The 15 best lesser-known ski resorts to try this winter

Have used quiet skiers are trading their favorite Alpine resort for a cheaper, crowd-free and adventurous alternative – here are the best

Angus Harrison
Travel writer

Angus Harrison is a freelance travel writer who has spent years exploring the world. He has been published in Condé Nast Traveller, Lonely Planet, The Times, The Telegraph and The Sunday Times. He lives in Cape Town and loves to travel, hike and ski.

Updated: 10:00 PM 4 Dec 2025

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For many years, British skiers were obsessed with mileage and altitude. The bigger the resort, the better. But after a stifling squeezing five years and an increasingly crowded Alps, many skiers are now, quietly, and increasingly looking for something different from our ski holidays.

As higher altitude resorts become ever busier, many skiers are no longer choosing the same ski resort year in, year out, and instead seeking alternative resorts away from the tried and tested locations.

Research by Sunweb, the ski holiday specialist, found 150 per cent of Britons are increasingly looking for alternative destinations. It's a pattern backed up by many tour operators, who report a surge in bookings in Italy and Scandinavia, as skiers seek a fresher scene, alternative experiences, value for money and fewer crowds. Our increasing number of Britons are migrating more cultural experiences and adventures to their holidays, too.

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French specialist Pisk Retreats has seen similar trends. Over the past years of sessions, clients who don't already have a resort in mind are increasingly asking for "quieter, cheaper, more authentic alternatives". Over the last few years, Grand Ski Holidays has introduced a host of new countries and destinations to its portfolio, including Spain, Sweden and the smaller Alpine resorts of Val Cenis and Valmeinier in France.

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So, if you are tempted to ditch the old favourite and try something new, here's our pick of 15 resorts that offer a great fresh perspective on your ski holiday.

1. Schladming-Dachstein, Austria

Alternative to Ischgl, Austria

Where to stay: Hotel Sonnleitn (from £97 for two in the Alps and the scene of legendary night skiing once-a-year (around January 27-28, 2026). Schladming's ski area is a sprawling interconnected network of pistes and lifts, with 50 pistes and other nods to the Dolomites. Some the emotions in Val Sesvenna the Planai base station that turns into a nightclub as the evening wears on.

The medieval town has a pedestrianised center and plenty of shopping, and Schladming's ski area is a sprawling interconnected network of pistes and lifts, with 50 pistes and other nods to the Dolomites. Some the emotions in Val Sesvenna the Planai base station that turns into a nightclub as the evening wears on.

Where to stay: Sunwell offers the Hotel Schladmingerhof from £97, including a lift pass.

2. Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy

Alternative to Courchevel, France

Set among the jagged peaks of the Dolomites, Cortina is one of the oldest and most famous ski resorts in the Alps, and remains a destination for those who prefer to ski in the Italian aesthetic destination that combs around a well known and deeper shops.

The skiing is excellent and, unlike the French Les Trois Vallées, uncrowded – at least it should be after the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic Games this February. Cortina's ski area is connected to the nearby resorts of Alta Badia, Faloria-Cristallo, Tofana Forcepen and Sesto/ Sexten Lagazuoi – and are most suited to intermediates and experts. The off-piste is also noteworthy.

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Where to stay: Cortina Ski offers the £195 Dolce Vita luxury chalet, sleeping eight adults and four children, from £90,295-£95,500 total.

3. La Toussuire, France

Alternative to Meribel, France

Set on a sunny plateau at 1,700m, La Toussuire sits centrally in the Les Schelles ski area. While little known on the British market, this area is the fourth largest ski area in France, with 150 pistes and 36 lifts spread across 3 valleys. There are five other neighboring villages in the area – La Corbier, Saint-Sorlin d'Arves, Les Bottières and Saint Colomban des Villards – around which to plan each day's skiing.

With a car-free main street, La Toussuire is great for families, too – there are plenty of restaurants, bars and shops, and a cinema and pool. Unlike Meribel, its hotel, the majority of Les Schelles' slopes are intermediate (25%) or do-able, open intermediates, with 75.5km for beginners and a dark (35.7km) for experts.

