The 10 most glamorous ski resorts on Earth

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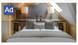

By **Gabriella Le Breton**, TRAVEL WRITER
6 APRIL 2017 • 11:15AM

For the first half of the 20th century, "wintersporting" (read skiing) in Europe's finest resorts – St Moritz, Megève, Zermatt, Cortina – was simply what one did, assuming one were royal, aristocratic or a Hollywood star.

Restaurant critic Fanny Cradock set the scene in her 1952 book The Austrian Tyrol with Bon Viveur (based on her Daily Telegraph columns) with her description of Kitzbühel: "Here you'll find a faint aura of old Monte Carlo, an evocation of Biarritz, a whisper of Menton and the merest rustle of fans in San Remo."

Since those heady, exclusive days, purpose-built resorts and package holidays have opened up skiing to a wider audience. Yet the sport appears intrinsically linked with luxury. European royals, including the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, still flock to the Alpine stalwarts of Klosters, Courchevel and Lech, while millionaires fly their private jets into Beaver Creek. Ski resorts on both sides of the Atlantic now bristle with Michelin-starred restaurants, five-star hotels and destination spas while ultra-luxury chalets come with chauffeur-driven cars, celebrity chefs, cinemas, helipads and spas as standard. And there are some young pretenders giving the golden oldies a run for their diamonds, making this a very exciting time for luxury wintersporting.

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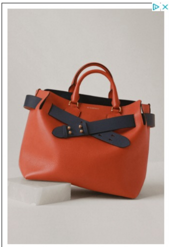
Of course, wherever you ski it's unlikely to be cheap – but you can have glamour without breaking the bank, as (some of) my selections prove...

1. Courchevel 1850, France

It's the winter home of glamour, caviar and excess. The prices are sky-high but it's hard to fault the well-groomed pistes, efficient lifts and



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multilingual instructors adept at hand-holding and ego-massaging. Packed with ultra-luxury chalets, Michelin-starred restaurants and swanky clubs, the village is where celebrities go to ski and be seen. High rollers can splash out £50,000 a week for a chalet, feast on oysters and consume cases of Cristal at Le Mangeoire's glamorous piano bar.

Courchevel is the winter home of glamour CREDIT: PATRICE MESTARI

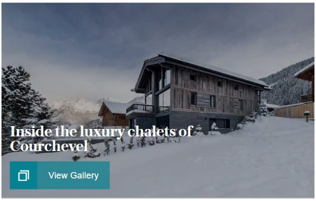
Courchevel 1850 is part of one of the world's largest ski areas, the Trois Valleés, offering 600km of pistes linked by 165 lifts. For beginners and early intermediates, though, the 150km of local slopes provide ample entertainment, with some challenging off-piste terrain too.

The five biggest ski areas | By total km of pistes

Ski area	Advertised km of pistes	Real km of pistes	Discrepancy
The Trois Vallées	600km	542km	58km
Paradiski	425km	402km	23km
Park City	N/A	360km	-
Sella Ronda	433km	346km	87km
Big Sky/Yellowstone Club	N/A	313km	-

Where to stay

The three-star La Loze sits at the foot of the pistes, in the centre of Courchevel 1850. Decorated in chalet style, with carved wooden balconies and murals on the walls, the hotel has a cosy lounge and bar, plus a sauna and steam room. Powder White (020 8877 8888; powderwhite.com) offers b&b packages from £853 per person for seven nights in a twin room, excluding flights and transfers.



2. Cortina, Italy

Encircled by the Dolomites, Cortina d'Ampezzo is blessed with one of the world's most beautiful backdrops. Despite its scenic, flattering slopes, many visitors prefer to shop for fur, antiques and jewellery or watch snow polo while drinking champagne. Adopting the local pace of life requires minimal effort but maximum fur as you join glossy Italians in their ritual passeggiata (evening stroll) along the Corso Italia. Flanked by gourmet restaurants, intimate wine bars and chic boutiques, this is where locals duck into the Enoteca wine bar for apéritifs and enjoy late suppers at El Toula, a converted hay barn.

Cortina's ski area spreads across four sectors: lifts rise out of town to Faloria and Tofana, while Cinque Torri and Lagazuoi are accessed by bus. Each area is distinct in terms of terrain, elevation and aspect, making for remarkable variety, yet most slopes are intermediate-friendly.

Cortina is blessed with a beautiful backdrop of the Dolomites CREDIT: DG BANDION

Where to stay

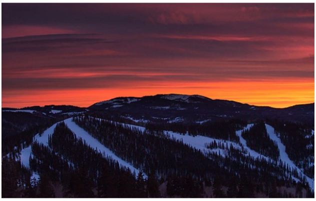
The five-star Cristallo Hotel Spa & Golf is all about old-school glamour with lavish suites and room service delivered on silver salvers. Ski Solutions (020 7471 7786; skisolutions.com) has packages from £1,725.

