



Mountain Travel Symposium

Aspen Snowmass

7 – 12 April 2025

1. Overview

The Mountain Travel Symposium is the largest and longest running annual gathering of mountain travel professionals in the world. The 2025 event is the largest to date with more than 900 representatives from 35+ countries establishing relationships, building their business, pursuing professional development and creating a stronger mountain community.

MTS is much more than a typical networking event. MTS is well-established as the premier global meeting place for the worldwide mountain travel industry where resort representatives meet in a single location with a wide range of mountain vacation suppliers, buyers and vendors from around the world.

Destination Queenstown and RealNZ are the only representatives of the New Zealand tourism portfolio. This makes a great opportunity with interest in New Zealand very strong, while also building on the momentum of being a third-year attendee that enables us building on new and existing relationships.

2. Trade Appointments

The Trade Exchange is the mountain resort industry's largest planning and contracting event. The list below is of businesses that were met with and discussions made for further action and information sharing. New Zealand was of keen interest with many advantages conversations to elevate existing offering or exploring new business opportunities.

North Star Travel Group – Brad Parrott	Holidaze – Sean McErlean
Ascend TV – Mark Kristofic	Travelplan Australia – Sylvia Schmiedl
WeSki - David Benzimra	Endless Turns Ski & Adventure Travel – Daniel Griffith
Travel The World – Christian Hammer	Backside Tours – James Hill
Snow Tours – Robert Rosensteel	Pharos Travelartifex – Nickolas Naehee Lee
Sno'n'Ski – Luke Pritchard	NTS New Travel Service – Nancy Floras
Snow Forecast.com / Mountain Forecast.com – Daniel Evans	Supertours – Mircea Chiru
Ascent 360 – Scott Buelter	Born2Ski & Travel Ltd – Leoni Sowerbutts
Sports America Tours – April Bruder	Alpine Adventures – Courtney Boyd & Nathan Boyd
Kioniq – Andre Petrovic	Inspire Ski – Andy Cleary
Knecht Reisen – Martin Gallati	Ski Travel Specialist – Abigail Manthel-Brown
Ships Skis – Liza Sweitzer	Sportvac Voyages – Alexandre and Marc Savoie
Get Ski Bots – Brandon Quinn	AirBnB – Edward Puglia
Powder Holidays – Joshua Norris	Kangaroo Tours – Julia Alves de Souza

Alana Tours – Andre Lopez Arellano	Luxury Escapes Ski – John Schulze
Travel & Co – Rob Macready	Viajes Le Grand – Diana Cantu

3. Group Appointments

Group Exchange buyers (Group Leaders) consist of decision-makers from top ski clubs and councils in North America as well as other active groups planning ski and mountain trips. Applicants are carefully screened by MTS to ensure they meet the club/council criteria and the delegate requirement of being a decision-maker.

The following summary of group appointments is business ripe for conversion for the Queenstown tourism community. The interest and request for information this year is exponential based on the previous two years' attendance.

Eastern Pennsylvania Ski Council – Anne Ceres

Queenstown 2027. August 50-100 people, 7–8-night stay, 4-star accommodation, 5 days ski.

Kevin Gill Group – Kevin Gill

New Zealand – September 2026, 30-45 guests. Mostly skiing with off-mountain opportunity. Accommodation 4-5 star. Wants South Pacific stopover and airline carrier suggestions that enable this.

NBS Rocky Mountain Region – DeAndrea Staes

Looking at August/September 2027 for ski and non-ski group. Age group 25 and 40 – next generation of skiers and travelers. Number of guests - 100 people.

Sitzmark Ski Club of Illinois – Marta Hoelter

International trip every second year. New Zealand earmarked for September 2027 (ski and non-ski experiences). Based in Chicago. Group size 20 –24 guests.

Roaring Form Show Up – Sajari Simmons

Deliver 15 trips per year. Adventure and ski. Located in Aspen. Looking for immersive community experiences. Group size 10-30 people. New Zealand a bucket list opportunity they want to explore.

Space City Ski Club – Rita Cardenas

Members are based in Houston. Group went to New Zealand two years ago. New Zealand back on cards for 2027 non-ski (March/April 2027) and ski (September).

Cleveland Metro Ski Council – Curtis Bell

New Zealand being pitched to group for 2026. Membership 2,500. Group size 30-40. It would be mix of ski and non-skiing August/September 2026.

