



PYRENE DUFAU/LES DEUX ALPES

## The world's greatest ski holidays

Whether you are a nervous novice or fearless thrill-seeker, Sophie Butler guides you down the slopes

▲ White stuff: hitting the fresh powder in Les Deux Alpes ski resort in France

Here we are again. On the brink of a new ski season, full of anticipation for those fluttering flakes, for the resorts to open and for that first run on powder. It won't be long until you're surrounded by perfectly groomed corduroy, with the high peaks silhouetted against the blue sky, breathing in the sharp chill of the fresh mountain air and listening to the satisfying crunch of fresh snow as you clip on your skis and feel your muscle memory kick in after long months away.

There's plenty of exciting news from the slopes, and within the following pages you'll find 30 of the best holidays to suit every kind of skier and snowboarder – from the nervous novice finding their ski legs to the fearless thrill-seeker looking for the excitement of remote off-piste.

There's also a selection of this season's best options for families, whether you're looking for home-from-home accommodation for young children, with crèches and supervised activities, or are travelling

with older children who want friendly, English-speaking ski schools and some independent après to mingle with new friends and have fun.

We also have a holiday for every budget, showing you how to find more bang for your buck in the unflashy Haute Maurienne region of France, in the Spanish Pyrenees or in the Italian Dolomites. Meanwhile, those who aren't counting the pennies can find top-notch spa hotels in Switzerland or high-end North American resorts such as Aspen – which, by the way, opens a brand new 60-hectare ski area this season. And if you want something completely different, then how about a luxury eco-lodge in the spectacular wilds of northern Iceland?

Whatever type of holiday you are looking for, there are exciting options. What are you waiting for? Scour our selection to find the holiday that best suits you and prepare to make the very most of the flakes.

*Continued on page 2*



# BEST FOR BEGINNERS

## Arinsal, Andorra

Find your snow legs alongside other first-timers on a newly introduced, tailor-made beginners' week aimed at nervous novices with Crystal in Arinsal, a mountain village with high-altitude nursery slopes, good ski schools and lively après.

*Crystal Ski Holidays (020 3451 1821; crystalski.co.uk) offers a Slope Starter week staying at three-star Hotel Montané, a six-minute ride to the ski school meeting point and nursery slopes, from £845. Departs January 21*

## Obergurgl, Austria

Pick this classic first-timers' resort for its two top-notch beginner areas (one in the resort centre, the other accessed by chairlift), English-speaking ski school instructors and lower slopes, which are wide and treeless. The resort is one of the highest ski villages in Europe and oozes Austrian charm.

*I-Ski (020 3666 1896; i-ski.co.uk) offers stays at five-star ski-in/ski-out*

### Telegraph's weekly snow and ski update

#### Scan to join in

Sign up for the Telegraph's weekly snow and ski update, delivered to your inbox every Monday throughout the ski season



▼ Learning the slopes: the snow-sure resort Les Deux Alpes is great for first-time skiers

*Hotel Edelweiss and Gurgl, with spa and indoor pool, from £1,981. Departs January 6*

## Les Deux Alpes, France

Hone your skills on a new green slope, which winds down from 2,100 metres under the Vallée Blanche lift in Les Deux Alpes. A big plus point for beginners in this snow-sure resort is that the beginner pistes sit at a high altitude, rather than at resort level, which means great views and more reliable snow for first-timers.

*Sno (020 7770 6888; sno.co.uk) offers stays at Résidence Neige et Soleil, four minutes' walk to the ski school meeting point, from £639, self-catering, based on full occupancy of an apartment sleeping six. Departs March 9*

## Trysil, Norway

Enrol on the beginners' programme offered by singles specialist Friendship Travel in the Norwegian resort of Trysil, where gentle slopes and English-speaking ski schools give first-timers a more relaxed introduction than busier Alpine resorts.

