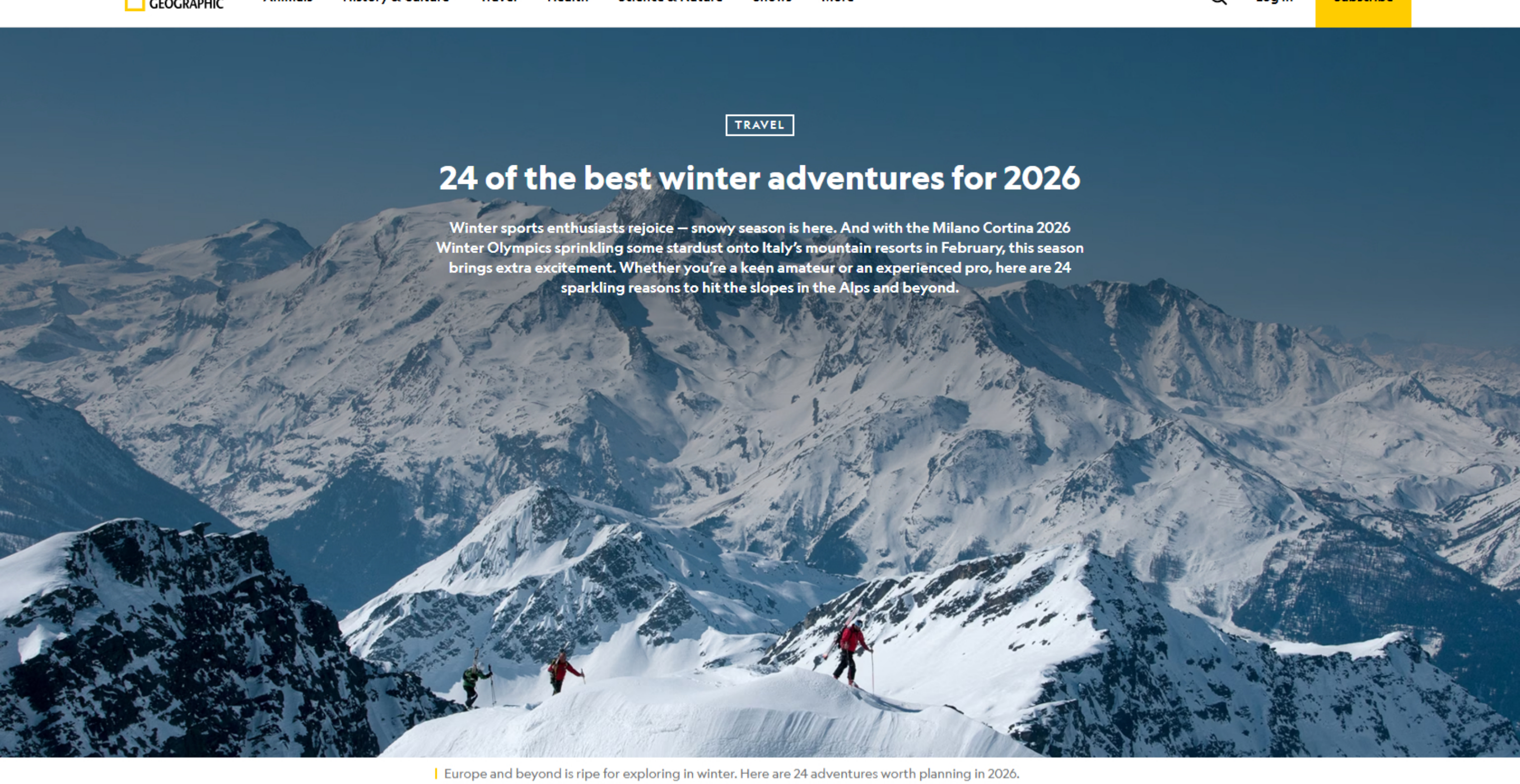

TRAVEL

24 of the best winter adventures for 2026

Winter sports enthusiasts rejoice — snowy season is here. And with the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics sprinkling some stardust onto Italy's mountain resorts in February, this season brings extra excitement. Whether you're a keen amateur or an experienced pro, here are 24 sparkling reasons to hit the slopes in the Alps and beyond.

