



WILDSIDE

THE WILDERNESS SHOP NEWSLETTER # 52

Trip Review: Winter at Mt Bogong

by Jono



Towards the middle of winter, after an eventful few weeks of working at Falls Creek, I decided I needed to have a break, but still wanted to be skiing. A couple of friends were keen to test their new set-ups for a ski tour mission in NZ and so off we went. The forecast was for sunny days and moderate breezes. The hike up Eskdale spur is quite steep, with views of Mt Bogong ahead and looking back over the beautiful alpine valleys behind as you climb higher. The snow line usually starts by the time you reach Michelle Hut and this is a good spot to swap the hiking boots for skis or snowshoes. The last push up to Rocking Stone Saddle is very steep, and so snow shoes/crampons would be required if you weren't on skis or the snow pack was fairly compact or icy. Once the saddle is reached it's about 20 minutes uphill to the summit, or about an hour or so in the opposite direction to Cleve Cole hut. This would be our base for the next few days. All up it took us about 4 hours to get to Cleve Cole from the car, including a snack and boot change at Michelle hut.

A usual day starts with some breakfast in the hut followed by a few warm up runs on the easier slopes close by. The afternoons generally followed an early lunch and then off to explore what lies a bit further away. The variety of skiing around Cleve Cole is fantastic and we'd often set a goal for the day to ski a particular kind of terrain. Linking up little drops through some of the steeper bowls would be my top pick, while the others enjoyed skiing



Cleve Cole hut is a lovely stone hut that is maintained by the Mt Bogong Ski Club, with a separate room for members. The hut receives running water from a stream nearby and has place for about 8 non-members to sleep inside on the bunks. While there is snow on the ground the hut is usually occupied, so I tend to opt for sleeping in a tent away from the hut (and the inevitable snoring crew) to get a good rest while my gear dries inside over the stove.

The skiing is endless around Mt Bogong, from easy slopes near the hut to steep bowls a short skin away. It is important to note that avalanches in Australia do exist and an assessment of the snow pack and a probe and beacon each is a solid idea.

some of the steeper open faces to get in some big turns.

The journey back down Eskdale Spur was a race against the weather which was starting to close in. We opted for a traverse across from Rocking Stone saddle instead of climbing to the junction. We lost the race and progress became slow as the visibility deteriorated. For some reason it always feels a lot steeper coming down the spur than going up it. At some points we were able to use the wind to blow ourselves backwards up some of the more gentle slopes. Once we reached the cover of the trees the rest of the way down was easy. The formed tracks through the trees from previous returning parties guided us back to Michelle hut, where the skis were exchanged for the boots we'd stashed in the hut.

Back country skiing in Australia is a rarity in comparison to other countries and Mt Bogong is certainly one of the better places to explore. Easy enough access provides more time and energy for exploring the mountains and great hut networks provide excellent escape from the weather.

If you are heading to Mt Bogong this winter make sure you are prepared for the worst regardless of the forecast. The weather can (and does) change very quickly and being above the tree-line the wind can be ferocious.



Tech Tips: Winter Gloves

by Nick



OR Alti Mitts and their inners

I've been going to the snow for nearly 40 years and over that time I've had a lot of gloves. My earliest memories of ski gloves are not great: wet hands with frozen and numb fingers. That was back in the early 80's when my Dad had waxed leather gloves, ski patrollers wore dishwashing gloves over the top and I was wearing whatever was the cheapest at the time.

Suffice to say that the first bit of skiing kit I bought for myself was a good pair of gloves. Your fingers are the first thing to feel the cold and if you can't keep the lining dry then it really doesn't matter how much insulation is on the inside. The real problem over here is that Australian snow has a tendency to be wet.

The first thing to consider is if you want gloves or mitts? Mitts are definitely warmer because they keep your fingers together thus reduce the surface area presented to the cold. The advantage of gloves however is that your fingers are able to move independently so it is easier to do buckles and zips up and even hold your poles more effectively.

The second thing to consider is whether you want an all-in-one, modular or shell only glove? To answer this it's useful to understand how gloves are made and what the different parts do. The outside of the glove is generally made of nylon and its role is to provide abrasion resistance so that the glove lasts a long time. Most gloves will also have a grippy material integrated into the palm and fingers. The second layer of the glove is the waterproof-breathable membrane (like those found in walking boots and rain jackets). The third layer is the insulation (like that found in synthetic sleeping bags). Some gloves integrate these layers together, some have detachable inners and some are available as a shell only. To put this in context here are a couple of scenarios that I've had to deal with over the years.

Very Cold: I went to Canada a few years ago and it was regularly below -20°C . At these temperatures wet snow is not going to be a problem but you needed a lot of insulation. Your best choice for seriously low temperatures, like you'll find in the Northern hemisphere ski resorts and mountaineering venues, is the *Outdoor Research Alti Mitts* (\$289.95) or *Alti Gloves* (\$199.95). Both have an insulated Gore-Tex shell as well as detachable, heavily insulated inners. I took a pair of the Alti Mitts to Canada and my hands were toasty warm. I still use them in Australia, the trick is to swap out the insulated inners with a liner glove if it is a bit warm. Other Gore-Tex options would be the *OR Mt Baker Modular Mitt* (\$229.95).