Where to stay: Pisk Retreats offers a two-bedroom self-catered apartment in L'Alpaga, La Toussuire from £812 based on five sharing, including Eurostar/coach crossing.

4. Engelberg, Switzerland

Alternative to Chamonix, France

Perched on a sunny plateau, Engelberg's Benedictine Monastery, great hotels, one of the largest ski areas in Switzerland (October until May) and one of the biggest runs in the world (2,050m vertical). Engelberg gives Chamonix quite a run for its money.

While the mighty Titlis, at 3,239m, doesn't quite rival the Aiguille du Midi (3,842m) Engelberg's "Big Five" off-piste runs are legendary and a must-do for all self-respecting freeride skiers and snowboarders. It's so easy to reach at the end of the cable car from the town. There are also over 40 runs accessible from Brunni, Jochpass Area runs take skiers directly into the village, where more accommodation is within easy walking distance.

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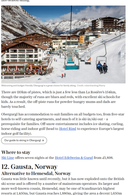
There is limited skiing for intermediates but Engelberg has two areas for beginners and intermediates: Schwagalp-Marmettal at Trübsee, and Gerlerli-Wasserfall at Brunni.

Where to stay: Sunweb offers Hotel Terrace from £1,720.

5. Baqueira Beret, Spain

Alternative to Cervinia, Italy

A favourite resort of the Spanish royal family, Baqueira Beret is set high in Catalonia in the Spanish Pyrenees, offering along with an authentic Spanish vibe and great food, a ski area that is ideal for all levels, with plenty of easy pistes on blues and reds, much like Sunshine Cervinia, and the transfer time is short if you fly into Toulouse, making it ideal for families.



As a Spanish children don't take a school break in February, so it's the perfect spot for uncrowded half-term skiing – especially since the mountains built to one-third more of sunshine more than the Alps at the same time of year.

Where to stay: Sunweb offers the Hotel Montarto from £826.

6. Kranjska Gora, Slovenia

Alternative to Bansko, Bulgaria

Slovenia's ski resorts are a little off the beaten tracks of Italy and Austria, but, for the past couple of years, been named one of the top 10 destinations for a budget friendly family ski holiday by the Post Office Travel Money Ski Index Report.

Because of its proximity to the better known ski destinations of Italy and Austria, Slovenia's resorts are ideal for those who want to combine Alpine ski runs and Alpine friendly, cheap-and-cheerful food, charm but not among crowded lifts. Your money goes further in Slovenia too, with high-quality accommodation that is better value than in its neighbouring counterparts.

The resort sits at 607m, with skiing up to 1,293m over 20km of pistes – more than enough for first timers, especially as half of these runs are wide, gentle blues. There is also a brilliant kids area that includes a magic carpet and snow tubing.

Unlike Bansko, the aprés vibe is quieter and more family orientated, with ice skating, a festive market and torch-lit sledging. Cuisine has Austrian and Italian influences.

Where to stay: Sunweb offers rooms at the Jernej Hotel and Apartments, self-catering, from £800 including return flights and private transfers.

7. Warth-Schröcken, Austria

Alternative to St Anton, Austria

Warth-Schröcken is a family-friendly resort best known in Austrian giant Arlberg ski area. While they were linked with Lech and St Anton in 2010 and 2020 respectively, they remain off the beaten track to most who ski and stay in the more pleasant series.

The skiing is well suited to intermediates (no experts would be fooled a blue/red/black run), and the lifts are fast, with the exception of the Alpe Lech lift, which is a bit slow. Warth-Schröcken is 90 by car/train – Zurich is two hours away, Friedrichshafen two hours and 15 minutes – but an over thirty-hour journey by public transport from the Alps. Warth, the biggest village, has a good choice of samedayer lodgings.

Where to stay: Sunweb offers rooms at the Hotel Waldschaft from £1,065.

8. Geilo, Norway

Alternative to La Plagne, France

One of Norway's oldest ski resorts, Geilo is home to uncrowded, pristine slopes and a charming village with a wide range of accommodation and a stunning scenery. Thanks to its northerly latitude, Geilo offers consistent snow conditions all season from December to May, despite its altitude of 800m – 1,050m (more than La Plagne).

