

Robb Report

THE ASSOCIATION OF EXPERTS

AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

PEAK EXPERIENCES

Leap into Winter

SCOTTY JAMES TURNS
SNOWBOARDING
ON ITS HEAD

HEAVEN AND HELI-SKIING

CLASSICS IN THE MIST:
RALLY NIPPON

COLLECTABLE SPIRITS

A TAILOR OF SURVIVAL:
MARTIN GREENFIELD

MEN'S WINTER
FASHION FEATURE



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Plus: Down and dirty with truffles | Cruising Japan's west coast
Travel: Fiji, Koh Samui, Palm Springs | Investing in design



Snow worries this Winter

*Robb Report Australia & New Zealand's
definitive guide on where to eat, sleep and
hit the slopes when skiing locally*

WINTER ESCAPES

Skiing is life spelt right. Whether it's dancing on tables with champagne in hand at Aspen's famed Cloud Nine, flying with guides in helicopters to pristine slopes in Canada, or ski touring with one's family between arctic French chateau and back-country hut in the Alps, you know you're living life to the full.

As the sun sets on a stellar season in the Northern Hemisphere, we turn our attentions to the delights that Australia and New Zealand skiing have to offer. We may not have the 4000-metre peaks of Colorado or the 15-metre snowfalls of Japan, but the Australasian ski experience has a charm of its own.

Australia's snow gums are not found anywhere but the alpine regions of our sunburnt country. Skiers and boarders dart between the snow-laden eucalypts and slumber in ski-in/ski-out lodges akin to the European winter lifestyle. The ski hills of New Zealand, in turn, are above the tree line on mountains thrusting skyward from azure lakes, the valley floors dotted with resort towns where skiers and boarders traditionally stay.

Those with private jets can fly directly into Christchurch and Queenstown airports to access the ski hills nearby; in Australia, it's direct to Hotham Airport for the Victorian alps, or Cooma Airport for the New South Wales ski fields. Beats the alternatives, which are, respectively, a four-hour drive from Melbourne and a six-hour drive from Sydney.

This 2018 winter brings a plethora of new properties and experiences in both countries for those who like to be first with the skiing bragging rights. Try any of these and thank us later.

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The master suite at Mahu Whenua, with a view of Lake Wakatipu.

BED DOWN

Those who like their linen Frette, their in-house dining private and their car to be equipped with a driver, need only call on the private villa and residence concierge companies who have it all on speed dial. Try **Release Wanaka** (releasenz.com) and **Touch of Spice** (touchofspice.co.nz) for the finest selection of lakefront, mountain peak and urban retreat portfolios in the South Island.

New this season in Queenstown is the funky, purpose-built **QT Hotel** (qthotelsandresorts.com/queenstown), for urban hipsters who can't live without a mixologist in the hotel bar and a quirky gin martini set-up in every suite. Try the Remarkables King rooms for sweeping views of Lake Wakatipu.

In Australia, the team behind the uber-chic **Forty Nine Post Office Lane** (fortyninepostofficeclane.com.au) opened their doors in the Thredbo Valley for families wanting style and comfort in a Myson + Berkery architectural home that sleeps up to 12 people. It's close to both Thredbo and Perisher, so you can choose where to ski, according to the day's conditions.

The crew at **Astra Lodge** (astrafalls.creek.com.au) continue to set the bar for stylish and thoughtful alpine hospitality in the Australian ski fields, after launching their stunning, multi-million-dollar refurbishment last season (see our Passport on page 45). The lodge is the brainchild of philanthropists and creatives Roy Seaton and her husband Seumas Dawes of Pepper Financial Services Group fame, and boasts a 1200-bottle wine cellar with hand-selected vintages from European ski regions.

NZ Mahu Whenua - Kiwi for you need this

A mere 15 minutes from Wanaka but a world away from the masses, **Mahu Whenua** (mahuwhenua.co.nz) is the newest eco-lodge from South African Robert 'Mutt' Lange, songwriter and producer and former husband to Shania Twain. Mahu Whenua comprises four high country stations, with thousands of private hectares in which to play.

Helicopters can land on the lawn and whisk guests to fresh heli-ski tracks all day, returning for a hot tub in the lodge afterwards. Bed down in one of two self-contained Cottage Suites or two Homestead Suites with a host, a chef and access to the library, spa, pool, billiards, media room and more.

From NZ\$15,500 for exclusive use or NZ\$1850 a suite a night for two guests.



