

# marry me on a mountain

White goes with wedding the way husband goes with wife and when it comes to wedding locations you don't get whiter than a snow-capped peak, writes Rachael Oakes-Ash. Climb a mountain with your beloved and you'll be certain that you're on top of the world when you both say "I do!"



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Rick Kunelius marries a couple in the Rockies in Alberta, Canada. Picture perfect in the Rockies. Kunelius will arrange everything from helicopter to photographer.



## Lake Louise & Banff, Canada

Lake Louise and its surrounding region, including Banff and Canmore, provide a host of truly stunning mountain range locations where you can exchange vows. Think majestic snow-capped Rocky Mountains melting into aquamarine lakes for the perfect photographic backdrop.

There's no waiting period for a marriage license in Alberta so you can get married on a whim or choose to plan well ahead. All you need are two witnesses, a celebrant (or a commissioner, in local parlance) and preferably a helicopter to take you to truly breathtaking peaks for your ceremony.

Rick Kunelius has married over a thousand couples, all of whom are drawn to the remote beauty of this region. Some choose to don kilts and tartan, others wear ski suits with wedding trim and still others wear traditional bridal dress.

Rick and his crew have an extensive network of local wedding services and they can arrange everything for you – helicopter flights, photographer, bubbly, flowers or

whatever you need. All you have to do is show up. Best of all, with only five people, your photographer and the chopper pilot in attendance, you're guaranteed a truly intimate ceremony.

**SLEEP OVER** At the Fairmont Lake Louise Chateau in a lakefront suite far from the crowds. + 1 403 522 3511

[www.fairmonthotels.com](http://www.fairmonthotels.com)

**MARRIAGE MAN** Rick Kunelius is an Alberta Marriage Commissioner. + 1 403 762 3852

[www.kunelius.com](http://www.kunelius.com)

**SNAP HAPPY** Brenda Falvey is a wedding photographer. + 1 403 609 2413

[www.falveyphotography.com](http://www.falveyphotography.com)

**BRIDAL BEAUTY** Treat yourself to the Willow Spa at Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel for pre-wedding couple treatments.

Tel + 1 403 762 2211

[www.fairmonthotels.com](http://www.fairmonthotels.com)

**GENERAL ENQUIRIES**

[www.skibig3.com](http://www.skibig3.com)

PHOTOGRAPHY: RACHAEL OAKES-ASH



WEDDINGMOONS



## Loveland, Colorado, USA

Every Valentines Day at the Loveland Ski Resort in Colorado, couples arrive from far and wide to declare their love for each other on top of the mountain. It's the annual "Marry me and ski for free" day. A mass wedding ceremony takes place at noon with a celebrant who marries around 60 couples and renews the vows of others wanting to recommit.

Brides are creative in their attire, from full wedding frocks on skis to veils glued to snowboarding helmets, roses twisted around ski poles, top hats and tails, even faux leopard skin. If you like your wedding filled with laughter, then this is for you.

After the ceremony the newlyweds ski down to the valley floor for a group reception with family and friends. It's quirky, it's different and it's for the truly dedicated snow sports enthusiast. It's cheap too: registration costs \$10 and the same amount for each guest. Marry on the day and your ski pass is free.

**SLEEP OVER** Denver is less than an hour's drive from the Loveland ski field. Bed down

in Hotel Teatro and know that Gwyneth and Chris have cosied up between the Frette linen sheets here too. Favoured by celebrities for its service with a capital S, you can soak in your personal aromatherapy tub, pre-wedding. Romance packages start from US\$199 per night. + 1 303 228 1100

[www.hoteleatro.com](http://www.hoteleatro.com)

**BRIDAL BEAUTY:** The Spa at the Brown Palace in downtown Denver is truly lush-a-licious. Cocooned in a basement with complimentary spa dining menu, massage, facial, manicures, hair salon and eucalyptus steam rooms you won't want to leave.

+ 1 303 297 3111

[www.brownpalace.com](http://www.brownpalace.com)

**HAPPY SNAPS** 2 Sisters Wedding Photographers have been voted Denver's best. What you save on the wedding ceremony and reception you can spend on the photos.

