

# Tips and essentials for your group's visit to Whakapapa



Welcome to Whakapapa! To ensure your trip runs as smoothly as possible, here are a couple of essentials, tips and reminders. We also have a pre-visit checklist available on the Schools & Groups section of our website.

## **BOOKING CHANGES**

***Once your booking is confirmed, communicate any changes or cancellations to your Mt Ruapehu Schools & Groups Co-ordinator as soon as possible so we can accommodate them.***

Advising us of any unwanted lessons or rental equipment in advance could mean accommodating another group who may be on standby. The Snow School prepare their staff roster a week in advance, so any lesson changes in the week prior to your visit can cause severe disruptions.

- **Major changes** should be advised at least 10 days in advance (e.g. significant changes in lesson numbers or rentals or a new type or level of lesson required)
- **Minor changes** can be accommodated on the day of your visit itself, but may cause delays for your group.

If weather is bad at Whakapapa but good at Turoa, we will work with the Turoa Schools & Groups Co-ordinator to accommodate your visit there. Please be aware that lesson times are different at Turoa.

Please phone through final numbers **2.00pm-4.00pm the day before your visit so we can pre-print your tickets**. If you do not confirm your final numbers by 4pm the day prior to your visit, we cannot guarantee pre-printing of your tickets and you may have to wait longer in the office as a result.

## **PREPARING FOR BAD WEATHER**

The weather on Mt Ruapehu can change quickly. We highly recommend keeping an eye on the mountain weather forecast (<http://www.metservice.com/skifields/index>) and having a back-up plan for transport (see below) and/or alternative activities in case the ski area is closed due to bad weather. We are more than happy to provide assistance with interpreting the forecast and its potential implications – just call us on 07 892 4000.

There is no covered storage area for bags and if the weather is bad there will be no space in the cafes. We recommend bringing a tarpaulin or other waterproof cover to tie over your bags and protect them when they are outside.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Changeable weather conditions mean that the road can be restricted to vehicles with chains or 4WD. We are unable to provide shuttles ourselves and there are no chain hire facilities available, so please consider your transportation back-up options. Information on getting to the snow can be found on our website here: <http://www.mtruapehu.com/winter/getting-to-the-snow/>.

Ruapehu Alpine Lifts itself does not operate any transport to and from the mountain and we are unable to take responsibility for getting groups up the mountain road. The main shuttle provider is Mountain Shuttles – 0800 11 76 86. If the forecast is suggesting there may be issues with the road, we recommend calling them to let them know you may require their services.

As of 2011, there are no chain hire facilities available for cars and other family-size vehicles. Please factor this in as part of your transportation planning.

Information on road safety can be found here: <http://www.mtruapehu.com/winter/Road-Safety/>

## LESSONS

### **Group lessons**

We have 3 levels of group lessons:

- Discover (beginner) – in Happy Valley at Whakapapa, Alpine Meadow at Turoa
- Explore (advanced beginner) – at Hut Flat at Whakapapa, Alpine Meadow at Turoa
- Explore (intermediate) – Knoll Ridge at Whakapapa, Wintergarden at Turoa

Group lesson packages include gear rental, appropriate lift pass and a group lesson. They do not include any clothing rental.

Please double check the abilities of those requiring lessons to ensure they have booked the correct level of lesson and advise of any changes at least 10 days before your visit.

<u>Definitions:</u>	
Beginner	First timer, never touched snow before.
Advanced Beginner	Able to complete wedge turns on skis. Able to complete a turn on a snowboard.
Intermediate	Comfortable turning both ways and linking wedge turns on skis. Comfortable linking turns, both heel side and toe side, on a snowboard.

Ski lessons contain a maximum of 15 people; snowboard lessons a maximum of 10. Youths must be aged 8 or over to participate in snowboard lessons.

### **Group lesson times**

If lessons have been indicated on your booking form, lesson times have been pre-allocated for each group on a first come, first served basis and are confirmed on your confirmation form.

Time slots start daily at 9.30 for Discover and 10.00 for Explore. Discover lessons begin every half hour, Explore every 2 hours. Large groups are split into rolling time slots. For example, a group of 60 beginner skiers will take their lessons at 9.30 and 10.00, with 2 groups of 15 in each time slot. It is not possible for large groups to take their lessons all at the same time due to availability of snow school instructors. If the lesson times you have been allocated do not suit, please contact your Mt Ruapehu Schools & Groups Co-ordinator and they will discuss alternative times with you.

**NOTE:** Group sizes are not guaranteed. On the day of your visit, smaller groups may be joined into fewer larger groups. While we will make every effort to avoid this, on some occasions this will be unavoidable.

**NOTE:** You must ensure that your group is on the mountain at least 1 hour prior to your first allocated lesson time. Due to the huge demand for lessons we cannot transfer groups at short notice. Therefore, groups who miss their check-in time will have their lessons shortened or cancelled. It causes severe disruption to our Snow School operation if people do not turn up to lessons on time...or at all. Therefore, there are no refunds on shortened or missed lessons.

