

Travel > Ski

Q Explore city breaks, activities...

Expert ski guides



The 10 best ski resorts for beginners

All you need to know to make your first trip to the slopes a huge success



Dave Watts

01 December 2024 11:00am GMT



Here's our pick of 10 resorts that solve the puzzle of booking your first ski trip Credit: amaroster media

Dave Watts

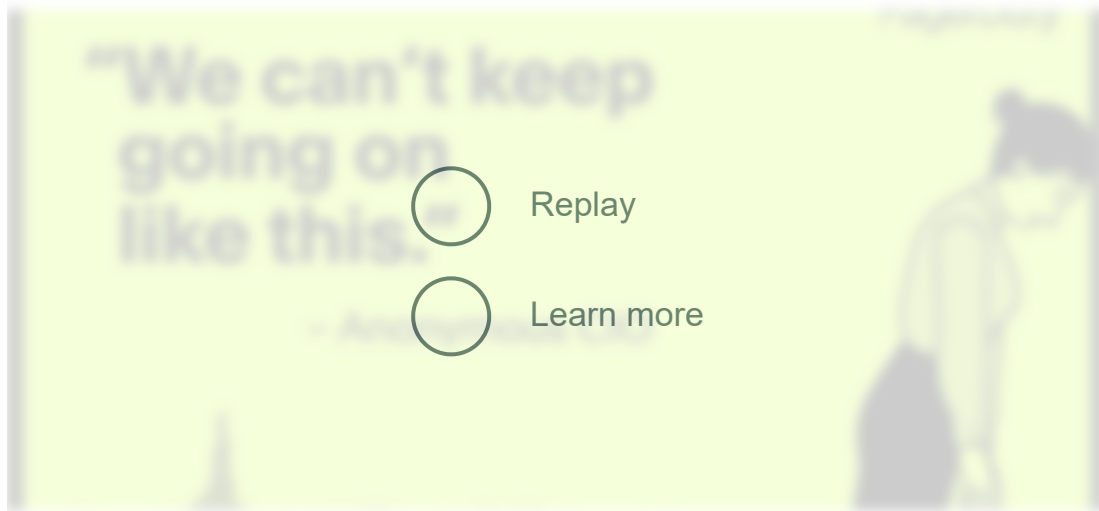
01 December 2024 11:00am GMT

Britain is still a nation passionate about ski holidays, with interest in learning to ski booming.

Tour operator Erna Low reports Google searches for “beginner ski resorts” are up 23 per cent year on year and 52 per cent in the past three months. The operator also ran a survey of 2,000 UK adults and found that nearly a third (30 per cent) would like to learn to ski – with those aged 25-34 the most eager to take to the slopes.

This is backed up by a recent survey by the UK’s biggest ski travel agent, Iglu Ski. It found that 60 per cent of respondents started skiing over the age of 20, with more than a third skiing for the first time in their 20s and almost a quarter in their 30s or 40s.

Advertisement



So what do beginners, of all ages, need to look for when choosing a ski resort? The most important things are: a good dedicated beginner area, with a very gentle slope and an easy-to-use lift; easy pistes to progress to; a good ski school, with instructors who speak English well; a resort that has a good snow record and, preferably, accommodation that’s near the beginner area and main lifts, to reduce the logistics of getting to the slopes each day.

Here’s our pick of 10 resorts that solve the puzzle of booking your first ski trip, plus insider tips to prepare you for your holiday.

The best ski resorts for beginners

Soldeu, Andorra

Best for a wonderful ski school



[Soldeu Ski and Snowboard School](#) (which also covers neighbouring El Tarter) is renowned for its excellent tuition and English-speaking instructors, many of whom are British.

There's a vast and snow-sure beginner area at Espiolets (an area of pistes reached by gondola from the centre of the resort) and another above El Tarter (also reached by gondola).

Progression to easy green and blue runs is simple. By the end of a week's holiday, many beginners will be able to enjoy the whole of the Grandvalira ski area, which covers more than 200km of pistes and is the largest ski area in the Pyrenees.

Soldeu is a lively resort, popular with British holidaymakers, with several good bars for après-ski, including the Villager (at the foot of the slopes), Fat Albert's (in a 300-year-old barn) and Aspen (a pub with pool tables, table football, live music and a big-screen television showing sport).

