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Ski

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The 10 best alternative ski resorts to try this winter

More and more skiers are trading their favourite Alpine resort for a cheaper, crowd-free and adventurous alternative – here are the best

Abigail Butcher, TRAVEL WRITER

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The French don't call British skiers "Le Rosbif" for nothing. When it comes to [ski holidays](#), just like our roast dinners, we know what we like. For a long time, that has involved choosing the same [ski resorts](#) year in and year out. But after a wallet-squeezing

couple of years, increasingly unpredictable snow conditions and a desire to avoid long lift queues, skiers are looking for alternative resorts away from the tried-and-tested favourites.

Research released by Club Med shows that more than half (55 per cent) of Britons are reconsidering their choice of destination. It's a pattern backed up by many tour operators, who report a surge in bookings to the likes of Italy and Scandinavia, as skiers seek [reliable snow](#), value for money and fewer crowds. An increasing number of customers are requesting more cultural experiences and adventures on their holidays too.

In response, this winter, Crystal Ski Holidays has introduced a host of new countries to its portfolio, including Spain and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The changes reflect a desire to suit all customer needs and to offer [budget-friendly options](#), says Scott Britton, head of commercial at the UK's leading ski operator.

"Value for money is more important than ever before," he says. "We've introduced Bulgaria, Andorra, Slovenia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. All demonstrate really good value for money in terms of the holiday package prices and the cost of lift passes, which helps skiers and snowboarders get out to the slopes without breaking the bank. They all are also beginner-friendly destinations and so are great options for [those new to skiing](#)."

Ski Solutions is selling 70 per cent more ski holidays in Norway this year than last, with Trysil and Geilo the most popular destinations.

"Clients are aware of the high quality and value for money in Norwegian resorts," says Paul Russell of Ski Solutions. "Particularly for families where lift pass, rental and lesson costs are lower."



Schladming-Dachstein is part of the Ski Amadé, which has 760km of pistes to explore | CREDIT: Claudia Ziegler

At the other end of the financial scale, Italy is upping its game with the opening of new luxury hotels and chalets in response to demand, which Rupert Longsdon, CEO of the Oxford Ski Company, says has been very well received. “We’re now suddenly seeing the quality of properties usually reserved for top-end Swiss and French resorts on the slopes of resorts across Italy – which is very exciting and adds a whole new region for those looking for the ultimate in luxury.”

The knock-on effects of the pandemic continue to influence holiday choices too, with many skiers still eager to tick off bucket-list destinations that were inaccessible for over three years.

Rupert Hatfield, Canada and USA product manager of Ski Safari, says skiers are dreaming big. “We’re seeing more demand than ever for big ski trips. Whether that’s to bucket-list destinations like Japan, multi-resort ski safaris with city and sightseeing add-ons, or simply splashing out on high-end, luxury hotels.”

So, if you’re tempted to ditch the old favourite and try something new, here’s our pick of 10 resorts which offer a great fresh perspective on your annual ski holiday.

Skip ahead:

Schladming-Dachstein

Cortina d'Ampezzo

La Toussuire

Engelberg

Baqueira-Beret

Bjelasnica

Warth-Schröcken

Geilo

Big Sky

Garmisch-Partenkirchen

Schladming-Dachstein, Austria

Best for: Après-ski

Alternative to: Ischgl, Austria

Schladming-Dachstein is home to one of the largest bars in the Alps and the scene of legendary night skiing races (next hosted on January 23, 2024). Après starts with live bands in the mountain huts spread over Schladming's 167km of pistes and often ends in the Hohenhaus Tenne, the enormous bar beside the Planai base station that turns into a nightclub as the evening wears on.



Schladming-Dachstein offers some of the best après-ski activities in Austria | CREDIT: Matthias Fritzenwallner

The medieval town has a pedestrianised centre and plenty of shopping, and thanks to regular ski racing there has been heavy investment in the resort's lift network, with a massive proportion of heated and covered chairlifts allowing skiers to travel in comfort and style. Schladming-Dachstein is also part of the Ski Amadé, which offers a hearty 760km of pistes.

