

# Ski BY numbers



Want to ski with like-minded people of a similar ability?

Australian ski resorts have got it covered with specialised courses and

events. STORY: RACHAEL OAKES-ASH

**T**hrow a group of strangers together and watch the group divisions form dependent on age, background, identity, economic standing and the like. Throw a group of strangers onto a ski slope and you have a level playing field, especially if they're first timers on the slopes. There's nothing like sliding down the baby slopes on your butt as a common denominator.

## FEATURE Ski schools, Australia

**IMAGES:** 1 All types of snow action is available at Falls Creek. 2 Girl power hitting the slopes at Falls Creek. 3 Carving up the slopes at Falls Creek. 4 The snow covered village of Mt Buller.



Nevertheless, as humans we just can't help ourselves and the ski resorts of Australia have taken note offering specialised events and activities where like can ski with like. No more mixing it with the wrong crowd and who knows, you might get lucky. With categories like female, lawyer, over thirty, men in uniform the resort activity sheets start to read like a personal column.

Not sure which category you fall into? Read on and book your ski trip accordingly.

### SKI LIKE A GIRL

No good looking beefcakes on skis here. Just a friendly all-female environment where women learn from women. Apparently we ski

different to men, something to do with the centre of gravity or the hips.

Thredbo resort in New South Wales offers three- and five-day WHIP (Women's High Intensity Program) programs that focus on technique over muscle power with five hours of skiing and tuition daily. Groups are small, no more than seven, and you get a free WHIP t-shirt and a booze up at the end, plus video analysis so you can see how you look in your new ski suit. Five days cost \$964 (August 7, 14 and 21).

Perisher Blue ski resort has a similar three-day program, called The Women's Program and is strictly for intermediate and advanced skiers. Three-day coaching

and mountain pass \$624 (August 8 and 22).

Victorian resort Falls Creek has the original Mim Sodergren Women's Program from July 31 to August 4 (\$980) and a three-day program from August 5 to 7 (\$599). Individual and group assessment, video analysis, après beverages, a celebratory dinner and loads of girl-on-girl encouragement.

Next door at Mount Hotham, L'Oreal Paris have got in on the action with Visible Results a five-day female fest of women's only ski coaching, massages, beauty treatments and pamper packs. \$799 includes lift pass welcome breakfast, massage, beauty session and pamper pack (July 24 to 28).

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Mount Buller has the Ski Mag Rossignol Ladies Day on July 30 or 31. Try the latest demo skis, join other lady skiers for a bubbly lunch, partake in a ski workshop and rummage the Ella Bache goodie bag at the end of the day all for \$99.

**TEEN EXTREME**

Free skiing/boarding and extreme skiing/boarding are the buzzwords of the snowfields, especially for the new generation of snow sports enthusiasts, the teenagers.

Falls Creek offers Sean White and Dale Begg Smith wannabes season-long coaching programs with Australia's top freeride athletes with their Air & Style

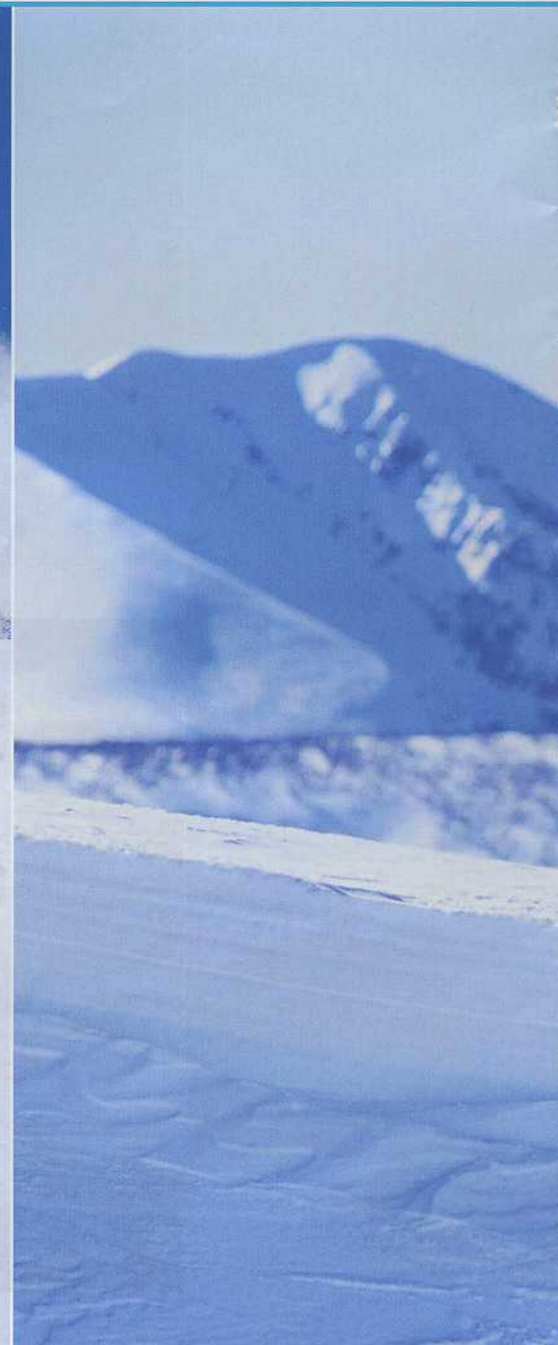
program. Utilising the resort's World Class Terrain Park, skiers and riders develop skills with both season-long weekend courses or a 12-day school holiday program including mogul sessions with a former Olympian.