Where to stay

Crystal Ski (020 8610 3123: crystalski.co.uk) offers the four-star Sport Hotel Village, next to the gondola, from £1,037.

Read more with our guide to the [best ski resorts in Andorra](#).

Alpe d'Huez, France

Best for a huge ski area of sunny easy slopes



Credit: JEAN-PIERRE CLATOT/AFP

Known as the “Island in the Sun”, [Alpe d’Huez](#) has ample south-facing slopes and gets an average of 300 sunny days a year.

The beginner areas, located near the main base stations, are usually bathed in sunshine and novices have access to free lifts for their first turns. From there, there’s the chance to progress to a huge number of easy and mostly wide green and blue pistes, which criss-cross the lower half of the mountain.

There’s a great indoor-outdoor pool to relax in after skiing, plus an Olympic-size ice rink and a wide range of bars.

Where to stay

Skiworld (0330 102 8004; skiworld.co.uk) offers Chalet Salagou, 100m from the Télécentre lift that runs through the resort and an easy green run, from £849, chalet board.

Read more with our [Alpe d’Huez ski guide](#).

Saas-Fee, Switzerland

Best for late-season holidays



Credit: Puzzle Media

Saas-Fee is one of my favourite resorts – a traditional old mountain village, with narrow car-free streets and stunning views of a ring of 4,000m peaks. It’s known as the “Pearl of the Alps” for good reason.

The resort’s ski area goes up to 3,500m and includes the Allalin glacier. It can be bitterly cold in midwinter – when the village gets little sun – so it’s best for a March or April holiday.

There’s a superb, out-of-the-way beginner area at the edge of the village, for which there’s a cheap beginner lift pass available. After that, the easiest runs are gentle blues and reds high up on the glacier. The runs between mid-mountain and the village are much steeper and beginners should take the gondola down.

Where to stay

Iglu Ski (020 3848 3700; igluski.com) offers the three-star Hotel Bristol at the foot of the slopes, opposite the ski school meeting point and next to the beginner area, from £1,305.

Read more with our [Saas-Fee ski guide](#).

Montgenèvre, France

Best for family fun



Credit: Michele D'Ottavio/Alamy Stock Photo

This resort is famously snowy because of its position on a high pass on the Italian border. The main road has been banished to a tunnel, leaving the resort with no through traffic and great for families.

The huge, resort-level beginner area is ideal, with a magic carpet lift and a long draglift. Beginners move on from there to lovely long green runs, accessed by a lift that has both chairs and gondolas. A further chairlift takes you all the way to the top of the mountain and yet another green piste.

Off the slopes, there's lots of fun for families, including an excellent aquatic centre, the 1,400m long Monty Express sled-on-rails ride and a big outdoor ice skating rink.

Where to stay

Erna Low (020 3011 1222; ernalow.co.uk) offers Residence Napoleon, next to the ski school meeting place and beginner area, with swimming pool, hot tub, steam room and saunas, from £692, self catering, based on four people sharing a two-bedroom apartment, including flights and transfers.

Obergurgl, Austria

Best for jolly Austrian après-ski



[Obergurgl](#) is the highest parish in Austria, set at 1,930m. Its church was consecrated in 1737 and over the years modern hotels and other buildings have been added in a sympathetic chalet style.

But it remains small and is set in a remote location at the end of the Ötz valley. There's no through traffic and it has a calm and relaxed atmosphere. The slopes are high and about the most snow-sure of Europe's non-glacier terrain.

The ski school has an excellent reputation and there are beginner areas at each end of the village. The easy blue from the Hohe Mut gondola mid-station to the village is a great run to progress to.

Après-ski when the lifts close is jolly, especially at the Nederhütte (at the mid-station of the Hohe Mut gondola) and at bars at the bottom of the lifts.

Where to stay

Inghams (01483 938047; inghams.co.uk) offers the four-star Olympia, right by the beginner area, from £939.

Read more with our [Obergurgl ski guide](#).

