

TRAVEL NEWS

SHORT TAKES

DELICIOUS DESTINATIONS

From Boston to Barcelona, Paris to Prague, a highlight for most travelers is sampling the local cuisine. Thomas Cook's new Time for Food series directs visitors to the best eateries in 18 cities. Beyond restaurant reviews, the guides (\$9.95 each) include information on food etiquette and culture, menu decoders, and recipes for authentic local specialties.

BRITISH MUSEUM SHOPS ONLINE

What if the brooch you want to buy is halfway around the world? No problem. Visit www.museumshop.com to shop online at the world's best museum gift shops.

A TASTE OF THE PIEDMONT

Take your taste buds on a culinary adventure to one of the most prolific food regions of the South—the Carolina Piedmont. On July 13–15, this Greensboro, North Carolina, event celebrates the food of the region with field trips to food producers, discussions by experts, and meals by restaurateurs showcasing indigenous products. For more information, call 800-965-8529.

ONLINE ART TOURS

Visit the National Gallery of Art from the comfort of home at www.nga.gov. Click on "online tours" for in-depth treatment of artists such as Alfred Stieglitz, Jackson Pollock, and Mark Rothko.

TRAVEL TRENDS: SKIING SOUTH AMERICA

Head south to ski? A growing

number of the globe's ski enthusiasts are doing just that. South America claims the Western Hemisphere's highest mountains and a string of Andes resorts announcing expansions and improvements aplenty. | **By Tiffany Amy-Ashley Woods**

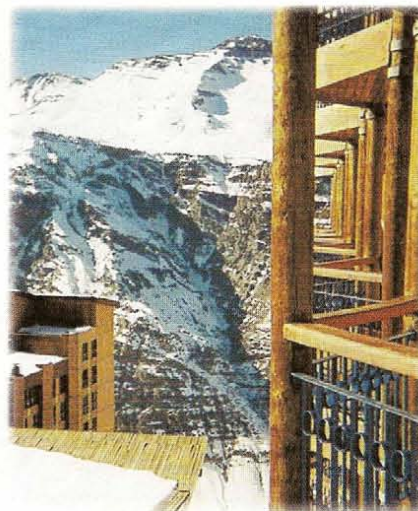
JUST BECAUSE IT'S SUMMER IN THE Northern Hemisphere doesn't mean you have to put your skis in storage. Powder hounds on the southern half of the globe are racing down the awesome Andes Mountains in Chile and Argentina at some of the world's finest ski resorts.

Although still primarily visited by locals and Brazilians, the resorts are attributing an increase in U.S. visitors to their attractive sites on the Internet and to promotional events. At Argentina's Valle de Las Leñas, skiers from North

America "are discovering the place, and they like it, above all because of the level of service and the off-piste terrain," says Andrea Christello at the resort. Portillo, on the other side of the Andes, is experiencing a similar trend. "The United States has discovered Chile as a destination," says Ellen Guidera, commercial director at Portillo. "Our numbers are going up for non-South Americans. The Internet has had a huge impact because now we can compete with far-off markets." With the ski season typically running from mid-June to mid-October, you have plenty of time to pack your ski gear for a trip to South America.

Touch down in Santiago and head for the hills. Only about 35 miles from the airport and reached by a road marked with hairpin turns, Valle Nevado will take you as high as 12,040 feet and has 34 runs and more than 24,000 acres of ski terrain, all above the tree line. This season the three-hotel resort sees the debut of a high-velocity detachable quad, bringing total lifts to 11 (of which four are chairs). Other goodies this year include seven new runs and a halfpipe for snowboarders (Valle Nevado hosts the Snowboard World Cup this September). And you won't need to drive into Santiago at the end of the day—Valle Nevado has it all, including child care, a disco, spa, heated outdoor pool, and restaurants.

If that sounds hedonistic, wait until you see Portillo, which was the site of ►



Balconies warmed by a southern sun provide Andean vistas at Valle Nevado, Chile.

