

Chalet holidays are back and better than ever – here’s how to do them

As demand soars for this traditional style of ski break, operators are upping their game, says Gabriella Le Breton

It’s easy to get nostalgic when looking back through the mists of time to the halcyon days of the British ski chalet holiday. Peaking in popularity during the 1980s and 1990s, with operators Bladon Lines, Scott Dunn and Le Ski leading the charge, chalet holidays were inherently social and joyously amateurish. Basic chalets with shared bathrooms were staffed by charmingly inexperienced “chalet girls” and cost less than £400 a week.

The 1990s saw Crystal Ski and Inghams enter the fray, bringing chalets to the masses, while Scott Dunn and Descent International upped the luxury with hot tubs and champagne on tap.

Come 2007, the Ski Club of Great Britain found that 37 per cent of British skiers holidayed in catered chalets. But then, came a flurry of existential challenges – global recession, Brexit, Covid, increasing operational costs – that drove all but the most determined chalet specialists into the abyss.

According to statistics from the Mountain Trade Network (MTN), only 10 per cent of British skiers holidayed in a catered chalet in 2023. Yet there are signs that the chalet market might have bottomed out, with MTN statistics for last winter revealing that 16 per cent of British skiers stayed in chalets.

Looking ahead, this season sees VIP Ski launch 16 catered, slope-side chalets in La Plagne; Ski Independence partner with Ski Armadillo in Verbier; Le Ski expand its portfolio with a new property in Tignes; and Ski Weekends add four new chalets in Val d’Isère.

Two notable factors unite these developments and speak of today’s chalet experience: high-altitude resorts and plush accommodation.

High (altitude) standards

At its peak, VIP Ski operated chalets across the Alps, but now limits its portfolio to four high-altitude resorts. Managing director Andy Sturt explains: “Booking a catered chalet holiday today typically costs about £15,000 for a family of four in high season – that’s a major purchase and clients have associated expectations of service and quality. A lack of snow is no longer acceptable at that price point.”

As demand soars for high-altitude resorts, so too does the demand for accommodation – already limited since Brexit – which in turn becomes more expensive and luxurious. As Sturt confirms: “Each component part of the chalet holiday has increased in cost and quality exponentially in recent years. We’re in a world where today’s luxury is tomorrow’s standard – high-speed internet is the new hot water.”

A new definition

Today’s interpretation of luxury also extends to the option to define your own chalet experience. Sparked partly



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The history of the British chalet holiday

- 1947** Erna Low launches the Erna Low Travel Service, selling hosted ski trips to private homes in the Alps with meals and drinks included
- 1978** Bladon Lines, the UK’s seminal catered chalet operator, is founded by Simon Bladon and Mark Lines with three chalets in Verbier
- 1986** Andrew Dunn launches Scott Dunn, a small portfolio of luxurious catered ski chalets in the Alps
- 1995** Inghams buys Bladon Lines, absorbing it into the Inghams brand
- 2020** Scott Dunn ceases its fully serviced catered chalets offering
- 2021** Crystal Ski axes its chalet programme
- 2024/25** Several new operators and chalet-specific extensions of existing operators launch with a focus on the ultra-luxury market including The Ski Collection (by Peak Retreats), The Luxury Chalet Club and Koja d’Or



which has transformed the chalet experience to the benefit of our guests.”

Rupert Longsdon, founder of the specialist agent Oxford Ski, agrees that the quality of chalets is increasing across the board.

“Overall, the experience of staying in a ski chalet offers better quality and value for money than a summer villa, and often surpasses four-star hotels. Some of the chalets in our portfolio are on a par with the world’s finest hotels.”

With hotel-worthy properties and service, it’s unsurprising that chalets are no longer the exclusive preserve of British skiers. Among ultra-luxury operators such as Kaluma Ski, Consensio and Ultima Collection, Britons represent a minority of a global audience converted to the chalet holiday. Yet the British skier remains a stalwart of the more affordable chalet, with operators such as Le Ski, F&P Travel and VIP Ski still attracting a majority of home-grown clients.