*Friendship Travel (0289 446 2211; friendshiptravel.com) offers stays at the four-star Radisson Blu Resort, a ski-in/ski-out hotel with swimming pool and four restaurants, from £2,995, based on sole occupancy. Departs February 24*

## Morzine, France

Tackle the gentle slopes at Pleney in this family-friendly resort in the Portes du Soleil ski area. For 2023-24, a new carpet lift has been installed near the Nabor lift, giving beginners a more comfortable way to access the Penguin Park learning area.

*VIP Ski (0203 820 0030, vip-chalets.com) offers stays at Valdez Suite, an apartment sleeping four in the resort centre, with a spacious open-plan living area, from £1,205. Excludes travel; departs January 14*





◀ Visitors to Zermatt in Switzerland can enjoy a largely uncrowded intermediate's paradise

## BEST FOR INTERMEDIATES

### La Plagne, France

Go high in La Plagne, a resort in the giant Paradiski ski area which celebrates its 20th anniversary this season. Improvers looking for more of a challenge can take advantage of the resort's newly opened Glaciers gondola. Ascending from Roche de Mio, it gives faster access to the resort's snow-sure red and black slopes just below the Bellecôte summit.

*Ski Beat (01273 855100; skibeat.co.uk) offers stays at Chalet Arpette 1, sleeping up to six, near the chairlift in Plagne 1800, from £930. Departs January 13*

### St Anton, Austria

Book a newly launched rail package with Inghams on a morning train from London St Pancras to the legendary slopes of St Anton, via Paris and Zurich, arriving at around 9pm. The Rendl sector, on the southern side of the valley, is the ideal place for honing your ski legs,

before tackling the trickier reds from Albonagrat.

*Inghams (01483 319598; inghams.co.uk) offers stays at four-star Chalet Rendl Mountain Lodge, with wellness area, from £1,149. Departs January 6*

### Sauze d'Oulx, Italy

Up your confidence levels in this great-value resort overlooking the Susa valley in the linked Milky Way area, where open cruising pistes for intermediates combine with sheltered, tree-lined lower slopes. Free guiding is a bonus for guests staying at Chalet Hotel Edelweiss with Neilson.

*Neilson (0333 014 3351; neilson.co.uk) offers stays at Chalet Hotel Edelweiss, 120m from the nearest lift, from £849. Departs January 7*

### Zermatt, Switzerland

Be among the first skiers to take a ride on the newly opened Matterhorn Alpine

Crossing, unveiled in July, for a thrilling journey between Swiss Zermatt and its neighbouring Italian resort of Cervinia. The two resorts combine to make a paradise of wide, snow-sure and largely uncrowded blues and reds.

*Ski Solutions (020 7471 7761; skisolutions.com) offers stays at four-star Hotel Daniela, with two restaurants, from £1,605, B&B. Departs December 9*

### Avoriaz, France

New developments at these intermediate-friendly slopes include a six-seater chair replacing the old Lac-Intrèts lift, plus a new mile-long red run, Le Creux de la Neige. Just under two hours from Geneva, this resort is an ideal snow-sure option for a quick break.

*Flexiski (01962 587777; flexiski.com) offers a three-night stay at Chalet Renard Blanc, with private chef, from £603. Excludes flights; departs January 22*



## BEST FOR EXPERTS

### Whistler, Canada

Rise to the challenge of alpine bowls, chutes and tree skiing in Canada's most famed resort on a two-day course geared to advanced skiers. Included in the price is video analysis, free-riding tuition and an introduction to the best snow in the company of an experienced and knowledgeable guide.

*Ski Safari (01273 224060; skisafari.com) offers stays at three-star Aava Hotel from £1,995, room only, including a two-day Extremely Canadian Steep Skiing Clinic. Departs March 14*

### Verbier, Switzerland

A five-day course at the world-famous Warren Smith Academy can help even the best skiers hone their skills and techniques in a variety of challenging terrains. Participants are individually assessed to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses.