(from top) The Dacha's modern lounge; warming up at The Rees Residences; the private dining room at Blanket Bay

NZ Blankets of style

Blanket Bay (blanketbay.com) is already known as the exclusive luxe lodge on the lake, albeit only half an hour from Queenstown, favoured by the likes of Sir Ian McKellen and friends. Filled with grand libraries, leather-clad great rooms, wine caves and mammoth stone fireplaces, the lodge encourages guests to exhale with intuitive service, and lake and mountain vistas in which to lose one's self.

The team has gone one step further this winter with the launch of the Blanket Bay Villa. It's a four-bedroom residence with manicured lawns, twin hot tubs, four king suites centred around a grand lounge and bar – and a Hollywood backdrop, viewed from private terraces with fire pits. The villa comes with a security suite and personal staff if required.

From NZ\$11,000 for exclusive use.

NZ Lakeside living

Regulars to Queenstown will already know of the quiet-achieving lakeside resort **The Rees** (therees.co.nz), a selection of waterfront penthouses and the most impressive wine cellar on the South Island, accompanying the fine dining cuisine of True South dining room. This year the hotel has added five separate three-bedroom villas on the shores of Lake Wakatipu, each with a curated interior design. Every residence comes with a Travel Curator, a personal concierge-style butler to create bespoke experiences.

From NZ\$2250 per night.



NZ Shrine to design

The Dacha's impressive residence perches above Lake Wanaka with views across the lake to the Aspiring Range and nearby Treble Cone ski field (tauchefpic.co.nz). Eliska Lewis Architects are the name behind this shrine to architectural design, a fusion of cedar, schist, steel, glass and polished concrete. The living areas and master and main bedrooms have all been built to take in floor-to-ceiling views of the landscaped lawn, pool, hot tubs and floating verandah. The entire property sleeps 16.

Want even more privacy? The Banya is a one-bedroom, stylish pod tucked away within the grounds. Bed down at The Banya and feel like you're floating on the lake.

From NZ\$8000 per night.



WINTER ESCAPES

SKI DOWN

Australasia has its fair share of unique ski experiences for those bored of the chairlift. Take a snowmobile with Olympian Steve Lee to the peak of Mt McKay behind Falls Creek for fresh back-country lines among the Aussie gum trees ([facebook.com/skiingwithstevelee](https://www.facebook.com/skiingwithstevelee)), or perhaps take over the private snowcat-access ski field of Soho Basin (sohobasin.com) in New Zealand's Crown Range with 10 friends, a guide and a ski-in lunch on a sun deck provided by Amisfield Winery. Or try on these new ski adventures for size.

NZ Start your day the right way Short on time or keen to host a business meeting with a difference? Step into a private charter helicopter at 8:00am with four friends, colleagues or family members and head to the stunning terrain of Minaret Station (minaretstation.com) near Wanaka, New Zealand. After some early morning heli-skiing (heli-skiing.com), you can be back home for lunch with 10 to 12 runs under your belt, or stay on for a remote fine dining lunch at Minaret's Alpine Lodge Mountain Kitchen for farm-to-table cuisine plucked straight from the station itself.

First Tracks, up to five guests NZ\$5500. Private day charter with lunch, up to five guests, NZ\$11,195.

NZ Step inside a snow dome Adventure Consultants in Wanaka (adventureconsultants.com) has launched a new First Tracks Heli Camp for those who like their skiing intrepid. Helicopter in to the McKerrow Range that overlooks Lake Wanaka and Lake Hawea on a two-, three- or four-day ski tour camp and start skinning uphill to earn your downhill turns with an experienced mountain guide. You'll bed down in purpose-built snow domes under the night skies with a separate communal snow dome serving as a lodge. **From NZ\$1740 per person for two days with one guide and two guests.**



(right) Minaret Station; (opposite, from top) cross-country skiing and First Tracks near the Snow Domes, Wanaka

The Whakapapa ski area on Mt Ruapehu



NZ Ski the Tasman

Take a helicopter from Queenstown or Wanaka to Mt Cook, then a fixed-wing plane over New Zealand's highest peaks and blue lakes to land on the Tasman Glacier (skithetasman.co.nz). Ski down with a guide, exploring ice caves and glacial features, dine on rustic gourmet fare for lunch, then take the plane back up and do it all again for the afternoon.

From NZ\$975 per person, helicopter transfer extra.

