

The Bulletin

RUAPEHU SKI CLUB

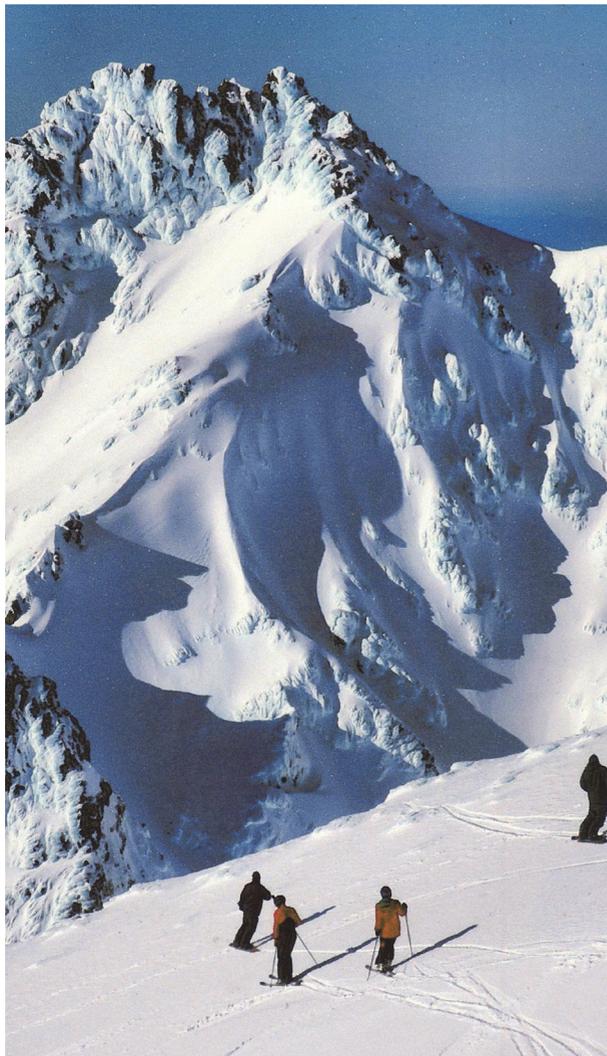
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Skiiing at Ruapehu in 2023. Photo: Richard Stirling.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Hi all,

With the fields being separate identities, 2024 was always going to be an interesting ski season.

The snow came late and during the July school holidays. Turoa had more skiable area open, so we had more members using the Ohakune building, which we hadn't expected. This was helped by the High Noon opening late July.

Whakapapa opened the Rangatira with mostly manmade snow, at the end of the school holidays in July and the valley and Delta early in August, though RAL were unable to groom the runs, due to lack of snow.

The express opened mid-August, with RAL pushing manmade snow around to fill in the gaps.

The Cook, went in to the Lodge at the beginning of July and we picked up a couple of ski instructors – Erik from Denmark and Maya from Canada who are paying to stay in the instructors' room.

They have been very helpful in helping Paul bring up the stores to the Lodge, as they are going up and down each day.

Early July Damon, David Watt and I were the Lodge to do some long overdue maintenance on the fire pump, which we'd had a report that the exhaust pipe was loose, on the manifold.

Not wanting a repeat, of the 2011, diesel fumed Lodge, we got to it and replaced and tightened the gasket, as well as giving the pump and oil change.

Thanks to David Watt for his expertise, in sorting out the fire pump oil leak, and giving the pump a good clean. I now know more than I ever

thought I'd need to know about fire pumps.

The Christiania Derby, due to be run on August 10th, was cancelled due to lack of snow, and hence area for a ski race.

We cancelled the Haensli Cup Race, as we had not had time to organise it, especially not having a Club Captain. But it does now look like there would not have been enough snow for that either.

Sadly, we haven't had many members make use of the buildings as I write, and going forward if members are wanting a cook in our Lodge, we need to have the bunk nights to support it. Otherwise we may need to go to the self-cook or self-catered model.

Even if the skiing conditions are marginal, the Club is still a great place to visit and catch up with friends for a winter weekend away.

Non-member groups have added to our bunk night totals. A group NZ Alpine Club Ladies stayed in the Lodge at the end of July.

They really loved our facilities especially the hot showers. I was explaining that while we had hot showers, we asked that they would only have one a day, to minimise water usage.

Their reply was "we're used to going days without showers, one a day is no problem"

They were quite impressed with our drying room as well, especially when they collected their gear the next day and it was dry.

The RNZAF is booked in to use the Hut in August for training. Hopefully these relationships will foster more bookings in the coming years, for our buildings.

Catherine Gafa
President



Patterns in the snow in Te Heuheu Valley. Photo: Liza Fitzsimmons.

THROUGH THE LODGE WINDOW

Whakapapa operated by RAL opened on June 1st for sledding plus Sky Waka sightseeing. It opened for skiing in Happy Valley on June 27th and on the Upper Mountain on July 27th.

Turoa operated by Pure Turoa opened on June 28th (the Matariki holiday) for skiing, snowboarding and sledding in the Alpine Meadow and from July 13th for its upper mountain facilities.

NZ Tourism operators say there is an appetite for international visitors to pay to access NZ national parks to help cover costs.

The Department of Conservation is facing major financial headwinds and said it could not afford to maintain its assets which are under increasing pressure from visitor congestion.

Officials have told Conservation Minister Tama Potaka he should consider more user charges and raising existing fees, which he has not ruled out.

RSC published on Facebook a photo of the Club Committee meeting at the Chalet with several laptops open.

Club member Tim Sharp summed it up: "The way times are you need a crystal ball not laptops."

DoC said its booking system for the Tongariro Alpine Crossing received strong support from the public in summer and it would remain open throughout winter.

"We are currently analysing booking and track counter data to better understand the level of use, and booking behaviour, so that we can identify any potential improvements we could introduce next summer.

"DoC encourages all visitors to

**THE
RUAPEHU SKI CLUB**

(inc) Founded 1913

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President: Catherine Gafa.

