

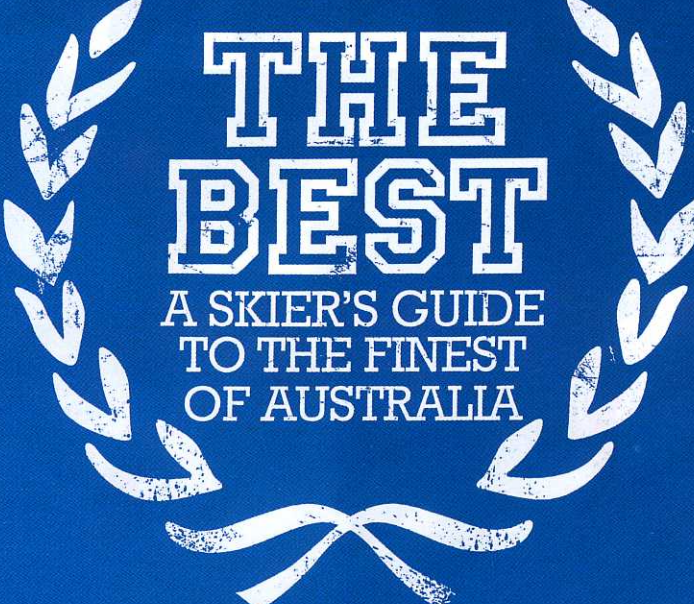


For too long Australia's tall poppies were harvested for a cheap opiate high. The time has come to celebrate excellence. The Powderhound team put every important facet of the Australian ski industry under the microscope: powder, cruisers, park, pipe, bars, clubs, restaurants and accommodation. Our impartial investigation shows you the goods – not necessarily the most expensive or the newest, just the best.

- ED



JORDAN HOUGHTON 180S A DEATH GAP IN THE KOSCIUSZKO  
NATIONAL PARK. THE ADVANTAGE OF LANDING SWITCH IS  
THAT, IF HE COMES UP SHORT, HE WON'T SEE IT COMING  
PHOTO: ALEX GUZMAN



# THE BEST

A SKIER'S GUIDE  
TO THE FINEST  
OF AUSTRALIA







BEN MURPHY DROPS A TECHNICAL DOUBLE STAGER AT THREDBO SEQUENCE: ALEX GUZ

## OVERVIEW BY RACHEL OAKES-ASH

Like most skiers, I am loyal to the mountain where I first laid my bruised tush. For me that mountain is Thredbo. We've been through a lot together, Thredbo and I. Thredbo knows my body intimately, and for every time I've fallen down the mountain has thrown me back up again.

My instructor's name was Nerida and she had her own bag of secret tricks, fast tracking me from Friday Flat to the ridgeline of Funnel Web within a week. Like a duckling I'd ski behind concentrating on hip up the hill, jaw over the bottom ski, hands driving a bus. So focused I failed to notice what we'd just skied. At the bottom she'd say "look up" and it was only then I realised I was skiing by looking at where I had come.

To ski is to enter a community. Those who do it bond instantly at the word "snow" – a bit like drug addicts with the word "charlie". It's a great leveller. Who cares how big your bank balance is or where you went to school when you're making your way down a mountain. Most of us care about just getting down alive.

To ski Australia is to enter a niche community. We join together when folks from around the world baulk and laugh. Skiing? In Australia? They guffaw. It's then

## BEST WINING AND DINING:

### BREAKFAST:

Zirky's, Mt Hotham [www.zirkys.com.au](http://www.zirkys.com.au)  
If you're lucky Zirky himself will tell you of the time he cheated Hitler's Youth and won a medal for cross-country running as a child. If you're not, you'll dine alone on cinnamon porridge and waffles with rhubarb.

### HANGOVER SOAK-UP:

Sundance Bakery, Jindabyne  
You won't be up in time for breakfast so inhale a pie come lunchtime. Stand in line, these pies are hot.