Old-school glamour at the five-star Cristallo

3. Eagle Point Resort, Utah, USA

You can't get more luxurious than having your own mountain, particularly when it's doused in more than 11.5m of fluffy Utah snow each winter. Eagle Point Resort delivers 600 acres of terrain (five lifts and 40 pistes), all available for private hire for up to 200 guests Tuesday to Thursday (except Christmas and New Year). Whether you bring 20 or 200 friends, it will cost $10,000 per day, including equipment rental. Bag the resort's stand-alone cabins by Canyonside Lodge, where a bar, disco and outdoor hot tubs ensure you party as hard as you ski. Or hit Vegas après: the city of lights is just a 20-minute helicopter ride away.

Eagle Point's lifts connect two mountains, delivering steep black diamond runs and tree-lined greens and blues. For thrill-seekers, there are five backcountry gates, giving access to acres of untouched terrain.



You can exclusively book the entire ski area of Eagle Point CREDIT: HENRY O WELLES

Where to stay

View Cabin is a three-bedroom ski-in/ski-out timber property that can be booked through the resort (001 435 438 3700; eaglepointresort.com) from $650 (£511) per night, excluding flights.

4. Lech-Zürs, Austria

Marketed as one, Lech and Zürs are two of the world's most exclusive resorts, with 100 five-star and four-star hotels between them. Set high in the Arlberg mountains, the picturesque villages draw the rich and famous with opulent hotels and chalets as well as manicured slopes and extensive off-piste. Thanks to the new Flexenbahn lift, Lech and Zürs are now encompassed by Austria's largest linked ski area, Ski Arlberg, with 305km of pistes.

The 22.5km Weisse Rausch (White Ring) circuit is popular with intermediates who can follow blue and red pistes around Zürs, Oberlech and Lech over the course of a day. Lech Zürs also offers some of the region's best off-piste, with reliable powder off the top of Trittkopf mountain, descending into the hamlet of Zug.

Lech-Zurs is set high in the Arlberg mountains

Where to stay

The stylish five-star Aurelio in Lech blends hotel and chalet, with rooms available in the former while the latter, the Clubhouse, is available for exclusive use for up to 20 people. Ski Solutions (020 7471 7786; skisolutions.com) offers half board from €3,500 (£2,960) per week in the hotel.

Aurelio blends hotel and chalet

5. Megève, France

In 1914, Baroness Noémie de Rothschild decided that France should have its own St Moritz and set about transforming the Savoyard farming village of Megève into a glamorous holiday destination. It remains the epitome of aristo chic – home to seven five-star hotels, one restaurant with three Michelin stars, one with two stars and another with a single star, plus several of the world's finest mountain spas.

While glittering boutiques and lavish hotels line Megève's cobbled streets and town square, the gently undulating slopes above it provide flattering, tree-lined pistes that make everybody look, and feel, great. A Mont Blanc Unlimited lift pass gives access to Megève as well as Chamonix, Courmayeur, Verbier and Les Contamines – handy if Megève's low altitude makes fresh snow hard to find.

Megève is France's answer to St Moritz

Where to stay

Four-star Les Fermes de Marie is a collection of restored timber chalets comprising cosy rooms and suites, two restaurants and a spa. Scott Dunn (020 3504 7897; scottdunn.com) has half-board packages from £2,100 per week.

A bedroom in Les Fermes de Marie

6. Klosters, Switzerland

Long loved by the rich and royal (particularly Prince Charles), Klosters appeals to those A-listers who are keen to keep a low profile. Frequented by the likes of Greta Garbo, Gene Kelly, Paul Newman and Gregory Peck, the little farming village was known as "Hollywood on the Rocks" during the Fifties, with most stars staying at the cookie-cutter-cute Hotel Chesa Grischuna. The village has now become much larger but maintains its traditional feel, the main focus being Klosters Platz – a collection of upmarket hotels around the railway station.

The impressive range of bespoke ski boots, fat skis and touring equipment available at Gotschna Sport reflects the real reason many people come here: 300km of pistes, shared with neighbouring Davos, and superb, barely touched off-piste terrain.

Klosters offers plenty of off-piste terrain for experts CREDIT: DESTINATION DAVOS KLOSTERS/STEFAN SCHLUMPF

Where to stay

The cosy, wood-panelled three-star Chesa Grischuna hotel is a five-minute walk from the Klosters cable car. PT Ski (020 7736 5557; ptski.com) has packages from £1,240 b&b, including ski hosting, concierge service and airport transfers (but excluding flights).

7. Beaver Creek, Colorado, USA

"It's not exactly roughing it." Beaver Creek's slogan says it all. This resort delivers exceptional levels of service with free mountain tours, freshly baked cookies served daily at 3pm and a village kiosk where you can swap ski boots for slippers to enjoy après-ski. It also boasts manicured corduroy pistes (on to which fresh snow is blown overnight, offering intermediates a taste of fresh powder) and acres of accessible yet challenging terrain.

