

December: where to go for off-peak snow

Low airfares mean the best slopes in north America, south America and Australasia are now within your grasp. By **Patrick Thorne**



SEPTEMBER

Victoria - New South Wales
A short hop to New South Wales and another of Australia's leading ski areas at Thredbo which boasts the largest snow making system in the hemisphere, twelve lifts, and Australia's highest peak, Mt Kosciusko (2228m).

OCTOBER

Sydney - Batam
This is the month to start pointing those skis back homeward. Most of the large Alpine ski areas with glaciers start staging "Season Opener" festivals from early October where you can test the first fresh snow of the season in resorts like Austria's Sölden or Hintertux. Over in the US, East Coast resorts like Killington and Sunday River battle with Keystone and Loveland for the year's "first tracks" award. In the southern hemisphere, if it's a good season, there are a few weeks left, if it's a bad one then you better get those grass skis on. Still no need to dash all the way back to the Alps when there's plenty of lovely fresh powder in the Tropics, thanks in good part to British indoor snow entrepreneur Malcolm Clulow. The Waterfront City development in Batam, Indonesia, has a snowdome by the waters edge, 23km south of Singapore. There are other tropical snowdomes in Malaysia and Thailand.

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER

Batam - Tokyo - Helsinki - Home
Dozens of areas in the Alps and the Rockies will be opening up every weekend from now on. But why rush back when you have a choice of around a thousand ski areas in Japan? After an obligatory stop at the world's largest indoor snow slope, the 550m (1,800ft) long facility built on earthquake proof stilts in Tokyo harbour, take the bullet train

ay. By the end of the month to look south where falling temperatures and improving snow-technology should mean more impressive resorts of

and La Parva. The latter includes Chile's first quad chair lift, one of more than 40 lifts available from the three combined. A few hundred miles to the south, and just over the Argentinian border: Las Leñas has

a chance to ski the legendary Perito Moreno with its five drag lifts normally operational from early July. It guaranteed its place in world skiing trivia by reportedly operating the lifts free of charge. Another one for the

until February and is famous for skiing under the midnight sun in June.

JULY

Tierra del Fuego - Auckland - Christchurch
New Zealand's ski season gets un-

AUGUST

Christchurch - Melbourne
It's about 200 miles inland from Melbourne to Victoria's better ski areas. Fall's Creek and Mount Hotham now boast 15 quad chairs between them. What's literally