**NOTE:** The Discover Package includes Beginner lessons and beginners' area lift pass. The Explore Package includes lessons and an all mountain lift pass. Please discuss all other lesson requirements with your Mt Ruapehu group co-ordinator. Lift pass upgrades are available for a small fee.

### **Group Training**

An alternative to group lessons is our Snow School Group Training. You can book an instructor for a half or full day and lesson groups can be divided and tailored to your requirements. Contact your Mt Ruapehu Schools & Groups Co-ordinator for more detail.

### **Adaptive Learning Centre**

The Ruapehu Adaptive Programme aims to assist anyone with a disability to get out and have fun and freedom on the snow. Experienced instructors provide an opportunity for all people with disabilities to experience the freedom of skiing or boarding and enjoy the spectacular Mt Ruapehu. The programme is run in conjunction with Disabled Snowsports New Zealand (DSNZ). The programme works to ensure there is virtually no limit as to who can participate.

For more information, visit our website <http://www.mtruapehu.com/winter/adaptive-learning-centre/> or contact your Mt Ruapehu Schools & Groups Co-ordinator.

## **RENTALS**

Please ensure you have communicated all rental requirements clearly to your Mt Ruapehu group co-ordinator, including any clothing requirements.

### **Rental cards**

If you have requested rental gear or clothing from us, rental cards will have now been posted out to you along with instructions to complete these before you arrive.

These are not booking forms. They will be used when going through the rentals department for the rentals team to keep a note of what specific items have been allocated to each individual. The information we will be asking for on those cards includes the individual's name, UK shoe size, height and weight. A shoe size conversion chart will be provided with the cards. Height and weight information is important to safely set the bindings on your skis or snowboard.

**NOTE:** Helmets are not a compulsory requirement at Whakapapa and Turoa.

**NOTE:** We do not 'hold aside' specific rental gear or clothing for groups.

**NOTE:** We do not rent out accessories such as goggles, gloves or hats.

### **Multiple day visits**

If your group is booked for more than one day, we ask you to keep your rental gear for the duration of your visit. You can also pick up your equipment at Turoa and return it at Whakapapa, or vice versa.

### **Fitting rental equipment**

Rental equipment is fitted in person, after any rental clothing has been put on.

- Skiers: first fit the boots, then take 1 boot back off to fit skis
- Snowboarders: first fit the boots, then keeping both boots on; go to the snowboard bench for your snowboard and wristguards.

Boots are tight but should not be painful. As a guideline, they should feel on your foot like a bear hug or a firm handshake.

**NOTE:** The use of wristguards for all those hiring snowboards is strongly recommended by Ruapehu Alpine Lifts and ACC. These are free of charge to groups, but any unreturned pairs are charged at \$10 each.

## **SAFETY ON THE MOUNTAIN**

While your visit is all about fun and learning, the mountain can be a hazardous environment.

A wealth of safety information specific to the alpine environment can be found on our website: <http://www.mtruapehu.com/winter/mountain-safety/>. This includes information and videos on our Snow Safety Code, Volcanic Safety and Road Safety. We recommend that all groups watch the videos and read the information before coming to Mt Ruapehu.

Templates for Risk Assessment documentation are also available from the Schools & Groups section of our website.

### **Gear to bring**

Everyone, including sightseers, should at minimum be equipped with the following essential items:

- warm clothing/thermal undergarments\*
- one pair of socks
- sensible footwear
- waterproof and windproof jacket and overtrousers (these are available to rent)
- warm, water resistant gloves/mittens (these are not available to rent)
- hat and scarf (these are not available to rent)
- sunglasses or goggles (these are not available to rent)
- sunblock and lipbalm

\* Wool and synthetic fibres like polypropylene and polar fleece are excellent to wear in an alpine environment. Cotton and nylon garments, e.g. jeans, t-shirts, nylon jerseys etc, are not suitable to wear outside as they offer very little protection when wet.

Make sure that no loose clothing is worn and that long hair is tied up so that it does not get hooked or caught up on the lifts

Suggestions of other useful items:

- A 'unique identifier', e.g. bibs, the same brightly coloured hat, uniform jacket. This allows you and staff to easily identify members of your group on the mountain.
- A 'tag' for each child with information such as their name, their school/group, emergency contact details, medical conditions etc.
- Tarpaulin or other waterproof material to cover bags in case of bad weather.
- Make sure everyone has access to plenty of drinks, especially on hot days, and energy foods.
- Vivid/permanent marker (to write the ski or snowboard number on student's lift pass)
- Consider bringing walkie talkies for ease of communication.
- Consider bringing a dry change of clothes too for the trip home.

### **Lost property and missing people**

All lost property is brought to the main Customer Service desk. If you have lost anything, ask in Customer Services or contact your Mt Ruapehu Schools & Groups Co-ordinator after your visit.

If you cannot find a member of your group, tell the rest of the group what you are doing and come to Customer Services and ask for the Schools & Groups Co-ordinator. They will use the various communication methods at their means to locate the missing person.

### **Where to find help**

Our qualified team of Ski Patrollers are here to help ensure everyone's health and safety on the mountain. You can recognise them by the white cross on their uniform. Their main base at Whakapapa is at the top of the Waterfall Express Chairlift. They can also always be contacted by radio or by phone – just ask any lift operator or go to Customer Services.