### BEST COFFEE:

Huski, Falls Creek [www.fvfalls.com.au](http://www.fvfalls.com.au)  
Pro snowboarder Cheyne Southwell doubles as a barista. The beans aren't bad either.

### ON MOUNTAIN:

Guthega Pub (AKA Guthega Alpine Hotel)  
It's a trek, but worth it for the mountain views and winter beers, not always in that order.

### DRESS UPS:

Credo, Thredbo [www.credo.com.au](http://www.credo.com.au)  
Haute cuisine always tastes good, especially if someone else is paying. Wash behind your ears before you step in here, it's all swanky wine and customers in diamonds.

## POWDER

When is it going to snow? Watch the weather in Adelaide. When it is cold and raining in the city of churches you have 24-48 hours to make it to one of these secret powder stashes.

### FALLS CREEK:

The unnamed mini bowls between Cabbage Patch and Après Vous. Sometimes it's sloppy, but if the temperature is right this is the best on the mountain.

### MT BULLER:

Duck into the trees skier's right of the Wombat chair. Head ever deeper into the snow gums for these south-facing freshies; often the last place tracked out on the mountain.

### MT HOTHAM:

The aptly named Mary's Slide and Avalanche Gully. Avalanches are nothing to boast about, but they do indicate a glutinous accumulation of snow, worthy of further investigation.

### THREDBO:

The Bluff is a consistently loaded powder drift (up to seven metres deep!) with a good pitch and plenty of options. Stanley's, outside the resort boundary, is also gold.

### PERISHER BLUE:

Kamikaze is a proven powder haven. Out of bounds try Mt Blue Cow summit to the Guthega road.

AUSTRALIA. 2004. NUFF SAID  
PHOTO: PAUL WOOD





we spout statistics, defend our fields and show them our war wounds before beating them down the mountain. When you can ski the varied conditions of Oz you can ski anywhere.

Who saved the 22 skiers buried in an avalanche on Valentine's Day in Japan? Five Thredbo ski patrollers on holiday. Who trained the Gulmarg ski patrol in the Himalayan ski hills of India? Hotham ski patrol. How many Winter Olympic medals do we have? Six, and the only Southern Hemisphere nation to win Gold. Who was the first non European to win a World Cup ski race? Malcolm Milne, an Australian. Not that we're boasting. Well, OK, maybe a little.

Skiers from Down Under know there's nothing better than leaving before sunup

to drive to their "local" hill. Sydney skiers look forward to the Big Merino at Goulburn, because we're almost halfway there. Those in the know stop at the Goulburn Greengrocer on Clifford for breakfast in a fruit shop with a cycle shop out the back. There's not another decent coffee until The Lot in Cooma, the only place for espresso to get you across the driving line in the last hour to the snow.

Melburnians drop into Brown Brothers winery for a selection of dessert wines too delicious to save until after dinner. The wine tasting only ends when the designated driver gets bored and the car boot is heavy with flagons of port.

Skiers in Australia know the painted stripe in green or blue on a dead wombat's back means it's been checked for orphaned

babies. We know that just because the sea is far away doesn't mean our cars won't rust. There's more salt on these roads than Lake Eyre. We also know that metho in the windscreen washer bottle will prevent the water from freezing overnight.

I learnt early on at Mt Hotham in Victoria that just because the village sits on the top of the hill doesn't mean you can ski down whenever you want. Go too early and you'll be waiting in the cold for the lifts to open down the bottom. Sit at Swindlers Café, however, watch the lift cable start to move, stay seated, watch it until the first person comes up the chair then get up. You'll still get fresh, if not first tracks, and you won't freeze for it.

The real inside tip is ski race days when they open the Heavenly area for race training at 7.30am. The average skier in the village can't see the lifts, but if you ski down the hill and across to Heavenly they'll let you up the lift with the race crew and you'll have a good hour with the mountain to yourself.