*Warren Smith Ski Academy (00 44 7747 809545; warrensmith-skiacademy.com) offers a five-day course from £697 with accommodation in three-star Hotel Rotonde. Excludes travel; departs January 22*

### Aspen Snowmass, US

Colorado's smartest resort sees the opening of a high-speed quad chairlift accessing the north face of Aspen Mountain this season. An enticing 150-acre playground for experts includes new chutes, glades and trails, which are set to increase the skiable terrain by more than 20 per cent – the biggest development of the resort since 1985.

*American Ski Classics (020 86079988; americanski.classics.com) offers the*

*centrally located four-star Limelight Hotel, from £5,506, room only, including lift pass and equipment rental. Departs February 24*

### Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy

Be one of the first to try the newly opened touring itinerary in this chic Italian resort that will co-host the 2026 Winter Olympics. Located in the north-eastern Dolomites, the Cortina-Alta Badia tour takes in the Torri ski area from Mount Lagazuoi to Tofane. Experienced skiers will relish trying the area's dizzying black runs as well as plenty of challenging off-piste.

*Skiline (020 8313 3999; skiline.co.uk) offers stays at Hotel Parc Victoria, a chalet-hotel dating back to the 1890s, from £1,189. Departs January 6*

### Nagano, Japan

Head east to try out Powder Byrne's newly launched Japanese Ski Safari programmes, geared towards the most experienced skiers with extensive black run and off-piste experience. Tours are accompanied by private, English-speaking guides and include options in Hokkaido, Tohoku and Nagano – all of which are blessed by the nation's legendary powder snow.

*Powder Byrne (020 8246 5300; powderbyrne.com) offers an eight-night Nagano Ski Safari, with three nights each in Hakuba and in Nozawa, and two nights in Tokyo, from £4,995, excluding meals and flights, including a day's sightseeing in Tokyo. Departures between January 22 and 30*

*Continued on page 4*



▼ Powder play: Aspen Snowmass has boosted its skiable terrain by more than 20 per cent



## What's new this winter?

There's plenty to be excited about this ski season, whether it's news of ski area expansions, new lift connections or historic anniversaries. Among the top headlines is news from across the pond, where

American favourite Aspen is opening its first new terrain since 1985 – in the process increasing its ski area by 20 per cent. Its neighbour Steamboat is making waves, too, with the final stages of a \$200 million (£165 million) investment – one of the biggest in history – including a transformation of its base area and 650 acres of new expert terrain,

making it the second largest resort in Colorado.

Yet European resorts aren't to be overshadowed. This winter will be the first chance skiers get to cross the Italian-Swiss border on the Matterhorn Alpine Crossing – a game-changer for those looking to clock up big mileage between the resorts of Cervinia or Zermatt. On the slopes there

are exciting changes in store. Les Deux Alpes has set its sights on the next generation of skiers in the redeveloped Vallée Blanche sector, while experts will be exploring the newly opened touring itinerary in Cortina d'Ampezzo, which takes in the Torri ski area from Mount Lagazuoi to Tofane – highlights of Italy's north-eastern Dolomites.



It's not just on the slopes that ski holidays are advancing, with rejuvenation in Alpine hotels and chalets at the forefront this winter. Skiers will be able to relax in an innovative glass-bottomed rooftop pool at the Das Central Hotel in Sölden and guests will return to the storied halls of Grace La Margna – one of the most

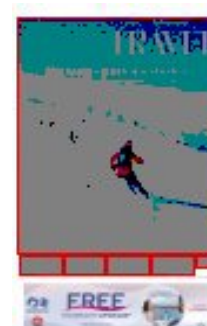
historic five-stars in St Moritz. If your budget is on the larger side, you can indulge in a stay at the new Six Senses Crans-Montana or enjoy the all-inclusive delights of Club Med's new resort in Kiroro, Japan.