Vice-Presidents: Carl Burling,
Damon Forsyth, Donald Webster.

Immediate Past President:

Phill Thomass.

Secretary: Michael Webb-Speight.

Treasurer: Sonia Quinn.

Captain: vacant.

Committee: Drew Blair,

Ron Bonfrer, Sam Hood,

Simon Hunt, Pip McNaughton,

Fiona Lovelock.

Patron: Peter Brady.

Patroness: Barbara Scelly.

Auditors: Hart and Co.

Heritage Fund Guardians:

Robin Dallas, Phill Thomass,

Bernard Smith, Catherine Gafa.

Fund Treasurer: Mike Wardle.

Glacier Hut Custodian:

Bernard Smith.

continue to support the sustainability of the TAC by making a booking if they plan to walk some, or all, of the track. Booking remains free and voluntary.”

ODDITY: *Franz Klammer (Austria) the winner of 25 alpine skiing downhill and once an Olympic gold medallist, combined with NZ motor racing legend Denny Hulme to contest the Bathurst 1000km touring car race in Australia. They came ninth overall and second in their class.*

DoC apologised after its website to book spots on the highly-popular Milford Track and other Great Walks crashed for the second year.

DoC said 11,000 people were logged in just before bookings opened at 9.30am for the Milford and Waikaremoana tracks. They sold out in six minutes.

People on social media reported they could not get on as the website kept crashing.

Three men were arrested in Ruapehu District on drug and firearm charges.

Police found 35g of methamphetamine, 2.7kg of cannabis, five firearms and stolen property including power tools sized.

The cannabis was found wrapped inside lolly paper.

The deadline for the December Bulletin will be **Friday November 22nd.**

All items should be with the Editor in Wellington by that date.

THE BULLETIN

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Whakapapa avalanche rescue team Andy and Echo take a ride on the Sky Waka. There were three avalanches on one weekend at Whakapapa in August. No one was hurt but there were some near misses and the NZ Mountain Safety Council (MSC) reminded skiers and snowboarders to adopt backcountry precautions when leaving patrolled ski areas. Photo: RAL.

SKIFIELD FATE AWAITS

The choice of a company to operate the Whakapapa skifield from 2025 was not made by the time this Bulletin went to press.

RAL's liquidators Calibre Partners (formerly Korda Mentha) called in April for candidates to run Whakapapa.

Applications closed on May 10th but there has been no comment since on how many applications were received.

One grapevine report said there were four applications including one by an iwi group and one led by ex-RAL chief Dave Mazey, but there was no confirmation.

Earlier at Turoa one candidate was chosen. An application to DoC for the award of an operating licence was then heard at public sessions, resulting in Pure Turoa getting a 10-year concession.

Presumably the same procedure

will follow when a chosen bidder for Whakapapa is known.

HOLIDAY ATTENDANCE

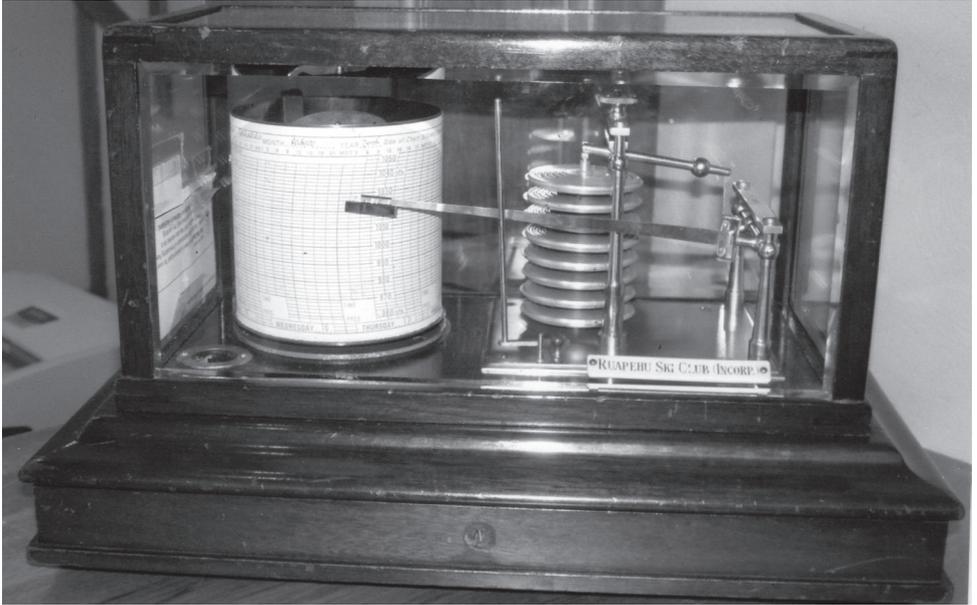
Despite the snow being a little late to arrive this season, more than 30,000 people visited Whakapapa over the July school holidays.

Whakapapa Ski Area chief executive Travis Donoghue said that was on a par with other good years and was helped by the variety of activities on offer at Whakapapa.

“Sledding, snow play and sightseeing on the Sky Waka gondola are very popular with guests seeking a special alpine experience at Mt Ruapehu,” Donoghue said.

Skiing was available in Happy Valley.

*** Due to the late arrival of snow, the 65th Christiania Derby race at Whakapapa was cancelled.



This 1930s barograph, which measures changes in atmospheric pressure and records them on a drum, was owned and used by RSC. In recent years it has been on public display at The Chateau's reception desk, but due to the demise of the hotel it has been reclaimed by RSC. Photo: Alan Graham.

RSC CLUB NOTES

Ted Southworth and Grace McQuoid are our custodians at RSC Turoa for the 2024 season.

They are both working at Pure Turoa.

Grace is training to be a level one ski instructor and Ted is working in ski and snowboard rentals.

While they are keeping an eye on the building, they are not there to clean up after members and you will need to do your duties. Remember to put out the rubbish.

NO HAENSLI CUP.

*We will not have a **Haensli Cup** ski race this winter:*

RSC does not have a Club Captain at present and there was no one else available to organise the race.