Book it: Sunweb (020 3170 8206; sunweb.co.uk) offers the Hotel Schladmingerhof from £1,068, including a lift pass.

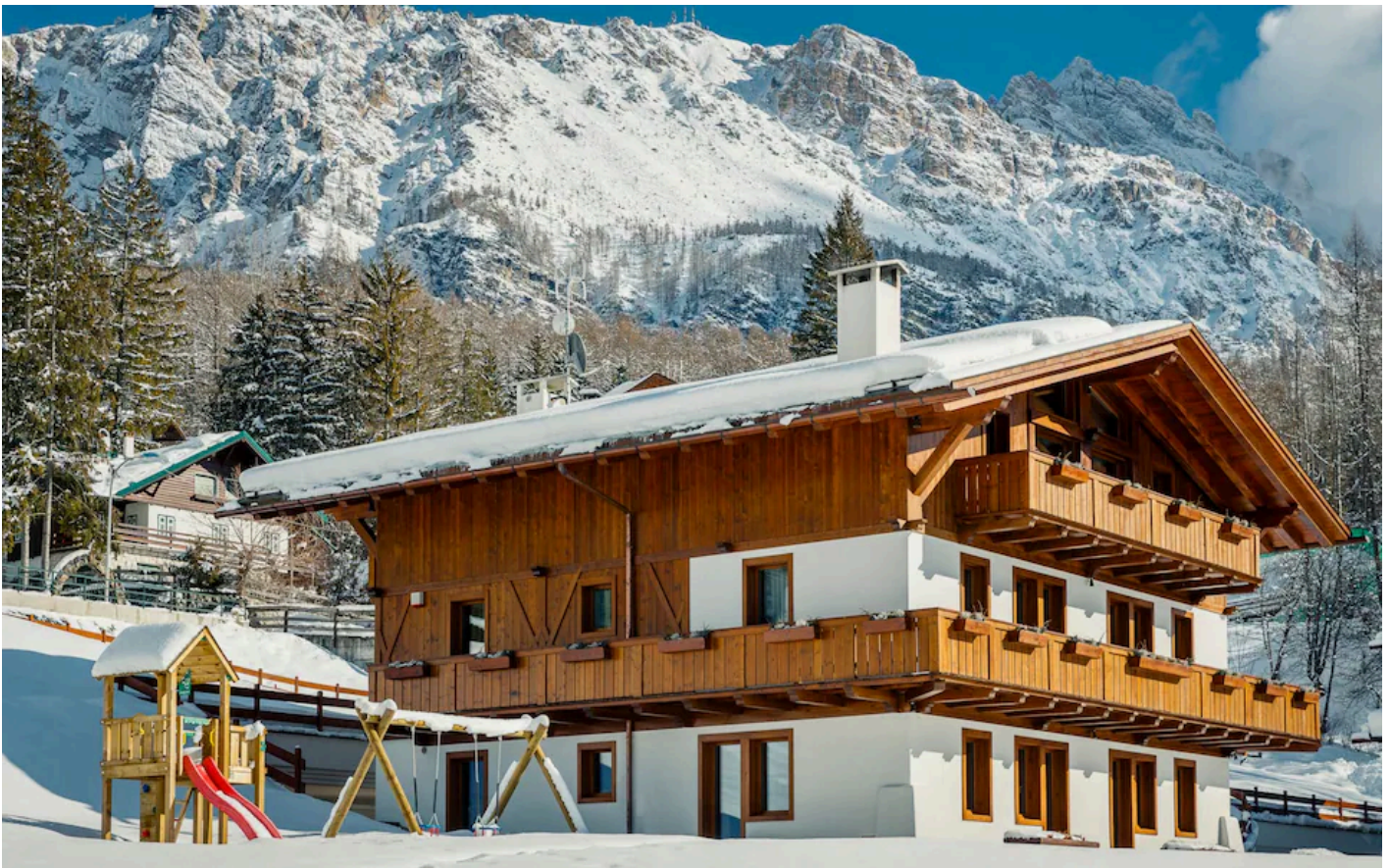
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Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy

Best for: Opulent glamour

Alternative to: Courchevel, France

Set among the jagged peaks of the Dolomites, Cortina is one of the oldest and chicest ski resorts in Italy. Cobbled streets and gourmet restaurants are the order of the day in this upmarket destination that centres around a bell tower and designer shops.