Val d'Isère, France

Best for mixed-ability groups



Until 2016, I wouldn't have dreamed of recommending Val d'Isère to beginners. But then a brilliant new beginner area opened high up (2,560m) on the Solaise mountain, served by covered moving carpet lifts, a cosy café at the top and a new gondola to and from the village.

That supplements the long-standing village-level beginner area. And from the new area it's easy to take the Madeleine chairlift to a wide, easy green run and several easy blues. The downside is there are no easy runs to valley level – beginners should ride the lifts down.

Intermediates and experts have vast amounts of terrain to try – including world-class off-piste.

Where to stay

Le Ski (01484 548996; leski.com) offers Chalet Roc Merlet from £960, chalet board, including use of outdoor hot tubs and a shuttle service to/from the slopes.

Read more with our [Val d'Isère ski guide](#).

Valmorel, France

Best for a cute, traffic-free village centre



Valmorel was purpose-built in the 1970s with a traffic-free main street at the foot of the slopes, designed to look like a traditional old French mountain village.

There's a beginner area next to this with a moving carpet and draglift that are free to use. Plus two other areas at the tops of the main gondolas out of the village. Progression is by easy blue runs up the mountain and long gentle greens, served by a series of draglifts along a ridge down to Doucy.

At the top of the Planchamp gondola there's a snowtubing area and a Pirate Village with lots of fun activities for children.

Where to stay

Peak Retreats (023 9283 9310; peakretreats.co.uk) offers the luxury Anitea apartments at the foot of the slopes, with a swimming pool, hot tub, sauna, steam room and underground parking, from £578, self catering, based on four sharing a two-bedroom apartment, self-drive, including Flexiplus Le Shuttle crossings.

Cervinia, Italy

Best for easy slopes and cross-border cruising



[Cervinia](#) is high (2,050m), snow-sure and its pistes are almost universally easy. First-timers have a wonderful beginner area at resort level with a free moving carpet lift and chairlift. There's another beginner area up the mountain at Plan Maison.

Progression is easy, onto lots of easy blue runs. By the end of week's holiday fast learners will even be able to go over the top ridge to Zermatt in Switzerland and enjoy the very gentle runs on the glacier there.

One of my favourite mountain restaurants is among the blue runs at mid-mountain level, Chalet Etoile (chaletetoile.it). Booking is essential.

Where to stay

Ski Line (020 8313 3999; skiline.co.uk) offers the three-star Breuil hotel at the foot of the slopes, with a steam room and sauna, from £949.

Read more with our [Cervinia ski guide](#).

Passo Tonale, Italy

Best for low-budget learning

[Passo Tonale](#) attracts a lot of beginners and its ski schools have good reputations. Covered moving carpet lifts serve excellent beginner areas. After that, fast chairlifts take you to plenty of easy blue runs and almost as easy red – all on high, snow-sure sunny slopes.

On the opposite side of the valley is the Presena glacier sector, served by a three-stage gondola, with an easy blue run beneath its middle section. More confident skiers will enjoy some of the steeper slopes in neighbouring (lift- and piste-linked) Ponte di Legno too.

Prices – on and off the slopes – are low by Alpine standards. There’s an open-air ice rink and several lively bars for après-ski.

Where to stay

Ski Solutions (020 3944 7124; skisolutions.com) offers the four-star Miramonti, at the foot of the lifts and by the ski school meeting point, from £761.

Read more with our [Passo Tonale ski guide](#).

Beaver Creek, Colorado, USA

Best for money-no-object luxury

“Not Exactly Roughing It” is Beaver Creek’s slogan. If you’d like luxury and top-notch service while you learn to ski, Beaver Creek is the place to be: its slopes are delightfully quiet, even by US standards; its lodgings are luxurious; its ski instructors are the best; its snow is dry, powdery and perfectly groomed.

The beginner slope at resort level is excellent and served by a short gondola. Up the mountain and served by chairlifts, McCoy Park has lots of splendidly easy green and blue runs. And the main mountain, served by successive fast chairs from the base, is full of easy runs too – including top-to-bottom options of over 1,000m vertical.

Where to stay

Ski Independence (0131 243 8097; ski-i.com) offers the five-star Park Hyatt Resort & Spa at the foot of the slopes, with a swimming pool and five hot tubs, next to the ski school meeting point and the main lift up the mountain, from £3,768, B&B.

