

TRAVEL

Mogul maniac or après animal? 10 ski resorts for any style

Whether you're an absolute beginner or would rather carve up the Michelin-starred food than the snow, here are the best places to find your skiing tribe. *By Mary Novakovich*

After months of unending hot weather, the ski season can't come quickly enough for many snowsports fans. Just looking at photos of glistening white corduroy pistes is a soothing sight for scorched eyes, as memories of beach holidays start to fade and preparation begins for fun on the slopes.

You can steal a march on the season in November by heading to high-altitude resorts such as Sölden, Ischgl and Obergurgl-Hochgurgl (now just Gurgl) in Austria and France's Val Thorens and Tignes, which all open early. Skiers flying from Gatwick can take advantage of Jet2's new routes to Geneva, Grenoble, Chambéry, Salzburg and Turin, while easyJet is connecting Newquay to Geneva in January 2027 for the first time. Rail options are growing every season, with four operators such as Ski Solutions, Iglu Ski, Crystal Ski, Inghams and French company Travelski making it easier than ever to take the train to the Alps.

Whether you're a beginner, an expert skier, travelling with kids, a food lover or just up for a party, you'll find your tribe at these resorts. Put them on your wish list for this winter's ski season, and over the page you'll find our ultimate guide to skiing in the Dolomites, such is the scope of slopes on offer there.

ALPE D'HUEZ, FRANCE

Best for: beginners
When you have a massive beginner area at altitude, rather than only at the bottom of the village, it makes learning to ski that much more pleasurable. And at Alpe d'Huez, you get 41 green runs and 34 blues, making

progression considerably easier in this famously sunny resort. It also has easy links to a handful of smaller and prettier villages, including Vaujany and Oz-en-Oisans. Mixed-ability groups with advanced skiers will make a beeline for the legendary Sarenne, the longest black run in Europe. **Book it:** Erna Low has a week's self-catering at Résidence Maison de l'Alpe departing January 16 from £700, including flights, transfers and ski passes; ernalow.co.uk

PONTEDILEGNO-TONALE, ITALY

Best for: budget-conscious skiers
Regularly feted as among the best-value resorts in the annual Post Office Travel Money Ski Resort Report, Pontedilegno-Tonale (known as Passo Tonale) in Italy's Trento province consistently offers good value. This covers everything from accommodation, lift passes and ski lessons to food and drink. Combining Passo Tonale with the village of Ponte di Legno, it's one of the most snow-sure resorts in Italy, with access to the 3,000m Presena Glacier, and its mainly gentle slopes suit beginners and intermediates.

Most hotels run on a half-board basis, and lift passes are free for children under eight, saving you even more cash. **Book it:** Iglu Ski has seven nights' half-board at Hotel Cielo Blu in Passo Tonale from £687, departing January 2, including flights and transfers; iglu-ski.com

MORZINE-AVORIAZ, FRANCE

Best for: intermediates
Take a traditional Haute-Savoie village and pair it with a classic modernist resort and you have the desirable combination of Morzine-Avoriaz. Between these two stalwarts of the



POWDER TRIP
French resort Morzine: left, Verbier in Switzerland

“Steal a march on the season in November by heading to high-altitude resorts”

Portes du Soleil ski area straddling France and Switzerland, you have plenty to keep mileage-hungry intermediates busy for days. If you're looking for the more challenging end of the spectrum, make your way up to Chamossière at 2,002m and have a go down the red runs — after you've taken in the fabulous views of Mont Blanc from the summit. By staying in Morzine, you also have the option to ski over to family-friendly Les Gets. **Book it:** Inghams has seven nights' half-board at Hôtel Le Crêt in Morzine departing January 2 from £960, including flights and transfers; ingham.co.uk

LA ROSIÈRE, FRANCE

Best for: families
There's a relaxed atmosphere in La Rosière —



helped by its south-facing slopes that get all the sun — that especially appeals to families. You won't find raucous parties, but lots of family-friendly activities and excellent beginner areas for young skiers. Accommodation is split between La Rosière Centre and the hamlet of Les Eucherets, both connected by a magical Narnia-like woodland path. More confident skiers can get the lift up to Mont Valaisan for fun red runs and a large freeride area. And few can resist skiing across the border into Italy to La Thuile, as long as you can handle a tricky red and two long drag lifts. They're worth it. **Book it:** Peak Retreats has a week's self-catering at Les Cimes Blanches in January from £1,467 for a one-bedroom apartment sleeping up to four, including return Le Shuttle crossing for one car; peakretreats.co.uk

