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Telegraph Travel Awards 2023: Your favourite ski operators

Find out which ski holiday companies triumphed, voted for by readers

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Almost 30,000 readers voted in the 2023 Telegraph Travel Awards, nominating their favourite destinations, hotels and holiday companies – and the results are in.

Here we reveal your top ski holiday companies and consider what their success means for the future of winter breaks in the snow.

Best Ski Operator

- (1) Peak Retreats
- 2 VIP SKI
- 3 Sunweb

Over the course of the past three winters, ski operators have endured a seemingly endless storm. The winners of this year's awards showcased stellar commitment to delivering memorable, and valuable, holidays in the mountains – despite the challenging conditions.



'Peak Retreats has defended its position as champion in this category,' writes Aspden-Kean | CREDIT: Shutterstock

Peak Retreats has defended its position as champion in this category – a victory that is a testament to the operator's ability to understand the changing demands of British skiers. VIP Ski rose from third in 2019 to second place. Swiss company Sunweb completed the top three.

The rise and rise of self-catered skiing

Since its last success – having been named best ski operator in 2019 – the self-catered specialist Peak Retreats has come into its own. Following the pandemic, as Britons return to the mountains, self-catered and self-drive packages have never <u>been so in vogue</u>.

Thousands of skiers now choose to stay in the privacy of their own mountain residence – according to research from the Mountain Trade Network, 37 per cent of skiers booked an apartment or self-catered chalet for their 2022/23 break and 18 per cent travelled to their resort by car. The boom in food delivery services in the mountains and flexible catering options have rewritten the rule book – especially for families and groups.



Families and groups especially opt for self-catered and self-drive packages

Peak Retreats, which celebrated its 20th anniversary last winter, has been at the forefront of that revolution. Under its tenure, the once claustrophobic and dated appearance of DIY breaks has undergone a modern facelift. Its properties across France have shattered any misconceptions about apartment accommodation, with five-star facilities, including spas and swimming pools, and spacious living spaces the new norm.

The best ski operators - previous winners	
Year	Winner
2023	Peak Retreats
2019	Peak Retreats
2018	YSE
2017	Première Neige
2015/16	Scott Dunn
2014	Mark Warner
2013	Mark Warner
2012	Neilson
2011	Crystal

The future of the traditional chalet

While the appeal of self-catered ski holidays has skyrocketed, the classic chalet holiday looks on shakier ground. Brexit has seen the number of British voices welcoming guests in European ski resorts decimated and rising costs have forced operators to shrink their portfolios, or leave the market entirely.

So it is a testament to both the company's resilience and the enduring appeal of the traditional chalet break that VIP Ski has maintained its spot on the podium, rising one place from third in 2019.



VIP Ski remains on the podium, rising from the third spot in 2019 | CREDIT: Pierre Morel

Not that it hasn't rethought its approach. With founder Andy Sturt at the helm, VIP has remodelled its classic chalet break, to include flexible travel options and complimentary ski guiding, and opened a <u>new flagship property, Bear Lodge, in Arc 1950</u>. The new lodge was seven years in the making as the company has shifted its focus to only the most snow-sure French resorts, above 1,500m. VIP Ski's continued presence as one of your favourite operators shows the longevity of chalet holidays and their importance to British skiers.

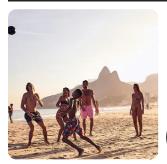
The importance of value

Comparatively, the presence of Sunweb in third place demonstrates holidaymakers' appetite for value breaks, with added extras that help keep rising costs down on the slopes. The operator's lift-pass-inclusive holidays have proved to be a favourite in these straitened times – it replaced all-inclusive titan Club Med to round off your top three.



The appetite for value breaks is still strong, demonstrated by Sunweb's third-place ranking

Holidaymakers' desire to see their money go further on the slopes extends to the operator's portfolio of destinations. Branching beyond the familiarity (and high prices) of the Alps to the likes of Andorra and Scandinavia is a promising sign of British skier's appetite to travel off the beaten track and explore – if the price is right, and the snow is ample.



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