NZ Lodgings like no other

Those in the know already acknowledge **Huka Lodge** (hukalodge.co.nz) as the Waikato River-side retreat favoured by high profile Fortune 500s looking for privacy and seclusion, along with intuitive service and attention to detail. The lodge is offering guests a snow experience like no other this season. The Snow Time package features a riverside suite for two, candlelit degustation dining in the Main Lodge and picnic hampers for days on the slopes at New Zealand's largest ski fields, on the active volcano of Mt Ruapehu. You'll have a private return vehicle transfer through the Tongariro National Park, complementary beanies and scarves, and the lush service of Huka Lodge upon return for *après* with style. Upgrade to the Owners Cottage because you can.

The Snow Time package features a riverside suite for two, candlelit degustation dining in the Main Lodge and picnic hampers for days on the slopes at New Zealand's largest ski fields

WINTER ESCAPES

CHOW DOWN

AUS Shut the Gate in Berridale (shutthegate.com.au) on the road to the New South Wales ski fields has been stirring up a cellar-door storm since opening in 2016. With wines from their vineyard in the Clare Valley in South Australia, owners Richard Woods and Rassa Fabian are keen skiers who moved closer to the mountains, thankfully bringing their love of wine and food with them.

Still in New South Wales, try Birchwood cafe in Jindabyne (birchwoodcafe.com.au) for millennial hues and geometric lines, and a brunch menu filled with colour, flavour and avocado – it's made for Instagram. Jodie Evans from the Evans wine family is the name behind The Crackenback Farm Restaurant (crackenback.com) that employs the best local alpine produce with a French farmhouse-style menu that will make you feel part of the family.

In Victoria, Astra Lodge welcomes Australian chef Toby Burrows from London's Elystan Street restaurant and protégé of two-Michelin-star chef owner, Phil Howard. Burrows will be manning the pans at Astra for two weeks in mid-winter. Check the website (astrafullacreek.com.au) for dates.

NZ Across the ditch in New Zealand, wine aficionados still head to True South at The Rees (therees.co.nz) in Queenstown for a fine selection of Bordeaux wines, or to Amisfield Winery (amisfield.co.nz) for languid lunches on sun-filled terraces with chef's plates and matching wines.

Clean eaters love Bespoke Kitchen (bespokekitchen.co.nz) for green juices, raw desserts and micro herb brunches, and Yonder (yonderqt.co.nz) for experimental dining with a healthy twist and the best house-made pastries in town.

Akarua Wines and Kitchen by Artisan (akaruaandartisan.co.nz) is the Arrowtown locals' favourite for coey pre-skiing breakfasts filled with pancake stacks, hollandaise goodness and brulée bananas, then post-slope lunches of local cheese, lamb and salmon (not always in that order).

Over the Crown Range in the coveted postcode of Wanaka sits the new Ode Bistro (odewanaka.com), billed as a 'conscious dining bistro' filled with organic, ethically sourced and sustainable ingredients in a three-course or eight-course, trust-the-chef-style fine dining menu. Book ahead. This place is so hot right now.



(clockwise, from above) The Amisfield Winery, and its Fojoja palate cleanser, 'conscious dining' at Ode Bistro; fondue on the menu at Astra Lodge





DOWN TIME

When your thighs just can't take the ski burn in Queenstown and Wanaka any more, head to New Zealand's nearby Fiordland by helicopter for some soothing respite among UNESCO World Heritage waters.

NZ Dusky sound

The team behind the lush Minaret Station has created a Dusky Sound experience like no other (heliskinz.com). Take a helicopter from Minaret Station Alpine Lodge (minaretstation.com) or your abode in Queenstown or Wanaka to the most isolated part of the Fiordland. Land on a private floating helipad and transfer onto Minaret's day boat for a day of cray fishing, wildlife watching and exploration of the shoreline first found by Captain Cook in 1773.

Private charter for up to five guests: NZ\$13,950.

NZ Milford Sound

Milford Sound comes alive in winter with snow-capped peaks, raging waterfalls and misty mornings. There is no better way to see this iconic destination than from a boat. Land your private chopper on the catamaran *Fiordland Jewel's* top deck (fiordlanddiscovery.co.nz). Bed down in The Governor's Cabin on your personal deck or slip into the hot tub under the stars as you cruise by soaring cliffs, pods of dolphins and deep green waters. Dine on Michelin-inspired cuisine and share the vessel with 18 friends on a private charter.

Exclusive use from NZ\$14,400. RR

Explore the Fiordland either by helicopter (above), or at a more leisurely pace aboard the *Fiordland Jewel*



Photo (top): Gemita Duhmeit