

Skiing the top of New Zealand

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New Zealand is not only rugby, sheep's or breathtaking scenery. It is also an island, South Hemisphere, opposite seasons, 30 hours flight from France and 10 hours difference between the two countries. When flying to the Southern Hemisphere in hopes of getting quality footage, odds are not usually in your favour. It is a long shot the trip will be productive. However, spending a lot of money, meeting people you'll remember for the rest of your life, and having hell fun is a sure bet.

While ski season is definitely over here in France, other areas are just now getting prepared for their winter season. Places such as New Zealand have quite long ski seasons and are opening their ski resorts sometime in June and running through early October. The reputation of New Zealand in the freeride field has already been made. This country is the place to go for those who like off-piste, nice faces and helisking. The Southern Alps are big. So big in fact that unbelievably they are larger than the French, Italian, Swiss and Austrian Alps combined! With the stunning Southern Alps running virtually the entire length of the South Island, the skiing possibilities are limitless. Add to this the opportunity to ski areas previously inaccessible until the advent of helicopters, and you have the recipe for an extraordinary ski experience to say the least! New Zealand's south island is an international class reputation as a ski destination originates, and it is here where you will undoubtedly experience skier's heaven. The environment has been protected giving you clean mountains. It is like coming on a pilgrimage when you go to New Zealand. There is no stress, no big hole in your wallet as it is also cheaper than most of the French or American resorts. In fact, it has a traditional philosophy which has started to disappear everywhere else.

The two skiing destinations on the South Island which come immediately to mind are Queenstown, which calls itself the



Adventure Capital of the World, and Christchurch with its major international airport.

Base yourself in Queenstown is a good idea because ski slopes are so close to Queenstown you can stay in comfortable accommodations there and easily travel to your choice of slopes daily. But be warned: book your accommodation well in advance or you'll miss out on a warm bed in the city.

The nearby slopes are Coronet Peak and The Remarkables which are suitable for all levels of skiers and snowboarders. If you wanted to go farther a field you can take the shuttle from Queenstown to Cardrona or drive to Treble Cone which has the longest vertical rise in the Southern Lakes district in the South Island.

If staying in Christchurch, you can take shuttle buses or tour coaches to the Canterbury Plains ski fields. The eastern side of the Southern Alps is littered with ski club fields sporting a handful of rope tows, simple lifts and a varied collection of private ski lodges. They're open to all-comers, but some are only accessible by four-wheel-drive vehicles, others have a long walk in, and ski schools are almost unheard of. The best known slopes in the area are in Mt Hutt. Other skiing areas in this region of New Zealand are Porter Heights, Temple Basin, Craigieburn Valley, Brecken River, Mt Olympus, Mt Lyford and Mt Cheesman. You won't find the massive on-site resorts of the scale found in North America and Europe; skiers commute daily to the slopes from nearby ski towns.

At weekends and school holidays the tow queues at the major fields can become slightly long, and the ideal solution is heliskiing. Between Christchurch and Queenstown, you can take a helicopter to Mt Cook and ski the Tasman Glacier, skiing is by ski plane and a winter only operation. New Zealand is one of the best heliskiing regions in the world whereas it is unfortunately forbidden in France, despite huge number of areas (Northern Alps, Southern Alps, Pyrenees, Jura...). Heliskiing is definitely the ultimate snow experience for a skier, and you don't have to be an expert to enjoy it.

There are hundreds of identified runs in New Zealand for the heli-skiing enthusiast and the main Heliskiing locations are



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Methven, Mount Cook, Queenstown and Wanaka. The township of Methven is located an hours drive from Christchurch International Airport which provides quick access to Mount Hutt Ski Area and Methven Heliskiing. The Methven region provides spectacular heliskiing amongst towering peaks and glaciers in the heart of the Southern Alps. Another major place is the Mount Cook National Park. The magnificent Tasman Glacier provides a stunning 12km run amidst the towering peaks and ice falls of New Zealand's highest alpine region. The Murchison Glacier provides additional wilderness heliskiing. Wilderness Heliskiing at Mount Cook offers some of the worlds most spectacular and challenging terrain for both skiers and snowboarders.


But the main New Zealand heliskiing areas are close to the resorts of Wanaka and Queenstown, where some of the world's largest heliski operators are based. Runs trace the towering forms of the Tyndall Glacier, steep peaks and chutes and wide open treeless bowls. The main heliskiing location within this region is the Harris Mountains.