Unless otherwise stated, prices are per person, for a week, based on two people sharing a room, halfboard, including flights and transfers.

FAQs

Should you learn to ski before your holiday?

It’s advised to take two or three lessons at an [indoor snow slope](#) before you depart. This will enable you to get used to the equipment (boots, skis or snowboard and helmet) and learn the basics of sliding downhill safely, walking uphill and using a draglift. This will also save you valuable time when you hit the slopes for real and enable you to make

faster progress and enjoy your holiday. If there isn't a snow slope near you, have lessons at a dry slope instead.

Find your closest base in our guide to [the best UK indoor ski slopes and snow centres](#).

What equipment do you need?

Good [warm and waterproof jacket and trousers](#) are essential. Specialist ski or snowboard [gloves](#), long [socks](#) and a [helmet](#) are musts too. You can buy them; or rent them in the UK or abroad – ask your tour operator in advance if there are suitable rentals they can arrange in resort.

Skis or snowboard and boots should be rented in the resort, as you may need to change them if you don't like them – your operator will be able to assist with booking.

You'll also need boots suitable for walking in the snow before or after hitting the slopes. Sunglasses are a must and you may need [goggles](#) if the weather is poor. Sun cream for your face is essential – at least SPF30 as the sun is very strong at altitude, even in mid-winter, and is reflected by the snow.

I also recommend getting [physically fit enough for the slopes, whatever your age](#).

What else is there to do on a ski holiday?

There's lots to enjoy and do as well as skiing or snowboarding, such as tobogganing, ice skating and snowmobiling.

But one of the joys for most is just being in the mountains, especially on blue sky days, breathing in the fresh mountain air, admiring the spectacular scenery and enjoying the sunshine. Newbies may be surprised how warm it can be in the sunshine in the mountains – often warm enough to enjoy outdoor lunches in a deckchair.

[For further advice read our guide to booking your first ski holiday](#)

Join the conversation

Show comments

The Telegraph values your comments but kindly requests all posts are on topic, constructive and respectful. Please review our commenting policy.



Related Topics Cross-Country Skiing, Freestyle Skiing, Luxury travel, Snow

License this content

Sponsored content



Six ski resorts that belong on your shortlist



Christmas gifts and ideas that stand out



The incredible destinations that need to be on your



The first thing you'll notice is that the warmth of the

MORE FROM SKIING



What happens if your cruise ship leaves you behind?

Save



Direct flights and crowd-free resorts – skiing in the ‘Stans’ is easier than you might think

[Save](#)

ESSENTIAL GUIDES

[How to visit Sauze d'Oulx, the gateway to Italy's largest ski area](#)



[Save](#)

[The 10 best restaurants in Sauze d'Oulx](#)



[Save](#)

[The best après-ski bars and activities in Sauze d'Oulx](#)



[Save](#)

[The perfect holiday in Kitzbühel, the ‘most beautiful’ ski resort in Europe](#)



[Save](#)

[The 14 best restaurants in Kitzbühel](#)



[Save](#)

More from The Telegraph

Direct flights and crowd-free resorts – skiing in the ‘Stans’ is easier than you might think



How fit are you for the ski season? Take this simple test to find out



Norway and Sweden hold the secret to snow-sure ski holidays – here’s where to go



I went on a mid-life ski trip with a group of strangers



‘I dread winter – but skiing helps fight the seasonal blues’



I’ve visited almost 100 ski resorts in Austria – and this one is the best



Follow us on:



[Download the Telegraph App](#)

[Help Centre](#)

[About us](#)

[Telegraph Extra](#)

[Reader Prints](#)

[Branded Content](#)

[Syndication and Commissioning](#)

[Fantasy Sport](#)

[UK Voucher Codes](#)

[Betting Offers](#)

[Tax Strategy](#)

[Broadband and Mobile Deals](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[Privacy](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#)

[Subscription Terms & Conditions](#)

[Modern Slavery](#)

[Advertising terms](#)

[Guidelines](#)

[The Chelsea Magazine Company](#)

[Manage Cookies](#)

© Telegraph Media Group Holdings Limited 2024