Europe and beyond is ripe for exploring in winter. Here are 24 adventures worth planning in 2026.
PHOTOGRAPH BY LA THUILE

By Sarah Barrell, Abigail Butcher, Mike MacEacheran, Katja Gaskell, Tristan Kennedy, Sean Newsom, Colin Nicholson, Adrian Phillips, and Rob Stewart
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As the snow starts to fall on mountains across the Northern Hemisphere — and with the 2026 Winter Olympics fast approaching — excitement is mounting for ski season. Dive into the spirit of the Games with 24 ideas for winter trips, including a guide to Italy's Olympic host resorts. And if you're not quite slalom-ready, there's plenty to tempt you onto the slopes: an expert guide to skiing with the family; a two-country trip in Scandinavia; our pick of the best rail-accessible resorts; why you should visit the newly expanded terrain in Deer Valley, Utah; and everything you need to know about heli-skiing in Albania's Accursed Mountains.

1. Ski where the pros go

Unsure where to plant your ski poles this season? Then take some tips from the insiders. "After covering the Winter Olympics for the BBC, I'll head to Sainte-Foy-Tarentaise," says *Ski Sunday* presenter & CDC ski coach, Chemmy Alcott. "It's a French resort that looks tiny on paper, but it offers the opportunity to ski a huge amount of vast, unspoiled terrain, empty pistes and heavenly backcountry." The four-time Winter Olympian is keeping good company in France with Olympic ski jumper, Eddie 'The Eagle' Edwards, who will be hosting ski groups in the French Pyrenees and Les Gets this winter. Meanwhile, Swiss Olympic and World Cup ski racer, Wendy Holdener recommends her Swiss hometown resort of Hoch-Ybrig. "There are mellow warm-up runs, but also spicier, trickier ones that I use to train for all disciplines — from slalom to downhill," she says. Let's see if that pays off, when Holdener competes at the Milano Cortina Winter Olympics in February 2026.

(*The Dolomites and Milan 2026: When to visit, where to stay, and what to do*)

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Straddling multiple valleys in the heart of France's Hautes-Alps, Serre Chevalier is a playground for both kids and parents.
PHOTOGRAPH BY JAY HAYSEY; ALAMY

2. Go on a family ski break in Serre Chevalier

Straddling multiple valleys in France's Hautes-Alpes, Serre Chevalier is a playground for both kids and parents. Back in the 1970s, Chantemerle was the hub for three local ski areas in the Guisane valley, 45 miles southeast of Grenoble. Now, all are part of Serre Chevalier, a linked area of 250km of smooth, broad and gentle pistes set along the valley's northeast-facing slopes, offering top tuition and specialist family-friendly accommodation.

Along with being one of Europe's most sustainable ski areas, Serre Chevalier has lifts that whisk beginners up to mid-mountain areas of nursery slopes, where they can ski soft, grippy snow long into spring. Accommodation ranges from a great-value UCPA (National Union of Outdoor Sports Centres) — a hostel that hosts bargain all-inclusive family skiing weeks — to the newly revamped Club Med. Here, you can expect luxe bells-and-whistles childcare that includes ski instructors meeting younger kids at the boot room, to wrangle them onto the slopes.

3. Try heli-skiing in Albania

The Accursed Mountains of Albania are among the most inaccessible in Europe. Some say the Devil himself created the range. Others say Slavic soldiers cursed them as they lost their comrades between the impassable peaks. Whatever the truth, they're wild, rugged and remote — especially in winter, when storms rolling in from the Adriatic cover the roads and passes in deep, powdery snow. It's a landscape that looks a little like the Dolomites, but you won't find groomed pistes, high-speed lifts or apres bars serving Aperol here. If you want to ski these epic peaks, you'll need the assistance of a helicopter. Which is where HeliSki Albania, offering guided trips in the Valbona Valley National Park where you can ski fresh lines with every descent.

