

TRAVEL

Val Cenis

The largest resort in the Haute Maurienne valley, Val Cenis is authentic, unpretentious and laid back. This winter, the train to Modane, the station at the bottom of the valley, reopens after being closed by a landslide two years ago, so hop on a TGV from Paris, then a 20-minute bus ride for easy, low-carbon travel.

Who should go? Families and intermediate skiers.

What to book Peak Retreats (023 9283 9310; peakretreats.co.uk) offers a two-bedroom apartment in Les Chalets de Flambeau from £899, self catering, based on two adults and two children, including return train and transfers from London to Modane, departing Jan 10, 2026.

How to do it cheaper Take advantage of dynamic pricing to save up to 57 per cent when you buy your lift pass in advance (valcenis.ski) – the resort will refund the cost if there's bad weather.

Get set for your best ski season yet

Our expert Rebecca Miles shares 20 of this winter's unmissable mountain holidays, including top-notch resorts and insider tips on how to save

Ski season is just around the corner, so now is the time to start planning your time on the slopes. This winter, there's plenty to be excited about, and it's not just the promise of fresh powder days and making priceless memories with friends and family.

Chalet holidays, the much-loved staple of many a British ski trip, are making a comeback. Paving the way is Le Ski, one of the classic chalet tour operators, which is expanding into Tignes this winter;

short-break specialist Ski Weekends, with four new properties in Val d'Isère; and VIP Ski, which is returning to La Plagne with the opening of Graciosa – 16 catered slope-side chalets.

In recent years, train travel to the Alps has been a consistent uncertainty. But that looks set to change: Eurostar has expanded its timetable and, for first time since 2019/20, will run the Snow Train all season; the TGV line to Modane, France, and on

into Italy is reopening; and more tour operators are including train options in their packages.

New flights will add variety and open up new destinations too. Both Crystal Ski and easyJet are operating new routes to the Scandinavian Mountains Airport, while the latter's new flights from Bristol to Munich provide an opportunity for more long-weekend breaks in Austria.

North American resorts are breaking records

with their expansion plans: Deer Valley in Utah and Lake Louise in Alberta are the most ambitious.

It's also an Olympic year, with the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Games in February – Dolomites resorts are set to get their moment in the spotlight. But no matter where you go, you'll find more options than ever for making this your best season yet.

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THE PLACE TO BE

Discover the magic of the Maldives with Centara, offering four distinct experiences to suit every traveller. The jewel in Centara's crown, Centara Grand Lagoon Maldives, is a newly launched sanctuary of indulgence and serenity, while underwater world-themed Centara Mirage Lagoon Maldives offers a vibrant family paradise.

From the intimate, adults-only Centara Ras Fushi Resort & Spa to the pristine beaches and award-winning house reef of Machchafushi Island Resort & Spa

France

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Courchevel

The grande dame of ski resorts turns 80 next year and is showing no sign of its age, particularly when it comes to its gastronomy. It has the most Michelin stars of any ski resort in the world – Baumanière 1850 has been awarded a second this year – and Japanese and Thai cuisine is celebrated at the new five-star Hotel Maya in 1850.

Who should go? Everyone, at least once – especially foodies.

What to book Iglu Ski (020 3848 3700; igluski.com) offers Hotel Portetta in Courchevel 1650 from £2,255, B&B, including return train travel and transfers, departing Feb 28, 2026.

How to do it cheaper If your heart is set on staying in the heart of 1850 – home to the resort's highest prices – Ski France (020 3475 4756; skifrance.co.uk) offers a week's B&B at the two-star Hôtel Courchevel Olympic from £933.



Les Gets

If this is the winter you're finally going to learn to ski, then consider a week in Les Gets from March 21 next year when the new Premier Ski Festival takes place. It's a week of not just learning the ropes but enjoying group activities. Festival tickets cost €399pp and include all the essentials (lift pass, lessons, equipment hire and evening entertainment).

Who should go? Beginners.

What to book Chalets1066 (020 7183 5082; chalets1066.com) offers self-ca-

▲ Beginners' luck: Les Gets in France is well suited to new skiers; right, Val Thorens sits high in the 3 Vallées, the world's largest linked ski area

tering properties from €315, arriving March 21, 2026. Fly from London Gatwick to Geneva with easyJet (easyjet.com) from £72 return.

How to do it cheaper The least expensive way to travel from Geneva (one hour) is a shared transfer with Alpy Transfers (alpytransfers.com); from €14 one way.

Val Thorens

The latest survey from the Ski Club of Great Britain and the Mountain Trade Network found that British skiers value the size of the ski area and its altitude most when choosing a resort for a skiing holiday. Therefore Val Thorens, Europe's highest resort and part of the mighty 3 Vallées, the largest linked ski area in the world, is a no-brainer at any time of the season.



Who should go? Anyone looking for guaranteed snow.

What to book Erna Low (020 30 111 222; ernalow.co.uk) offers a two-bedroom apartment in Hameau de la Sapinière from £985, self catering, departing April 4, 2026.

How to do it cheaper Consider basing yourself in Les Menuires, just down the valley, for lower prices and deals such as six group teenage lessons, including equipment hire, for €223 with the ESF (esf-lesmenuires.com).

La Plagne

From the reopening of the completely refurbished Roche de Mio gondola, providing more reliable access to La Plagne's high-altitude, intermediate-friendly slopes, to the decades-in-the-making renovation transformation of Le Christina, the resort's oldest hotel, into Pop Alp, La Plagne is honouring the past, present and future this upcoming season as part of its 60th anniversary celebrations.

Who should go? Intermediates.

What to book VIP Ski (020 3538 3463; vip-chalets.com) offers the Mio Suite at the Graciosa from £1,480, including chalet board and transfers, departing April 12, 2026. Excluding flights.

How to do it cheaper ESF group lessons (ski-school-laplagne.co.uk) are up to 15 per cent cheaper in the afternoons than in the mornings. Rent second-hand equipment at skihut.ski, where prices start from €10 a day for adult skis and ski boots.

◀ Home comforts: Les Chalets de Flambeau offers unpretentious accommodation in laid-back Val Cenis

