Information for Prospective Members

Club Structure & Membership

Vagabond Ski Club is an Incorporated Association under Victorian law with tax exempt status on the basis of being non-profit. The club constitution satisfies these criteria, and a copy can be provided if needed.

The club started in Melbourne in the late '70s, with the lodge opening for the 1982 season. Members have a wide range of talents and interests. There are many families, including second generation. A number of members live outside Victoria.

A person must hold a debenture to be a member. Debentures can be held by an individual person over 16 (ie no company names or joint ownership).

There are 86 debentures, currently held by 66 members.
In 2010 the club allotted a second debenture to each of 43 members at that time. A number of members still hold 2 debentures. The membership is growing slowly. The main reason to increase membership was to substitute non-member public bookings with members, given trends in usage at the time, and to provide a means to grow the club with family members. This spreads the costs of maintaining the asset more broadly, but does constrain access.

A prospective member must acquire one of the existing debentures from a current member, and be accepted by the committee. The club facilitates the process to put buyer and seller in contact, with a direct financial transaction after the membership application is accepted.

A Committee elected at the Annual General Meeting, normally held in November, operates the club on a day to day basis.

The Lodge at Mt Hotham

The lodge is generally accepted as one of the best club lodges at Hotham. It is located at the southeast end of Mt Hotham Alpine Resort, at 8 Ash Drive (Davenport), with stunning views to the south over the Dargo River valley wilderness. See map on resort website.
You are welcome to inspect the lodge. Contact us to arrange a visit.

Our 540+ square metre lodge is spacious compared to many club lodges, particularly in the shared lounge, kitchen and dining areas. The cedar clad, timber framed, split level building opened for the 1982 season. An interior refresh was completed for the 2016 season, and maintenance and improvements are ongoing. A major project to build a new spa and sauna area was completed for 2026 (photos on our website).

The lodge accommodates 40 guests in 8 rooms with ensuite toilet & shower.
Four rooms have 4 beds (3 with a double & 2 singles, and one with 4 singles), and four rooms have 6 beds (double & 4 singles). Doubles are queen size, singles are standard.
In addition we have a loft space with 4 beds with bathroom.
There is accommodation for the live-in managers during ski season.

The kitchen & dining area is separate from the lounge, which works well when different groups are cooking / eating at different times. The kitchen can cope with multiple cooks at one time & the tables and bench seating accommodates around 30.

Other lodge features include:

- Hydronic central heating, plus wood heater in the lounge.
- "Starlink" internet, non-smoking policy,
- pool table, plus 'kids klub' playroom (beside the dining area)
- ski room including washing machine & dryer, and drying room
- new spa and sauna for the 2026 season.

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Lodge Development

Lodge improvements have been undertaken almost for the entire existence of the club.
In more recent years this included renovating all the ensuites, improved hydronic heating, new carpets, lounges, lighting as well as conforming to the latest building standards.
A multi-year major project started in 2019, involving rebuilding the spa and sauna area, a new and extended pantry, and some additional beds. After delays due to the Covid pandemic, construction commenced in summer of 22/23. Initially, the work provided a greatly expanded pantry (with generous fridge, freezer and shelf storage) and the sub-structures for the spa and sauna areas to be built above. The project was ready for 2026 season.
A “loft” area above the sauna and spa now has 4 additional beds which are currently being restricted to member bookings.
The longer term plan and building permit was to also convert one large room (6 beds) into 2 smaller rooms for 4, which would improve flexibility for smaller groups and families. A restructured entry was also included in the permit. The timing of this project will depend on sensible funding and cash flow management, with no immediate plan to start.
Building works on the mountain are expensive and while the aim is to fund it mainly from bookings, there remains the possibility of additional member contributions (See Finance).

Site Lease

The lodge is on leasehold land. The original lease expired in 2002, and in 2003 Vagabond was granted a lease renewal for 40 years. At the time this was the longest lease offered to a club, reflecting the Resort Management assessment of the quality of accommodation, the condition and ongoing enhancement of the lodge, and the management practices.

Finance

All members share responsibility to contribute funds for the club to remain solvent.
The club aims to finance operations, maintenance and ongoing improvements from operational revenue. Member obligations are defined via the annual booking policy.