+ 1 303 948 5363

[www.2sistersphoto.com](http://www.2sistersphoto.com)

**GENERAL ENQUIRIES**

[www.skiloveland.com](http://www.skiloveland.com)



Scenes from the "Marry me and ski for free" day at Loveland Ski Resort in Colorado. Brides are creative in their attire from full wedding frocks on skis to veils glued to snowboarding helmets, roses twisted around ski poles, top hats and tails, even faux leopard skin.



Badrutt's Palace Hotel, a member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World, is the *crème de la crème* of Swiss luxury hotels located in the mountains in the tiny town of St Moritz. Views are unbelievable and the hotel's spa will keep you looking radiant.



## St Moritz, Switzerland

When it comes to glitz, glamour and all the trimmings, St Moritz is the passport stamp of choice. It's so James Bond retro chic.

It's all Cartier and French champagne in a fairytale setting at St Moritz. Horse-drawn sleighs take loved up couples to secret wooded restaurants for traditional cheese fondue. Wander the snow lined streets by lamp light and spot the celebrity, high flyer and jet set.

Before July 2005 weddings in Switzerland were only recognized if the ceremony was officiated in a registry office. The government changed the laws and now couples can marry on mountain tops, lakeside, in the village square and the like.

There's no residency requirements or waiting time to marry in Switzerland, though it's best to give yourself three days to make suitable arrangements should you be eloping in the Alps.

**CEREMONY** Check this Swiss site on all things to do with marriage: [mariage.ch](http://mariage.ch).

Or enlist the help of an American ex-pat wedding planner based in Switzerland ([www.wedding-day.ch](http://www.wedding-day.ch)) or opt for a wedding planner, Swiss-style

[www.artdumariage.com/en/index.htm](http://www.artdumariage.com/en/index.htm)

**MOUNTAIN DINING** El Paradiso sits mid-mountain surrounded by peaks. This charming restaurant caters for events should you wish to hold a full reception or simply dine in the sun on the balcony for a pre-wedding lunch.

+ 41 (0)81 833 40 02

[www.el-paradiso.ch](http://www.el-paradiso.ch)

**SLEEPOVER** Three words – Badrutt's Palace Hotel. This is the *crème de la crème* of Swiss luxury in the town's centre with lake views. It's grand, with chandeliers and marble, so act like Hitchcock, Schieffer or Brosnan who have all stayed here. There's a spa to keep you radiant and views that simply just don't look real. A member of

Leading Hotels of the World. [www.lhw.com](http://www.lhw.com)  
**GENERAL ENQUIRIES**  
[www.stmoritz.ch](http://www.stmoritz.ch)



The Southern Alps of New Zealand are a truly Oscar-winning setting and The Remarkables are the most spectacular

## The Remarkables, New Zealand

The Southern Alps of New Zealand are a truly Oscar-winning setting and The Remarkables mountain range is the most spectacular of them all. If it's good enough for film maker Peter Jackson...

Picture white-covered mountains as far as you can see on one side, and Queenstown's Lake Wakatipu on the other. Romance is in the air: sleeping giants and a princess saved by a warrior populate a Maori love legend that explains the lake's creation.

Chopper into a private lodge for an intimate ceremony. The helicopter seats six – enough room for the bride and groom, two witnesses, a celebrant and photographer. (A second helicopter, or two drop-offs can accommodate more guests.)

A Touch of Spice can co-ordinate your entire day's events from flowers to mountain reception and honeymoon.

+ 64 3 442 8672

[www.touchofspice.co.nz](http://www.touchofspice.co.nz)

**SLEEP OVER** The Spire Hotel is true decadence. Deep tubs built for two, beds to sink into and open fires in each of the 10

suites, plus discreet service and intimate surroundings. It doesn't get better than this in Queenstown, and with the area boasting over 270 world-class accommodation options, that's saying something.

+ 64 3 441 0004

[www.selecthotels.com](http://www.selecthotels.com)

**CHOW DOWN** The Restaurant at the Spire seats 20 for a *degustation* menu, perfect for a stylish reception. Executive chef Rex Morgan is New Zealand's finest. Afterwards, move into the sexy copper bar and celebrate with peach bellinis.

