

# *Whakapapa*

UPDATE | 26 MAY 2025

Whakapapa opens Friday 30 May – ahead of King’s Birthday weekend – with that familiar feeling: the ski area awakening, and the magic starting to build.

It’s the our first winter in a new chapter, we are arriving with fresh intent, a sharpened focus, and a season we’re ready to grow into, one layer at a time.

The first layer is **June**.

End-May and June are a chance to return to the maunga, reconnect, and ease into the season ahead. We open with sightseeing and sledding from 30 May, building toward skiing and snowboarding in Happy Valley by Matariki — or earlier, if conditions allow.

## **Opening Weekend.**

We begin with a celebration — Friday 30 May to Sunday 1 June — with sightseeing on the Sky Waka gondola, sledding in Happy Valley, and two snow play zones designed for first-touch snow moments.

One of the snow play zones is brand new — a dedicated space in Happy Valley with more room to slide, throw, and explore. Across the long weekend, you’ll also find breakfast from 9–11am, music, shared spaces, giveaways, and warm treats — with more magic moments waiting to be discovered.

## **Early-season experiences**

June brings a series of early-season experiences designed to get you on snow, in whatever way suits you.

- Begin with an intro to snow — our [“Sledding and Sightseeing Combo”](#). Sky Waka gondola + 1 hour sledding for \$54 adult | \$34 youth (5–17 years) — save up to 30%, June only. Ride above, walk through, slide down, throw, laugh together.
- Add a little altitude to your cup of tea — our [“Sky Waka gondola and High Tea Combo”](#) Sky Waka gondola + our signature high ‘Tea at 2020m’ for



\$79 adult | \$59 youth — served daily from 10am–2pm, available until Matariki. Ride up, settle in, sip slow, take in the view. Bookings essential.

- Take your first turns — our “[Snow Taster](#)” from Matariki: lift access to Happy Valley beginner area + ski or snowboard rental + one-hour group lesson for \$99 adult | \$79 youth (5-17 years). Save up to 40%. Gear up, slide out, fall over, try again, grin wide. only. Limited time.

As snow builds, we'll begin opening more of Whakapapa— lift by lift, run by run. We'll move from tasters to turns, with skiing and riding expanding beyond Happy Valley as soon as conditions allow. Expect steady progress — from bottom to top, east to west — supported by snowfall and strengthened by snowmaking.

Season passes are available now until 8 June — and it's the best value if you're planning more than one visit. Unlimited access, all winter long — from first slides to spring laps. Get yours [here](#).

We look forward to welcoming you back to the maunga soon.

## ENDS

### About Whakapapa

Whakapapa is situated in the heart of New Zealand's central North Island spanning 550 hectares on the northern side of Mt Ruapehu in Tongariro National Park, an easy three-hour drive from Hamilton, four from Wellington and five hours from Auckland.

Since 1953, New Zealanders have been discovering their first love of snow at Whakapapa's premier learner facility, Happy Valley, while more advance skiers and riders hone their skills exploring natural bowls, wind lips, exhilarating chutes, and remnants of old volcanic crater rims on descent from 2320m - New Zealand's highest lifted point.

Naturally volcanic terrain is formed by solidified lava, with snow filling in natural gullies and rocky crevasses from June through to October. Traditionally a snow base upwards of 1m from August is enhanced by Whakapapa's expert team and makes for some of the best free ride terrain in the Southern Hemisphere.

Whakapapa is home to the Sky Waka gondola, New Zealand's premier gondola experience (wheelchair accessible). It transports guests 1.8km up the Whakapapa side of the maunga 2020m above sea level and offers panoramic vistas out across the volcanic terrain and neighbouring mountains, Mt Tongariro and Mt Ngauruhoe. Skiers, boarders, and sightseers are welcomed to the architecturally awarded Knoll Ridge Chalet and highest year-round eatery in the country. The Sky Waka gondola runs daily, 10am - 4pm.

For families looking to give their kids a snow play experience, a snow experience zone at the top of the Sky Waka gondola can be accessed with a sightseeing pass. Or the Whakapapa sledding zone in Happy Valley offers fun for snow-seekers of all ages. Kids need to be 8 years+ to ride their own sled unaccompanied.

For more visit [whakapapa.com](https://www.whakapapa.com) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#)

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