



Romantic Skiing Snow time for couples

The Australian and New Zealand alpine resorts offer a white wonderland of escape during winter, writes **Arthur Stanley**

SKI boots off, feet up, warming drink in hand, icy-cold cheeks thawed by the flicker of a roaring log fire.

Outside it's snowing, inside you're glowing as endorphins rush through your body from the adrenalin-charged hours before.

A ski holiday is all the more special when you share it with someone special. It's even more so when you stay somewhere that has a touch of class and luxury, so your accommodation is as memorable as the mountains themselves.

Just as every resort has accommodation options for those on a budget, they also have luxury alpine hideaways that make perfect holidays for couples looking for that romantic edge.

Schuss down the white slopes and then kick back in a beautiful chalet or lodge, enjoying the peace and beauty of the mountains. Later, dine at an intimate alpine restaurant while the white flakes tumble down outside.

There are packages designed specifically for couples, ensuring there's plenty of pampering of soul after all the scampering on snow.

Just being in Thredbo can bring out your romantic side.

Maybe it's the river that runs through the heart of the village or the beautiful alpine village as famous for its shops, bars and restaurants as it is for its towering mountains.

A fabulously romantic Thredbo property is The Peak, which offers stunning one, two or three-bedroom

apartments, some of which feature floor-to-roof windows looking out on to the Crackenback Supertrail.

The iconic Thredbo Alpine Hotel is not the height of luxury, but it does offer a unique hotel-style all-inclusive snow holiday because you are so close to the ski lifts, bars and restaurants. In fact, the hotel's popular piano bar, where you sit around a log fire and look out on to the mountain, is just down the hallway.

The Perisher Valley Hotel remains one of the finest snowed inns of the Australian alps. Sitting in the heart of Perisher, Australia's biggest ski resort, the PVH offers a fabulous on-snow holiday experience. It's located at the base of the lifts in Perisher Valley, so you enjoy ski-in, ski-out access for an exhilarating slide on the mountain each day.

Soak up the five-star service and especially Snow Gums restaurant, where you can peer at the night skiers over dinner and a glass of wine.

A hidden secret at Perisher is Heidi's Chalet Apartments, which opened for the 2009 season. Heidi's is located at Smiggin Holes, right opposite the chairlift, so it is ideal for couples who are first-timers or beginners.

Each two-bedroom apartment has its own car space too, meaning you can drive right up to your accommodation.

It's romantic just walking through the snow-covered streets of Falls Creek, with its European-style village dotted among the Australian snowgums.

Falls Creek has arguably the best alpine dining scene in the Australian alps, with Summit Ridge, Winterhaven and Astra just some of the fine eateries to look out for.

There are numerous beautiful places to stay. Huski has a romantic package called "Heaven in a hamper". You stay in a designer one-bedroom apartment with a private hot tub on the terrace and enjoy a gourmet hamper featuring sumptuous local produce and wine supplied from the resort's onsite Produce Store. It's an indulgent evening in.

One of the great hidden secrets of skiing at Hotham is the beauty of the nearby Dinner Plain village. Only 10km from Hotham, Dinner Plain provides a wonderfully romantic environment in a unique alpine village setting designed by leading Australian architects. There are 300 private lodges, cabins, apartments and commercial lodges.

The stunning Under The Moonlight chalet is an appropriately named accommodation house for couples, The Last Run has a fabulous spa, Absolut Apartments is the ultimate indulgence on-snow at Hotham, while centrally located White Crystal Apartments offer an excellent off-peak Romantic Escape package. Couples going to the powder capital of Hotham should try the Sparkling Sunset Tour.

The beauty of going to Mt Buller is that it is only three hours from the



heart of Melbourne. Interstate visitors can use frequent flyer points or grab a cheap flight to the southern capital and take a hire car to the village.

The Mt Buller Chalet ranks with the finest hotels in the Aussie alps. Walk out of your room with beautiful mountain views and you're virtually on Bourke St ski run to the lifts.

The Chalet features arguably Buller's best restaurant too, the Black Cockatoo, with new executive chef Shane Lewis joining this season. Your package allows you use of the fitness centre and the indoor pool and steam room.

Another excellent Mt Buller option for couples is the boutique-style Andre's At Buller, which offers luxurious alpine bed-and-breakfast hospitality, not to mention stunning cinematic sunrises.

Perhaps the ultimate in romance this winter is surprising your partner with tickets to New Zealand for three or four days. Of course, you don't have to tell them how affordable it is either.

There are some amazing deals designed for couples. A weekend is cutting it a bit short, but stretch it to a few days and you can quite comfortably make it to Queenstown – perhaps the ultimate in romantic snow destinations.

Every skier should see Queenstown at least once. If you do it with the love of your life, neither of you will forget it

Deals to delight

Falls Creek: Huski heaven in a hamper. \$1299 a couple June and September. Two nights in designer one-bedroom apartment with private hot tub and gourmet hamper of local produce, one hour in-room massage. Book an additional night for \$189 extra. Falls Creek bookings: 1800 453 525 or fallscreek.com.au

Hotham: Romantic Escape: \$703 a person for two nights in White Crystal Apartments studio. Package includes two-day lift passes, two group lessons or massage at White Spa, dinner for two. June 12-25, Sep 13-Oct 3. Hotham bookings: 1800hotham or hotham.com.au

Mt Buller: Mt Buller Chalet \$1120 a couple for two nights in one-bedroom apartment Sun-Thu, includes breakfast and one two-course dinner for two people. Includes use of sports centre, indoor pool and steam room.

Mt Buller bookings: 1800buller or mtbuller.com.au

Thredbo: The Peak. Stay three nights June 11-26 or after Sep 5 for \$800 a couple. The Peak: 1300 799 130. Thredbo bookings: 1300 020 589 or thredbo.com.au

Perisher: Mountain view suite at Perisher Valley Hotel from \$689 a person for two nights from June 11-19. Includes breakfasts and dinners at Snow Gums restaurant. Up to \$1100 a person peak season same inclusions. Perisher bookings: 1300 655 811 or perisher.com.au

Queenstown: Ski Max Qantas Romance Package: Fly direct to Queenstown from Sydney: four nights Hotel St Moritz, four-day car hire, three-day Queenstown lift pass. From \$1560 a person. Bookings: Ski Max on 1300 136 997 or www.skimax.com.au



UNIQUE SETTING: Cilantro casual bar at Dinner Plain village.



TOUCH OF CLASS: The Huski luxury apartments at Falls Creek.