BOOKINGS.

Please make all bookings/and changes to bookings for weekends prior to 12pm on Friday, so there is enough time for the booking to be processed, and the cook to know (if you are going to the Lodge) that you are coming for the weekend.

Also, if you are going to make a change/cancellation to a booking could you please do it online through the website, as this will save Administration time, and cost for the Club. Thank you

WINTER PARTY.

September 8-12 at RSC Lodge.

Save the dates, we are coming up with a plan, including a quiz night, and a themed dinner.

If you are happy to help out, please contact Admin.

Note:- This is an Adults only week at the Lodge.



Introducing our Lodge cook (centre) Paul Mcalister and live in instructors Erik from Denmark and Maya from Canada. While they live with us, all lessons are booked through RAL, as they work for RAL. Photo: Catherine Gafa.

EXPENSIVE REMEDICATION

A rarely mentioned aspect of the Whakapapa skifield debate is the presence of a covenant requiring remediation.

If the skifield closes for good both RAL and any departing ski clubs will be obliged to restore the mountain to its original state.

Trouble is, neither has the money needed to do the task, and the onus would seem to fall on the Government, via the Department of Conservation.

How much are we talking about? One estimate is \$80 million for RAL and \$30 million for the clubs. Others have suggested the real costs could be much higher than that.

We are talking about lifts, cafeterias, clubhouses, other buildings such as ticket offices, shops, groomer garages, snowmaking, sewerage and maybe some roads.

The cost to DoC increases substantially if Turoa is added, since Pure Tūroa will not assume obligations to remove structures it inherited.

That is, Pure Tūroa will only be responsible for removing any new infrastructure it adds.

The Government has said it will not be making any further funds available to Whakapapa and “sick industries must die” has long been a political mantra.

But one wonders if this is good economics in this case, given the enormous cost of the covenant.

As for RSC, we will presumably keep our Turoa Lodge if Whakapapa is closed, and we may choose to keep the Chalet, if that is allowed by DoC.

RSC Lodge and RSC Hut would presumably have to be demolished, yet there is no chance of RSC having the cash to do that.

Alan Graham

**** The recent Government Budget showed \$8.5 million has been allocated towards the management and removal of skifield infrastructure between now and 2028.

Reports said the first payment from this fund will cover the removal of the Ngā Wai Heke chairlift at Turoa which is not required by Pure Turoa as it has been little used.

TUROA UPGRADE DONE

Tūroa Ski Area has completed its \$4.3 million project to upgrade two chairlifts.

Specialist contractor and chairlift producer Doppelmayr finished the upgrade of the Movenpick and Park Lane lifts, including improved safety and control.

“While these changes won’t be visible to mountain-goers, the upgrades greatly improve the reliability of the lifts, helping to ensure less downtime and smoother operation,” says Pure Tūroa’s marketing manager Jess Till.

“It is also a significant step forward in Pure Tūroa’s commitment to more environmentally sustainable operations.”

NO RUAPEHU ERUPTION

An alert on Mt Ruapehu in July did not mean there was an eruption, the Department of Conservation said.

The Ruapehu Eruption Detection System was triggered at 5:57pm on a Monday evening due to the combination of severe weather and a magnitude 3.6 earthquake in the Hawkes Bay.

“This resulted in a lahar warning being broadcast at Whakapapa Ski Area,” stated DOC.

“To the system, these conditions mimic the conditions of an eruption event and the system performed as designed.”

WINTER OLYMPICS

The French alpine regions of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes and Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur have been selected to host the Olympic Winter Games and Winter Paralympics in 2030.

Salt Lake City (Utah, US) was then chosen to be the host of the 2034 Winter Games.

*** The next Winter Olympics will be held in 2026 at Milan-Cortina (Italy).

*** The 2030s venue master plan

focuses on four zones in Haute Savoie, Savoie, Briançon and Nice. There are five Olympic Villages so all athletes can stay no more than 30 minutes away from their competition venue.

HAMISH SIMPSON

Hamish Simpson, owner and operator of the Mt Lyford skifield in North Canterbury, has died at 44 years old of brain cancer.

Simpson is the son of Doug and Jenny Simpson who carved sections out of their high country farm in the 1980s to create Mt Lyford village and ski resort.

They jointly owned companies in nearby Kaikoura including one which sold log cabins, and the ski village features such lodges.

Simpson operated the ski area with his wife Caroline, brother Tim and sister-in-law Tess.

LORNA LAURENSEN-SPEIGHT

Lorna Laurenson-Speight (nee White) who died at Devonport in June aged 97 was a long-timer skier at Whakapapa.

Lorna was the wife of the late John Laurenson and subsequently of the late William (Bill) Speight, who was a President and Life member of RSC.

Bill died in December 2023 aged 95. He married Lorna after his first wife died.

INNOVATIVE NEW LIFT

The World’s first Tri-line ski ropeway is being built by Doppelmayr at Hoch-Ybrig in Switzerland.

It features high wind stability which is ensured by having two track ropes which form a stable base, and a haul rope which moves the cars.

The system allows for a remarkable 8000 passengers per hour in cabins with room for up to 20 people.

NZ SKATER SAVED

A former NZ Olympic Games speed skater is feeling lucky to be alive after falling through a frozen dam in Central Otago.

Andrew Nicholson, who earned a fourth place in a skating event at the 1992 Winter Olympics, was skating at Lower Manorburn Dam when he moved three metres from the thick-ice markers and fell through the ice.

He said he was saved by following a drill he had been taught.

*** Nicholson is not to be confused with NZ equestrian Andrew Nicholson who has won three Olympic medals. The skater is a brother of Chris Nicholson who has represented NZ at both the summer and winter Olympics.

RUAPEHU FATAL

A woman has died after slipping and falling a “significant distance” during a climbing expedition on Mt Ruapehu.

Police said the woman was with a group near Whangaehu Hut when she fell at 11am on a Saturday and suffered significant injuries.

