-pipes for boarders and free skiers. It doesn't get the sun that Whakapapa does, but that can be a good thing, depending on conditions.

Ohakune is the closest village to Turoa and is the hub of Mt Ruapehu, with more après action than nearby Whakapapa. The Powderkeg is popular with the young and gets going later, while the Turoa Lodge and Powderhorn Chateau are more relaxed.

mountainfacts

- 500 hectares
- 1600 metres – 2322 metres
- 25% beginner; 50% intermediate; 25% advanced

wheretostay

Ruapehu Golf & Country Lodge is the home of one of New Zealand's premier golf pros, Geoff Pitman. Practise your swing in the lodge kitchen for some tips before a degustation dinner prepared by Vivienne Pitman. www.ruapehugolfodge.co.nz

Club ski fields

Clubs maintain these ski fields, where there's rarely anyone on the mountain and the cost of skiing is almost one-third of what you'll pay at more popular sites. But don't expect high-speed chairs ... it's rope tows and T-bars all the way. On-mountain lodging is in basic cabins or double rooms.

For powder-hounds chasing the remote and extreme, Canterbury's Craigieburn and Mt Olympus club fields will suit you best. Others to try are Temple Basin, Hanmer Springs, Broken River, Mt Cheeseman and Fox Peak.

In the North Island, Tukino (on the "wild" eastern side of Mt Ruapehu) and Manganui on Mt Taranaki are good club ski fields. •



Reflect in
Grand Style



A hotel distinguished by its timeless alpine interiors and impressive attention to detail, St Moritz is truly a hotel with a difference. Its dramatic location maximises lake and mountain views, and is just minutes walk from the vibrant township of Queenstown. Three-time NZ Tourism Award Winner, and holder of the prestigious Distinction Award, it is no wonder St Moritz is considered one of Queenstown's premier hotels.

St Moritz
Queenstown

Grand Mercure
Accorhotels

10-18 Brunswick Street Queenstown New Zealand
Tel 64 03 442 4990 Email H2074-sm@stmoritzmg.co.nz
mercure.co.nz accorhotels.co.nz