



Wintry vista:
Lake Hayes
with Coronet
Peak in the
distance.

Photo:
Destination
Queenstown

After a soak I settle in a leather armchair in front of the fire for a quiet read.

of Coronet's new features – the result of seven new Kassbohrer “Pisten Bully” snow groomers shipped in from Germany at a cost of \$600,000 each – and in the cloudy flat light it's a boon. You can ski with confidence even when you can't see.

As the day continues the weather closes in, snow falls, I wipe a gloved finger across my goggles, thunder rumbles over the peaks. I'm sitting in a metal chair, on a metal wire suspended between metal pylons in a thunderstorm. Nice.

At the top of Greengates the operator says the lightning is forcing the lift to close. It's only 3.15pm but I'm happy to head down – skier vs 10 million volts is not a good match.

Back at The Dairy my fellow guests are also returning from their outings. An American couple have had a tyre destroyed by a rock on the road from Glenorchy. “It just exploded!” he says. “Hey Elspeth, can you get the Noo Zealand government to get all the rocks off the road?”

(Memo to NZ government: please get rocks off road.)

After a soak I settle in a leather armchair in front of the fire for a quiet read, fortified from the honesty bar: 1 x Heineken, 1 x Chard Farm sauvignon blanc. It feels like there should be a grandfather clock ticking somewhere but there's just the rustle of the logs.

In the morning NZSki PR Alexa Forbes calls to advise against going to The Remarkables – the local weather pattern is bad for that side of the mountains,

she says. I figure I'll give it a go anyway, but she's right. Just past Kawarau Falls I call The Remarkables manager Ross Lawrence to find the place is locked in a blizzard, so it's back to Coronet.

Amazingly, Coronet has clear blue skies and a dump of fresh snow overnight. I jump straight on to the Greengates chair, rolling off at the top for an incredible view. There's no one else here. Down the ridge the only sound is the new snow crunching softly under my

skis. Skippers Canyon weaves out to the right, Lake Wakatipu up ahead, The Remarkables still sheathed in cloud to the left.

After a few runs on that side of the hill I switch across to Express and peel off to the left into Exchange, David Mead's “Luxury of Time” in the earphones, fresh snow under the skis and no one else in sight. Just range after range of snowy tussock, ice and rock stretching into the distance.

■ Tim Hunter was hosted by NZSki.



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