Detlef, the skilled German pilot, can put skiers in almost anywhere they want to go in the mountains.
PHOTOGRAPH BY AARON ROLPH

4. Take the European ski train

Eurostar's 'ski train' returns this winter, running December to April — outbound on Saturday, inbound on Saturday and Sunday. The 'Eurostar Snow' service will travel between London and the French Alps with a same-station change in Lille, before calling at the ski hub stations of Chambery, Albertville, Moûtiers, Aime-La-Plagne, Landryand Bourg-St-Maurice.

SURPRISING SWITZERLAND
Think you know Switzerland?
THINK AGAIN

For those who don't want to book train travel, hotels and extras independently, operators including Inghams, Peak Retreats and SNO are selling rail-inclusive packages to the likes of Courchevel, Méribel, Les Menuires, Val Thorens, La Plagne, La Rosière, Les Arcs, Tignes and Val d'Isère.

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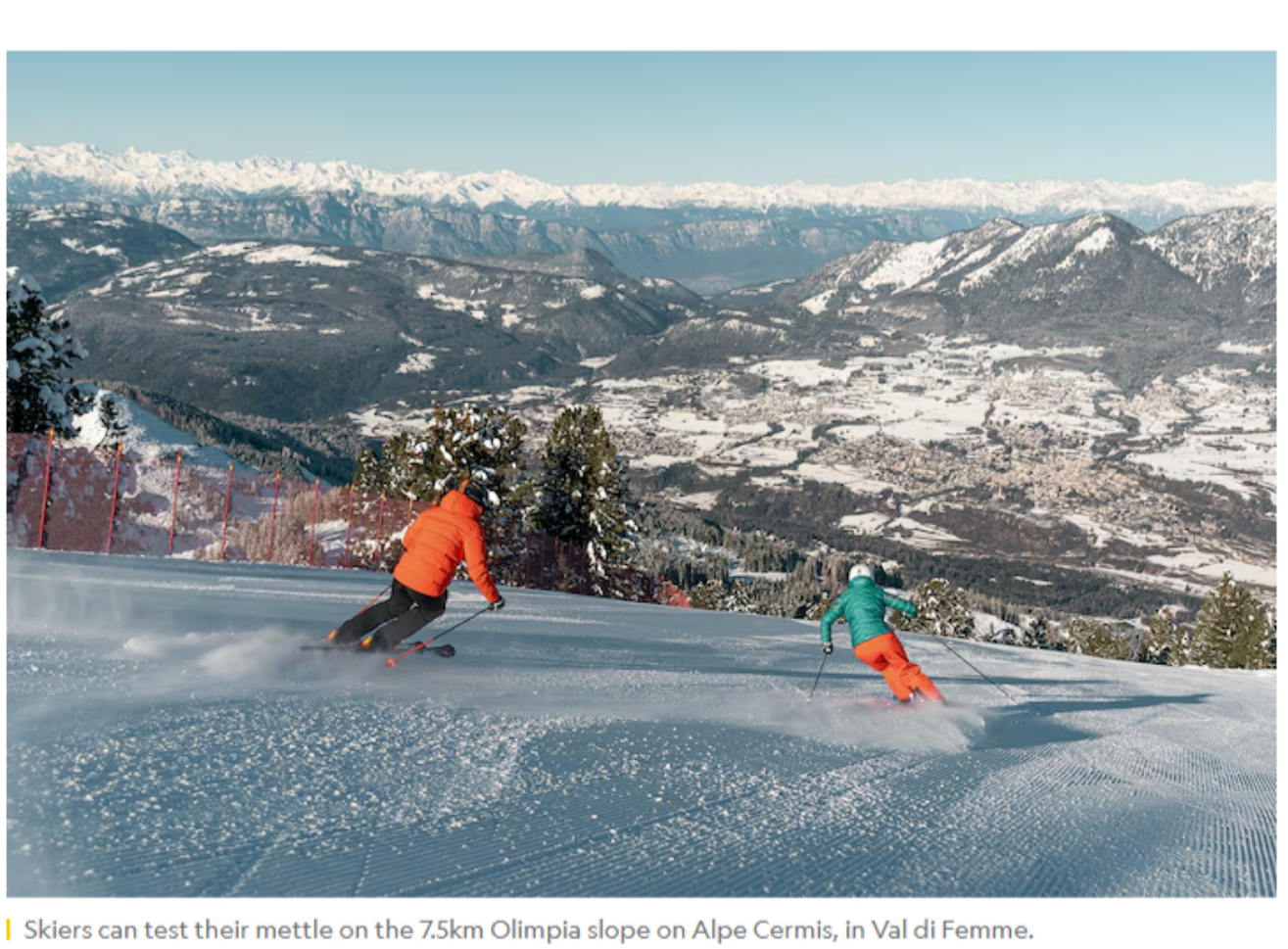
5. Try skijöring & other winter sports

