

AUSTRALIAN ALPINE CLUB

Welcome to Season 2008

AUSTRALIAN ALPINE CLUB
newsletter

Season 2008

After a late start, the 2008 Australian winter season has begun in earnest. Alpine resorts have all lifts and runs open at the end of July with cold temperatures and plenty more snow expected.

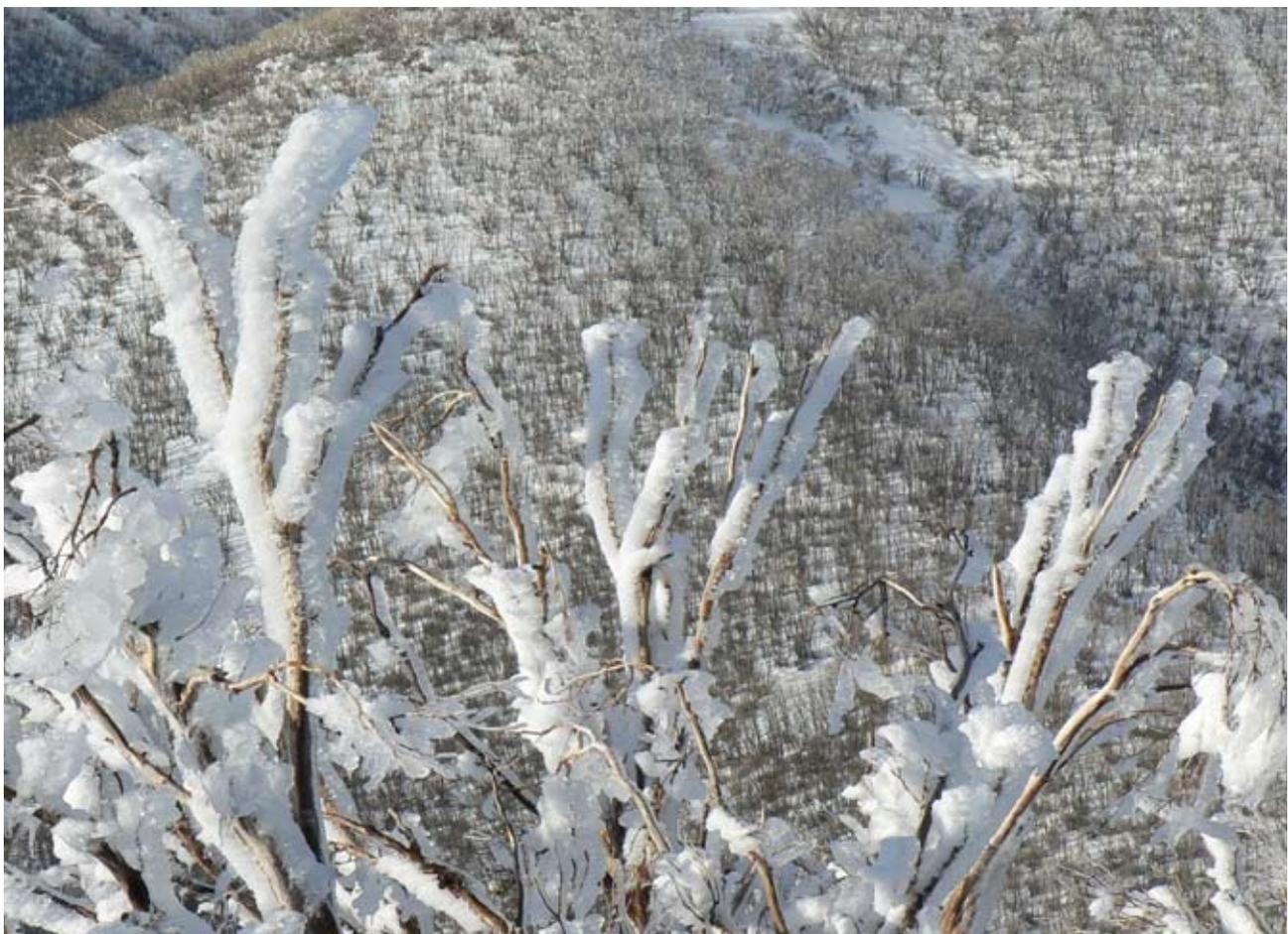


Photo by John Harding

website: www.australialpineclub.com

Is three enough?

