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Courchevel offers plenty of choice for a mix of abilities
(Adam Batterbee)

10

BEST BEGINNER SKI RESORTS IN EUROPE, FROM COURCHEVEL TO CERVINIA

New to snowsports? We've got you covered

Mary Novakovich | @mary_novakovich |

Monday 28 October 2019 13:14 |

If you've been enviously watching your family and friends skiing and finally fancy a go yourself, you'll need to choose your ski resort carefully. One of the main things to look out for is the progression from gentle nursery slopes to longer runs that allow you to practise your technique without throwing you in at the deep end.

Some resorts have very little to offer between the nearly flat baby slopes

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and the more demanding pistes that might be classified as blue (easy) but in reality are quite challenging to a newbie. You'll also want to be able to ski at altitude rather than being stuck at village level, plus look out for resorts that offer free beginner lifts. If you want a taste of skiing, these are some of the best beginner ski resorts in Europe.

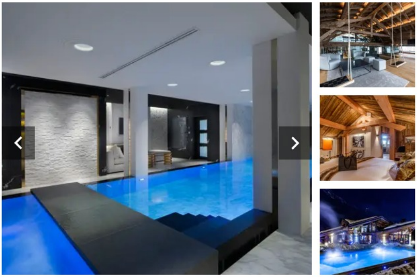
The Independent's ski recommendations are unbiased, independent advice you can trust. On some occasions, we earn revenue if you click the links and book, but we never allow this to affect our coverage.

Courchevel, France

It may be pricey – especially if you stay in the most expensive village, Courchevel 1850 – but Courchevel really does offer some of the best skiing in the enormous Trois Vallées ski domain. You'll find superb nursery slopes at Courchevel 1650 and Courchevel 1850, and the move to longer blue runs is an easy one.

Where to stay

Europe's best ski chalets Show all 10



Crystal Ski has a week's self-catering in a one-bedroom apartment at Fahrenheit 7 Home in Courchevel 1650 from £657pp, including flights and transfers, for a 4 January departure.

Cervinia, Italy

This sunny resort on the Italian side of the Matterhorn (known as Monte Cervino across the border) is one of the most enchanting and easy-going places to learn how to ski. With the jagged peak of Monte Cervino to gaze at, you have high, wide slopes to progress to once you've mastered the village slopes. If you whizz to intermediate level, you can even ski across the border to Zermatt.

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Cervinia is one of Italy’s highest resorts (Cervinia)

Where to stay

Inghams has seven nights’ chalet board at Chalet Hotel Dragon in Cervinia from £999pp, including flights and transfers, departing 18 January.

Montgenèvre, France

The only French ski resort in the mainly Italian Milky Way, Montgenèvre also has the most varied skiing. Beginners are in for a treat once they get up to speed on the village nursery slopes – they can then move to beautiful high-altitude green and blue runs at the top of Les Gondrans. And the prospect of walking into Italy for lunch is too tempting to resist.

Montgenevre is the only French resort in the Milky Way area (Adam Batterbee)

Where to stay

Peak Retreats has a week’s self-catering in a one-bedroom apartment at the four-star Hameau des Airelles residence from £798, including Eurotunnel crossing, for January departures.

Alpe-d’Huez, France

While many ski resorts reserve the best views for more competent skiers, that’s not the case in Alpe d’Huez. This high-altitude resort has some of the most uplifting ski slopes for beginners – mainly because there’s a large network of green slopes that go up to 2,109m.

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Ski at altitude in Alpe d'Huez (Adam Batterbee)

Where to stay

Neilson has a week's chalet board at the Chalet Hotel Escapade from £779pp, including flights and transfers, departing 4 January.

La Rosière, France

La Rosière doesn't get the attention that its bigger neighbour across the valley, Les Arcs, does, but its intimate atmosphere is one of its strong points. So are its sunny south-facing slopes that lead down to the main village and the laid-back hamlet of Les Eucherts. Intermediates who have gained a bit of confidence can ski across the border to La Thuile in Italy.

La Rosiere connects to La Thuile in Italy (Adam Batterbee)

Where to stay

Ski Solutions has a week's chalet board from £600pp at Chalet Papillon 1, including flights and transfers, for an 11 January departure.

La Plagne, France

With about 10 villages dotted throughout La Plagne, there are plenty of places to learn, and most come with free beginner lifts. Plagne Centre is the focus, with the other villages scattered above and below it. Beginners have a large number of very good nursery slopes to start with, and the progression to long blue runs is an easy one. There's also a cable car that links the village of Montchavin to the neighbouring Paradiski resort of Les Arcs.

La Plagne has a big choice of nursery slopes (Adam Batterbee)

Staying there

Alpine Elements has a week's chalet board at Chalet Capella in Plagne 1800 from £776pp, including flights and transfers, for a 5 January departure.

Valloire, France

This small village in the Maurienne Valley combines warm Savoyard charm with some excellent slopes for novices, including a lovely long green run that winds through the woods. You'll also find beginner slopes at close to 2,600m, offering wonderful views of the Maurienne Valley.

Valloire oozes Savoyard charm (Adam Batterbee)

Staying there

Peak Retreats has a week's self-catering in the Chalets d'Adrien luxury apartments in the village centre for £996, including Eurotunnel crossing, for a 4 January departure.

Saalbach, Austria

If you've always wondered what the fuss is about with après ski, this boisterous Austrian resort will introduce you to all its raucous pleasures. But knuckle down with the skiing first, where nursery slopes are divided between Saalbach and its near neighbour Hinterglemm. The whole area is now part of the catchily named Skicircus Saalbach Hinterglemm Leogang Fieberbrunn ski domain, of which 140km of its 270km pistes are for beginners.

Choose Saalbach for raucous après ski (Saalbach)

Staying there

Igluski.com has a week's B&B at the Pension Schattberg from £574pp, departing 4 January, including flights and transfers.

Avoriaz, France

Traffic-free streets give this purpose-built resort a cosy feel, and its altitude gives it a good snow record. Once you've mastered the nursery slopes, it's a straightforward progression to much longer slopes – as well as the huge terrain available at the other resorts within the Portes du Soleil domain.

Avoriaz is part of the Portes du Soleil area (Adam Batterbee)

Staying there

Pierre & Vacances has a week's self-catering in a one-bedroom apartment at Residence l'Hermine from £585 for 11 January.

Saas-Fee, Switzerland

You don't have be a Wham! fan to fall under Saas-Fee's spell (the resort served as the backdrop to the band's "Last Christmas" video). Tons of snow at high altitude – plus an attractive village – makes this Swiss resort an appealing option for beginners. There are plenty of long blue runs to progress to once you've honed your skills on the large nursery area, and even some of the reds are gentle enough to give you a confidence boost.

Saas Fee offers high, snowsure slopes (Saas Fee)

Staying there

Inghams has a week’s self-catering at Allalin Apartments from £665pp departing 4 January, including flights and rail transfers from Zurich.

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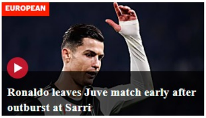

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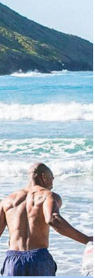

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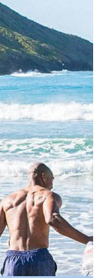

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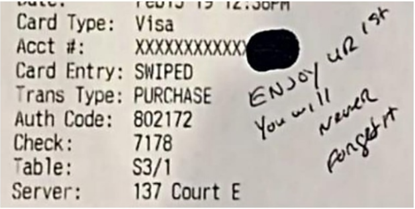

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