The climber was Wednesday Davis, of Auckland, a marine biologist who graduated in 2022 with a Masters degree first class honours at the University of Auckland.

Emergency services responded immediately following the incident but despite their best efforts the woman died at the scene.

Services which responded were the Greenlea Rescue Helicopter, members of the Ruapehu Alpine Rescue Organisation and Tukino Skifield staff.

PURE TUROA WARNED

DoC directed Pure Tūroa to remove a social media video in which it appeared to have breached its licence to operate.

Pure Tūroa’s concession document only allows aircraft – preferably drones – to be used for health and safety, medical emergencies, search and rescue and avalanche management.

But Pure Tūroa posted a series of clips on its Facebook page showing helicopters lifting snow machines and then taking a tour of the mountain to show how much snow was on the ground.

The video showed the helicopter flying up the mountain the length of the High Noon Express chairlift, the highest elevation lift on the field, showing a dusting of snow between rocks.

JASPER BUSHFIRE

Canadian ski town Jasper (Alberta) was been devastated by a massive July wildfire caused by lightning that destroyed 50 percent of the town.

Included in the loss was a luxury hotel loved by the late Queen Elizabeth.

Police said no one was hurt in the blaze and none of the ski lifts was damaged. However, 25,000 tourists had to be evacuated.

Jasper has a permanent population of 5000, many of whom have lost their houses.

The Jasper wildfire raged for two weeks and covered 32,500 hectares. Some 120 wildfires burned in the forest protection area of Alberta of which 19 were out of control.



Upper: Members of the RSC Committee. **Lower:** Marion Quinn is elected a Life member of RSC. Photos: Deane Tetley.

AGM TOPICS

RSC President Catherine Gafa welcomed members to the 111th AGM of the Club held at the Richmond Yacht Club at Westhaven.

Members stood in memory of those who have died in the past year.

The annual report and accounts were adopted.

Treasurer Sonia Quinn said the Club has an increased cash reserve despite having endured a difficult ski season.

Colin Upchurch congratulated the Committee on its work on behalf of the Club during uncertain times. This was greeted with applause.

Hart and Co were reappointed as Auditors.

The meeting approved a motion from the Committee to amend the Constitution allowing for the review of accounts to be undertaken rather than a full audit.

This is a lesser standard of scrutiny by the auditor. However, the Committee is confident that the accounting is in good hands and this change will significantly reduce both monetary costs and the time required by the Treasurer.

Barbara Scelly was reappointed as Patroness and Peter Brady was reappointed as Patron. The meeting was told that their roles were to provide technical advice and wise counsel.

Adrian Adriaansen and Marion Quinn have retired from the Committee.

Adrian left after 25 years on the Committee including a term as President. He was thanked for his many skills and wisdom.

Donald Webster replaces Marion as a Vice-President, and Pip McNaughton replaces him on the Committee. Otherwise the Committee is unchanged.

There is still a vacancy for Club Captain. This was described as disappointing and leading to a loss of some ski races.

Members were asked to consider taking up the role of Club Captain.

Marion Quinn was elected as a Life member of RSC.

Marion is a member of the Payne family. Her father was on the Committee, as were her late husband and a sister.

One brother John is a past President and her daughter Sonia is the Club Treasurer.

The meeting was told that Marion has served the Club as Vice-President, health committee member, kitchen designer and acting secretary.

Marion was presented with a silver tray and flowers.

In general business, President Catherine said there was no information to hand on bids to run Whakapapa skifield.

There was also no word yet from RAL on when and how the Rangatira chairlift on the Rockgarden would run for foot traffic.

Presentations were made to Catherine, Damon Forsyth and Carl Burling for their efforts on working parties, and to Treasurer Sonia Quinn.

The meeting was live screened to members who could not attend.



Catherine Gafa.



Upper: Members at the RSC AGM. **Lower:** Patron Peter Brady addresses the meeting.
Photos: Deane Tetley.



Upper: Sonia Quinn and Ron Bonfrer. **Lower:** Robin Dallas and Jim Mutch. Photos: Deane Tetley.

RSC folk seen at the Club's AGM held at Westhaven in June.

Photos by Deane Tetley



Gay Dobbie



Michael Webb-Speight



Colin Upchurch



Fiona Lovelock



John Payne



Alice O'Connor



Tjebbe Bruin



Bernard Smith

SAVE THE CHATEAU

Ruapehu District Mayor Weston Kirton is calling on the public to support a parliamentary petition seeking urgent Government action to save the “iconic and cherished” Chateau Tongariro.

The 95-year-old hotel closed its doors in February 2023 after seismic assessment found some of the hotel infrastructure no longer met safety standards.

Kirton’s petition seeks to urge to Government to act quickly to save The Chateau and restore it to its former glory.

“The Chateau is more than a historic landmark in the World Heritage Tongariro National Park; it embodies cultural significance and economic vitality crucial to the Ruapehu District and New Zealand.

“Before its closure, it was a major economic driver, employing over 70 staff, attracting high-spending tourists, and contributing around \$10 million annually to the local economy.”

TWO NZ COUNCILLORS

NZ now has two members on the Council of the International Ski and Snowboard Federation (FIS).

Former NZ Olympian and national ski champion Fiona Stevens has been elected as a councillor for a second term.

Meanwhile FIS has voted to add two para athletes to the Council, and NZ ski racer Adam Hall has been elected to one of those positions.

The second representative, who will be a woman, is still to be appointed.

Ian Hunt (NZ) has been appointed to the FIS Ethics Committee, and therefore has stepped down from his position on the Snow Sports NZ Board.

*** FIS has recognised Freeride

skiing and snowboarding as an official discipline, a step toward including extreme snow sports in the Olympic Winter Games.

WHAKAARI UPDATE

Whakaari/White Island erupted three times at the end of May, leading volcanologists to say the island might be entering a “heightened state of unrest”.

The volcanic alert level was increased to 3 on a scale of 0-5 after the eruptions and boaties were advised to keep clear of Whakaari/White Island until further notice.

