

# Tasmanian Ski-ing Grounds

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Hon. Secretary, S.C. of Tasmania.

Potentialities, as an economist would say, are possibly the most salient thing about Tasmanian ski-ing at present. However, this must not be taken as a reflection against the Islanders, for it seems universally true that the popularity of a recreation varies directly with the ease of indulging in it, less a certain factor accounted for by lack of novelty or prejudice. Now, in both Hobart and Launceston, general sporting conditions are particularly good, and easy of access, while, on account of the fortunate location of these towns, they also enable yachting, fishing, shooting, and walking devotees to have wider opportunities than usual. It will be seen, therefore, that the comparatively small number of city dwellers are widely disseminated in their pastimes, far more so than in large towns where such sports are considerably more expensive and difficult of attainment. It is this plethora of other sport, and not the indifference of the people, that accounts for the neglect of the snowfields; and it is fairly certain that Tasmanian ski-ing will continue to suffer from this same effect until easy and quick access is more generally available to the snow country.

From the above remarks, the reader will gather that it is not correct to gauge the possibilities of the Island's ski-ing by the small number of ski runners, nor, for the matter of that, by their standards; and by rather emphasising this point the writer hopes that prospective visitors will not be deterred by the smallness of the number of local people really wedded to the sport, or by the absence of winter hotels and accommodation houses as at Kosciusko, Buffalo, Buller, Hotham and other mainland resorts. To-day Tasmanian ski-ing trips are synonymous with semi-camping conditions, and, since the accommodation huts are good, tourists should be well suited by the change.

The State's mountains may roughly be divided into two classes, from a snowcraft point of view, the detached and individual ranges and mountains, chiefly in the south and west, and the connected highlands and peaks of the central plateau. While access to the plateau and the fishing lakes is easy, good roads leading to both ends of The Great Lake, it is not of much use at present, for the ridges around the Lake are low and unsuitable. Later on, no doubt, matters will improve, when branch roads give easy

approach to the good snows further west, as at Rugged Mountain. The road to the north end of the Lake is certainly of much more advantage, since it enables Launceston skiers to get practice around Pine Lake, a two and a half hour's run bringing one to snow, which, if not of the most desirable extent and slope, affords good chances for week-end practice and Sunday trips. In the western section, however, far better conditions prevail, but snarer's huts and hunter's tracks are the only ways and means now available.

In spite of this, the Tourist Bureau have now control of two sound mining huts on the Pelion Plain, an excellent site for an exploring base, for the snowfields of the numerous and important mountains set closely around. Pelion Huts are 2,800 ft. in altitude, while Ossa and Pelion West rise to about 5,000 ft., and these and adjoining mountains afford very fine ridges and slopes, so that when roads replace the thirty mile packtrack, it is possible that this country will become the most popular in the Island.

Further to the west, but still connected by high country, one finds the Barn Bluff-Cradle Mountain system, and



CHART OF TASMANIA'S CHIEF SNOW MOUNTAINS.  
With Heights above Sea Level.

N.B.—The Arthur and Frankland Ranges are not recommended but are included as of considerable extent.

a snug little accommodation chalet in the Cradle Valley (3,050) is available. Cradle Valley is connected by road to the North Coast railway and towns, but the last twelve miles of the route are unsuitable for motors, visitors going by horse conveyance, which can get within a mile of the chalet in winter. Although not the best of centres in itself, Cradle Valley forms a base for attacks upon the better snows and slopes around it, the somewhat battered Lake Windermere Hut seven miles away (3,500) being well situated for a tour.

Regarding the other northern mountains little can authoritatively be stated, as they have not yet been properly investigated from a ski-ing point of view, but it seems



Photo. by Beattie.

The Central South-eastern Section of the Tasmanian National Park, photographed after a thaw from the summit of Mount Field East and looking at the Mawson-Rodway Range. Mount Field West is over the Rodway Range on the sky-line in the right corner. Lake Fenton is sunk below the ridge edge behind the open moors in the middle foreground. Mount Field West is about seven miles distant as the crow flies.

certain that there are several sites that will prove to be serious rivals to National Park when once they are opened up. Ben Lomond (5,160), the highest mountain in the State, is not recommended, as it has rather a flat top and is generally unsatisfactory.

The majority of the southern ranges are beyond the pale of civilisation, and thus some excellent mountains, such as the Denisons and the Snowies, are impracticable, except to experienced campers, prepared for hard carrying. Again, others like La Perouse, Adamson's Peak and



This map illustrates the Ski-ing Terrain in the Tasmanian National Park, the main resort in the State. The Park is only 48 miles from Hobart.

the Hartz are close to the sea, and thereby affected to some extent, so that, while they have promising slopes and receive good falls, they are not comparable with the inland ranges of National Park. In consequence they have not received much attention, although a good hut is available on the Hartz system. Mt. Wellington, at Hobart, is also adversely affected by the sea, and, while frequently affording good practice and touring conditions for some months, should not be regarded as a complete ski-ing centre, its great virtue lying in its proximity to the town; for half an hour's drive to the Springs (2,480) and an hour's walk



Photo, by Beattie.

