

Snow dome first for Lu-Ve down-under

Kiwis are flocking to a new all-year-round ski centre

Lu-Ve Contardo has played a key role in the cooling behind a new indoor ski centre, located in Auckland, New Zealand.

The Snowplanet is believed to be the fifth largest such facility in the world, with a combined ski area of 9,500sq meters of snow, the size of two rugby pitches or 12 tennis courts in a row. This makes it larger than any of the five snowdomes currently operating in the UK.

It provides all-year-round skiing and snowboarding for a large catchment area around the New Zealand capital.

The facility has two slope runs, each kept supplied with a 50cm blanket of powder snow. The longest run is 202 meters, with a varying gradient of between 9 to 30 per cent.

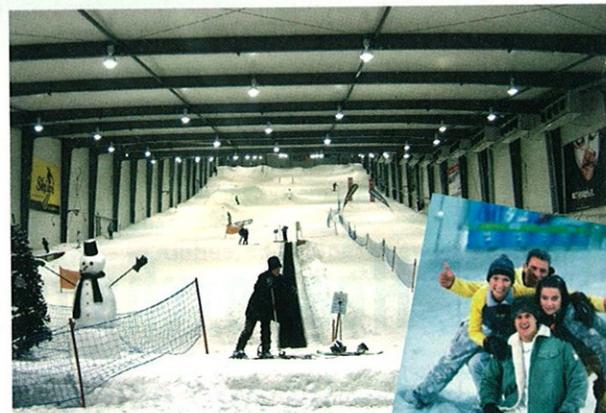
The 30 per cent rate of incline at the top is amongst the steepest pitches on offer at indoor snowslopes around the world. The snowhall itself is just over 40 metres wide, around a third wider than most such facilities, allowing skiers to carry out wide carving turns.

To maintain conditions and an operating temperature of -5deg C within the snow hall, the facility uses industrial glycol coolers, equipped with dual fin technology.

The aim is to minimise de-humidification and frost formation.

Some 16 unit coolers are mounted by suspending from the ceiling of the structure, along the length of the snow runs. They provide 70kw of cooling.

Snowplanet is the only all-round indoor snow facility in the Southern hemisphere. It is proving extremely popular, being marketed



as a self-contained resort, "a one-day vacation, close to home".

■ Meanwhile, Lu-Ve is celebrating 20 years in business. The specialist heat exchange manufacturer began in January 1986, and has its roots in Contardo, a company founded in 1928, which it acquired in 1986. It's theme for the year is "Our most beautiful days are yet to come."