Volcanologists said ashfall was unlikely to cover the 50km from the island to the mainland, as the eruptions were small, but if it did then people should stay indoors, keep pets indoors and avoid non-essential driving.

The May eruptions were clearly visible from the mainland.

*** Geonet has no working sensors on Whakaari because it has no access and cannot service or replace equipment.

It is relying on remote monitoring, which includes stations on the mainland, observation and gas flights, plus radar and satellite thermal imagery.

*** The WorkSafe inspector who investigated helicopter companies after the Whakaari/White Island tragedy did not believe they should have been prosecuted and felt so concerned about changes to his findings that he gave evidence against his former employer.

The inspector, Paul Patterson, felt the prosecution had been pre-determined. He lost faith in WorkSafe and later resigned.



This team cleaned out the RSC Chalet ready for the ski season. Photos: Ron Bonfrer.

RSC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

August 2024		Haensli Cup (cancelled)
	24-27	NIPS intermediate
	31-Sept 3	NIPS primary
	31	Ngauruhoe Trophy
Sept 2024	7	Rangatira Trophy (provisional)
	8-12	Winter Party at RSC Lodge
	15	Tongariro Juniors (provisional)
	28	RSC Club champs
Oct 2024	13	Happy Valley closes
	27	Whakapapa closes (subject to snow levels)
Nov 2024		
Dec 2024	??	DoC and RSC summer programs



Dismounting a quad chairlift at Ruapehu.



The Vallée Blanche ski run in France covers 20km or 13 miles, with a vertical drop of 2700 metres or 8850 feet.

WORLD'S LONGEST RUN

What is the longest ski run in the world?

Various claims are made for runs but the French are sure that answer is the Vallée Blanche which offers a run of 20km or 13 miles, with a vertical drop of 2700 metres or 8850 feet.

Vallée Blanche leads down to Chamonix, an alpine resort town with 8500 people. It was the site of the first Winter Olympics in 1924.

The run is serviced by a lift but you have to traverse a precipitous snowy ridge (or arete) from the lift.

This run can be dangerous without a guide on account of avalanches and crevasses as well as a high risk of serac falls.

It is OK for fit intermediates but they should only attempt it when the conditions are good and with a mountain guide.

The Vallée Blanche is suitable for snowboarders who have previous off piste experience and are able to safely ride all kinds of terrain and snow conditions.

Fees vary but a typical guide may charge 400 euros (\$NZ660) for four clients. The run takes four to six hours.

In terms of features it has every type of skiing you could possibly want: steeps, ice, powder, couloirs.

The run has some variants. These require more skill and are recommended only for advanced skiers with plenty of backcountry skiing experience.

Vallée Blanche is so long that halfway down you can stop for lunch at the Requin Hut (2516m).

IWIKAU PARKING

Overnight parking at Whakapapa. RMCA has now had definite confirmation that Carpark 3 (the gravel park marked 'club'), plus the Loop Road, and the usual roadside parks alongside the main 'up' road will remain as overnight parking, with the addition this season of overflow space in Carpark 5.

To recap, overnight parking remains the status quo with the addition of carpark 5 if needed.

Carpark 3 - the gravel park marked 'club'

Down loop carparks

Terraces (old carpark 5)

Roadside parks on main 'up' road

Overnight platinum parking will be in the spaces from the Iwikau shelter down.

All other day parks will be locked from 5pm to 7am.

The primary reason for this will be to maintain RAL's ability to clear carparks during snowfall.

The carparking next to the medical centre will be reserved for ***day parking only*** to maintain ability to clear snow and ice when needed. These parks are not usually available to the general public/club parking.

Rangatira Express Foot Access:

The Rangatira Express access for foot passengers (ie those NOT on skis/boards) will be provided again this season. Please note:

- This arrangement is only provided on days that the Rangatira Express is operational
- ***Between 8:45am to 9:00am and 3:45pm to 4:00pm access will be provided***
 - o Please note that will need clearance checks to be received prior to loading passengers
- Foot passengers to arrive to the Rangatira 15 minutes prior to the allotted time
- Please ensure you are wearing appropriate clothing and footwear.

Club members/custodians **on skis/board** carrying a pack can access the lift anytime during scheduled operational hours but please be mindful of other users.

You will need to be able to manage your pack so that you can load and unload safely.



WINTER SUMMER

Eddie Eagan (US) is the only person to win a gold medal in different sports at both the summer and winter Olympic Games.

Eagan won a gold in boxing in 1920 and a gold in bobsleigh in 1932.

Five other people since 1924, including two quite recently, won medals in different sports at both Olympics.

Jacob Tullin Thams (Norway) won a gold in ski jumping in 1924 and a silver in sailing in 1936.

Christa Luding-Rothenburger (Germany) won a gold in speed skating in 1992 and a silver in track cycling in 1988.

Clara Hughes (Canada) won a bronze in road cycling in 1996 and four medals in speed skating including a gold in 2006.

Lauryn Williams (US) won two athletics relay medals including a gold in 2012 plus a silver in bobsleigh in 2014.

Eduardo “Eddy” Alvarez ((US) won a silver in short track speed skating in 2014 and a silver in baseball in 2020.

Some others won medals in winter sports prior to 1924 when figure skating and ski jumping were part of the summer Olympics, and then won winter medals in the same events after 1924 when the winter Games were established.

Madonna Harris in cross-country skiing and road cycling (1988) and **Chris Nicholson** in short track speed skating and road cycling (1992-94) are the only NZ athletes to contest both the summer and winter Olympics.

Richard Ussher came close to joining them. He contested the Winter Olympics in freestyle skiing in 1998 and then switched

to world record status in iron man triathlons rather than the shorter Olympic variety.

He has won the Coast to Coast race five times and is now its Director. His wife Elina won it three times.

INVINCIBLE SNOWFIELDS

Invincible Snowfields is a private ski resort near Glenorchy in Otago.

Although it is a commercial operation, the field has few facilities and is run like an old fashioned club field, with its main drawcards being the backcountry terrain.