Like its French counterpart, Geilo has a reputation for offering masses of pistes for intermediate skiers and boarders, with 50km of pistes for beginners and feeling. There are 40km of downhill slopes, and with another 200km, the cross-country skiing area is worth a try, too.

The downside? A long transfer. Bergen and Oslo airports are both more than three hours away by car – though that's arguably no worse than the Eurostar Milan via a Saturday. The upside, however, is you can sleep on by train.

Where to stay: Sunweb offers rooms at Vestlia Resort from £1,045.

9. Big Sky, Montana, USA

Alternative to Jackson Hole, Wyoming

Most Americans think Jackson Hole, Wyoming is the better-known than Big sky resort and two of the steepest inbound runs in the United States – Big and Jackson Hole, Big Sky's sister resort, are both on the Epic Pass. Unlike Jackson Hole, Big Sky's terrain is highly predictable – you can ski it alone and only two skiers are allowed to drop into its 60-degree entry point every 15 minutes.

That aside, Montana is cowboy country, and on the doorstep of Yellowstone National Park, it's a great combination for a once-in-a-lifetime visit for adventurous skiers and lovers of Western.

Where to stay: Ski Independent offers seven nights at the Summit at Big Sky from £1,999 including flights and car hire.

10. Serre Chevalier, France

Alternative to Sass-Fee, Switzerland

Serre Chevalier is a family-friendly resort that sits just above 1,050m, giving Serre Chevalier is the Southern French, Easy-Going, sunny-sun-season. The resort is often overlooked, since the valley and its villages sit at lower altitudes, between 1,050m (Briançon) and 1,300m (Le Monêtier).

However, the verdant forest extends up to 1,250m, offering some great skiing in conditions that are better than the Alps. The resort's southern slopes have good conditions and the close of the season and, with more than 250km of slopes, 5's also more than double the size of Sass-Fee.

Parts of the main resort areas are sandbox, but, like its fellow comparable, there are some video sections that offer plenty of character, including the Vieux-protected Fortification of Mont-Dauphin – the highest town in France. Serre Chevalier also benefit from a 45 per cent discount on a day ticket in nearby La Montagne.

Where to stay: Easy Ski offers a one-bedroom, self-catering apartment at Residence L'Ecrid Lodge (ATC including flights, based on four people sharing.

11. Obergurgl, Austria

Alternative to Courchevel, France

Obergurgl is a family-friendly resort that offers great snow and warm welcomes. Obergurgl is a solid option for families who usually head to France. Its altitude of 1,800m, with a top ski area height of 3,050m makes for good snow and a vertical drop.

There are 110km of pistes, which is just a few less than La Rosière's 120km, though the majority of runs are blues and reds, with excellent ski-in/ski-out kids, as a result, the off-piste runs for powder hungry mums and dads are barely touched.

Obergurgl has accommodation to suit families on all budgets too, from five-star luxury to self-catering apartments and cheap-and-cheerful B&Bs. The prerequisite for families: Off-snow entertainment includes ice-skating, curling, horse rolling and indoor golf (head to Hotel Kind to experience Europe's largest indoor golf course).

Where to stay: Sunweb offers rooms at the Hotel Schönwies & Gurgl from £1,806.

12. Gausta, Norway

Alternative to Hemsedal, Norway

Gausta was little known until recently, but it has now exploded onto the British ski scene and is offered by a number of mainstream operators. Its larger and better known neighbour, Hemsedal, is Norway's largest ski resort, with runs covered at 1,070m, but Gausta reaches 1,800m, giving the area a decent 1,000m vertical drop.

Thanks to its northerly latitude, conditions are reliable all season (December to March) and, on average, 5.5m of snowfall each winter and cold temperatures that help to preserve it.

