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Travel

THE GREATEST SNOW ON EARTH Our pick of the best winter resorts for all ages and abilities

Trisha Harbord
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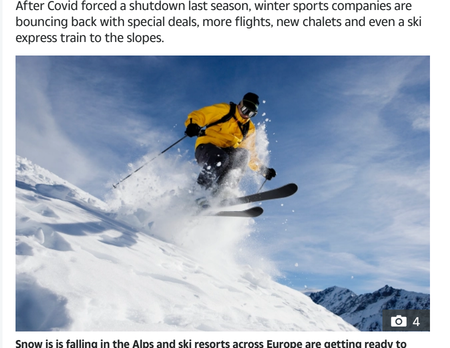
SNOW is falling in the Alps and ski resorts across Europe are getting ready to welcome us again.

After Covid forced a shutdown last season, winter sports companies are bouncing back with special deals, more flights, new chalets and even a ski express train to the slopes.



Snow is is falling in the Alps and ski resorts across Europe are getting ready to welcome us again Credit: Getty

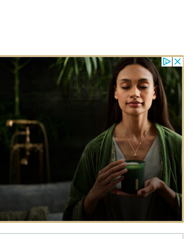
If you don't fancy going abroad, head for the super Scottish Highlands or one of the UK's amazing indoor snow centres. TRISHA HARBORD selects a range of offers.

1. TRAIN IT TO THE SLOPES

LET the train take the strain on new rail-inclusive ski holidays.

Travelski Express is selling packages to six popular French resorts, which also include exclusive transfers and seven-day lift passes.

The train, operated by Eurostar with a dedicated check-in at London St Pancras, departs once a week, normally on Friday evenings apart from over Christmas and New Year, and travels overnight to Moutiers and Bourg. You are then taken to your accommodation in Tignes, Les Arcs, La Plagne, Meribel, Les Menuires or Val d'Isere.



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Travelski Express is selling packages to six popular French resorts, which also include exclusive transfers and seven-day lift passes Credit: Eurostar

SLOPE OFF: Departures from December 26 to April 9. Seven nights' self-catering at the 3H Residence Belambra Le Hameau des Airelles in Les Menuires, including travel from London St Pancras on January 14, is from £569pp. See uk.travelski.com/travelski-express.

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SLOPES FOR SINGLES

LEARN to ski or snowboard and make pals at a house party in the French Alps.

Singles holiday specialist Friendship Travel has three new hosted chalets in Les Deux Alpes and Vaujany, a hamlet near Alpe D'Huez.

Seven-night trips run from December 19 to March 20 and a member of the Friendship Travel team hosts each house party.

The 3H Chalet Ruby in Les Deux Alpes is a renovated stone farm cottage with nine bedrooms, a log fire and a hot tub on the terrace.

SLOPE OFF: Seven nights' half-board at the chalet including dinner and wine on five evenings, afternoon tea and six half-day lessons, with flights from Gatwick on December 19, costs from £1,085 sharing a room. Sole use £1,285. See friendshiptravel.com.

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GO CROSS COUNTRY

AS the Winter Olympics kick off in Beijing in February, you could try a sport which has been contested since 1924 – cross-country skiing.

The Austrian Alps' medieval town of Kitzbuhel has around 40 miles of prepared trails with the areas around the Hahnenkamm, Kitzbuheler Horn and Wilder Kaiser easily accessible.

The trails are free but it's recommended that beginners book a guide for private cross-country ski sessions from £85 per person.

SLOPE OFF: Seven nights' half-board at the 3H Hotel Edelweiss in Kitzbuhel, with flights from Manchester on January 8, including transfers, is from £949pp, based on two sharing. See inghams.co.uk and kitzbuehel.com.

DEALS IN THE DOLOMITES

FREE ski guiding and coaching and a half-price lift pass is on offer in the Italian Dolomites. With more than 745 miles of slopes, the Superski area is the world's largest.

The Chalet Hotel Dolomites Inn, which is giving skiers and snowboarders free lessons with a qualified instructor, is near the picturesque village of Canazei, a lively resort with vibrant bars and restaurants.

A new gondola, a short walk from the hotel, whisks guests up to the 26-mile Sella Ronda circuit with its pristine pistes. Take one of two routes – avoiding the most lift rides or tricky terrain.

SLOPE OFF: Seven nights at the 3H Chalet Hotel Dolomites Inn, including breakfast, afternoon tea and dinner, from Stansted on March 20 and including transfers, is from £915pp, based on two people sharing. For more details see igluski.com.