Switzerland's sporty mountain resorts have traditionally offered far more than just downhill skiing. In these long-settled local towns, getting from A to B in winter has often required ingenuity. In Arosa, a horse-drawn sleigh takes riders from railway station to hotel, while in Engadine the Ice Trail winds skaters 3km along the River Inn, and over in St Moritz there's the chance to go skijöring — horse-powered skiing — across the sparkling Lake St Moritz. From winter walking and snowshoeing to skijoring, ice skating and more, the Swiss Alps offer some of the most diverse ways to have fun on frozen water.



Skiers can test their mettle on the 7.5km Olimpia slope on Alpe Cermis, in Val di Femme.
PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTIA RIZZI

6. Have an Olympic adventure in Italy

When the Winter Olympics hits TV screens in February, it'll be hard to tear your eyes away. The downhill racers who hit speeds of 140km/h; the ski-jumpers, who can clear 140-plus metres; the halfpipe snowboarders, who perform double corked spins at the height of a four-storey building, all of it makes for heart-in-your mouth viewing. Unlike the past three editions, which took place in Canada, Russia and South Korea, it'll be easy to follow Milano Cortina 2026 live — and, if you feel inspired, jump on a plane to Italy and ski or snowboard in the host resorts yourself. There are six to choose from. Scattered across the Alps and the Dolomites, these locations have been picked to showcase the enormous variety of *bel paese* (beautiful country) that Italy's mountains have to offer.

7. Ski and surf in Nova Scotia

Home to the mighty bald eagle, herds of wild moose and shivers of Great White Sharks, the Canadian province of Nova Scotia juts out into the North Atlantic Ocean, partially frozen over during winter. The relatively densely populated region feels very remote and the narrowly separated island of Cape Breton, even more so. During the 17th century, the region was populated by migrant Scots and the local culture is steeped in Celtic traditions, but perhaps its most famous resident was an American-Scottish inventor. Not previously known as a winter sports destination, a new ski area has opened with slopes ending close to the semi-frozen shore.

The Austrian town of Bad Gastein is luring the next generation of wellness visitors by renovating its turn-of-the-century spa hotels.
PHOTOGRAPH BY MARKTL PHOTOGRAPHY

8. Get pampered in Bad Gastein

If relaxing in a spa after a day on the slopes is as much a part of a ski holiday for you as speeding down pistes, then Austria is the place for you. And nowhere can you do it with more sense of place than in Bad Gastein, where belle époque spa hotels are being restored to create a ski experience as rich in history as on-piste adrenaline. From rooftop spas surrounded by grand 1890s architecture, you can admire the mountains towering above, with the lights of piste-grooming machines winking at you from the challenging slopes that you conquered during the day. And the naturally radon-rich waters promise to rid you of the aches in your overworked legs and other ailments, too.

9. Go wild in Lake Louise

In a country of habitually gleaming lakes and sawtooth peaks, Lake Louise still takes some beating. Surrounded by Banff National Park's sky-high terrain, this region in Alberta leaves skiers constantly in awe. This season's expansion in the legendary Back Bowls zone advances the resort's claim as the Canadian Rockies' largest ski area; the new Richardson's Ridge Express Chair will open up 200 acres of intermediate and advanced pistes, taking skiers deeper into the inscrutable depths of the Slate Range. Meanwhile this winter at the resort's milestone chateau hotel, The Fairmont Lake Louise, you can soak off the strain at the new trad-modern bathhouse.