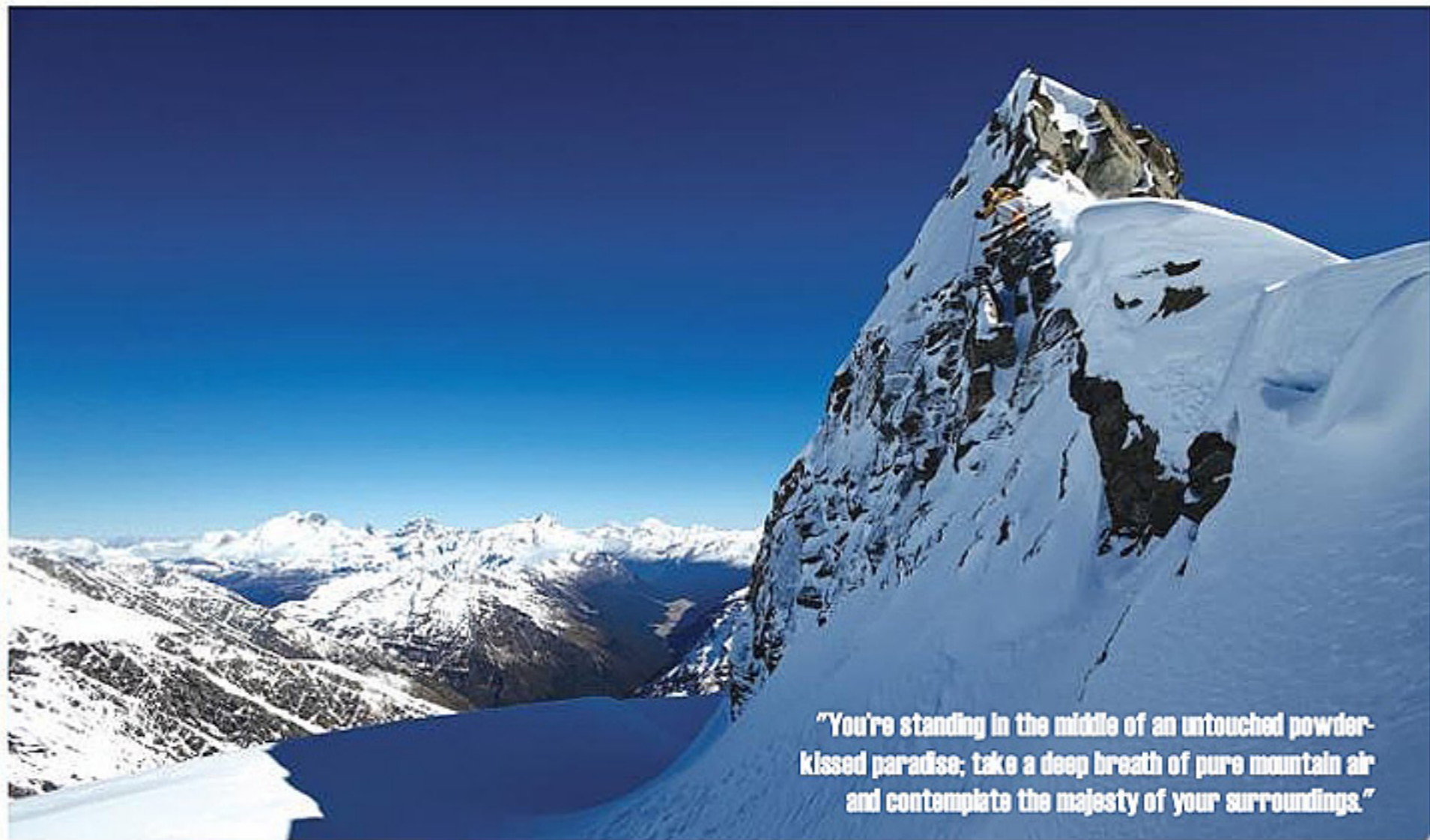
There is several helisking companies, and Harris Mountains Heli-Ski - an experience taking you 'Above and Beyond' - is one of them. HMM takes you into the vast terrains of the Southern Alps at precisely the level which best suits your ability. They allow you to ski over 400 runs from 200+ peaks in 7 separate mountain ranges covering over 3000 square kilometres. Runs vary between 2000 to 4000 vertical feet of treeless skiing in sheltered basins, bowls and wide rolling mountain flanks through to steep and gnarly chutes. HMM's operations include the famous Harris Mountains and Buchanan's Range, and Mount Cook, New Zealand's highest mountain and the Ben Ohau Range just south of Mt Cook National Park. Harris Mountains Heli-ski use European AS355 twin engine Squirrels and AS 350 B2 Squirrels. They have the highest level of Civil Aviation Authority certification for heli-ski operations.