It is targeted at advanced riders looking for natural chutes and gullies. There are no groomed trails and the field has a single 750m nutcracker rope tow, installed in 1996 and powered by an old Ford tractor.

Access to the field is by helicopter from Glenorchy. The only accommodation available is a 10-person hut equipped with a wood fire and gas stove.

The field is part of Rees Valley Station, a 7290ha high country sheep station.

Visitors to the field need to fend for themselves, carrying ski-touring equipment to ensure their own safety. This includes staying in a group and wearing an avalanche transceiver.

Invincible has a vertical drop of 300 metres and a base elevation of 1650 metres.

The field operates only on bookings so the Scott family can fit the skifield in around farm work.

They use freelance patrollers and also bring in a tow operator when necessary.

Someone also has to stay by the radio at the station base to maintain contact with groups staying and the helicopter company.

*** Invincible takes its name from an old gold mine.



Ruapehu ski season scenes in 2024. **Upper:** Knoll Ridge Café at Whakapapa. **Lower:** Alpine Meadow at Turoa. Photos: RAL and PT.

REMEMBERING ERNST

Ernst Skardarasy was an Austrian skier who in 1938 was the first qualified instructor to teach skiing on Ruapehu.

He taught the Arlberg technique, a systematic method of learning to ski which began with the snow plough and ran through to the pure Christiania.

Ernst initially taught skiing in Australia at the Perisher (NSW) ski area. He then moved to NZ to be based at Salt Hut at Whakapapa.

Before he left Australia he published a detailed ski instruction manual entitled *Skiing For Fun*.

Salt Hut, situated approx 1km below the current road end, was the HQ of Ruapehu skiing in the 1930s and hundreds of pairs of skis were hired out on busy days.

Ernst's lessons were widely sought and his skiing included jumps of more than 20 metres.

He had a widely published vision for a cable car running from The Chateau up to the crater. This was never seriously followed up, due to being too expensive.

Ernst was followed as a Whakapapa instructor by his brother Franz.

Unfortunately Franz was in NZ when the war began and as an "enemy alien" he was interned for a while in Somes Island at Wellington.

He did instruct here again, at Ruapehu just after the war, and married an Aussie lass he met here.

The brothers introduced to NZ a cape called the Thring Mantle which looked like something Batman would wear.

It acted as a parachute and enabled a skier to attain high speed with some degree of safety.

Ernst tackled much of the Pinnacles straight while wearing the mantle.

Franz is famed for skiing from the crater of

Mt Egmont Taranaki down to Fantham Peak at very high speeds, using the mantle. He was still going when he zapped by the designated finish line but he eventually stopped, unhurt.

Ernst set the courses for the RSC Club champs which included a jump near the Club Hut.

He arranged for gatekeepers and timekeepers which The Bulletin said was "well beyond the call of duty".

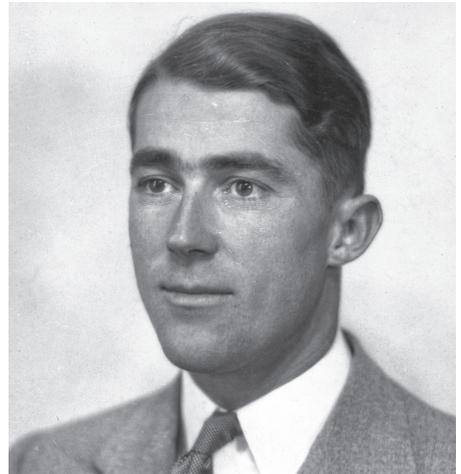
Ernst was farewelled from NZ at a lunch in Queen St, Auckland, where he was appointed an Honorary member of RSC and presented with a silver badge and a photo album covered in leather with a Maori motif.

In 1955 Ernst and his wife Hilde purchased the 5-star Zurserhof Hotel in the ski town Zurs in Austria. It is still in Skardarasy family hands today.

The couple visited NZ in 1960 and did a bit of skiing at Whakapapa while chatting with RSC veterans.

Ernst was popular wherever he went and at one stage was Lord Mayor of Zurs.

In later years Ernst was a most helpful liaison officer to NZ teams visiting Europe for the Olympic Winter Games



Ernst Skardarasy.



Helen Alanson skiing in 1941. Photo: RSC Collection

REMEMBERING HELEN

Helen Alanson was a tall and elegant skier who won the NZ national women's skiing championship three times, in 1946, 1947 and 1949.

She was so strong that most people were sure that she would have won more titles but for the fact that there was no championship for six years 1940-1945 due to the war.

An RSC member, Helen won the Club championship in 1940 and 1941, and again in 1949 and 1951.

Helen Alanson lived much of her life at the small town of Owhango in the King Country and thus was able to make regular

day trips to Ruapehu for skiing.

In 1947 she won the NZ downhill title by 55 sec and won the slalom by 22 sec, and was asked to set the course for the men's slalom.

The next year at Coronet Peak she won the women's downhill in a time that was faster than that of all but two of the men, on the identical course.

She broke a bone in her ankle in a minor fall at the end of the race and thus was unable to ski in the slalom.

In 1949 she passed a gold test at Zurs in Austria. Helen had to climb a slope in a given time, rest a short time and then complete a 1500ft descent. She made it with ease, with several seconds to spare.



Skiing in the sunshine at Whakapapa. Photos: Visit Ruapehu.



“Freeride” is not an Olympic Winter Games sport, but moves are in place to have it made one by 2030. Photos: Snow Sports NZ.



Upper: RSC member Jo Graham rides a Pomalift to the top of the Knoll in the 1960s.
Lower: RAL's Poma on the National Downhill in 1966. This lift is sited where the quad chair is located now. Photos: Alan Graham.



One of RAL's four Pomalifts is still in use today, at the Hanmer Springs skifield in Canterbury. Photo: HSSC.

WHAT WAS A POMA?

The Poma was a one person ski lift similar to a T-bar which was used around the world, including Ruapehu, in the 1960s and later.