Additional funding for the current major project has been established via $150k borrowed from members who wished to participate. The cost to the club is lower than from commercial lenders, but still beneficial to participating members.

Our tax-free, non-profit status does not allow distribution of profit to members.

Members generally book most of high season and weekends in a preferential booking period. Accommodation is then offered to the public, which provides some income from what would otherwise be unused space, but also limits last minute options to “head for the mountain”.

Other than the recently established member loans, historically the club has secured capital funds for major improvements by member levies. The committee has the approval of the members (from an AGM years back) to apply an annual capital levy without requiring further approval from a general meeting.
This authority was been applied typically at $100 to $350 per debenture for many years to fund ongoing improvements. This was used to fund renovations including new carpets and bathroom upgrades. With the recent major project (spa, sauna, pantry & loft room), the levy was raised to $500 in 2024, $550 for 2025, and $650 in 2026, though this has been renamed to emphasise the cost of insurance, which suggests similar annual amounts will be needed ongoing.
Members are kept informed, and have the opportunity to discuss major projects at a general meeting, typically the AGM.

An external audit is conducted annually, with the financial report provided to members.

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Booking Policy

The policy is reviewed and set annually by the Committee, and applies per financial year (1 Oct to 30 Sept).

The Booking Policy defines the accommodation rates, member charges, working bee obligations and booking benefits.
It reflects a balance between the obligation to maintain the asset and a user-pays philosophy. Cash balances are carried forward, with a late fee on amounts owing from previous year.

For 2026 the Member Charges are:

- An annual subscription of $300
- Attend a working bee weekend, or pay $450.
- Building & Insurance levy of $650.

Rates and Member Discounts

- Room rates are publicly advertised (ie what a non-member would pay).
- "Member Rate" is via discounts from the advertised rates, namely:
  - 50% discount for Member personal use, limit one room per night.
    This includes partner & children to 25 even if Member not present, so effectively a "Family Membership".
  - 15% discount for other bookings (eg additional rooms for friends / guests).

Ski Season bookings generally open in March, initially with a Members preferential period. The initial Member preferential period has a limit of 2 high season weekends that may be booked. These limits are removed for additional member bookings before public bookings open.

Note, existing member demand is high, with high season weekends invariably booked out quickly. The club is a relatively low cost option to access accommodation for say a couple of weekends and a midweek or 2 per ski season. If your ambition is to be there every weekend, or even the season, then the club will NOT be your best option.

Most demand is for non-sharing accommodation so the advertised rates are "per room". Check the website to see current rates. Singles rates may be applied on basis of room sharing (contact the Booking Secretary), and apply for the new "Loft" beds.

The first rush of member bookings are handled via email requests, so allocations can be optimized. Generally, with member flexibility we can negotiate and tweak dates to satisfy everyone. After that, availability is visible and bookings can be made via an online system.

There are no chores or duties for members or guests during ski season.

Value of Membership

Membership can be viewed as a lifestyle investment providing preferred access to a superior holiday facility for both winter and summer. Club membership does not mean "cheap skiing" or unlimited access every high season weekend. However, sharing an asset through a non-profit club structure provides the most economical way to access accommodation of Vagabond's standard, for say a week or two per ski season.

Many people, particularly families, value the club experience over apartments. The shared living spaces provide the opportunity to meet others while booking just one room in a spacious lodge. Many friendships have been made through meeting those with a common interest. Even the work weekends are a great social opportunity.

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How to Join

An existing debenture needs to be offered for sale by a member wishing to leave the club.

The price is set by market conditions of supply and demand, ie what a seller may expect v what a buyer is prepared to pay.

The Secretary facilitates contact between buyer and seller.
The actual payment is direct, but with guidance by the Secretary.

Before any financial transactions are made, the prospective member needs to apply to the committee to become a member.
There is no prescribed form.
The application can be an email including information about yourself, your family, interests, profession / skills, knowing existing members, etc… whatever you think will be of interest.

Once approved, the financial transactions are arranged.

The objective of this document was to provide information on aspects of the club that prospective members should ask about. However, please contact us if you have more questions.

If you decide Vagabond is for you, let us know so we can keep you informed.

Web Site

www.vagabondski.com

Contact

vagabond.hotham@gmail.com