I risk my life when telling you this, as the

locals will beat me, so I'll have to wear darker ski goggles this season, but there's a run at Falls Creek that has good vertical and not a soul around. Head up International poma early and traverse skier's right, maintaining your elevation out to the next knoll. Take a local with you, just don't tell them I sent you. They'll know the way down.

It's one long snow-gum run to Road 24, a track used to get to Mt McKay in summer. Make a call before you ski down so your mates are waiting with the engine running at the bottom or stick your thumb out for a ride back into town. Remember it's in the sun, so the snow can go off by the arvo and that's never pretty.

We're a naturally rivalrous bunch, we Aussies, swapping insults between States, convinced our own ski area is the best. I can't give a blue ribbon to any of them, they've all got their strengths and their hidden secrets. At the end of the day all that matters is if your face hurts from smiling. A smile is a ski secret you want the whole world to see, it means you got the best stuff.



SOMETIMES IT'S GREAT TO SKI IN A POSSE. SOMETIMES - AS RICHIE ADAMS KNOWS - THERE IS MAGIC IN SOLITUDE PHOTO: ANDREW BARNES

### CRUISING

Sometimes you want to let your skis run, your legs rest a little and enjoy one of the best things about skiing - moving fast with very little effort. Here's where to do it...

#### SUPERTRAIL, THREDBO

Why? Six kilometres of powder pockets and ice, wide to narrow, empty to crowded. You gotta be good to do it all in one hit.

#### THE RIDGE, NO NONSENSE AND LEAP OF FAITH, MT HOTHAM.

An open pitch to begin then dodge the snow gums.

#### FOX TRAIL, FALLS CREEK

Sure it's a kids' run, but it's an enchanted forest of mini jumps, bumps and fun to indulge the Andrea Binning within.

#### FEDERATION, MT BULLER

When it's on, it's on but only mid-week. It's steep enough without having to avoid people.

#### NORTH PERISHER T BAR (SKIER'S LEFT), PERISHER BLUE

Pick your line and keep it to yourself.

### SHHH, DON'T TELL ANYONE:

#### SAVE SOME \$\$\$ THIS SEASON

- Save yourself \$27 per person on oversnow transport at Falls Creek by packing your gear into a backpack not a suitcase. Park at the Gully Day Car Park and take the gully chair up then walk or ski to your lodging from there.
- Join the Thredbo Club for \$44 and get \$13 off each daily lift pass.
- A five-day Monday to Friday lift pass at Perisher means if you arrive early on the Sunday, you can ski that afternoon from 1pm for free.
- The Mt Beauty Primary School holds a second-hand ski sale on the Saturday of the Queen's Birthday long weekend every year. Get in early, there's some real bargains in a town filled with ski industry residents.

### BEST ACCOMMODATION

#### HUSKI, FALLS CREEK

Uber cool and filled with the famous. A produce store, Endota Spa and cowhides in every apartment. Studios from \$550 for two nights. [www.huski.com.au](http://www.huski.com.au)

#### JULIAN'S LODGE, FALLS CREEK

Retro-inspired lodge with indoor heated pool and a communal lounge worthy of key parties. From \$100 a night. [www.julianslodge.com.au](http://www.julianslodge.com.au)

#### SKI IN SKI OUT, THREDBO

Drop your Crackenback Supertrail address into every conversation. If you have to ask the \$\$\$ you can't stay here. [www.skiinskiout.com.au](http://www.skiinskiout.com.au)

#### GRIMUS, MT BULLER

Yodel for your morning waffles at this Tyrolean treat. From \$240 for a double room with breakfast. [www.pensiongrimus.com.au](http://www.pensiongrimus.com.au)

#### SHEPPARTON ALPINE CLUB, MT HOTHAM

You can't go past a ski club for value for money. Sure you gotta cook your own meals and share a room, but this is affordable skiing at its finest. From \$50 per person. [www.sac.asn.au](http://www.sac.asn.au)