Cortina is one of the oldest and chicest ski resorts in Italy | CREDIT: bandion.it

The skiing is excellent and, unlike the French Les Trois Vallées, uncrowded. Cortina's 120km of pistes are spread across three distinct ski areas – Faloria-Cristallo, Tofana-Socrepes and Cinque Torri-Lagazuoi – and are most suited to intermediates and experts. The off-piste is also noteworthy.

Book it: Oxford Ski (01865 817420; oxfordski.com) offers the LV01 Dolce Vita luxury chalet, sleeping eight adults and four children, from €35,500 (£30,430) total.

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La Toussuire, France

Best for: Off-beat charm

Alternative to: Morzine, France

Set on a sunny plateau at 1,750m, La Toussuire sits centrally in the Les Sybelles ski area. While little known on the British market, this area is the fourth largest in France, with 310km of slopes and the highest point a decent 2,620m. There are five other neighbouring villages in the area – Le Corbier, Saint-Sorlin-d'Arves, Les Bottières and Saint-Colomban des Villards – around which to plan each day's skiing.



Le Corbier is one of five villages in the La Toussuire area

With a car-free main street, La Toussuire is great for families, too – there are two easy beginner slopes and magic carpets beside the village. Like the Portes du Soleil, the

majority of Les Sybelles' slopes are intermediate (217km) on wide, open mountainsides, with 71.3km for beginners and a dash (21.7km) for experts.

Book it: Peak Retreats (023 9283 9310; peakretreats.co.uk) offers a two-bedroom self-catered apartment in L'Alpaga, La Toussuire from £286, based on five sharing, including Eurotunnel crossing.

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Engelberg, Switzerland

Best for: Expert off piste

Alternative to: Chamonix, France

With its towering jagged peaks, twelfth-Century Benedictine Monastery, grand hotels, one of the longest ski seasons in Switzerland (October until May) and one of the biggest runs in the world (2,000m vertical), Engelberg gives Chamonix quite a run for its money.



Engelberg in Switzerland has towering jagged peaks and a long ski season | CREDIT: Engelberg Titlis Tourismus

While the mighty Titlis, at 3,238m, 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 as easy to reach as Chamonix, too, just over an hour away from Zurich and one hour 40 minutes from Basel. Reliable Swiss trains take skiers directly into the village, where most accommodation is within easy walking distance.

There is limited skiing for intermediates but Engelberg has two areas for children and beginners: Schmugglis Winterland at Trübsee, and Globi's Winterland in Brunni.

Book it: Inghams (01483 944479; [inghams.co.uk](https://www.inghams.co.uk)) offers Hotel Terrace from £1,249.

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Baqueira-Beret, Spain

Best for: Half-term skiing

Alternative to: Cervinia, Italy

A favourite resort of the Spanish Royal Family, Baqueira-Beret is set high in Catalonia in the Spanish Pyrenees, offering skiing with an authentic Spanish-French flavour. Sitting at 1,500m in the Aran Valley, the majority of its 160km of pistes are blues and reds, much like (smaller) Cervinia, and the transfer time is short if you fly into Toulouse, making it ideal for families.



The Spanish resort of Baqueira-Beret offers skiing with an authentic Spanish-French flavour | CREDIT: NYTNS / Redux / eyevine

As a bonus, 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 bask in one daily hour of sunshine more than the Alps at the same time of year.

Book it: Iglu Ski (020 3993 5315; [igluski.com](https://www.igluski.com)) offers the Hotel Montarto from £880.

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Bjelasnica, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Best for: Bargain first turns

Alternative to: Bansko, Bulgaria

The highest ski resort in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bjelasnica is a snow-sure option for beginners looking to take their first turns at a great-value price. The resort's 12.5km of pistes are heavily skewed towards beginners and intermediates, mainly among thick pine forests that offer ample shelter in bad weather and with a decent 830m vertical drop.