Launched in the Eighties, Beaver Creek is essentially the perfectly designed ski village. Heated pavements and covered moving walkways ensure guests don't have to walk in snow or climb stairs, and virtually all the accommodation on offer is ski-in/ski-out.

The ski area, serviced by smooth new lifts, spans three mountains with extensive beginner and intermediate slopes, black diamond runs, soft bumps and powdery glades.

"It's not exactly roughing it": Beaver Creek's slogan says it all

Where to stay

The boutique four-star Osprey claims to be the closest hotel to a chairlift in North America, being 26ft away (about 10 paces). Ski Independence (0131 243 8097; ski-i.com) is offering b&b packages with flights and transfers from £1,940 per person for seven nights or £2,279 per person for 10 nights.

8. Baqueira Beret, Spain

Still largely unknown to Brits, Baqueira Beret is fit for a king. Indeed King Juan Carlos has a sumptuous holiday home here. Perhaps surprisingly, the sophisticated Spanish town benefits from weather patterns that see it doused in more snow than many better-known European resorts. The only Atlantic-facing resort in the Pyrenees, it features diverse terrain, minimal lift queues and impressive heli-skiing. Although low-key tapas bars still abound in the sleepy medieval hamlets around the main town of Baqueira, swanky new hotels are springing up, complete with their own gondolas and chairlifts, spas, bars and discos.

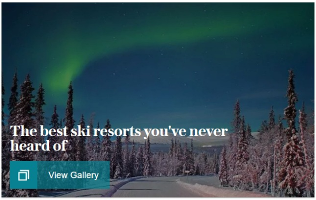
Locals party till dawn but it's worth saving some energy for skiing. Baqueira Beret's ski area spans three main zones, where intermediates can thrive on sunny blue and red runs and advanced skiers can tackle black trails and five unpisted marked itineraries.

The Baqueira Beret ski area is spread across three main zones

Where to stay

Five-star Hotel Val de Neu is a snowball's throw from the lift, with a spa and four restaurants. Kaluma Travel (01730 887641; kalumatravel.co.uk) offers b&b packages from £625 excluding flights and transfers.

The five-star Val de Neu is the place to stay in Baqueira Beret



9. Gstaad, Switzerland

Since the Sixties, Gstaad has been the home and playground of authors, artists, silver-screen stars and James Bond (well, Sir Roger Moore). Despite its extensive terrain, many visitors pay only passing homage to the slopes, preferring to stroll Gstaad's fairy-light-strewn streets or attend highbrow concerts.

Surrounded by mountains in the Saanen valley, Gstaad lies in the heart of farming country. But weather-worn timber chalets aside, the designer boutiques lining its main promenade (Chanel, Cartier, Louis Vuitton etc) reflect its sophistication. The skiing is equally suave, with 220km of mostly intermediate-friendly trails winding through postcard-worthy Swiss scenery. The Gstaad-Zweisimmen-Rougemont ski area (150km of pistes) comprises five separate hills while nearby Château d'Oex offers a further 30km and the more distant Glacier 3000 at Les Diablerets adds 25km.

Gstaad offers 220km of pistes CREDIT: GSTAAD-SAANENLAND

Where to stay

In Saanen, close to the Eggli lifts, the three-star Spitzhorn Hotel opened in December 2013. It has a big terrace with panoramic views over Gstaad and the Spitzhorn peak after which the hotel is named. Rooms are light and airy, all modern cool wood, while the communal areas have a warm, convivial atmosphere. The hotel (0041 33 748 4141; spitzhorn.ch) offers b&b deals from CHF90 (£70) per person per night in a double room when booked direct, excluding flights and transfers.

10. Zermatt, Switzerland

Hunkered at the foot of the Matterhorn, the ancient village of Zermatt defines Swiss mountain charm. Horse-drawn sleighs and electric taxis usher fur-clad visitors along cobbled streets lined with smart hotels, candlelit restaurants and lively bars. There are ancient, sun-blackened timber chalets but Zermatt is also home to cutting-edge architecture, most notably properties by local architect, designer and artist Heinz Julen.

Fortunately for foodie skiers, Zermatt boasts a bounty of gourmet restaurants on and off the mountain. Working up an appetite is easy with 360km of high-altitude trails to explore, including a superb 13km-long descent from the top of Europe's highest cable car (3,885m up on the Klein Matterhorn) all the way into Zermatt, affording mesmerising views of the Matterhorn itself.

Zermatt has unbeatable Matterhorn views CREDIT: MICHAEL PORTMANN/MICHAEL PORTMANN

Where to stay

Comfy, modest and quiet, and set back from the main street, the family-run two-star Hotel Alphubel is hard to beat for value. Its three-course set dinner is generous and tasty too. The hotel (0041 27 967 3003; alphubel.com) offers b&b packages from CHF156 (£129) per night in a double room when booked direct, excluding flights and transfers.

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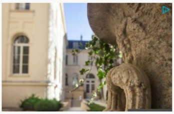

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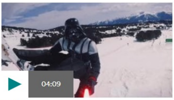

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