Operators are also making moves to keep ski holidays enticing. While Eurostar's ski train will return this winter – albeit on an indirect

route – Inghams is leading the way by launching rail-ski packages, including to resorts beyond France. In the skies, new jets will fly between London and Bolzano, operated by SkyAlps, as skiers seek out the value of the Italian slopes. Off-the-beaten-track specialist Ski Safari is branching out in Norway to the resort of Gausta, and

French self-catering experts Peak Retreats is adding further lesser-known resorts to its portfolio. Crystal Ski has expanded its beginner-only holidays, and in the luxury market, the Orient Express will operate a dedicated service to the Alps. The anticipation for winter really is palpable.

*Lucy Aspden-Kean*





*Seven-night prices are per person based on two sharing, or on two adults and two children for family breaks, including flights, transfers and half board, unless stated otherwise, and are subject to availability.*

◀ Whistler is the largest ski area in North America





## BEST FOR FAMILIES

### Les Menuires, France

Enrol the kids into Ski Famille's new Monty's Ski Club lessons (in groups of up to eight) in this family-friendly Trois Vallées resort, which celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2024. Off-piste activities include the Aqualudique swimming pool and a one-kilometre toboggan run on rails.

*Ski Famille (01252 365495; skifamille.co.uk) offers stays at its newly opened Chalet Hotel Cocon des Neiges, with 19 family suites, by the Bruyères gondola with onsite nursery and playroom. From £935 including childcare. Departs January 20*

### Obertauern, Austria

Austria's only purpose-built ski resort, Obertauern is a great choice for beginner or intermediate families looking for ski-in/ski-out convenience without the crowds of France. Highlights include the choice of ski circuits tailored to younger or older children, a snowpark, two toboggan runs and sleigh rides.

*Crystal Ski Holidays (020 3451 2821; crystalski.co.uk) offers stays at Valamar Obertauern, located in the village centre, from £1,841. Departs February 10*

### Champoluc, Italy

Make the most of the pre-school years by grabbing a quiet January week in the Italian resort of Champoluc in the large Monterosa ski area, with its sheltered tree-lined slopes. Family specialist Esprit Ski has kids' clubs for

babies and toddlers aged from 17 weeks and supervised lunches for children over three.

*Esprit Ski (01483 944516; espritski.com) offers stays at Chalet Hotel De Champoluc, next to the Crest gondola, from £498. Excludes childcare. Departs January 7*

### Kiroro, Japan

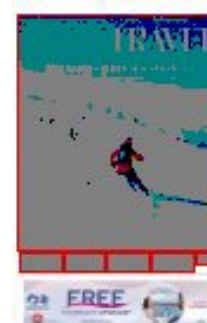
Splash out on a stay at the new Club Med Kiroro Grand resort on the northern island of Hokkaido, which opens its doors on December 1. Included in the price is Petit Club Med (ages two to three), Mini Club Med (ages four to 10) and Junior Club Med (ages 11 to 17), lessons and lift passes, allowing parents to enjoy their own time in Japow (Japan powder).

*Club Med (0345 3676767; clubmed.co.uk) offers stays at Club Med Kiroro Grand, with spa, from £3,207 all-inclusive. Departs April 6*

### Val d'Isère, France

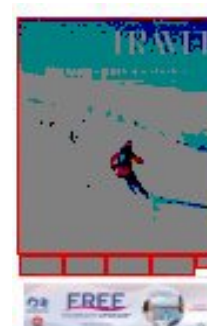
Visit this sophisticated French resort with children of all ages. Teens can try the tree-top adventure course, illuminated in the evening, and younger children can visit a local farm – Ferme de l'Adroit – to meet the chickens, pigs, horses and cows in the snow. Linked with neighbouring Tignes, Val d'Isère offers everything from high-altitude slopes for confident skiers to beginner-friendly areas on the Solaise mountain.