Bjelasnica, the highest ski resort in Bosnia and Herzegovina, is a snow-sure spot that's ideal for beginners | CREDIT: Anadolu/Getty

The village itself sits at 1,270m, right at the base of the slopes. Like Bansko or Borovets, Bjelasnica offers great-value eating and drinking options, with a quiet nightlife centred around hotel bars. Unlike its Bulgarian counterparts, the closest airport (Sarajevo) is a mere 35-minute drive.

Book it: Crystal Ski Holidays (020 8610 3123; crystalski.co.uk) offers the four-star Hotel Monti Spa & Wellness from £556.

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Warth-Schröcken, Austria

Best for: Powder snow

Alternative to: St Anton, Austria

These two north-facing villages are the least known in Austria's giant Arlberg ski area. While they were linked with Lech and St Anton in 2013 and 2016 respectively, they remain off the beaten track to most who ski and stay in the more popular areas.



Austrian resort Warth-Schröcken has a good choice of upmarket lodgings | CREDIT: Getty/iStock

The skiing is well suited to intermediates but experts would be foolish to overlook the powder: this side of the Arlberg receives the most snow in the Alps. Warth-Schröcken are tricky to reach – Zurich is two hours away, Friedrichshafen two hours and 15 minutes – but so are their better-known counterparts, and they're worth the trip. Warth, the bigger village, has a good choice of upmarket lodgings.

Book it: Snow Wise (020 3397 8450; snow-wise.com) offers the luxury apart-hotel Lech Valley Lodge, B&B, from £2,445.

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Geilo, Norway

Best for: Beginners

Alternative to: La Plagne, France

One of Norway's oldest ski resorts, Geilo is home to uncrowded, pristine slopes and is sandwiched between two national parks blanketed by awe-inspiring scenery. Thanks to

its northerly latitude, Geilo offers consistent snow conditions all season from December to May, despite its altitude of 800m – 1,000m lower than La Plagne.



The Norwegian resort of Geilo is sandwiched between two national parks | CREDIT: Moment/Getty

Like its French counterpart, Geilo has a reputation for offering masses of family-friendly activities from dog sledding to ski-doo driving, fat biking and ice fishing. There are 40km of downhill slopes, and 220km 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 Tarentaise valley on a Saturday.

Book it: Ski Solutions (020 3553 7131; [skisolutions.com](https://www.skisolutions.com)) offers Vestlia Resort from £1,495.

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Big Sky, Montana

Best for: Steep skiing

Alternative to: Jackson Hole, Wyoming

This is a serious skier’s resort, with an abundance of powder (more than 10 metres per season) and two of the steepest inbound runs in the United States – Big and Little Couloir – served by the Lone Peak tram, which has been updated for this winter. Much like Corbett’s Couloir in Jackson Hole, Big Couloir is tightly patrolled – you can’t 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, making this unique ski resort a once-in-a-lifetime visit for adventurous skiers and lovers of Westerns.

Book it: Ski Safari (01273 257278; [skisafari.com](https://www.skisafari.com)) offers 10 nights at the four-star Summit at Big Sky from £4,599.

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Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany

Best for: Snow-sure glacier slopes

Alternative to: Saas-Fee, Switzerland

A handy 32km drive from Innsbruck airport, the twinned resort of Garmisch and Partenkirchen in southern Bavaria offers both good value and convenience. It has hosted the World Ski Championship twice on Germany's tallest mountain and glacier, the 2,962m Zugspitze, with 40km of slopes (mostly blues and reds) and great nursery facilities for children and beginners at 1,310m.



The twinned German resort of Garmisch and Partenkirchen offers good value | CREDIT: Alamy

Garmisch-Partenkirchen has a robust après-ski scene that starts at lunchtime, with staff clad in lederhosen and dirndls serving vast quantities of beer and bratwurst to jolly skiers.

Book it: Heidi (0117 457 6000; heidi.com) offers the Akzent Hotel Schatten, room only, from £620.

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

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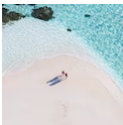


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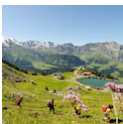
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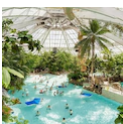
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