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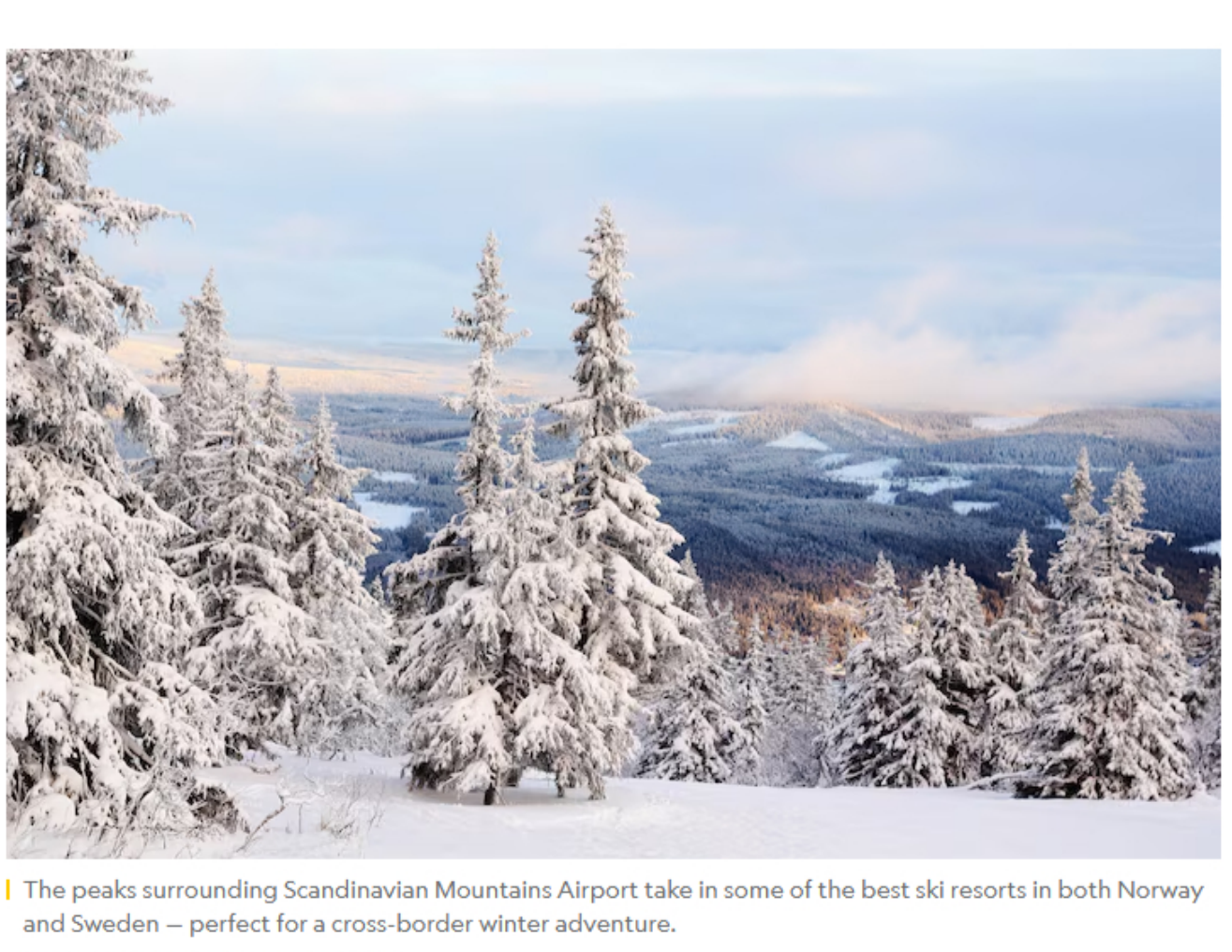
Ra Gusela is one of the distinctive Dolomite peaks overlooking Cortina.
PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERTO MOIOLA/SYSAWORLD; GETTY IMAGES

10. Visit a Winter Olympics host city

Is Cortina the most spectacularly set town in Italy's northern mountains? Encircled by a crown of snowy peaks, the 'queen of the Dolomites' is gearing up to host the 2026 Winter Olympics, which will bring extra sparkle to this ritzy Italian mountain town. And while there is fierce competition between the eight northern Italian destinations chosen to host the Winter Olympics, only the wide Ampezzo Valley surrounding Cortina allows for epic street-to-summit views of the craggy massifs, rising like sheer walls from surrounding forest. Big-name fashion stores like Dior, Prada and Moncler line its Corso Italia, and even beyond this pedestrian artery the town has glitz. As a favoured retreat among Italy's old money — and, increasingly, plenty of new — the town has attracted investment since long before the 2026 Olympics. The Games were also held here in 1956, and a revamp of existing infrastructure has seen an overhaul of its Olympic Ice Stadium — retaining much of the original wooden seating, to create a cosy wood-cabin vibe for the curling events.