*Le Ski (01484 548996; leski.com) offers Chalet du Berger, sleeping up to 16, from £1,690. Departs March 24*





▲ Val d'Isère has long been a winter sports haven for families of all ages



## BEST FOR BUDGET

### Baqueira, Spain

Find an affordable home-from-home in the Spanish resort of Baqueira, in the Val d'Aran in the northern Pyrenees. Chalet-board accommodation is rare in Spain, but Ski Miquel provides a convivial house-party atmosphere, and it's within reach of low-priced mountain restaurants and a good-value ski school.

*Ski Miquel (01457 821200; skimiquel.co.uk) offers the 11-room Chalet Salana from £753, including wine with dinner and complimentary ski hosting. Departs December 17*

### Saalbach, Austria

Track down a good-value stay with plenty of skiing potential in this traditional Austrian village, which has access to a huge 270km ski area – one of the largest in Austria. Save money with Sunweb, which includes a Ski Alpin lift pass in its self-drive package price.

*Sunweb (02031 708206; sunweb.co.uk) offers stays at three-star Hotel-Pension Schatberg, with games room and sauna from £806, B&B, self-drive, including a free lift pass. Departs March 23*

### Val Cenis, France

Save money by driving to this lesser-known Haute Maurienne region,



▲ The hills are alive: Saalbach, in Austria, offers plenty of options for tight budgets

bordering the Parc National de la Vanoise. Head to the small, affordable resort of Val Cenis, with 125km of piste, including improver-friendly greens and blues.

*Peak Retreats (023 9283 9310; peakretreats.co.uk) offers the four-star Les Chalets de Flambeau from £440, self-catering, based on full occupancy of a two-bedroom apartment,*

*including a Flexiplus crossing with LeShuttle. Departs February 27*

### Sëlva, Italy

Do the rounds of the Sellaronda skiing circuit – a 40km tour of the limestone monoliths of the Gruppo Sella – from the modest but well-located resort of Sëlva, which is part of the Dolomiti Superski area in Val Gardena. As well as having the largest lift system in Europe, this base also offers a large network of cross-country trails and a six-kilometre toboggan run.

*Inghams (01483 319 545; inghams.co.uk) offers Chalet Soldanella, a family-friendly hotel, from £1,069. Departs January 6*

### Val Thorens, France

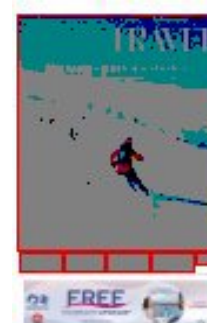
Enjoy a week at Union National des Centres Sportifs de Plein Air (UCPA), a French non-profit organisation, which provides outdoor sporting activities in purpose-built centres. One of the best is in Val Thorens, which has ski-in/ski-out accommodation and a sports centre with a swimming pool.

*Action Outdoors (0203 328 5443; action-outdoors.co.uk) offers stays at UCPA Val Thorens from £832, full board, including lift pass, equipment hire and half-day ski classes. Excludes travel. Departs January 6*





▲ Do you want to build a snowman? Austria is a popular destination for families



## BEST FOR LUXURY

### Crans-Montana, Switzerland

Combine ski and spa at the newly opened ski-in/ski-out Six Senses hotel in this compact, south-facing Swiss resort. Comprised of two linked villages, Montana and Crans, the latter is where most of the luxury hotels are based – most with cossetting rooms, top-notch spas and fine-dining restaurants.

*Scott Dunn (020 3131 8395; scottdunn.com) offers stays at Six Senses Crans-Montana, near the Cry d'Er gondola, from £6,215, B&B. Departures January 22 to February 3*

### Méribel, France

Stick to Méribel's 150km of pistes or head off into the vast Trois Vallées ski area from Purple Ski's stylish, new-build chalet, which is opening its doors for the forthcoming season. In the Dou du Pont area of the resort, a two-minute drive from the La Chaudanne lifts, the price includes unlimited champagne and gourmet dining.