Mount Buller has a similar season-long training program with XL Riders for seven to 17-year-old snowboarders. Team jackets are provided with a DVD of the season's antics. Boarders ride with the same team throughout the season, working on skills every weekend from June 17 to September 24 including two full weeks during school holidays. Price (\$2,260) includes season pass and all coaching.

An all-girls teenage squad of 13 to 18 year olds called Teen Evolution is new in 2006 at Mount Buller. The same training premise of season-long program and dates as the XL Riders, Teen Evolution gives girls the opportunity to train with the same ski coach for the season. Lunch is provided and the various squads all break bread together. It costs \$2,260.

New South Wales kids from six to 14 with a wicked ski or boarding ability hit the Team Black Diamond workshops at Perisher Blue. One-, two-, three- and five-day programs on offer from \$115 to \$489. Club Freeride at Thredbo has a similar program from half a day (\$70) to seven days (\$677).

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**IMAGES:** 5 Falls Creek has a number of ski improvement courses on offer for all skill levels. 6 Group skiing at Mt Hotham. 7 Off slope entertainment at Mt Hotham. (Photos supplied by Falls Creek and Mt Hotham)

## ACT YOUR AGE

**Thirty somethings:** Thredbo Masters Program runs a five-day training camp from July 24 to wash away grey areas (pun intended) of your ski-race techniques. Program includes 7am race training and video analysis. \$964 will get you daily training and all day lift passes for five days.

**Fifty is the new 40:** Falls Creek caters for the more mature with their Over 50s Ski Week. A week of dinners, cocktails and the like for those on the right side of 50. Senior instructors take small groups through four hours of instruction a day for a five-day program. Cost is \$760. For dates and further

info call 1800 45 35 25.

**Kidults:** Mount Hotham has daily Afternoon Extreme Sessions, specialised two-hour clinics for boarders in the park and skiers in the off piste. Classes are limited to eight and participants must be of a high intermediate standard. Standard group lesson cost applies (\$49) and only open to adults to try their gnarley skills out of harm's way.

## DISABLED

Falls Creek leads the field in Adaptive Skiing for the disabled with private and group lessons utilising specialised equipment.

Discounts available on lift passes at Falls Creek for members of the Disabled Skiing Association. Michael Milton wannabes be sure to book ahead.

## LAWYERS

Lawyers are usually found at the bar at Thredbo on Saturday, August 6 around sundown. Not content with a simple schuss down the powder, they hurl themselves in competition from slalom to masters in a bid to beat each other down. Don't race the divorce lawyers; they'll be splitting hairs at the finish. A weekend sponsored by Rossignol, Volvo and the like means loads of



loot up for the taking and ends in black tie ball. For information visit [www.lawski.com.au](http://www.lawski.com.au).

### MOVING ON UP

Perisher's Mountain Improvement camp helps the confident advanced intermediate break through the powder ceiling to the next level. A three-day program with daily coaching and video analysis, participants must be a level five or above skier. Running on August 8, 15 and 22 for three days each at a cost of \$624.

Thredbo's SLAP program is all about Skiing Like A Professional. For levels five to seven wanting to pump it up in a small

group environment. Daily instruction, video analysis, on mountain technical presentations on August 7, 14 and 21 at a cost of \$964. Power Slappers is for Level eight skiers looking for the next challenge. It involves intensive skiing over five days on challenging and vertical terrain to test your skill. Same dates, same price.

### NIGHT PERSON?

Ski under the stars Wednesday and Saturdays at Mount Hotham and Mount Buller and Falls Creek in Victoria, Australia. New South Wales resorts offer the same on Saturday nights at Thredbo, Tuesdays and Saturdays at Perisher Blue. ■



## TRAVELtips

**GETTING THERE:** Regional Express (Rex phone 13 17 13) flies from Sydney to Cooma and transfers are available from the airport to Thredbo, Jindabyne and Perisher. Rex also flies from both Sydney and Melbourne to Albury and transfers are available from the Albury airport to Falls Creek and Mount Hotham. Mount Buller is a three-hour drive from Melbourne airport.

**BOOKINGS:** All bookings and information for any of the specialised programs can be found at the resort websites. NSW – Thredbo Alpine Resort visit [www.thredbo.com.au](http://www.thredbo.com.au); Perisher Blue visit [www.perisherblue.com.au](http://www.perisherblue.com.au). Victoria – Mount Buller visit [www.mtbuller.com.au](http://www.mtbuller.com.au); Mount Hotham visit [www.hotham.com.au](http://www.hotham.com.au); Falls Creek visit [www.falls creek.com.au](http://www.falls creek.com.au).

**WHERE TO STAY:** Cashed up style meisters head to Thredbo's only official five-star properties On The Run, and Ski In Ski Out visit [www.skiinskiout.com.au](http://www.skiinskiout.com.au) or phone (02) 6457 7030. Perisher princesses hit Perisher Valley Hotel for on-snow accommodation phone (02) 6459 4455. Huski Lodge in Falls Creek for in-house Endota Spa and Zeth Romanis deli style café visit [www.huski.com.au](http://www.huski.com.au) or phone 1300 65 22 60. Schnapps and Sambuca apartments at Mount Hotham offer self-contained accommodation visit [www.hotham.com.au](http://www.hotham.com.au) or phone 1800 468 426. Grand Mercure Mount Buller Chalet is the prime spot to stay at Mount Buller. Located on Bourke Street ski run with a choice of restaurants and open fires visit [www.mtbullerchalet.com.au](http://www.mtbullerchalet.com.au) or phone 1800 810 200.