+ 64 3 441 0004

[www.thespirehotels.com](http://www.thespirehotels.com)

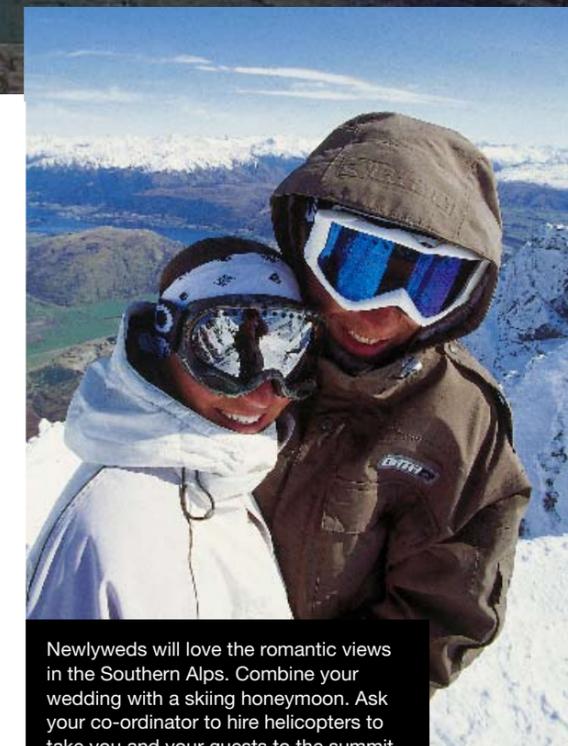
**BRIDAL BEAUTY** The Spa at Millbrook Resort has it all: Phyto-Marine wet treatments, anti-ageing facials, couples massages and hair and make-up. It's set in the natural amphitheatre of the Southern Alps, on the edge of the Sir Bob Charles-designed international golf course.

+ 64 3 441 7000 [www.millbrook.co.nz](http://www.millbrook.co.nz) or

[www.selecthotels.com.au](http://www.selecthotels.com.au)

**GENERAL ENQUIRIES**

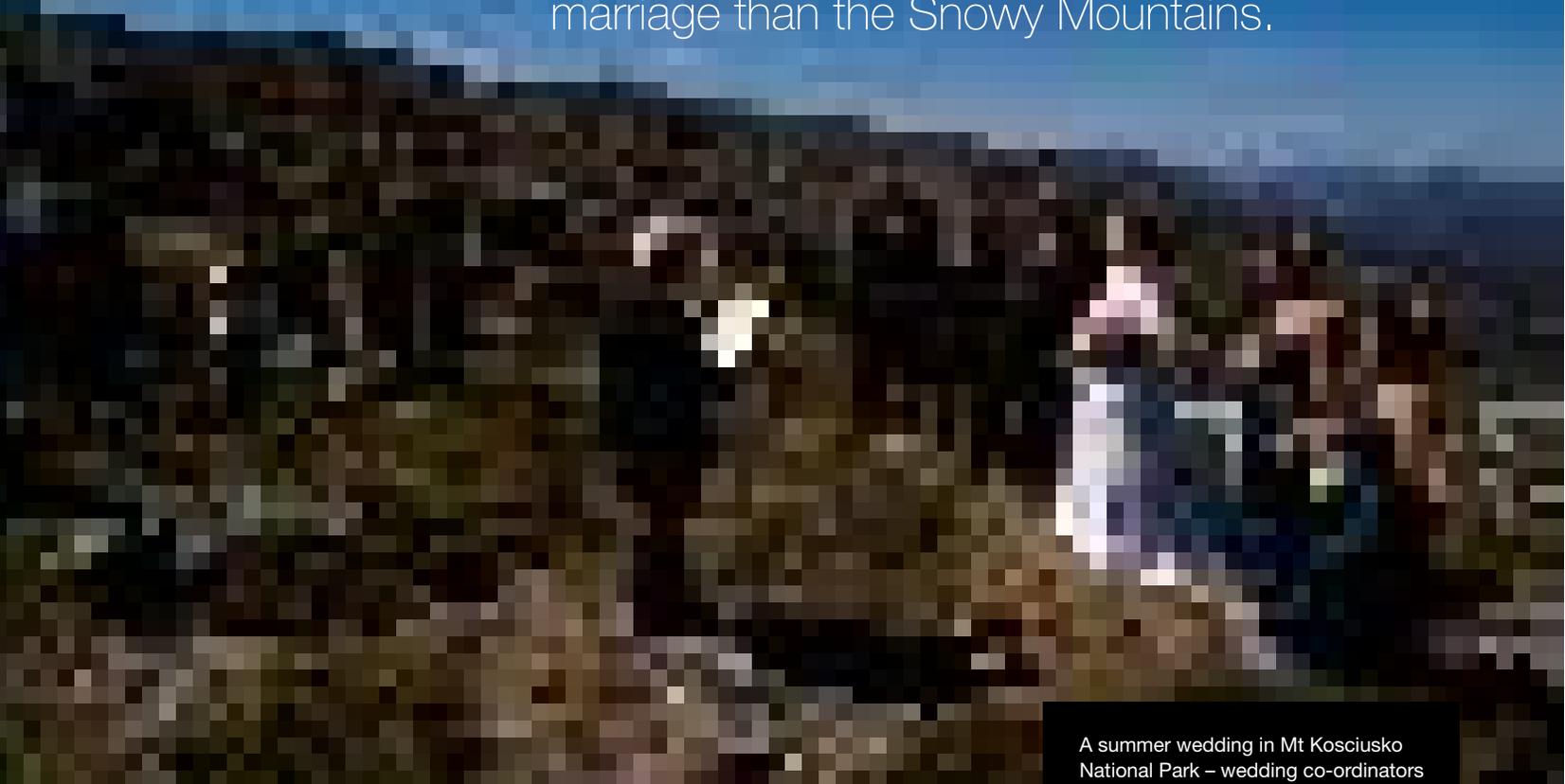
[www.queenstown-nz.co.nz](http://www.queenstown-nz.co.nz)