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has announced that it will not oppose the acquisition by Arctic Capital Limited of the Falls Creek and Mt Hotham ski lift assets currently held by Living and Leisure Australia. Arctic Capital's parent company, Consolidated Press Holdings, operates the Perisher Blue resort in NSW.

The ACCC considered that the relevant market was likely to include mainland Australian skiing destinations, acknowledging though that the five major Australian ski resorts were likely to be much closer substitutes for each other than smaller Australian resorts. Intrastate destinations were also likely to be closer substitutes for each other than interstate destinations.

The ACCC considered that close, intrastate competitors to the merged entity (Mt Buller and Thredbo) would remain post-merger. The ACCC also noted that overseas destinations, particularly New Zealand, as well as the smaller Australian destinations would be competitors to the merged entity. The ACCC considered that these alternatives would provide a small degree of competition to the merged entity.

Alpine resort	Area (Ha)	Ski lifts	Price*
Perisher Blue	1,245	49	\$98
Thredbo	480	14	\$97
Falls Creek	458	15	\$94
Mt Buller	263	25	\$94
Mt Hotham	320	13	\$94
Charlotte Pass	50	5	\$90
Mt Selwyn	45	12	\$70
Mt Baw Baw	30	7	\$71

* one day adult lift pass, 2008

Acquisition of the Falls Creek and Mt Hotham ski lifts by Arctic Capital Limited will deliver control of 73 per cent of the skiable terrain and two-thirds of the total ski lifts at the five major alpine resorts in Australia. On the assumption that the acquisition proceeds, the key test will be whether the increased ownership concentration, with just three different companies operating at the five major resorts, will lead to a greater or an even less competitive Australian ski lift industry.

Where nutcrackers rule

While many Australians are familiar with the major resorts across 'The Ditch' such as Coronet Peak and Mt Hutt, a common lament is that the accommodation is below the snowline and involves an often challenging bus or car trip up the mountain each day.

Less well known are the ten club ski fields in New Zealand where the lodges are on the mountain and the clubs operate the ski lifts. Most of the club skifields have nutcracker rope tows and some of them have T-bars. The Kiwi club ski fields recall an earlier era in Australia when the Ski Tourers Association, ancestor to the Australian Alpine Club, operated its own ski tows in the Snowy Mountains. There are two club ski fields on the North Island., Manganui on Mt Taranaki and Tukino on Mt Ruapehu. The other eight club ski fields are on the South Island, most of them – Broken River, Craigieburn, Fox Peak, Hammer Springs, Mt Cheeseman, Mt Olympus and Temple Basin- are in the Canterbury area (near Christchurch), and Rainbow which is near Nelson.

Importantly, you don't have to be a member in order to enjoy the New Zealand club ski fields.

The clubs offer "uncrowded slopes, minimal lift queues, a huge variety of big alpine terrain for all levels, genuine Kiwi hospitality and a chilled out atmosphere." Overnight packages including 2 day lift passes, meals and one night's accommodation range from A\$120 to A\$160 per adult. There are also multi-day packages that cost between A\$480 to A\$640 for a week.

The Canterbury Snowsports Association will welcome Australian Alpine Club members at their club ski fields. Further information is available through their website (<http://www.skisouth.org.nz/>).

2008 AAC office-bearers

President:	Ian Farrow
Vice-President:	Margaret Campbell
Secretary:	Mike Gregson
Treasurer:	Richard Tress

Niseko



David Owen (Perisher) celebrates his birthday in Niseko.