TRAVEL NEWS

Here's a look at what's going on in destinations all over the world. For more events, visit our Web site, www.hemispheresmagazine.com.

ASIA

KOREA

Yangji-ri, Yong-in, Gyeonggi-do

New Sejoong Stone Museum opens

A collection of 10,000 ancient stone sculptures is set amidst a serene grove of trees. Open daily except during Harvest Moon Festival and Lunar New Year's Day. Admission: W5,000.

Tel: 82-31-321-7001

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SINGAPORE

"101 Ways to Live It Up in Singapore," free pamphlet

There's more travel excitement than meets the eye in Singapore.

This handy booklet gets you started. Try a trip to Arab Street, a cooking lesson, or a movie with fully reclining seats.

Tel: 65-736-6622 or
www.newasia-singapore.com

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TAIWAN

Taipei, Kaohsiung, Aufeng Mountain, Taitung, and Jinmen and Penghu islands

Bicycle trails and rentals

Taiwanese cycling enthusiasts and government agencies are working to bring the joy of bicycling within easy reach of anyone visiting the archipelago. Bike rental:

NT\$20-NT\$200. Cycland Foundation Tel: 886-2-2719-2025

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AUSTRALIA

NEW SOUTH WALES ►

On Location

the 1966 Alpine World Ski Championships. Located about 100 miles northeast of Santiago and boasting an average annual snowfall of 20 feet, it is a summer training spot for a number of Olympic teams.

Portillo is like an exclusive summer camp with room for only about 450 people at any one time. Guests arrive on a Saturday for weeklong packages; by midweek, people who were once strangers are waving to each other from the chairlifts. The 12 lifts guarantee more time on the 15 runs and less in line. Daredevils can try heliskiing or go off-piste with the Condor or Roca Jack lifts. Like the wind in your face? Head over to the Kilómetro Lanzado, home to several world speed-skiing records. When your legs feel like they've turned to rubber bands, enjoy a massage, do some yoga, or catch up on your e-mail at the cybercafé. At night, there is live music at the bar and romance on the dance floor. The bright yellow hotel basks in views of majestic Inca Lake.

Across the Andes is Valle de Las Leñas, which last season launched a two-year, approximately US\$2 million expansion that includes snowmaking, more hotel rooms, and a sledding park. The casino, disco, restaurants, and bars explain why the 12 lift lines are practically vacant in the morning. While late-nighters are still eating breakfast, you can have your pick of 40 runs, including the steep bowl under the Marte lift.

Back in Chile, Termas de Chillán, about 300 miles south of Santiago, will have you pondering whether to spend the day skiing or relaxing at the mineral water hot springs. Termas de Chillán is nestled amid native forests with about 25,000 acres of ski-accessible terrain and nine lifts, four of which are chairs. This year, the resort has added the intermediate, 6.8-mile El Golf run. It is almost as long as the resort's famed 8-mile Las Tres Marías, South America's longest run. The five-star, 120-room hotel features a gym, squash courts, hot springs, steam baths, and saunas.

Farther south, the Ski Pucón Chile center is located on the active, smoke-spewing Villarrica volcano. Practically conical, it offers 20 runs, nine lifts, halfpipes for snowboarders, and a stunning view of the Villarrica Lake. The ski center is run by the Gran Hotel Pucón, just a short drive away in the village of Pucón.

After reveling in fantastic skiing, and wonderful resort amenities, you'll be yearning to come back later for the Southern Hemisphere's summer. **Details, Details, Details / Valle Nevado:** www.vallenevado.com or Tel: 56-2-206-0027; **Portillo:** www.skiportillo.com or Tel: 56-2-263-0606; **Valle de Las Leñas:** www.laslenas.com or Tel: 54-11-4313-1300; **Termas de Chillán:** www.termaschillan.cl or Tel: 56-2-233-1313; **Ski Pucón Chile:** www.granhotelpucon.cl or Tel: 56-45-441001. **/END/ Tiffany Amy-Ashley Woods earned her ski legs on the slopes of Oregon's Mount Hood and now lives in Chile with the Andes in her backyard.**

