

WINTER ARRIVES EARLY IN NEW ZEALAND

Ski resorts near Queenstown and Wanaka in New Zealand have reported up to 1 metre of snow during storms in the last 48 hours.

This recent snow deluge, on top of consistent falls earlier in the month, are delivering spectacular pre-season conditions.

Staff at **Treble Cone** were greeted with thigh high snow in the car park on Monday morning. Mountain staff are starting to groom runs and 'pack-down' snow on trails in preparations for their opening on 27 June.

Cardrona Alpine Resort hasn't experience such early season snowfalls of this magnitude since 1995. Blizzard conditions dished up two metre snow drifts on the road making access difficult for staff.

According to Sam Lee at **Snow Park NZ**, just across the Cardrona Valley, "This has given us a great heads start and snow making will be even more effective allowing for us to open all facilities as scheduled on 4 July".

Lake Wanaka Tourism general manager, James Helmore, said town was buzzing in anticipation of an excellent season.

"It looks like mid-winter now and it's only May," he said. "Having so much snow this early provides a hugely positive start to the season which helps everybody, from retailers to the ski fields themselves. There are lots of people just itching to get up the mountain and I'm sure there'll be plenty of keen skiers and riders getting in some early season touring over the next few days!"

Near Queenstown, The Remarkables, the ski area has received 45cm of fresh snow in the last 48 hours and has received 150cm over the last two weeks, resulting in a solid 120cm base across the mountain.

The Remarkables Ski Area Manager Ross Lawrence said he was excited about current conditions stating "it is the best start to the season anybody can remember for many years."

"These are magic conditions for this time of year so we're all hyped up for some superb skiing and riding from opening day," he said.

Coronet Peak reports a base of 80 cm at the top of the mountain and 50 cm at their base.

Hamish McCrostie, Coronet Peak Ski Area Manager, said they couldn't have asked for a better build up to season opening.

“It’s just fantastic. We’ve had consistent snow falls since early May which is unusual but very welcome,” he said. “We’ve started packing the snow already which bodes well for a really good base for the season to come.”

More snow showers are forecast for Queenstown over the next few days with the weather expected to clear but be cold over the weekend.

Bitterly cold weather is still passing to the north through New Zealand with as yet unreported dumps on Mt Hutt in Canterbury and Mt Ruapehu in the centre of the North Island.

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Images below are available on request.

Ski Resort Expected Opening Dates

RESORT AREA	DATE
Mt Hutt	30 May
Coronet Peak	6 June
The Remarkables	20 June
Cardrona	26 June
Treble Cone	27 June
Turoa	20 June
Whakapapa	27 June



Photo caption: John Power, Head of Grooming, works to clear The Remarkables access road at the 11.5km mark, in one of two of the ski area’s new state-of-the-art snow groomers. Image courtesy of NZ Ski Ltd.

All subsequent images courtesy of Treble Cone.