Craig Tansley writing in the 'Sunday Herald Sun' (25 May 2008) praised Niseko:

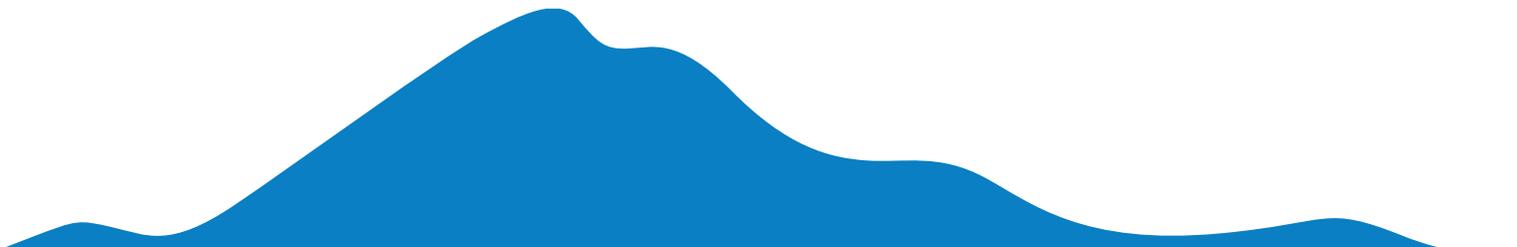
You haven't ridden true powder snow until you've ridden Hokkaido powder -- it's as simple as that. Utah may claim it has the best powder on earth, but only this small Japanese island, which lies in the path of epic storms from neighbouring Siberia that cross the Sea of Japan, can rightfully boast more than 14m a year of the driest, softest snow you could see.

The best way to access Hokkaido powder is to visit Australia's favourite overseas ski destination, Niseko. It's a culture shock for most Australians to experience life in a Japanese ski resort, but the rising popularity of Niseko over the past five years means most signs, and menus, are in English.

But, most importantly, the snow is unmistakably Japanese.

If you visit Niseko between late December and mid-February you're almost guaranteed thick powder snow. It's not unusual for Niseko to receive 50cm of snow a night, every night, throughout the peak period. On every run you'll sink to your knees and beyond. And if you prefer the trees get ready to sink to your waist. It's that kind of powder skiing that has led to the evolution of Niseko. Only discovered by Australian skiers en masse in the winter of 2003-04, Niseko used to be a diehard snowboarder's well-kept secret.

The AAC Niseko lodge had the largest percentage of reciprocal members visiting of any AAC project last year. Reciprocal bookings for members of other Australian Alpine Club projects (and Southern Alps Ski Club) open for 2008/09 on 1 August. See www.aacniseko.com for details.



Members' Survey

We want to find out what you want from the Australian Alpine Club. Please help us to help you by completing the AAC National Members' Survey (AAC Falls Creek members should note that this is different to their recent survey about lodge amenities). The Survey can be accessed at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=919celHnhgrJ1UZGN9tmpg_3d_3d or more easily through the www.australialpineclub.com website.



Anton renovating

The Anton lodge at Mt Hotham is planning a major lodge renovation of all its bedrooms, as agreed at its Annual General Meeting held in May. Renovations are planned to commence next Summer.

AAC National Races

The Australian Alpine Club inter-club races will be hosted by Perisher in 2008. AAC Falls Creek is defending its grip on the Roslyn Wesche trophy, with strong challenges expected from Anton and from Perisher on its home ground. The race will take place on the Rollercoaster on Saturday 6 September.

Southern Alps Ski Club

The Southern Alps Ski Club (SASC) welcomes Australian Alpine Club members in its lodges at Charlotte Pass, Kahane lodge in Perisher Valley and Christiania lodge at Thredbo. Details are available through their website at www.sasc-aus.com.

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Melissa Cameron (Falls Creek) on course.

Colour Newsletters

The expense of colour printing this newsletter would be prohibitive but the colour versions copies can be viewed or downloaded from www.australialpineclub.com.