



ANTARCTICA

WHERE: The earth's southernmost continent and home to the South Pole, Antarctica.

WHY: Skiing in Antarctica isn't about thigh-deep powder and lunchtime lattes. It is about going where few people have gone before, putting in the hard yards and earning your turns. Most folk head to Vinson Massif, found in the Ellsworth Mountains simply because it's the highest peak in Antarctica at 4,892 metres. Ski any of the mountain ranges in Antarctica and you'll find wildlife aplenty – at least once you reach the ocean edge – in the form of seals, penguins and their multitude of friends.

If you want to try before you buy then check out the film *Australis: An Antarctic*

Ski Odyssey. Australian big mountain skier Andrea Binning and her partner Stian Hagen made the trek to Antarctica, with their good mate Chris Davenport at the helm and a film crew in tow.

www.antarcticskiodysey.com

WHEN: November is ideal – but the best time to go is when your guide does, because without him or her you won't be going anywhere.

HOW: Andes Cross offer a 13-day ski tour cruise from Ushuaia, Argentina, to Antarctica, 8–20 November 2011. Contact Andes Cross for pricing.

www.andescross.com

Qantas fly direct from Sydney to Buenos Aires with connecting flights with LAN or Aerolineas Argentinas to Ushuaia.

www.qantas.com.au

image: doug workman



CHILE

WHERE: Deep in the heart of the Andes sits Portillo, a one-stop ski lodge lost in time, a mere two hours from Santiago.

WHY: Because a Latino attitude makes skiing all the more enjoyable. Think pisco sours at Tio Bob's, the mid-mountain lodge, and disco dancing with hundreds of holiday skiers in the basement at the giant yellow ski lodge.

Did we mention the skiing? If you don't mind a minor hike you will get to some of the best Chile powder you can find, untracked and untouched. Storms here can dump two metres in 48 hours, burying the unique 'slingshot' rope tows that carry four skiers along one bar at a time.

Add low-flying condors, a frozen lake and one giant outdoor hot tub.

WHEN: July to September for the southern winter. The annual Ski With The Superstars camp is held in August, where cashed-up skiers can make tracks with the world's best extreme skiers including Chris Davenport, Chris Anthony, Mike Douglas, Ingrid Backstrom and Wendy Fisher.

HOW: Fly direct with Qantas to Santiago from Sydney and shuttle the two hours along switchback roads to Portillo.

www.qantas.com.au

A week in Portillo starts from A\$2,329 including accommodation, four meals a day and lift passes. **www.valuetours.com.au**

image: ski portillo, chile

GREENLAND

WHERE: Head north, way north, then keep going. Soon you'll hit Greenland, bordering the North American Canadian Arctic Archipelago, smack bang in the middle of the Arctic and Atlantic oceans.

WHY: Drifting icebergs, aqua-blue ice caves, mountains that jut straight from the ocean, wandering polar bears, multi-coloured fishing villages, ancient cultures and Danish influence – and that's before the skiing. Now start up the helicopter engine and load up the skis.

The wild uninhabited terrain of Greenland's mountain ranges offer 2,000 metre runs straight down to the ocean edge, where the helicopter awaits to take you back up to do it all again.

Hotels are scarce, so most heli-ski operators provide an authentic local experience with clients bedding down at rented houses in local communities, with home cooked meals at the end of the day.

When it comes to boasting rights, it doesn't get better.

WHEN: March and April are the best times for long days and easy spring virgin snow.

HOW: Kulusuk in Greenland is a 90-minute flight from Iceland. Qantas flies from Sydney to London, with connecting flights to Reykjavik with Icelandair and then on to Kulusuk with Air Iceland.

www.qantas.com.au

www.icelandair.com

www.airiceland.is

A week heli-skiing including accommodation and some meals is A\$12,570 www.greenlandheli.com

image: kevin boekholt

INDIA

WHERE: High in the Himalaya Range on the border of Kashmir and India sits the 'ski town' of Gulmarg.

WHY: There's intrepid and then there's Gulmarg. First there's the altitude: it's home to the world's highest operating cable car, which takes skiers to 3,747 metres. A 'short' hike will take them to 4,000 metres for some serious thigh-burning skiing back down. Then there's the gunfire. Expect soldiers bearing arms – this is the war-torn region of Kashmir after all.

Don't expect electricity, hot water or a reliable internet connection to be readily available. Skiing in Gulmarg is unpredictable and avalanche-prone, but when it's on it is seriously on, with open powder bowls, tree skiing and long, long runs perfect for advanced to expert skiers.

WHEN: Mid-January to the end of February is the ideal time. Snow tends to arrive later rather than earlier in the winter.

HOW: Qantas flies via Singapore or Bangkok to Mumbai and Delhi. Take a connecting local flight to Srinagar where security is super tight. A two-hour taxi ride will get you up to Gulmarg.

www.qantas.com.au

Mt Hotham ski patroller, Bill Barker, runs two-week guided ski tours to Gulmarg. From A\$3,900. www.billstrips.com

image: bill strips



IRAN

WHERE: In the Alborz mountain range of Iran in the Middle East.

WHY: If the A\$24 a day lift passes don't get you, the uncrowded off-piste skiing will.

Sure, the ski resorts of Shemshak and Dizin are not as vast or extensive as those of Switzerland, the après scene involves shots of chai tea rather than schnapps (alcohol is forbidden) and the chairlifts are circa 1970, but you'll impress your dinner party guests when next comparing holiday destinations.

Expect to see some gender segregation with lift lines divided into male and

female, but overall Iran's ski resorts attract a more liberal local scene where women wear the latest ski gear and men pull up in fancy cars. Dizin is the larger of the two, and the resort sits at 2,650 metres with a top chairlift altitude of 3,600 metres, but Shemshak is steeper and more suited to advanced skiers.

WHEN: The northern winter months of December to March are best.

HOW: The Alborz mountains are a two-hour drive from Tehran. Emirates Airline flies from Sydney to Tehran via Dubai with daily connections. www.emirates.com 

DIFFERENT STROKES 5 UNUSUAL SNOW DESTINATIONS

72

ANTARCTICA

73

CHILE

74

GREENLAND

75

INDIA

76

IRAN

What places do you think of when planning a snow holiday abroad? France? Canada? Japan? New Zealand? Granted, these are some of the world's top spots to ski and snowboard, but if you want to stand out from the crowd then have a go at these lesser-known slopes.

text: rachael oakes-ash