K. Col, from the western face of Mount Mawson, Tasmanian National Park, with Mount Field West rising away to the right, and the Belton Belcher Valley in foreground.

of less than two miles brings one to the top ridge of the mountain at 4,100 feet (the Pinnacle being 4,166). Although it is possible to ski up from the Springs, it is usually better to walk, as the path is not a ski track. On top, however, considerable scope is available, so that in good winters one can often have ski-ing for weeks at a time. Winter visitors can either stay in the town and motor up daily, or stop at the Springs Hotel, a good hospice, and not infrequently covered by the "white mantle." Mt. Wellington, however, is not a recommended spot for a special trip, and visitors should pass on to National Park if time permits, Wellington only being mentioned for a week-end or Sunday excursion if on a business visit to Hobart in the late winter.

National Park is the main resort in the State and calls the skier's chief interest, for, although better country may exist in the northern mountains mentioned earlier, they are too inaccessible for everyday needs. The Park, on the other hand, is very close; in fact, by far the closest ski-ing centre to any Australian city, being only 48 miles by road and rail to the gates, and six and a quarter by good pack track to the accommodation huts at Lake Fenton (3,500 ft.). The six huts are all within a few yards of the Lake, and are fitted with the usual equipment, except blankets. Catering arrangements can be made with the Accommodation House proprietor at the gates, with the Tourist Bureau, or by the party themselves. Pack and riding horses are available at set charges from the ranger, and can be booked privately or through the Bureau. Skis are



Photo: C. V. Smith.

Along the route from the Club Hut to Newdigate Pass and the Rodway Range in the National Park.

always maintained at Lake Fenton, and are available at moderate charges. Besides the Lake Fenton settlement, the Ski Club of Tasmania maintain their own hut at Twilight Tarn, some four miles away, while a shelter and luncheon hut at Lake Dobson ensures protection should bad weather befall a party using the slopes of that locality.

In normal winters the June falls freeze and drifts accumulate, so that each succeeding fall betters conditions, and, while the exposed moors may thaw and recover several times, assured slopes are pretty certain during the latter half of July, August, and most of September, and drifts for any time up to late November, according to the season. New surfaced hard snow or granulated (sugary)

hard snow are the rule, deep soft snow generally lasting but shortly before being converted into one of the above forms, either crusted or surfaced, according to locality and conditions. In fact, the Telemark experts have little legitimate cause to exhibit, although that turn can be, and is, adapted to the usual surfaces with more success than it possibly merits.

The total area of the Park is about 40,000 acres and, of this, some thirty square miles are available to skiers, thereby giving ample scope for trips to the many different points of interest, embracing many varieties of country and fully meeting the needs of an average holiday. For experienced and venturesome tourers, the Lake St. Clair-Cradle Mountain Reserve can satiate the thirst for breaking new snows, but for good ski-ing and reasonable tours the Park is by far the most suitable base at present.

Topographically, the Park is most unusual, and one is likely to be amazed at the rapid and varied changes of contour, steep ridges, long slopes, undulating moors, sheltered tarns, and fair-sized lakes. The general layout of the highlands may be briefly explained as three main parallel and connected ranges, separated by moors, valleys and lakes, the central section being drained by the Broad River, flowing parallel with the ridges. The western and central ranges provide the best slopes, and the runs from Mt. Field West and the slopes around Newdigate Pass in the Rodway Range are particularly good.

For long tours, trips from Lake Fenton to the Summits of Field West or Tyenna Peak will give plenty of variation, as well as providing excellent runs, the shortest route being about seven miles each way. Again, the terrain round Newdigate Pass is very inviting, and its well sheltered easterly slopes give start to delightful descents through pine and gum woods, over frozen tarns, and, ultimately, down to the Ski Club Hut, some 1,000 feet below the Pass level of 4,600.

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Colonel Selater sends us a copy of a leaflet, "Ski-ing in the Canadian Rockies." The leaflet deals with the Mount Norquay Ski Camp, located about three miles from Banff, whence it is reached by auto and sleigh. It is the headquarters of the Banff Ski Club, and a membership fee of 50 cents. per day or 2 dollars per week entitles visitors to all Club privileges. Ski-ing is possible on Mount Norquay from the middle of November to the middle of May, and this should induce any Australian skiers travelling in that period to break their journey at Banff.