FAMILY-FRIENDLY FUN

Norefjell in Norway has 30 slopes including three for small children Credit: Getty

ADVERTISING

FOR great family-friendly skiing, head to Norefjell in Norway.

There are 30 slopes including three for small children, who can practise basic skills such as making turns and slowing down.

They will also come across Nore Rein, a "reindeer" mascot who can ski.

The ski-in, ski-out Norefjell Ski & Spa has two restaurants, a gym, spa, an outdoor Jacuzzi with mountain views and a 52ft climbing wall.

SLOPE OFF: Seven nights' B&B at the 4H Norefjell Ski & Spa, from Heathrow on selected dates from January 7 to 21, costs from £499pp. Book by November 11. Details are at britishairways.com/ski.

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BARGAIN BULGARIA

BULGARIA has the top two cheapest ski resorts, Borovets and Bansko, out of 32 European centres, a recent Post Office Travel Money report found.

Borovets, in the Rila mountains, has 36 miles of runs for skiing, snowboarding, ski- jumping and winter hiking, and is a party hotspot.

The Hotel Radina's Way, with a wellness centre, is a mile from the slopes and resort centre but there's a regular free shuttle bus.

SLOPE OFF: Seven nights' half-board at the 4H Hotel Radina's Way, which includes flights from Gatwick on January 15 and transfers, costs from £418pp, based on two sharing. Other UK airports available. See crystalski.co.uk.

THE BEAT GOES ON

SKI Beat has intr- oduced meat, nut and gluten-free ski weeks at catered chalets, with five-night holidays available for travel between January 3 and 8, at all its chalets in seven top French Alps resorts from £519.

The firm has also added hundreds of flights from Heathrow. Plagne 1800 village is a family resort in the Tar- entaise valley with Mont Blanc, Europe's highest peak, as a backdrop.

SLOPE OFF: Five nights at 3H Chalet Arpette in Plagne, with flights from Heathrow or Gatwick on January 3, is from £569pp. See skibeat.co.uk.

GREAT SCOT

SCOTLAND has five ski resorts, with terrain to suit beginners and seasoned pros, and equipment can be hired at several places across the country.

Glenshee Ski Centre is the largest resort and Glencoe Mountain Resort has the longest and steepest run, with superb views of Buachaille Etive Mor.

The Lecht Ski Centre is a quieter option for beginners and families, while Cairngorms Mountain Resort has the most challenging runs, and Nevis Range Mountain Resort offers everything in one place, from a restaurant and beginners' area to equipment hire and classes.

SLOPE OFF: Two nights' B&B and dinner at the 3H Highlander Hotel in the Cairngorms, including lift passes and equipment hire, costs £237 per adult, £211 per child, under-12s £170. See skinorwest.com.

TRY A SNOWCATION

WANT to hit the slopes but can't afford to go away? Try one of the UK's superb snow sports centres.

Snozone has centres in Yorkshire, Hampshire and Milton Keynes in Bucks, which has a main slope of 575ft. There's also an ice slide, gym, cinema, bowling alley and restaurant.

Chill Factore at Manchester's Trafford Quays has a Snow Park with inflatable tubes with which to speed down the lanes, while Snowdome in Tamworth, Staffs, also has nursery slopes, skating rink and climbing walls.

The Snow Centre at Hemel Hempstead, Herts, has a new Ringo Slide for whizzing down the slopes.

SLOPE OFF: One-hour lift pass at Snozone Milton Keynes costs £24.99, junior £19.99. See snozoneuk.com. Chill Factore one-hour pass from £24.30, junior £20.25. See chillfactore.com. And at Snowdome, from £28 and £24. See snowdome.co.uk. Ringo Slide, £10 for 30 minutes. See thesnowcentre.com.

FLIGHTS OF FANCY

Take a flight to Austria and ski in the Salzburg region Credit: Getty

YOU can now fly from ten UK airports including Bristol, Leeds and Birmingham to eight winter resorts in Italy, Switzerland, Austria and France with one-way fares from £23.

There's a service from eight airports to Geneva where you can get bus or train transfers to slopes nearby.

The Alpine village of Verbier is in the Four Valleys – 250 miles of pistes, a snow park, kids' area and more.

The 4H Hotel de Verbier was recently renovated and has a spa, gym and hammam. It is near the ski lifts, restaurants, bars and shops.

SLOPE OFF: Jet2.com has one-way flights from Birmingham to Geneva in December from £23. Double room at Hotel de Verbier from £240 a night, includes breakfast. See hoteldeverbier.com and verbier.ch.

Juliane Seyfarth pulls off some spectacular ski jumps

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