VERBIER, SWITZERLAND

Best for: experts
Verbier is off-piste heaven. Here among the 430km of pistes in the 4 Vallées, experts have almost unlimited off-piste itineraries — and these steep runs aren't maintained or patrolled. When there's fresh snow, get there as early as you can unless you really like moguls. Jaded thrill-seekers can get a helicopter to drop them off at one of the summits for an unforgettable descent. If you're with a group of mixed-ability skiers, those less skilled will still have more than enough blues and reds to keep them happy — especially as Verbier has some of the liveliest nightlife in Switzerland. **Book it:** Ski Weekends has a six-night break at



UPPER CIRCLE
Relax in a hot tub at La Rosière

Hôtel Montpelier from January 9 starting at £992, including breakfast. Flights and transfers are extra; skiweekends.com

ST ANTON, AUSTRIA

Best for: après-ski
It's almost a rite of passage to end the ski day among the throngs in slopeside Mooserwirt in St Anton and join the oompah party. That's if you've got enough energy after dancing at nearby Krazy Kanguruh, which was completely rebuilt last year and now features a glass winter garden. The KK's owner, local ski hero Mario Matt, also runs another slopeside hotspot, Arl One. There's a huge choice of bars and clubs in the town centre, too, if you don't fancy skiing down after a session.

Book it: Sunweb has seven nights at Hotel Kirchplatz in St Anton departing January 2 from £1,025, including flights, breakfast and lift passes; sunweb.co.uk

LAAX, SWITZERLAND

Best for: snowboarders
King of the freestyle resorts in the Alps, Laax (with its neighbour Flims) has five snowparks featuring 90 obstacles and the largest halfpipe in the world. There's one for all levels, from beginners to pros keen to take on the pro kicker line with four Olympic-size kickers. There's even a natural snowpark away from the slopes in open terrain. As 70 per cent of the pistes are above 2,000m, this makes Laax one of the most snow-sure resorts in Switzerland.

While neighbouring Flims has a quieter atmosphere, Laax is the place to be if you want more of a buzz.

Book it: Ski Independence has seven nights' self-catering at Rocks Resort in March from £1,173, based on four sharing a two-bedroom apartment and including flights and transfers; ski-i.com

COURCHEVEL, FRANCE

Best for: foodies
It's not just the exalted clientele that can bring stars to your eyes. Courchevel teems with Michelin-starred restaurants. Between the villages of Courchevel, including cute little La Tania, eight restaurants share 13 Michelin stars

between them, with a few more scattered around the 3 Vallées ski domain. In this cosmopolitan place, it's not surprising that the cuisine extends beyond the admittedly delicious Savoyard cheese-heavy dishes to go as far afield as Mexico, Japan, Thailand and Galicia for foodie inspiration. Once you're on the slopes, you have the glories of the rest of the 3 Vallées at your feet (or, rather, your skis). Set aside a day for a leisurely journey to Val Thorens and back.

Book it: Ski Solutions has seven nights at Le Grand Hôtel Courchevel, departing January 23, from £1,845 including flights, transfers and breakfast; skisolutions.com

ZERMATT, SWITZERLAND

Best for: mountain magic
Mont Blanc might be the highest mountain in the Alps, but it's hard to beat the Matterhorn for sheer drama. For those who can't get enough of the Matterhorn's jagged beauty, Zermatt gives us many ways of gazing at this marvel all around the town as well as on the slopes. The excitement begins even before you reach the resort if you're arriving by train on the Glacier Express, and increases once you're in resort and riding the cable car up to Matterhorn Glacier Paradise at 3,883m. You can even carry on into Italy and ski in Breuil-Cervinia, provided you time your return journey so you don't miss the last lift back.

Book it: SNO has seven nights at Hotel Excelsior in Zermatt departing January 16 from £1,271, including flights and transfers; sno.co.uk

KITZBÜHEL, AUSTRIA

Best for: village charm
It's hard to find a more beautiful ski town in Europe than Kitzbühel, where the sight of colourful gabled houses in its medieval pedestrianised centre makes you sigh in pleasure. It's a classy place for strolls along cobbled Voersterstadt past Hermès, Louis Vuitton and Moncler, until après-ski time kicks in and things become as boisterous as you would expect in Austria. In contrast to the gentility of the town, the rowdiness factor cranks up numerous pears in January during the annual Hahnenkamm World Cup race. But once the circus leaves town, things settle into a pleasing pattern of cruising down pistes that intermediates in particular will love.

Book it: Crystal Ski has seven nights' half-board at Bio Hotel Bruggerhof in Kitzbühel in January starting at £1,120, including flights and transfers; crystalski.co.uk