*Purple Ski (01885 488799; purpleski.com) offers stays at Chalet Harmony, sleeping 15, with swimming pool, from £2,429, based on full occupancy, including private minibus service and in-chalet ski and boot fitting. Departs April 7*

### Troll Peninsula, Iceland

Go off-grid to the spectacular snowy valleys of northern Iceland on a heli-skiing break to 12-suite Deplar Farm, in the Fljot Valley. Built from local materials, the lodge offers top-notch cuisine, a spa and a naturally heated outdoor pool. Activities away

from the untracked slopes include snow-mobiling, fat biking and cross-country skiing.

*Oxford Ski (01865 817420; oxfordski.com) offers stays and heli-ski breaks at five-star Deplar Farm from £11,000, full board, including equipment hire. Excludes flights. Departs selected dates from November to mid-March*

### St Moritz, Switzerland

Experience the glamour of this high-end Swiss resort – the world's first winter-sports destination, founded in 1864 – with a stay in the newly refurbished art deco Grace La Margna hotel with spa, fine-dining restaurant and a spectacular setting in the Engadin Valley.

*The Swiss Holiday Company (0800 619 1200; swissholidayco.com) offers stays at the five-star Grace La Margna Hotel from £4,816, B&B. Departs February 1*

### Megève, France

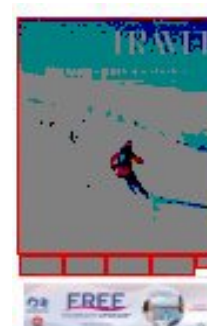
Soak in the atmospheric cobbled streets and pretty central square of Megève, a favourite of affluent visitors since the 1920s. Just an hour's transfer from Geneva, it has excellent restaurants, including the acclaimed three-Michelin-starred Flocons de Sel, overseen by chef Emmanuel Renaut.

*Elegant Resorts (01244 897581; elegantresorts.co.uk) offers stays at the Four Seasons Hotel, on the slopes at the foot of Mont d'Arbois, with three restaurants and spa from £6,655, B&B, including UK airport lounge passes. Departs January 20*





▲ Alpine chic: Six Senses Crans-Montana in Switzerland is made for self-indulgence



## Will it be a white season?

Those hoping for early signs of a snowy winter should look away now. The record-breaking September heat has been keenly felt in the Alps. Les 2 Alpes was to open the French season on October 21, but now says it's sticking to mountain biking instead for a while longer.

Searching for positives, there have been some early snowfalls reported and glacier ski areas are already open - the majority in Austria's Tirol region, alongside Saas-Fee and Zermatt in Switzerland.

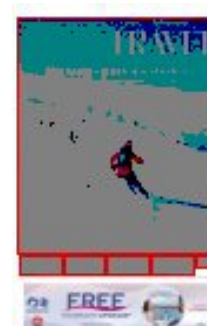
Everywhere else, the early signs aren't promising. Weather agencies predict new record-high temperatures for 2024, with the warming El Niño factor peaking this winter. It's too soon to worry though. As we saw last winter, with the arrival of fresh snow in spring, things can change quickly. The main clues will come by mid-November, when forecasters will be hoping for more wintry conditions.

To ensure your holiday isn't a washout, look for ski areas with plenty

of high terrain, above 2,000m, or look to northern Europe. There's been October snowfall in Scandinavia, and Finland's Levi and Ruka have both already opened for their seven-month seasons, using snow recycled from last winter.

For extra security, Crystal Ski Holidays, Inghams and Club Med now have policies that guarantee against poor snow cover and closed slopes. The latter, in its most recent customer survey, found that 81 per cent of people would be more likely to book a holiday with an operator offering a snow guarantee. Under these terms and conditions, customers are offered the chance to move their plans to an alternate (open) resort, to ensure they can ski, or to cancel and claim credit towards a later departure.

*Patrick Thorne*





Let your cares melt away at Eleven Experience at Deplar Farm in Iceland