Ski Noir Slide Through Sessions – Quincy Shannon

Identifies people who can't normally get access to the mountains or winter sports. Removing barriers for those less privileged to experience snow sports. Domestic trips cater to 85-150 people. All domestic at the moment, but keen to understand proposition of New Zealand as a visitor destination and how that might offer opportunity in the future. Envisages 30-50 people per trip international. Demographic 24-40 years.

Texas Ski Council – Andrea Yowman

Visited New Zealand in 2023. Wants to include two expeditions for fall and winter. Group size typically 100-250 people. They have 1600 members and 11 clubs in their portfolio of responsibility.

Pentagon Ski Club – Dina Zeese

Delivers 12 trips per year. Spilt between USA, Canada and Europe. Keen to explore New Zealand for something different. There are 500 people in the club, the average size trip 30-50 people. Does mix of ski and non-ski.

70+ Ski Club – Richard Lambert

Brought ski group to New Zealand in 2023, wants to return in 2027 with some refinements to their itinerary that enables them to streamline destinations they visit. Queenstown was the hit destination for the group. They wish to increase the length of stay in the region and possibly explore Wanaka. Group size 25-45 people.

Nashville Ski Club – Pete Tuttle

New Zealand August or September 2026/2027. Wants recommendations also for non-ski activities for partners who don't ski.

Orlando Ski and Travel Club – Steve Clark

Group size 22 people. New Zealand pitch for May 2026. Queenstown is Steve's favourite city in the world!

Chicago Metropolitan Ski Council – Michael Thomas

Group size 30-40 people. August/September timing 2026/2027. Itinerary to include minimum 7-days skiing, like to stay in one location to enjoy the local culture and community. Most trips are extended by 3-4 nights to offer additional inclusions from other cities of interest.

Little Rock Ski Club – Mike Graves

No interest currently for New Zealand, keen to receive marketing deck and learn more and share this with the ski club to see if interest in building a New Zealand opportunity.

Tampa Bay Snow Skiers and Boarders – Peggy Gummoe

Looking at New Zealand trip 2027 for 60 people. Provide 15 trips per year, alternating between domestic and international.

Oklahoma Ski Club – Ryan Breeding

Visited NZ in November (only North Island). Wants to do a reccy trip in October/November 2025 to the South Island. Group size about 20-30 people for international trips. Focus is exploring and cultural experiences, with some ski. Travel would be intended for September 2026/27.

Crescent Ski Council – Lisa Beregi

Bringing a group in 2027 to Australia and New Zealand in spring or fall 30-40 people. Needs refinement of inclusion and suggestions for experiences to then take to her preferred tour operator.

Birmingham Ski Club – Denise McKenzie

Based in Alabama, 500 members, six domestic ski trips and one international per year. Starting to look at non-ski, as members want to travel more. Great synergy with Queenstown to put forward New Zealand as suggestion. Support with marketing collateral to share with their members.

Columbia Ski Club – Jean Fregeau

Club average age is 65, would not come for ski, would come Oct – Apr 2026/27. One international ski trip and one domestic trip per year. Good opportunity for New Zealand in the pitch to their club.

Indianapolis Ski Club – Christian Legand

Members based in Indiana, 300 members – of that 200 ski. Average age 65-70. Looking at New Zealand for August 2028. Wants ski and non-ski options. Will be a full NZ itinerary. Average length of trip 10 days – 2 weeks, 30-40 people average group size.



Out of Control Ski Club – Lynda Heaney

Established in 1960 some of their groups have been travelling together for 50 years. Small groups tours only, keen to see if interest from their small membership for New Zealand. Will support with marketing material for them to share with their membership.

Nationwide Ski Groups and Tours – Frank Malone

507 members, majority-based Pittsburg PA area, some based all over America. They do 3-4 International trips per year. Interested in ski trips and non-ski trip options for NZ (12-14 days).

Ace Ski and Board Club – Bryan Woods

Based in Boston. Keen on New Zealand didn't realize direct flights out of New York. International holidays of 10–12-night duration and needs ballpark costs to check viability. Support with marketing collateral.

Columbus Ski Club – Gayle Anderson

800 members. Based Columbus, Ohio. Five ski trips per year and two non-ski. New Zealand an option for September – November 2026.

M Ski Club – Ross McLean

Based in Minnesota. Potential for New Zealand in August 2026. Group size 20-30 people. Often combine trips with Indianapolis ski club.

Kansas City Ski Club – Kyle Mueller

Split between Missouri and Kansas, 550 members, average group size 30-40 people. One international trip per year. Currently building out a 2026 trip for New Zealand.

