

Off the beaten piste:
not for beginners

FAB FIVE SKICATIONS

VIC: RIDE A SNOWMOBILE WITH AN OLYMPIAN TO PRISTINE POWDER

Steven Lee knows how to ski. He should: he represented Australia in the Winter Olympics in 1984, 88 and 92, and won the World Cup Super-G title in Furano, Japan, in 85. Steven grew up in the Victorian alpine resort of Falls Creek and now guides small groups of skiers and snowboarders into the back country of Mt McKay. Hop on the snowmobile trailer or ride pillion with Steven and hit the untracked snow – no showoffy 4-year-olds to dodge here. Ski down, get picked up again and repeat. No lift queues, no groomed runs, just Mother Nature, Steven and you. Could it get any better? \$129 per person for a half-day session. www.fallscreek.com.au

Win winter-holiday bragging rights with an unforgettable adrenalin-pumping alpine experience right here in Australasia

NZ: FLY TO THE TOP THEN SKI DOWN TASMAN GLACIER

Deep in the heart of Mt Cook National Park in the South Island, Tasman Glacier is a 27km network of turquoise ice caves, spectacular crevasses and rolling fields of the freshest white powder. Only accessible by ski plane (unless you fancy hiking in with crampons and ice axes), it is possible to ski this glacier in a day. Professional guides take skiers only (sorry, snowboarders!) on a relaxed day of super-cruising on runs up to 10km long. Skiers must be at least at intermediate level to enjoy this unique experience. A gourmet lunch is included. Priced from \$625 per person. www.skithetasman.co.nz

NZ: GO CAT-SKIING IN THE SOUTHERN ALPS

Donald and Barbara Bray are quintessential Kiwi farmers with a difference. Come winter time, they convert their 2000-hectare farm into a cat-skiing operation. Picture a snowgrooming machine (with giant caterpillar chains) with a cabin on the back for skiers and boarders to sit in to ride out to the good slopes. Donald drives, a professional guide takes you on the runs and Barbara makes soup, gourmet rolls and the best chocolate-chip cookies for lunch. Charter only, \$4845 for 10 people. www.alpurepeaks.co.nz

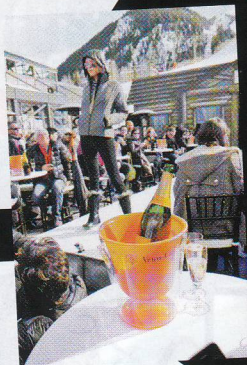
NZ: HAIL A HELICOPTER TO UNTOUCHED POWDER

Strap your skis in and take to the skies over the Southern Alps. The good news is you don't have to be an extreme skier or James Bond type to indulge in heli-skiing and snowboarding. Rule of thumb? If you can ski your entire favourite resort then you can heli-ski. Be warned, once you've tasted the thrill of making your own tracks in untouched powder snow, resort-style trails just won't cut it anymore. From \$565 for the day. www.southernlakesheliski.co.nz

NSW: CARVE UP THE BACK COUNTRY AT CHARLOTTE PASS

Australia's boutique ski field, Charlotte Pass, is the highest ski village in the country. Accessed by over-snow transport from Perisher, Charlotte Pass is pedestrian-only with just a handful of lodges (the social hub is the Kosciuszko Chalet Hotel). Try your hand at skiing the back country with guides who can take you off-piste and into the wilderness. Tours are graded from a half-day introduction to a full day of skiing the ruggedly scenic Main Range. The diehards can choose a Ski The Steeps tour.

You must be a confident skier with a good level of fitness. Tours from \$129. www.charlottepass.com.au



NOT FORGETTING THE APRÈS-SKI

Aspen's famous Clicquot On The Snow event is coming to Thredbo this winter. Clink crystal filled with the bubbly stuff from July 22-25. There will be champagne picnics hosted by the Denman Hotel, degustation dinners and après ski at the Thredbo Alpine Hotel, and celebrity races. www.thredbo.com.au

