

Leisure/Time out...

Take a Winter break...

Amanda Pearson

Lets face it, most of us are probably pretty tired of having to plan our weekend entertainment around the chilly air, the frost and fog and don't forget the good old Melbourne rain. Well don't fret guys as YL have discovered a great way to escape the boredom and depression of what may seem to be an endless winter.

Some of us may have pre conceived ideas about the sport of SKIING..... "it consists of wearing a couple of thousand dollars' worth of clothes and equipment, and driving for many hours in order to stand around at a bar and get drunk." While there may be some truth in the above comment, fleeing to the Victorian snowfields only involves an easy drive from Melbourne and it can be a relatively inexpensive and fun winter retreat. This short guide provides a summary of Victoria's most popular ski fields and of course, important tips that you as a visitor should consider when heading up to any of Victoria's alpine areas.

Mt Buller

FAST FACTS

Skiable area: 400ha
No. of lifts: 26. This provides skiers with over 75km of runs of various grades.
Lift capacity per hour: 38500
Terrain Breakdown: 25% beginner; 45% intermediate; 25% advanced; 5% expert
Closest access towns: Merrijig; Mansfield
Getting there by car from Melbourne: 3 hours.
Distance 237km.

Skiers are permitted to ski at night on the Bourke Street run.

The season closes (weather permitting) mid September.

Accommodation: There are 15 lodges located on the mountain. Off Mountain Accommodation: Alzburg Inn Resort, Mansfield; Mansfield Valley Motor Inn; Pinnacle Valley Resort. Please contact Mt Buller Central Reservation 1800 039 049 (free call) for information on prices and availability.

Falls Creek

FAST FACTS

Skiable area: 451ha
No. of lifts: 21
Lift capacity per hour: 25,414
Terrain breakdown: 17% beginner; 53% intermediate; 30% advanced.
Closest access towns: Mt Beauty; Bright
Getting there by car from Melbourne: 5 Hours.
Distance 356km.

Skiers are permitted to ski at night on the Baby Pomas run as well as new trails in the Sun Valley area and a new street course for snowboarders near Scotts chairlift.

This resort has the biggest snow making system in Victoria and there is often plenty of snow right through until October.

Accommodation: There are 24 lodges on the mountain. Off Mountain Accommodation: Bogong Village, Ph: 57 5433300; Carver's Log Cabins, Ph: 57 544863; Kiewa Country Holiday Flats, Ph 57 544004; Snow View Holiday Units, Ph: 57 544733. Please call 1800 35 45 55 (free call) for bookings and information on accomodation packages.

Leisure/Time out...

Mt Hotham

FAST FACTS

Skiable area: 96 ha

No. of Lifts: 8

Lift capacity per hour: 11,200

Terrain breakdown: 21% beginner; 38% intermediate; 41% advanced.

Closest access towns: Omeo, Harrietville, Bright.

Getting there by car from Melbourne: 4 hours.

Distance 356km.

At 1740 metres this is Victoria's highest alpine resort and the snow is reliable, long lasting and POWDER! Victoria's longest fall line run of 370 metres from the top of the Summit to the valley floor below.

Accommodation: 21 Ski lodges on the mountain and various types of accommodation in nearby towns. Please call 1800 35 45 55 (free call) for bookings and information on accommodation packages.

Lake Mountain

FAST FACTS

This is Australia's most popular cross country skiing resort and the third most popular cross country area in the world. That's right, the world!

Skiable area: 2400ha

Trail: 29km meandering through snow gum territory. The trails are groomed daily and are generally at least 6m wide and regularly patrolled.

Closest access towns: Marysville; Narbethong; Buxton

Getting there by car from Melbourne: 1.5 hours.

Distance 120km. Moroondah Highway to Healesville, Narbethong and through Marysville.

There is a cross-country ski school, ski hire, kiosk and modern shelter.

IMPORTANT TIPS:

ANTI-FREEZE

If your driving to the snow remember to use anti-freeze compound in your radiator.

WHERE TO SKI

Trail marking symbols are used at all resorts to indicate the degree of challenge. A green circle means the easiest, a blue square means more difficult and a black diamond signifies most difficult. (*Remember, No Guts, No Glory! Ed.*)

IF YOU GET LOST

Stay where you are and take shelter behind trees or rocks, or dig a snow cave. Stand your crossed skis where they can be seen by approaching searchers.

TAKE SKI LESSONS

Statistics prove that the more experienced skiers have less accidents and the best way to gain that experience is to take lessons. Unfortunately many skiers regard ski lessons as dull and slow. Nothing could be further from the truth as lessons introduce you in a safe and friendly manner to the art of skiing. Some resorts even offer a free lesson for first timers! You'll have fun, learn to ski and meet people of similar skiing ability.

RENT EQUIPMENT AT FIRST

When your learning it's best to rent equipment as you will quickly graduate to more advanced boots and skis as you become more proficient.

CUTTING YOUR COSTS

There are a number of ways to cut the costs of your skiing trip. For example, ski during low season and take advantage of multi-day tickets and accommodation packages.

GEARING UP

You will find that a lot of the clothing you need for the snow will already be in your wardrobe.

Clothing made of wool is best, or synthetic fibres that have insulating properties similar to wool. Do not wear jeans, cotton or nylon clothing as they are poor insulators when wet. The real secret to dressing for the snow is to dress in layers under your waterproof jacket and pants. The layers keep you warm by trapping air between them.

It's especially important to cover up your head and ears because more than 50% of your body heat can escape through your head.

Checklist:

- Waterproof pants or overalls
- Waterproof jacket
- Ski goggles and sunglasses
- Waterproof ski gloves or mittens
- Woollen hat
- Woollen jumper
- Warm underclothing
- Sunscreen
- Lip Balm
- Scarf and Hat
- Skivvy or T-Shirts
- Light or medium weight wool socks
- Warm, insulated, waterproof boots with tread for after skiing
- Day pack - containing whistle, waterproof matches in plastic bag, some high energy food and if you have one, a mobile phone in a plastic bag (keep the batteries warm) so if you get lost you will be able to ring 000.

Given the freezing Melbourne weather, the conditions on all mountains couldn't be better, so what are you waiting for?