4. Panel Discussions & Industry Forums

The State of Mountain Travel: Trends, Tech and Transformation

Tom Foley – Director of Business Intelligence Outside

- Consumer confidence has declined over the past 4 months, influenced by interest rates and rate tolerance.
- March occupancy in North America was 50%, with an Average Daily Rate of \$631; demand fell by 1.4%, but daily rate and revenue increased.
- Booking pace has been soft, and current booking base is lagging behind last year's.
- Price-sensitive consumers are more affected by economic conditions, showing lower confidence.
- Luxury travelers remain confident, with no notable drop in bookings.
- Overall consumer confidence is lower, especially in non-luxury segments.

<https://www.phocuswright.com/Special-Projects/2025/Shifting-Slopes-Navigating-the-Future-of-Mountain-Travel-Phocuswright-Inntopia-Special-Project>

Madeline List – Manager of Research and Special Projects Phocuswright

General Context:

- We're in a volatile economic period—resorts must clearly understand their customer base.

Research Overview:

- Based on 2025 ski and mountain travel research with 2,000 U.S.-based ski travellers who took multi-night ski holidays in winter 2024/25.
- 9.7% travelled specifically for winter sports.
- 172 million adult leisure travellers took winter sport holidays.
- \$85 billion spent across travel, accommodation, lessons, gear, F&B, and other activities.

Traveler Demographics:

- Age 35–44: 30%
- Gender: 58% male, 42% female
- Frequent travelers: Avg. 4.2 mountain trips/year, plus additional non-ski trips.
- Living areas: 57% city, 32% suburban, 6% small town.

Traveler Attitudes & Behaviour:

- 75% physically active, 68% seek challenge—not about relaxation.
- 72% value community within the sport and social connection.
- 60% of travel days spent on winter sports, the rest on other tourism activities.

Trip Decision Process:

- 47% had a specific destination in mind, 48% considered multiple, 6% booked spontaneously.
- 81% aim for one winter sport trip per year.
- 67% said winter sport participation was the main reason for booking.
- Luxury/high-value guests more open to non-mountain snow destinations.

International Travel:

- 39% of U.S. winter travellers went abroad, with:
- 58% to Canada
- 29% to France
- 21% to Germany
- 20% to Italy
- 16% to Switzerland

APEC countries had low visitation, due to off-season timing.

Reasons for international travel: better snow/weather, cultural experiences—price not the main motivator.

Influences on Destination Choice:

- Natural beauty is a major driver in choosing a destination.

Future Outlook & Barriers:

- 33% intermediate, 38% intermediate-advanced, 22% expert, only 7% beginner.
- Cost is a major barrier—51% cite price as the main reason for not taking more overnight ski trips.
- Takeaway: High cost may be deterring beginners/novices from entering the sport.

Nicole Brownell – Zartico Chief Operations Officer

Zartico is a marketing technology company that applies advanced data science and proprietary technology to deliver innovative marketing performance solutions to the travel industry.

- Target new markets by identifying high-potential visitor segments using data and behavioural insights.
- Engage the right audience with well-timed, strategic campaigns tailored to “best fit” guests.
- Optimize campaigns in real time by adjusting spend and messaging based on live performance data.
- Focus on measurable outcomes like increasing market share, opening new markets, and growing share of wallet.
- Evaluate cost per acquisition and campaign efficiency—success comes from spotting and acting on the right opportunities at the right time.

Currently no plans to come to the South Pacific. A company called Localis, located in Brisbane is the best option for this data in the South Pacific. <https://www.zartico.com/zartico-conferences>

Delivering Value Through Values

Christopher Miller – SVP, Sustainability & Advocacy, Aspen One (Vail Resorts)

- Aspen One’s mission focuses on long-term sustainability, aiming to “renew the mind, body, and spirit” while making values-driven decisions like living fully, honouring people and place, and pursuing excellence.
- Climate change is an existential threat to the ski industry, prompting Aspen One to lead through innovation with sustainability initiatives like solar energy, methane capture, and goals for 100% renewable electricity by 2030.
- Gen Z’s values and preferences are key to future growth, with this generation prioritizing sustainability, experiences, and alignment with brands that act on climate and social issues. Aspen One is working to stay relevant by engaging Gen Z.
- Ben & Jerry’s case study shows that purpose-driven branding, focusing on values rather than just products, creates strong customer bonds and drives business success—demonstrating the importance of authenticity and activism.

