

GO FOR THE SNOW

There's at least **20 ski resorts in Australia and New Zealand** where you can enjoy this winter's snow – we pick the best for you.

Whether you're a snow novice or an expert, looking for a family holiday or want to strut your stuff, there's a resort to suit your needs. Depending on which side of the Australian Alps you live usually determines what resorts you're most likely to visit. But if distance is no barrier, there is a huge range of diverse mountain terrain just waiting to be explored locally and across the Tasman.

The more adventurous and those with more time on their hands may want to make the journey to explore New Zealand's rich offerings. Unlike in most parts of the world, on-mountain accommodation is rare in New Zealand, with most places to stay located in towns such as Queenstown, Wanaka, Methven, Lake Tekapo, Ohakune and National Park. The wonderful thing about skiing in New Zealand is you're not confined to one resort and are more inclined to try other ski fields, which can open up an array of possibilities.

So dust off your gear or shop for new kit and get ready for a bumper season on the white stuff.

Newbies

Beginners can find a ski school at almost any resort, since 99.9 percent of resorts cater for all levels. However, if all of your party are first-timers you may want to check out resorts that offer a greater amount of beginner terrain.

► **Falls Creek (VIC, Aus)** – With accommodation on the mountain to minimise travel time, newbies

will also appreciate not having to lug equipment too far. There's a staggering choice of 27 beginner runs so you won't have to learn or practice on just the one slope. falls creek.com.au

► **The Remarkables (South Island, NZ)** – Boasting some of NZ's best beginner terrain and learning facilities, this resort features a network of progressive terrain parks with wide, gentle slopes for beginners of all ages. All kids under 10 years ski for free, so it's a great place for kids to learn. A bonus is the new Base Lodge, which allows for direct access from the car park to a purpose-built beginner's slope. nzski.com/remarkables

Families

Many mountain resorts have turned their focus to families, which has resulted in an array of quality ski schools, crèches for children and alternative snow activities for those who don't ski, such as tubing and tobogganing. Look for package holidays that offer deals where kids ski, and sometimes get to stay and eat, for free.

► **Perisher Blue (NSW, Aus)** – The perfect all-rounder, catering for all skill levels and interests. The seven mountain peaks including the villages of Perisher Valley, Smiggin Holes, Guthega and Blue Cow Terminal offer a range of terrain including a super pipe, mini pipe, four terrain parks for freestyle skiing, a snow tube park and night skiing. US based Vail Resorts recently purchased Perisher, which is good news for "Freedom Pass" holders as it now allows access to world-class



resorts in Colorado, Utah and Nevada.

perisherblue.com.au

► **Mt Buller Alpine Resort (VIC, Aus)** – The closest big ski resort to Melbourne has the state's largest network of trails, as well as a snow tube park, tobogganing, a half pipe and rail park to keep bigger kids happy. The snow sport facilities for children 3-5yrs (skiers only) and 6-14yrs (skiers and boarders) are excellent.

mtbuller.com.au

► **Cardrona (South Island, NZ)** – A friendly atmosphere coupled with wide, groomed runs makes this arguably the best resort in the country for kids, with a ski area reserved just for children. There's a crèche for babies from three months of age, a separate purpose-built

area for those aged 3-5yrs and another area for 5-12yrs. cardrona.com

► **Mt Hutt (South Island, NZ)** – A firm family favourite and only an hour's drive from Christchurch, Mt Hutt has one of the longest vertical drops in the South Island. With a variety of terrain as well as some of the best natural snowfall in the country, all family members are well catered for. Nearby Methven has reasonably priced accommodation with some businesses offering free accommodation and meals to children under 10, as well as free ski and board rental. Kids under 10 also ski for free and get free transport up the mountain, which makes this one very affordable family break. nzski.com/mthutt

The Experts

Advanced skiers and boarders are spoilt for choice with several resorts offering challenging terrain for those who love to test their skills.

► **Thredbo (NSW, Aus)** – Thredbo is renowned for having Australia's longest and steepest ski runs and is favoured by the skilled. The swift lifts and excellent snowmaking facilities ensure that the trails are kept well groomed and the top to bottom skiing is available longer. This year, Thredbo has been announced as an international partner of Mountain Collective, allowing season pass holders access to some of the best North American ski resorts as well. thredbo.com.au

► **Mt Hotham (VIC, Aus)** – Offering more intermediate





and advanced skiing than other Victorian mountain resorts, Mt Hotham has crazy double black diamond extreme terrain and everything in between if you need a breather.

mthotham.com.au

► **Treble Cone (South Island, NZ)** – Treble Cone boasts some of the best advanced skiing in the country and is suitable for all members of the family who have mastered the skills.

treblecone.co.nz

► **Turoa (North Island, NZ)** – Enjoy natural half pipes and chutes and the wide, sweeping terrain of the Triangle and the Glacier backcountry area. With 25 black and black diamond runs and lots of

backcountry access, experts are sure to be impressed.

mtruapehu.com

► **Mt Cook Heliski Region (South Island, NZ)** – Heli-skiing and heli-boarding are an essential element of a ski trip to NZ. Find fresh tracks, leap off cliffs, negotiate gnarly chutes and basically only share the place with your fellow heli-skiers. It doesn't come cheap but who doesn't want to ski or board in the shadow of Mt Cook?

wildernessheli.co.nz

Fashionistas

If having the most fashionable gear and the latest ski kit that screams "look at me" is important, then you'll want a

trendy resort to match. These vibrant ski hubs offer cool digs, have a choice of excellent restaurants and access to a lively après ski scene and nightlife.

► **Thredbo (NSW, Aus)** – Whether it's a quiet drink or a big night out, vibrant Thredbo Village has a variety of pubs, cocktail bars and nightclubs for those who like to get out and be seen. The Alpine-style ski village wouldn't be out of place in Europe and offers a range of eateries, from fine dining to pub meals. For the quintessential Thredbo dining experience, take a moonlight Gondola ride up to The Eagles Nest restaurant at 600 metres above the village. thredbo.com.au

► **Coronet Peak (South Island, NZ)** – The road up to The Remarkables is far too windy to cope with after a night out in Queenstown. Better is the easy 20 minute drive to Coronet Peak which also doubles as a time saver when it comes to getting off the pistes and back to Queenstown in time for après ski. On weekends, stay for the night skiing and boarding, which includes the Park After Dark freestyle terrain park of boxes and jumps. Queenstown also doubles as adventure capital and party town, and if you can't find a restaurant, café, bar or nightclub to suit your taste or budget, you're not trying. nzski.com/coronet **FR**