It was eventually replaced in many spots by the T-bar which carried two people whereas the Pomalift carried one.

In some places such as Turoa the term Poma also covers the simple platter lift, as this was the company's first product.

The Poma company now makes detachable chairlifts, gondola lifts, funiculars, aerial tramways and people movers. Poma has installed 8000 devices for 750 customers worldwide.

Poma is named for French engineer Jean Pomagalski who installed his first ski lift at Alpe d'Huez in France in 1934.

The Poma surface lift has a disk that skiers straddle. It has the ability to travel at high speeds because the platters are detachable from the haul rope.

The perch is telescopic and has a pneumatic system which allows for a smooth and progressive departure. They are still sold today.

RAL installed its first Pomalift in Te Heuheu Valley in 1961. Three more followed on the Rockgarden (later moved to Delta Corner), the Knoll and West Ridge.

All four were eventually sold to the South Island. Two went to Mt Lyford and one each to Hanmer Springs (still in use) and Mt Cheeseman.

Coronet Peak had a Pomalift in Rocky Gully for some years, until it was replaced by a T-bar.

A feature of the Poma was its ability to go round bends.

The Knoll Poma clung close to the edge until two-thirds of the way up, when it took a 20 degree turn to the right, thus staying close to the edge.

WORLD SKI NEWS

The Remarkables (Queenstown) skifield has opened its new \$23 million high-speed six-seater Shadow Basin chairlift, commissioned by Doppelmayr.

At full speed it can move skiers and snowboarders from the bottom to the top in three-and-a-half minutes, with capacity for 2400 people per hour.

The chairlift opens up 47 hectares of additional lift-serviced terrain, primarily for intermediate and advanced skiers and boarders, including freeride runs such as Alta Chute and Boulder Basin.

The cherry on top is the addition of 16 new snowguns in Shadow Basin.

A documentary film following some of New Zealand's top skiers exploring the Southern Alps with packhorses has won a prize at the Mountain Film and Book Festival.

*Made by Wānaka film director Finlay Woods, **Terra Incognita (unknown terrain)** follows an attempt by world-class skiers led by freeride World Tour competitor Craig Murray to ski new lines in the Southern Alps.*

The group's experiment with using packhorses to access ski touring introduced the realities of pushing into some of the most remote places in Aotearoa.

Wānaka skifield pioneer Mary Lee has been appointed a Companion of the NZ Order of Merit for services to snow sports and tourism, nine years after her husband John received the same honour.

Mary Lee and John founded the Cardrona ski area in 1981 before shifting their focus across the Cardrona Valley where they developed the cross-country Snow Farm, the Snow Park skifield, the Race to the Sky car hill climb and snowy test grounds for new cars and tyres.

Now retired at 76, Mary volunteers at SeniorNet and the Cardrona Heritage

Trust, as well as at the Snow Farm as a cross-country skiing instructor. She is the NZ representative on the Worldloppet Ski Federation.

The 100 metre Manganui Gorge suspension bridge on the track from the car park to the Manganui skifield is now open.

The bridge is a major feature of the Taranaki Crossing project on Taranaki Maunga.

The skifield is operated by the Stratford Mountain Club which has a lodge, a T-bar and some rope tows.

Two Canadian ski racers who have been friends for nearly 80 years were photographed together again at the Canadian Ski Hall of Fame banquet.

They are Rhoda Wurtele Eaves, 102, and Lucile Wheeler, 89, who have been fixtures in each other's lives since they first met in 1945 at Lucile's first ski race, aged 10.

Wurtele Eaves was a surprise participant at the hall of fame banquet and her arrival completed a reunion of all four members of the 1952 Canadian women's Olympic ski team. She joined Rosemarie Schutz Asch, Joanne Hewson-Rees and Wheeler.

Wheeler earned the first Olympic medal by a Canadian Alpine ski racer with her bronze in the 1956 downhill.

Swiss extreme skier and pioneer Sylvain Saudan has died, aged 87.

For 30 years he attempted new ski routes around the world on mountain ranges including the Himalayas.

"Fear has no place," he said. "If you are afraid, it's over."

His conquests gave him the nickname "Skier of the Impossible" and led to innovations in ski equipment and techniques to handle steep gradients.

To cope with the pitch of the mountains, Saudan developed a style of leaning back on his skis to slow his speed while swiveling his ski tips.



The World's toughest lift accessed ski run is said to be Le Pas de Chavanette, also known as the Mur Suisse or Swiss Wall. Situated on the border between France and Switzerland, it has a length of 1km with a drop of 330 metres and a slope of 40 degrees. Plus lots of steep moguls.



The world championships for alpine skiing in 2029 have been awarded to Narvik, a town in Norway which is 229 km north of the Arctic Circle and where the skifield falls almost to sea level.

ACROSS THE SKIING WORLD

Retired World champion alpine skier Marcel Hirscher, who won the World Cup eight times while competing for Austria, has been training in NZ for his planned comeback representing the Netherlands, his mother's country.

Hirscher has been living at Lake Tekapo, getting up 6 am, leaving for the Roundhill Ski Area at 7 am and race training from 8am.

While 18,500 kilometres away from home, he said: "Coming here was a brilliant decision in every respect."

He has been away from racing for five years but plans to ski in events at Coronet Peak before the rejoining the World Cup circuit.

He added: "Every afternoon I walk from my apartment down to the shore of Lake Tekapo, sit down on a rock and look into this endless expanse, 27 kilometres of turquoise water, in which a white mountain panorama is reflected."

Ohau Snow Fields and the nearby Lake Ohau Lodge have been relisted for sale after a deal to buy them collapsed.

Mike and Louise Neilson who are now in their 70s have been running the South Island skifield and lodge for 33 years and want to retire.

The 72 room lodge was built in 1951 on a 10 hectare lake front site in the Mackenzie high country and attracts 35,000 visitor night a year. The sale price is said to be \$50 million.

Ohau skifield has one chairlift, one platter and one carpet, and has lovely views out over the lake.