“VIP Ski remains a very Anglo-Saxon product,” confirms Sturt. “Our focus is on staffing chalets with authentic, charming people with a sense of humour and love of banter.”

So, while the days of Bladon Lines’ self-branded Parrot Claret and Parrot Vin wines are over, the classic chalet holiday is far from down and out. Rather, it’s entering an exciting new dawn, with far greater diversity – and fewer parrots.

Ski holidays

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Expert tips to find the best value

Serviced apartments
Jane Bolton, from Erna Low: “Consider booking a serviced apartment with shared facilities, which offers the privacy of a chalet at a lower cost”

Share the space
Operators such as Inghams, Skiology and Mercury Alpine Chalets sell properties on a room-by-room basis in select weeks, offering a more affordable and sociable chalet experience

Book a short break
Embrace the joy of the short ski break with Ski Weekends, which enables guests to enjoy chalet holidays of three, four, five or six nights, which is also handy for avoiding travel on busy weekend changeover days

Book extras in advance
Oli Corkhill, from Leo Trippi: “Book your ski lessons well in advance. It will secure your pick of instructors and save you money – instructors are increasingly applying dynamic pricing during peak weeks, with prices known to exceed €600 per half day in Courchevel”

Hybrid catering
Rather than commit to fully catered services, opt for a hybrid catering offering, provided by the likes of Ski France. This is particularly cost effective if your party won’t capitalise on the alcoholic drinks included in many catered packages

▲▲ The haute life: accommodation is only getting more luxurious as demand for chalet stays soars

▲ Every little Alps: Switzerland’s chalets beckon

Who to book with

There’s a dizzying proliferation of chalet providers, each offering varying benefits. Experienced agents such as Oxford Ski, Ski Solutions, Peak Retreats and Leo Trippi match clients of all budgets with their dream chalet and package up travel, equipment hire and ski passes if desired.

Small chalet operators like VIP Ski, Kaluma Ski, Hip Hideouts, Le Ski, F&P Travel, Skiworld and Skiology offer in-depth local expertise and, sometimes, the ability to negotiate on price.

Rental platforms such as Heidi, Emerald Stay and OVO Network enable you to book each element of your holiday independently.

Where to go

High-altitude resorts with reliable snow-making such as Val d’Isère, Courchevel, Verbier and St Anton are the most popular and expensive. But, as Rupert Longsdon of Oxford Ski says: “Swapping the expansive ski areas and prices of big resorts for lesser-known destinations, can save you money.”



▲ Peak time: ski in and ski out to your chalet in Val D’Isere, France

CHALET, YOU STAY: FIVE TOP BREAKS



Val d’Isère

VIP Ski is offering free six-day Val d’Isère-Tignes passes when booking a seven-night catered chalet. From £1,184pp, including chalet board at No 5 Belvedere and transfers. Departs Dec 7 2025 (vip-chalets.com).



Courchevel

Le Ski offers seven nights at the two-bedroom Petit Marmay in Courchevel La Tania from £1,256pp, including chalet board, flights and transfers, departing Jan 18 2026 (leski.com).



Morzine

Morzine specialist Skiology offers seven nights at newly renovated Le Manoir on a room-by-room basis from £1,600pp, chalet board, departing Feb 22 2026, excluding travel (skiology.co.uk).



St Anton

Kaluma Ski offers seven nights at three-bedroom Chalet 53 in St Anton from €2,666pp (£2,314), chalet board, including resort driver service, departing March 8 2026, excluding travel (kalumaski.com).



Les Gets

Chalet Behansa OVO Network offers seven nights at the five-bedroom Chalet Behansa, with a hot tub, sauna and cinema, from £4,852 total, self-catered, departing 28 March 2026, excluding travel (ovonetnetwork.com).