Newlyweds will love the romantic views in the Southern Alps. Combine your wedding with a skiing honeymoon. Ask your co-ordinator to hire helicopters to take you and your guests to the summit for a ceremony no one will forget.



There's nothing that says Australian winter like a powder-laden snow gum and there is no better place for either a winter or summer marriage than the Snowy Mountains.



A summer wedding in Mt Kosciusko National Park – wedding co-ordinators Thredbo Weddings can take care of all the details from ceremony to reception. Stay in a waterfront suite at the Lake Crackenback Resort and put your guests up in one of the ski-in ski-out chalets on the Crackenback Ridge.

## Thredbo, NSW

There's nothing that says Australian winter like a powder-laden snow gum and there's no better place for an alpine marriage (summer or winter) than The Snowy Mountains. Mt Kosciusko National Park provides a beautiful bush setting for photos.

The village square and the winding laneways give Thredbo a genuine alpine town atmosphere just begging for hot chocolate and mulled wine around a fire.

Summer weddings are equally pleasant and couples can take advantage of the relative quiet, the off-season rates, mild temperatures and photos filled with alpine wildflowers.

**CO-ORDINATOR** Don't want to lift a ski-gloved finger? Thredbo Weddings can take care of all the finer points whether you're planning a 200 person wedding in a marquee or an intimate dinner for 20.

**0418 222 356**

[www.thredboweddings.com](http://www.thredboweddings.com)

**RECEPTION** The Denman, a boutique hotel in Thredbo, has three reception rooms plus a library, terrace and a professional wedding

event organiser to make sure your big day runs smoothly.

**(02) 64 576 222**

[www.thedenman.com.au](http://www.thedenman.com.au)

**SLEEPOVER AND SLEEP IN** Enjoy wedding breakfast room service on the lake at the Lake Crackenback Resort in your private waterfront suite.

**1 800 020 524**

[www.novotellakecrackenback.com.au](http://www.novotellakecrackenback.com.au)

**SLEEPOVER FOR THE GUESTS** Put the extended family up at one of the five-star ski-in ski-out chalets on Crackenback Ridge.

**(02) 6457 7030**

[www.skiinskiout.com.au](http://www.skiinskiout.com.au)

**CHOW DOWN** The Credo restaurant's fairy lights and snow-laden sloping roof spells romantic. Set on the river with floor-to-ceiling glass windows to take in the stunning view, Credo restaurant is fine dining alpine style. Receptions can also be catered for.

**(02) 6457 6844**

[www.credo.com.au](http://www.credo.com.au)

**GENERAL ENQUIRIES**

[www.thredbo.com.au](http://www.thredbo.com.au)