11. Take a multi-stop ski trip in Scandinavia

Scandinavia might not boast the mighty peaks, long pistes and huge ski domains that other places in Europe enjoy, but what the region lacks in skiable miles, it more than makes up for in storybook charm with some epic and varied skiing. In many ways, neighbours Sweden and Norway are very similar, rolling snow-covered hills, cosy wooden cabins hidden among the spruce forests and a seemingly endless supply of freshly cooked waffles. But when it comes to skiing, the two countries are quite different: Sweden excels at family-friendly skiing while Norway offers more extensive and challenging ski terrain. Experience them together, and you'll find that they complement each other perfectly.



The peaks surrounding Scandinavian Mountains Airport take in some of the best ski resorts in both Norway and Sweden — perfect for a cross-border winter adventure.
PHOTOGRAPH BY PEJFT; GETTY IMAGES

12. Lift off for the Swiss ski slopes

The world's steepest cable car will be completed in Mürren this winter, giving skiers faster access to the highest pistes of Switzerland's famous Jungfrau region, an area so snow-sure it only closes in May. So now you can comfortably ski there from Wengen — in the shadow of the Eiger's imposing north face — and Grindelwald in one day. Only one resident is unhappy — Ernst Blofeld, whose hideout in the famous Bond film *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* can now be easily reached by cable car from the valley, giving you time to enjoy a martini — shaken, not stirred — in the Piz Gloria restaurant. It's all part of the attraction when visiting a country where scenic railways make travelling an adventure in itself, and where there's alternative apres-ski action in a host of mountain activities.

13. Ski in North America's largest resort

Canada's Whistler-Blackcomb is the North American ski resort you dream about. The largest on the continent encompasses two mountains, a Herculean lift network, more than 200 marked pistes and a handsome purpose-built base village — ideal for happy hour boozing and high-end dining. This British Columbia resort celebrates 60 years of mountain culture this season, while the village itself is marking its 50th anniversary. Whistler Museum, meanwhile, is ratcheting up nostalgia, with exhibits on the creation of the resort and the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, when the region first grabbed global attention.

14. Access Paradiski & Les Arcs by train

Even without considering its access via ski train services, Les Arcs is very well served by regular TGV trains that whisk passengers across France from Paris and Lyon depositing them in Bourg-Saint-Maurice — gateway to some of the country's best ski resorts. A speedy funicular runs from the station providing a seamless, car-free link to compact Arc 1600, the original resort of the Les Arcs ski area. With an additional three villages to ski into plus access to the large, interconnected Paradiski area, this is without doubt one of the easiest French resorts to enjoy by train.

Disney ZOOTROPOLIS 2 IN CINEMAS NOVEMBER 28 BOOK TICKETS

Family-friendly French resort Les Deux Alpes is ideal for beginner skiers — as well as those returning to the sport.
PHOTOGRAPH BY @PYROUU LES 2 ALPES

15. Return to the slopes in France

That first ski trip — or return to the slopes after years away — can be as daunting as it is exciting. Which resort is best for those finding their feet? France's Les Deux Alpes has moving carpets on its nursery slopes and novice-friendly blue runs to ease you in. This is a place with a good-time atmosphere (look out for skiers dressed as bananas or traffic cones...), and the newly opened Jandri gondola whisks skiers up the mountain in just 17 minutes — it used to take more than 40 minutes. When the muscles start to ache, there are nature trails to walk, an ice cave to visit and the ancient village of Venosc to explore. And be sure to try a Snooc — a single ski with a seat on top that's ideal for thrill-seeking kids and adults alike.

16. Go local in Abruzzo

For empty pistes, stupendous views and pocket-pleasing prices, our hot tip for the