We have a fully equipped Accident & Medical Centre offering doctor or nurse consultations and an x-ray service. If someone in your group is injured, this is where they will be taken. The Whakapapa Medical Centre is just below the 5-minute parking zone at the top of the Bruce Road – it is clearly marked with a large blue sign.

## **ACCOMMODATION**

There are numerous options for accommodation on and off the mountain. Ruapehu Alpine Lifts itself does not run any accommodation facilities.

For accommodation in Ohakune, Whakapapa Village, National Park Village and beyond, please visit:

<http://www.mtruapehu.com/winter/accommodation-activities/>

<http://www.visitruapehu.com>

<http://www.nationalpark.co.nz>

<http://www.ohakune.info>

For on-mountain accommodation options at Whakapapa, please visit this page:

<http://www.mtruapehu.com/winter/whakapapa-on-mountain-accommodation/>

## **PAYMENTS**

The preferred method of payment is **via an account** with Ruapehu Alpine Lifts Ltd. In order to set up an account you need to complete the Credit Application form attached. Any unused products (tickets) must be returned on the day and, if a refund is appropriate, a credit invoice will be issued. If you are already set up for credit with us, we would greatly appreciate if you could complete and return the first section of the Credit Application form annually so our accounts department has an up to date record of your details.

**NOTE:** You will receive a GST till receipt with your tickets when you pick them up. A tax invoice will be forwarded to your accounts department by mail within 2 weeks of your visit.

If your group is **paying by cash, credit card or cheque**, payment is required on a daily basis when tickets are picked up at Customer Services. Any unused products (tickets) must be returned on the day and they will be refunded appropriately. Payment by cheque **must** be presented with a valid credit card – we will write the credit card details on the back of the cheque as security. The credit card will only be charged if the cheque bounces.

## ON THE MOUNTAIN

On the day of your visit itself, we have procedures in place to make the process of allocating tickets, going through rentals and getting into lessons run as smoothly as possible.

Most importantly, **please ensure you are in the office collecting your tickets at the arrival time indicated on your confirmation letter** – this is usually **at least 1 hour** prior to your first allocated lesson time (if you are taking lessons).

The process:

- If you are paying by invoice and you confirm your final numbers and requirements **before 4pm the day before** your visit, we can pre-print your tickets ready for pick up in the morning. For any final numbers confirmed after that time, we cannot guarantee pre-printing of your tickets.
- Contact Schools & Groups (07 892 4000 ext 7703) in the morning if you are running late or if you decide to cancel, so we can make necessary arrangements. Remember you need to make a booking for your group at least 2 weeks in advance.
- Our friendly road crew will give you directions to available and appropriate parking. We have a designated bus park on the left at the top of the road – spaces allocated on a first come, first served basis. Please ensure any buses and mini-vans are clearly marked with your school or group's name.
- **Do not enter rentals.** Gather your group in one area on the plaza and keep them together. Now is a good time for a toilet stop – toilets are in Lorenz's Bar & Café.
- Send 1, maximum 2 people to collect your tickets from the Schools & Groups Office (around the left hand side of the ticket windows). Remember, you should be doing this **at least 1 hour** prior to when you wish to be on the snow. **Note:** On high volume days it may take some time to get your tickets and your rentals.
- In the meantime, group people according to lesson/lift ticket type.
- Distribute correct tickets and rental cards to each person, then, if you are renting from us, return to the Schools & Groups Office for a host to take you to rentals.
- A Schools & Groups Host will talk your group through the rentals process and then take you to your designated rentals outlet. **Remember:** If your visit is for more than one day, please make arrangements to keep all your rental gear for the duration of your visit.
- All accompanying adults are expected to assist with general tasks during the process of getting your students through rentals and into their lessons – e.g. distributing lift tickets, collecting shoes in the shoe bags, gathering students outside rentals and taking students to lessons.
- Shoes will be kept in large bags in the rentals department. There are limited locker facilities (\$2 each) and a \$5 bag check in the top rentals building. There are currently no other designated areas for storing backpacks or other bags. We recommend leaving any unnecessary valuables at home or keeping them on your person.
- You might find it useful, especially for beginners, to write the unique number of their skis or snowboard on their lift pass. There are always lots of skis and snowboards in the racks and they can easily be mixed up.
- After leaving rentals, ensure students having lessons are organised into their groups, with a teacher or parent for each group, and that they are at the designated meeting place at least 10 minutes before the lesson start time. **Note:** It causes severe disruption to our Snow School operation if people do not turn up to lessons on time...or at all. Therefore, there are no refunds on shortened or missed lessons.
- Have a meeting place and time arranged for students or adults who may get separated from the group. Make sure everyone in your group knows the name and cell phone number of the teacher/coordinator so they can be contacted in case of an emergency.
- If any of your group becomes tired or cold, get them to a shelter, give them a warm drink and put more dry clothing on them.
- At the end of your visit, please return all rentals by 4.30pm. Returns after this time will be charged as an extra day.

Remember we are here for you. So if you have any questions at any time, please feel free to come and see us in the Schools & Groups Office.