

ARV Lake Mountain resort: Community Information on 2024 Winter Operation Changes

Winter 2024 at Lake Mountain will see some changes to operations to both improve the visitor offering and make the resort more sustainable.

This will include:

- No more capping of visitor numbers – the resort will park visitors to maximum vehicle capacity
- Two improved toboggan slopes, upgraded Village Run and the new Mini Run, which will be ticketed to manage safety and access (see Lake Mountain website for ticket prices)
- Maximising areas for snowplay and tobogganing on the weekends and school holidays with ski lessons offered midweek and outside of school holidays
- Improved marketing and promotion

Lake Mountain Resort has been operating at a significant deficit for many years, requiring financial support from State Government to remain operational. Alpine Resorts Victoria (ARV) has been tasked with determining a financially sustainable way forward for all the resorts, including addressing the financial issues of Lake Mountain.

To this effect, ARV has considered where it can reduce costs and identify opportunities for new income generation to create a sustainable future for the resort. This has required taking a hard look at where the resort can be run more efficiently, and focusing on activities that generate revenue that covers the cost of operating the resort. ARV is working to transition the resort into a profitable position to keep the resort open for all Victorians.

Within this context, in 2024 Lake Mountain will also close to visitors on Tuesdays and Wednesdays (excluding school holidays), traditionally the lowest visitation days, when the resort often does not attract sufficient visitor numbers to off-set costs. Operating over 5 days means that less seasonal staff are required, saving on labour costs. In a similar vein, winter shuttles to/from Marysville will not run to minimise operational costs.

These decisions have been made with the goal of keeping Lake Mountain open and viable.

Why close on Tuesday and Wednesday during winter and what does it actually mean?

- Based on visitation data, Tuesdays and Wednesdays are the days with the lowest visitation, resulting in the cost of running the resort being greater than the revenue earned on those days. That is, the resort often makes a loss on those days during winter, even when there is fresh snow.
- The resort gate will be closed as there will be no services available on the mountain, which means vehicles will not be able to access the resort
- Food and beverage won't be available
- No Visitor Services (e.g. no visitor information, no retail, no Ski Patrol)
- Activities will not be running
- Resort operations will continue if necessary, using only essential staff– trail maintenance, utilities maintenance, snowmaking (conditions allowing), road clearing

Why are you charging for tobogganing?

Tobogganing is central to the snow play experience offered at Lake Mountain, which is why we have enhanced this offering for winter 2024 through significant drainage and earthworks.

However, there are significant costs associated with producing snow for this offering, which is required due to the low altitude of the resort and the growing impacts of climate change. Charging a fee to undertake this activity will better enable ARV to cover the costs associated with sustaining this product, and still provide a fun family snow experience for a cost that is much lower than skiing or boarding.

A user-pays system also brings Lake Mountain into alignment with its competitors, including Mt Baw Baw and Mt Buller in Victoria, and other interstate snow destinations and attractions, who all charge a fee for tobogganing.

Increasing visitation

ARV's aim is to make winter at Lake Mountain vibrant and sustainable. We believe that our overall improved product offering will better suit our largest consumer group – the families who are often experiencing snow for the first time, who want to get their kids on a toboggan and play in the snow. This is why we have introduced a second toboggan slope and upgraded the existing toboggan run. This will spread the users over a wider area, allowing for a better experience.

A new café is set up in the building closest to the toboggan slope utilising the existing balcony to its full potential as it looks over the main tobogganing area. The food menu in the bistro building is also being reviewed to ensure we are providing locally sourced, healthy options.

Modification works are also being undertaken on the tube run to create a better experience for visitors.

Staffing

Lake Mountain is maintaining its permanent workforce but reducing winter casual staff, and seeks to work with the local community to scale up for peak winter periods like school holidays.

Seasonal staff requiring accommodation will be housed in Healesville, as we have been unable to source appropriate and affordable accommodation in Marysville for the four month winter period. Securing key worker housing is a significant issue across regional Victoria, and we are not immune to this problem.

ARV still encourages guests to stay locally and enjoy the offerings of the area.

Future-focused work

Lake Mountain is also working in a number of areas that will improve the resort's ability to operate. We are working on improving the reliability of the power supply and reducing the costs, improving asset management, and developing ways to attract more funding for the resort.

Community consultation

ARV is committed to engaging with stakeholders on strategic and operational matters. A key forum for this engagement is the resort Stakeholder Consultative Committee.

The Lake Mountain Stakeholder Consultation Committee is made up of representatives from the local community, local businesses, and the tourism and business association, and as such is ARV's primary conduit into the Marysville community. The Lake Mountain SCC has been an important part of the decision-making process on the resort's operational review since October 2023.

Come and talk to our team

The current General Manager of Lake Mountain, Dean De Santis, welcomes discussions with the Marysville community on the changes being made and ideas for getting the resort back into a sustainable financial situation. In particular he is interested in supporting business opportunities that make use of all that the resort has to offer.

Dean and his team are always available at the monthly Marysville Market – please come and have a chat. In addition, Dean’s office door is open, and he welcomes all in the local community to come and speak to him on-site in the resort.

Dean’s phone number is 0461 458 996 and his email address is Dean.DeSantis@alpineresorts.vic.gov.au