A new innovative suspension form of ski binding is tipped to be the next major invention for the sport. It was created by former race car drivers and inspired by motor sports.

ShredShox is a lightweight adjustable spring that features both compression and

rebound adjustments wherein skiers can apply boot pressure to the ski.

The benefits are improved cornering and stability, as added static pressure keeps the ski in constant contact with the snow. The suspension also makes for a smoother ride and softer landings.

"I saw all of the chatter in the skis and thought, what if ski racing had shock and damping systems like race cars?" said former race car driver Ken Nicholas.

The product is not yet for sale and is still being tested by big mountain, mogul, freestyle and alpine skiers.

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) has published a detailed guide for NZ ski industry employers.

It says it is important that both employers and employees are aware of their rights and responsibilities under the law.

This includes complying with minimum employment standards, and ensuring workers have the right to work in this country and with the specific employer, and that accommodation made available to employees meets the required standards.

Peter Landsman, an American skier, has completed his task to ride 3000 chairlifts and T-bars at all 750 ski areas in the US and Canada.

The 34-year-old lift supervisor at Jackson Hole Mountain Resort (Wyoming) has been on a 25-year mission to ride and photograph ski lifts.

He finished his journey with a visit to Moose Mountain, a single-lift ski area Canada's remote Yukon Territory.

In 2022 he concluded visits to all 500 US resorts and turned his attention to 250 ski hills in Canada.

The US ski industry posted 60.4 visits in the 2023-24 season, the fifth best on record.

The performance in a modest snow year followed the two strongest seasons since NSAA the industry began keeping track of skier visits in 1978-79.

The Rocky Mountain region led the country with 26.7 million ski visits, a little shy of last year's best-ever 27.9 million.

While skifields in Australia and New Zealand were slow to open this winter due to a lack of snow, resorts in **Chile and Argentina** saw the best start to their ski seasons in decades.

Some resorts were unable to open for a while as there was too much snow and chairlifts were buried.

In Chile, Valle Nevado had 5 metres of snow in May and opened three weeks earlier than planned. resort typically receives 6.1 metres of snow annually.

In Argentina, Las Lenas had to delay its opening with 6.5 metres of snow on the upper slopes.

Tiffindell, South Africa's only ski resort, has announced its permanent closure.

Two years of the Covid pandemic plus poor snowfall has proved that even with snowmaking machines, Tiffindell is not economic.

The only places to ski in Africa now are Afriski in Lesotho and two indoor slopes in Egypt.

A recently opened Club Med destination in China, which incorporates an indoor snow slope, has announced plans to add a second slope, which will be the world's new longest indoor slope.

The Oasis Taicang Resort opened at the end of 2023 and has already attracted more than 300,000 visitors.

Now Phase 2 of the development to the tune of 5 billion yuan (\$US690 million) will include two linked indoor snow centres together offering a total slope length of 1700 metres and the biggest indoor vertical in the world at 120 metres.

*Chinese conglomerate Shanghai Yuyuan Tourist Mart has announced that it will sell the **Hoshino Resorts Tomamu** ski area in Hokkaido (Japan) for 40.8 billion yen (\$US252 million) on the heels of a real*

estate downturn in China.

The Chinese firm will sell almost all the shares of the Tokyo-based company that owns the luxury resort complex. Its business operations have deteriorated amid the slumping real estate market in China and it has been selling off its assets.

Hoshino Resorts Tomamu has one skiing gondola and five chairlifts.

Inghams, the top British ski holiday company, is for sale.

It is owned by Swiss company Hotelplan that is in turn owned by the supermarket chain Migros which has decided to sell out of the travel business.

Inghams started by Walter Ingham in 1934 and has grown to be a trusted tour operator.

"We never quite got the connection between a supermarket and a travel business," the company said, while announcing the sale.

Inghams mainly offers holidays in Europe, but also has destinations in Canada and Japan. Its packages include flights from 20 airports in the UK.

Mt Buller (Victoria, Australia) ski resort celebrated its 100th birthday in mid-July with a series of events on-snow and off-snow.

This marked 100 years since seven pioneering members of the newly-created Ski Club of Victoria hiked up to Mt Buller's summit and made the first turns with skis.

Members were encouraged to turn out in vintage ski gear for the celebrations which included a torchlit descent of 100 skiers.

Scottish skifield the Lecht Ski Centre has been saved by crowdfunding.

In May the Lecht said it was on the brink of closure so it launched a public crowdfunding campaign to raise £35,000 (\$NZ70,000).

In July its management said the campaign was successful and they'll be open for skiing and riding next winter.

The skifield has two chairlifts, six poma/platter lifts and two magic carpets.



CLUB ITEMS & SERVICES FOR SALE

RSC Administration Office, P.O. Box 8064, Newmarket, Auckland 1149

Website: www.rsc.org.nz

email: admin@rsc.org.nz

Lockers

Ski and gear lockers are available in the Hut, Lodge and Turoa buildings.
Please email admin@rsc.org.nz for current availability.

Annual Locker Rental Rates:

Charged at the date of allocation.

Ski Locker \$63.25
Gear Locker \$32.62

Club Items

(Add \$3 for each order to be posted)

Name Badge (free to new members) \$12

PHONE NUMBERS

RSC Office 09-377-3856
Lodge 07-892-3824
Hut 07-892-3822
Chalet 07-892-3823
Turoa 06-385-8767

NEW MEMBERS COSTS

Attend two working parties.
Joining fee senior and young adult \$199
Junior \$99
Annual senior subscription \$310
Annual sub young adult, junior,
associate, veteran \$130

ACCOMMODATION FEES

2024 season nightly rates –

	With Cook	Without Cook – Turoa + Chalet
Senior member	\$63.00	\$45.00
Young Adult	\$63.00	\$45.00
Teen member	\$54.00	\$39.00
Junior member	\$41.00	\$30.00
Member's Child	\$32.00	\$24.00
Senior non-Member	\$114.00	\$80.00
Junior non-Member	\$76.00	\$54.00