Resort Skiing Australia: Get a good pair, your fingers will love you for it. It generally doesn't get much below -5°C so you won't have to get too bulky a pair and there is definitely a good argument for getting gloves over mitts as it is a bit easier to hold your poles. My favourite resort gloves are the Gore-Tex lined *OR Arete Glove* (\$139.95). They have a warm fleece liner glove, which makes it much easier to adjust buckles, straps, zips and all the other things dangling off you when you go skiing. The shell is insulated and this works by itself during spring. If it is really cold you add a warmer liner glove. So all in all the *Arete Gloves* are really versatile for Australian conditions. Honorable mention goes to the *OR Adrenaline Mitt* which offers the best bang for your buck at \$69.95.



OR Mt Baker shell



OR Stormtracker

X-C Skiing: Regardless of how cold it is when you start out in the morning, I find that I always get hot cross-country skiing. I prefer skiing in a softshell glove such as the *OR Stormtracker* (\$89.95) or the *OR Extravert* (\$129.95). Softshell gloves are more comfortable, less bulky and importantly not as hot as a waterproof glove. To be prepared for bad weather if it does come, I always pack a waterproof shell mitt such as the *OR Mt Baker* (\$189.95) or the *OR Revel* (\$99.95). These can just slip over the top of the softshell gloves and keeps the wind and rain out. This set-up is also great for resort skiing in Spring when the weather is a bit warmer.

Tech Tips: Choosing Trail Running Shoes

by Mac

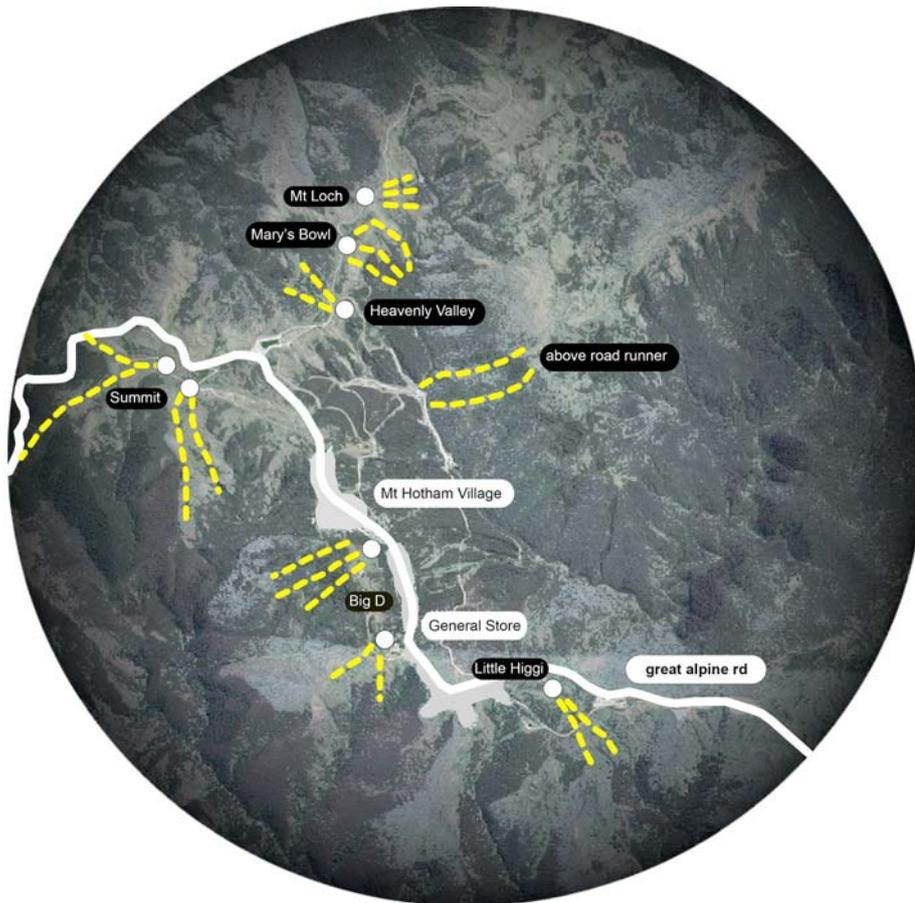
"I'm going for a run" means different things to different people. For some they'll be back in 20 minutes, while for others covering 100 km will take a fair bit longer! La Sportiva are dedicated to providing the best trail running shoes for all occasions. To help with decision making, La Sportiva have broken down the critical components of their shoes. These are: type of grip; recommended terrain; recommended distance; configuration of cushioning (or drop); and weight. If you're still confused, come in to The Wilderness Shop and the helpful staff can help find the right trail running shoe for you.