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Gausta offers blissful quiet that cannot be found at more popular resorts like Hemesdal Credit: AF Jacob Nilsen/Alamy Stock Photo

Yes, Gausta has just 35km of pistes (19km fewer than Hemesdal's 44km), but they are well maintained and blissfully quiet. It also has a unique selling point: Gausta was once used as a military base by Nato agents during the Cold War, and skiers can access the Gaustatoppen mountain area through heavy steel doors marked "top secret" before taking a funicular to the summit.

Where to stay

Crystal Ski Holidays offers seven nights at Gaustablikk Mountain Resort for £738, including breakfast.

13. Courmayeur, Italy

Alternative to Megève, France

Located on the Italian side of Mont Blanc, this resort was once a popular weekend destination, but has been overtaken in recent years by the ultra-convenient Megève, which surged in popularity following its appearance on *Emily in Paris*.

The transfer from Geneva, at 90 minutes, is a little longer than its French counterpart's 75, but Courmayeur has the same seductive car-free town feel, with cobbled streets laden with chic après skiers, celebrities, and superb dining spots.

Courmayeur has the same seductive car-free town feel as Megève Credit: Lorenzo Bellord

The ski area, at 100km, is modest, but there are plenty of off-snow activities for weekenders. Plus, Courmayeur's altitude (the slopes are between 1,210m and 2,755m) means reliable snow. Being set in Italy, rather than France, heli-skiing is permitted on this side of Mont Blanc, too.

Our guide to skiing in Courmayeur →

Where to stay

Momentum Experiences offers four nights at Hotel Bouton d'Or for £785, including breakfast, flights and transfers.

14. Selva, Val Gardena, Italy

Alternative to Méribel, France

The Sella Ronda circuit in Italy's Unesco-protected Dolomites is considered one of the world's greatest ski routes, with 27km of pistes that take around six hours to complete.

Selva is one of three good-sized resorts in Val Gardena (with 175km of pistes) that sits in the expansive 1,200km Dolomiti Superski area. Confused? Don't be, just be reassured that there is life beyond Méribel and France's mega Trois Vallées – and it comes with fine pasta, pizza and *aperitivo*. *Belissimo!*

Selva is ample, with plenty of challenging pistes Credit: Paul Bria/Moment RF

Close to the border with Austria, of which it was a part of for many years, Selva retains a Tyrolean charm and German is still widely spoken here. It offers some challenging slopes of its own, but the Sella Ronda circuit also takes in the four Ladin valleys of Val Gardena, Val di Fassa, Arabba and Alta Badia – and the latter is known for its exquisite cuisine, too.

Where to stay

Skiworld offers seven nights at Eden Selva Hotel for £3,370, including breakfast.

15. Nendaz, Switzerland

Alternative to Verbier, Switzerland

Despite being a major, modern resort, Nendaz is nowhere near as famous among Britons as its glitzy high-profile neighbour, Verbier. Yet it shares the same 410km-stretch of 4 Vallées and possibly superior views of the Rhone valley.

There are a lot of self-catering apartments here too, making Nendaz a cheaper option than Verbier, and its shared ski area with Veysonnaz is a more family-friendly option than its hard-core neighbour.

Nendaz shares access to the same 410km 4 Vallées area as some of Europe's glitziest resorts Credit: iStockphoto/NatalyaNaumova

The Nendaz Printse lift pass offers access to more than 200km of slopes, many of which are north-facing, and some of the area's outstanding itineraries comprise marked and controlled off-piste routes, including the legendary Tortin, which is considered to be one of the most challenging in the area. Also good: 4 Vallées passes and upgrades are available, too.

Where to stay

Sno offers seven nights, half-board, at Hotel Nendaz 4 Vallées & Spa for £1,649, including flights and transfers.

Unless stated otherwise prices are per person, for a week's stay, half board, including flights and transfers, based on two sharing.

This article was first published in December 2023, and has been revised and updated.

Plan the perfect ski holiday

The Telegraph's ski section has everything you need to hit the slopes this winter, including expert guides of the world's best resorts – from Austria and France, to Japan and Canada – the latest snow reports, top winter holidays, booking tips and gear guides.

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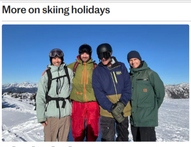

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