It is easy to understand why heli skiing is the next step for those ski enthusiasts who want to "push the envelope" for something beyond the ordinary. Heli skiing affords the opportunity to enjoy skiing at an entirely different level. You have access to the highest and longest ski runs available; many remote areas around Queenstown are reachable only by heli skiers.

Before any attempt is made at heli skiing, you must be an experienced skier. The minimum level of expertise required for any heli skiing event is advanced intermediate. Queenstown, New Zealand, just as most heli skiing locations, has slopes designed for different levels of heli skiing expertise. The height and type of terrain are both factors in matching the heli ski location with the skier's ability. New Zealand heli skiing vacations will take you to heights you've never before experienced. With a variety of mountain ranges to choose from, you'll find high alpine terrain with rock and ice pinnacles and glaciers, all without a tree anywhere to be seen - until you get to as much as 4,000 feet below the peak! As a bonus, many of the peaks have a longer ski season than those with less altitude. The thrill begins when you are high above the snow-capped mountains, observing nature's majestic beauty from the helicopter. As you are transported to a ski location inaccessible by any other



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means, you realize you are about to embark on a downhill journey that is uniquely yours.

New Zealand is an island in the middle of the vast and turbulent South Pacific sea. New Zealand's constantly bombarded by storms. That's why after a booking, early in the morning, HMK's staff check the weather and then contact you. If it's on, they pick you up and take you to the staging area. Here you're introduced to your pilot, guide and fellow heli-skiers. A safety briefing is given covering avalanche transceivers, helicopter and mountain safety. Then up you go to the first heli-ski run. You're standing in the middle of an untouched powder-kissed paradise; take a deep breath of pure mountain air and contemplate the majesty of your surroundings. The moment you push off the peak into your first turns the magical calm turns into pure adrenalin! You glide into

exhilaration. Powder flies, adrenaline pumps and you soon become a tiny and inconsequential figure amongst the immense silence of the mountain world. At the bottom the helicopter awaits to lift you effortlessly to the top of another peak. At lunchtime a gourmet picnic with an unbeatable view. All groups meet for an alpine buffet lunch with time to relax. Then it's time to do it all again, the afternoon is back to the ultimate more heli-ski runs.

Another option is private charters. It offers the ultimate in convenience and flexibility. Enjoy the freedom to set your own pace and ski wherever conditions permit - thousands of vertical feet of untracked snow - skip from mountain to mountain. Ski as much or as little as you please, as fast or as slow as you wish. In conjunction with your personal guide and pilot, your private charter reflects the exclusive desires of your group.



Harris Mountains Heli-Ski is New Zealand's most experienced heliski and heliboard company with over twenty-five years of operation. Being the originator of heliskiing in New Zealand, Harris Mountains Heli-Ski has secured the best exclusive terrain at altitude to guarantee snow when the lower mountain ranges struggle to get good snow cover to heliski. Not only is the terrain exclusive, but it also offers an extensive variety to ski or board from Wanaka, Queenstown or Mount Cook.

Daily heliski options include three, four and seven run days with extra runs available. Heli-ski days start from \$725 per person. Charter and multi-day heliskiing is also available plus accommodation packages.

From first-time heli-skiers to those wanting to ski maximum vertical, HMM is "the perfect escape from the every day". With small groups (5 skiers per Guide) of similar ability, this ensures you of a personalised

heliski day. Guides are chosen for their ability to provide skiers with an exciting and memorable Heli-Ski experience. In addition to their technical qualifications, they have strong interpersonal and communication skills and a genuine love of the sport of skiing. Languages spoken include Japanese, French, Spanish and German.

Guides are trained in avalanche hazard evaluation and control, route selection, weather analysis, emergency first aid, mountain survival, rescue and ski instruction techniques. Radio repeaters give voice communication throughout the Heli-ski area. Snowpack and weather are analysed daily and forecasts made

accordingly, with slope assessment conducted prior to skiing.

Harris Mountains Heli-Ski use predominantly twin engine Aerospaciale Squirrel helicopters and HMM guides are internationally qualified and/or specialists in snow and mountain safety. HMM specialise in both snow boarding as well as skiing.

Harris Mountains Heli-Ski is the only QUALMARK rated heli-ski business in the Southern Lakes Region so you can be assured of a high level of quality and service with Harris Mountains Heli-ski.

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