

OREGON AND ITS FABULOUS SKI RESORTS ARE PUTTING OUT THE WELCOME MAT FOR AUSSIE SKIERS & BOARDERS. REPORTS **BRONWEN GORA**



# *North Western Exposure* OREGON'S MIGHTY MT BACHELOR & **MT HOOD**



Considering Oregon receives full marks in both the skiing and beer departments, it's amazing the mountain destinations of this western US state have not appeared in local ski brochures till now. But as of the last few years, local operators have taken Oregon into the fold making it far easier for Australasians to explore this snowy corner of the northern US.

Here are a few reasons why you should: Portland, the gateway city into which most visitors will arrive in Oregon, has a whopping 65 breweries, the most of any city in the US. This is matched by a happening food and wine scene.

Secondly, Portland is a mere 60 to 90 minute drive to one of its major ski areas, Mt Hood, and a four-hour drive or 40 minute flight to Mt Bachelor.

Mt Bachelor is impressive not least because it is laid out around the summit of a non-active volcano and gets hit by an average 11m of snow annually.

Any readers familiar with Whakapapa or Turoa, located on active volcano Mt Ruapehu in the middle of New Zealand's North Island, will have an inkling of

what skiing at Mt Bachelor is like, full of variation not found on other ski mountains thanks to the vagaries of solidified lava.

New for the 2016-17 season is the Cloudchaser detachable quad, opening up 635 additional acres over 1448 vertical feet on the mountain's east side, a \$USD 6 million investment that will make Bachelor America's 5th largest ski area. It will be their 7th high-speed quad, and with 88 trails, a 3,365'/ 1025m vertical drop this is one big mountain.

It's also one where you need to take safety seriously, and be equipped for and aware of avalanche risks; weather can change frighteningly quickly on volcanoes. Support their avalanche dog training program by buying a cool t-shirt when you're there. Winter seasons run from November to May, when many visitors will ski in the morning and golf, bike or lay about in the sun in the afternoons.

From Mt Bachelor it is possible to descend in every direction, or hike the cinder cone, or, especially when the weather closes in, ski the trees and carve up as many powder stashes as you can find. Sure the treeless



summit area is subject to being socked in by weather but show us one that isn't.

Bend, 30 minutes from Mt Bachelor, and Sunriver, 20 minutes away, are your typical character-filled American ski hill towns that have become magnets for hip young entrepreneurs with brewing and/or culinary skills who have filled them with cool places to eat and drink and stay.

Further north and closer to Portland is the 3400m Mt Hood, where the first ski field in Oregon was established in 1927 at Cooper Spur.

These days Mt Hood's major commercial fields are Mt Hood Meadows, Mt Hood Ski Bowl and Timberline Lodge and Ski Resort.

Mt Hood Ski Bowl is the closest ski resort to Portland, a 50 minutes drive, so be prepared to rise early and get on first lift when there's freshies to be had, otherwise those deep powder stashes will be tracked out by locals well before your morning eggs are fried.

What Mt Hood Ski Bowl lacks in size it makes up for in prowess: it has the most black diamond runs (60%) of Oregon's 12 resorts, plus the largest night skiing operation in America. This is just the ticket for Portland workers who want to squeeze in ski after work as well as tourists who like making the most of their ski vacations.

Mt Hood Meadows, 90 min from Portland, is the second largest ski field in Oregon after Mt Bachelor. It has diverse terrain and many short slopes for intermediates comfortably located near its main lodge. Advanced skiers can hit the forested glades and tree runs that run below the Shooting Star and Hood River express lifts. Expert skiers will find their element in the Heather and Clark canyon areas found through a gate off Mount Hood Meadows' Cascade Express lift. Even more serious skiing is hidden in chutes and bowls that are accessed most easily by taking the snow cat rides to the Mt Hood Meadows' 9000ft summit.

They have excellent family programs too, with progressive parks your kids will love and even a fully enclosed conveyor lift for the wee ones.

Mt Hood's third ski field, Timberline is renowned for the 1937-built Timberline Lodge, whose exterior famously doubled as the Overlook Hotel in horror film "The Shining," starring Jack Nicholson. The lodge was built by 500 men during the Great Depression as a government work project.

Timberline's other claims to fame include being the only ski area in North America open 12 months a year. It is spectacularly located high on Mt Hood, Oregon's tallest peak, so the 10m of snow that falls here each winter tends to stick. The top express quad only runs for the spring and summer seasons; in winter they run a free snowcat up to access the same terrain. And there's still another nearly 3,000 vertical feet above the top lift to the top of the mountain! In fact off the lifts they have more vertical in summer than Australia's best in winter. No wonder it's hugely popular for summer training camps for freestyle and racing.



#### Know more

*getting there* Non-stop flights to Portland are available from Los Angeles, San Francisco, Denver or Salt Lake City.

Bend (Redmond Airport) is linked by flights from Seattle and Portland. Ski Max have packages to Mt Bachelor and Mt Hood, from \$1,525 pp 2 share for 7 nights with a 6 day pass.

*packages* [www.skimax.com.au](http://www.skimax.com.au)

*resorts* [www.mtbachelor.com](http://www.mtbachelor.com) [www.timberlinelodge.com](http://www.timberlinelodge.com)

[www.skihood.com](http://www.skihood.com)

*tourism info* [www.traveloregon.com](http://www.traveloregon.com) [www.travelportland.com](http://www.travelportland.com)

# ski OREGON

## WITH SKIMAX

Oregon's ski areas Mt Hood & Mt Bachelor have it all, from beginner runs to advanced terrain. Located just 90 minutes from Portland, you can experience the largest night skiing area in North America, snowshoe around scenic lakes or spend an afternoon Nordic skiing, there's something for everyone at these vibrant resorts.

### Ski Mt Bachelor USA

7 NIGHTS FROM **\$1,525\*pp**

 7 nights twin share in a Lodge Village Room at Sunriver Lodge

 6 Day Lift Pass

\*Valid for travel 4 January – 16 March 2017. Book & pay by 31 August 2016.

### Ski Mt Hood USA

7 NIGHTS FROM **\$2,065\*pp**

 7 nights twin share in a Hotel Room at Timberline Lodge with daily breakfast

 6 Day Lift Pass

\*Valid for travel 3 January – 3 March 2017. Book & pay by 31 August 2016.



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