- Aspen One prioritizes partnerships and advocacy, collaborating with organizations like POW (Protect Our Winters) and Holy Cross Energy to ensure a renewable power supply and advocate for climate solutions.
- Customer engagement is key—Aspen One uses initiatives like compostable cups, sustainability signage, and branded messaging to show environmental commitment and strengthen connections with guests.

“In today’s crowded marketplace, it may be better to be intensely loved by some than be met with indifference by all.”

Mike Lannen – Eternity

https://docs.google.com/document/u/0/d/1avXXeiwi_E6j4wf2NtDPl6ya-o9MQvaP7F9UFCdqSWg/mobilebasic?pli=1

Epic Innovation: Redefining the Guest Experience

Greg Sullivan – Executive Vice President of Retail, Rental and Hospitality and Guest Services, Vail Resorts

The Big Picture:

- Over the last 8–9 years, Vail Resorts has grown rapidly—from under 20 to over 40 resorts—spanning North America, Australia, and Europe.
- Despite the growth, every resort is unique, and Vail is focused on preserving local character while leveraging innovation to elevate the guest experience.

Vail sees technology and data as central to driving:

- Guest experience improvements
- Growth in participation
- A smoother, more inviting journey for first timers

Challenge:

- The Ski Industry Can Feel Intimidating
- Compared to a beach holiday, a ski vacation can be:
 - Logistically complex
 - Equipment-heavy
 - Weather-dependent
 - Intimidating for first-timers or those without experience
 - This complexity can be a barrier to entry—particularly for families or younger newcomers.

Key Innovations to Address These Challenges:

Ski & Ride School:

- A Gateway for New Generations
- Critical entry point for future skiers and riders
- Focused heavily on kids – over 50% of ski school attendees are children
- 71% of first-time ski experiences happen before age 18
- As kids grow, they ski more but use ski school less
- Investment in ski school is an investment in long-term participation

My Epic Pro: Tech-Enhanced Lessons

Digital transformation of ski school

Features include:

- Easy booking, check-in, paperwork, and management via app

- Real-time updates and photos for parents during lessons
- Track progress and unlock skill-based “levels”
- A fully digitized learning experience

Gear: A Traditionally Stagnant Space

- The gear rental experience hasn't evolved in decades
- Gear is critical to the overall experience
- My Epic Gear
- Rolled out at 12 destination resorts
- \$50 membership fee unlocks premium gear access

Guests can:

- Book, manage, and swap gear via the app
- Access high-quality, personalized gear
- Track gear history and preferences
- Makes the gear process simpler, more convenient, and more tailored
- Mission: Deliver the Experience of a Lifetime
- Innovation is not about one-size-fits-all—it's about enhancing the unique, local experiences at each resort
- The goal is to balance consistency in quality with the authenticity of place

Final Thought:

“While ski enthusiasts thrive on complexity, the industry must grow by making the sport more accessible.”

Nick Doble- Area Manager Partner Services Booking.com based in Denver

- Gen Z (ages 13–28) is reshaping travel, favouring nature and authentic experiences over traditional city trips.
- Social media is their go-to for travel research, especially YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and increasingly AI search tools (1 in 3 use them daily).
- They spend ~70 minutes daily on social platforms, checking them ~20 times per day for inspiration and planning.
- This generation values flexibility and spontaneity, often changing plans last-minute and seeking remote-work-compatible travel.
- Gen Z is experience-driven, not brand loyal, and prioritizes authenticity, local culture, and environmental consciousness.
- They seek short-form, real content from creators/influencers over polished brand campaigns.
- Clubs like Ski Club of Great Britain are adapting by forming digital partnerships and showcasing authentic experiences to engage Gen Z.
- Gen Z is cynical and research-driven, questioning traditional marketing—brands must make products relevant, not pushy.
- They value health, local connections, and well-being, favouring après-ski, festivals, and shopping over heavy drinking.
- Travel value matters, but Gen Z is willing to spend more for memorable, shareable, and meaningful group experiences.

The Start Up Mentality – Boosting Business and Driving Sales
Hugh Lawson - Principal Lawson Leadership Advisory Ltd

- Lifelong learners should also be lifelong sharers, passing on knowledge, insights, and experiences to help others grow.
- Inspired by Mark Twain’s quote, true purpose is found not just in existence, but in discovering your "why"—your deeper reason for being.
- Finding your "why" lies at the intersection of what you love, what you're good at, what the world needs, and what you can be paid to do.
- Aligning passion, skill, impact, and value creates a fulfilling path that supports both personal growth and meaningful contribution to others.

5. Event Images