DISTANCE				DROP	Drop is a measurement of the height difference between the heel and the ball of the foot.
	SHORT	MID - LONG	ULTRA LONG		
TERRAIN					
	ALL GROUNDS	ROCK GROUNDS	MUD GROUNDS		
GRIP					
	VERY STICKY	SOFT & LIGHT	ALL PURPOSE		

	460 g		610 g		740 g		720 g		660 g		700 g
Helios 2.0 Δ 4 mm		Bushido Δ 6 mm		Savage Δ 12 mm		Wildcat 3.0 Δ 12 mm		Akasha Δ 6 mm		Ultra Raptor Δ 12 mm	

Tele Beta: Backcountry Skiing at Hotham

by Nick



Years ago I gave up my resort skis in favour of backcountry tele skis because I love the untracked and uncrowded runs. For anyone interested in backcountry telemark skiing at Mt Hotham, the map to your left shows all the best spots. With this type of skiing you're best off with a wide ski like the Madshus Annum or Epoch. Both have a pattern base that allow you to climb easily back to the top.

My favourite area is to the south-west of the Big D ski run. There are lots of clearings and the runs are really long with easy ridges to climb out on. Being south facing the snow lasts well into Spring.

Another great area is north-east of Mt Loch summit which is above the tree line. The runs here are quite varied, with some long easy runs as well as some pretty steep stuff.

If you get a dump of fresh snow Mary's Bowl is the best skiing on the mountain. Unfortunately for backcountry skiers, a chairlift services the area and it gets skied out pretty quickly.

On years when the snow has fallen low enough you can ski from the summit down to the road. It's a really long run and a bit of a novelty to get picked up by a car at the end.... See you out there!

Climbing Beta: Oxbow Rocks

by Troy

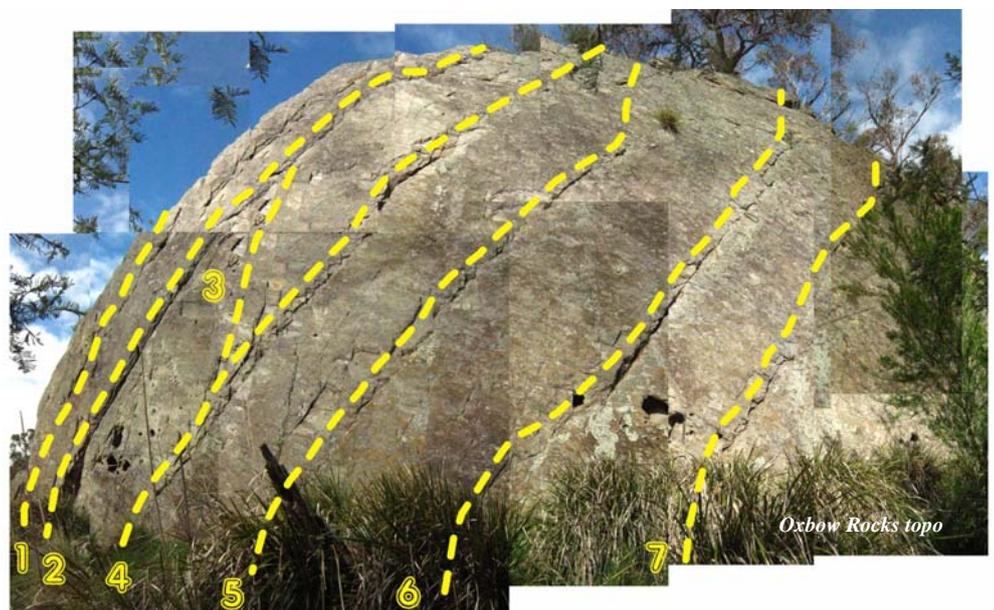
Sometimes you just want to climb somewhere you haven't been a thousand times. Sure, it might not be as good as your favourite crag, but who doesn't want a slab of rock all to yourself and the challenge of new routes on a different type of rock?

Located just over an hour west of Melbourne, near the town of Meredith, Oxbow Rocks is a 'reasonably' stable 17m high slab of rock, almost directly on the banks of the beautiful Moorabool River.

The VCC South-West Victoria guidebook has route descriptions and access info which can be used in addition to the topo below. The rock itself is somewhat similar to that at Werribee Gorge. There are no bolts, but the cracks accept cams and big nuts well. There are a few cracks for top anchors, but it is also worth while bringing tree protectors. Oxbow Rocks is the kind of place to bring a picnic lunch and a relaxed attitude to your climbing.



Oxbow Rocks side view



Oxbow Rocks topo

1: Upend 14m 5

2 Line of '79 14m 15

3 Shrink 14m 15

4 Roller Blind 18m 16

5 Parallels 18m 16

6 Triandangle 16m 17

7 The Fifth Diagonal 16m 17