



CRYSTAL
— SKI HOLIDAYS —

Your Guide to the Mountain

Take our quiz to...

Find your mountain match

What to know if you're...

Getting started on the slopes

Our pick of resorts for: **big ski areas** | **childcare** | **fab food** and more



Why people choose Crystal



Hassle-free holidays

Your flights, transfers and accommodation wrapped into one easy package.



Ski essentials, sorted

Add your lift passes, equipment hire, ski school and more so you're ready to get on the slopes.



Crystal Snow Promise

Flexibility to change your holiday fee-free if the snow lets you down. T&Cs apply*.



Loads of choice

Pick from over 150 ski resorts in 14 countries and fly when you want from 19 regional airports.



Book today and pay £100pp

Secure your next trip today and pay just £100pp. T&Cs apply*.



Protected packages

All our holidays are ABTA-protected. And any with a flight have ATOL protection too.



We're award winners

It's official. We've been voted Best Large Ski & Winter Sports Holiday Company.



Fee-free changes

Change your holiday fee-free up to 12 weeks before you go. T&Cs apply*.



Expert service

From booking to our reps on the ground, we're here to help every step of the way.



Free child places

Don't pay a penny for their flight, transfer or accommodation.



Crystal Childcare

Book days filled with snowman building, stories, crafts and more.



Ski train holidays

Swap the plane for a train, with your transfers and accommodation also included.



Short ski breaks

Mid-week or weekend ski trips, sorted – and fly any day you fancy.



Travel Aware – staying safe and healthy abroad

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and National Travel Health Network and Centre have up-to-date advice on staying safe and healthy abroad. For the latest security and local laws, plus passport and visa information, check www.gov.uk/travelaware and follow @FCDOtravelGovUK and Facebook.com/FCDOtravel. More information is available by checking www.tui.co.uk/destinations/info/travel-aware. Keep informed of current travel health news by visiting www.travelhealthpro.org.uk. This advice can change so check regularly for updates.



How to use this guide

Whether it's your first or your 50th time, there's nothing quite like a ski holiday. We've been taking people to the mountains for over 40 years so we know a thing or two about planning the perfect winter holiday. These pages are packed with expert advice and answers to your questions about learning to ski or snowboard, and taking children to the slopes. We've also picked out our fave ski resorts, grouped by theme, to help you find the holiday that's right for you.



Best for beginners/families

Look out for these icons to see at a glance which resorts are especially good for first-timers or families.

Crystal supports:



Protect Our Winters (POW) is a climate action charity that advocates for systemic solutions to the climate crisis. Believing in progress over perfection, it uses education as a way to kickstart change. Crystal supports their education programme, enabling colleagues and customers to take part in Carbon Literacy Training.

Visit crystalski.co.uk/ski-holidays/pow-uk to find out more.



Building on the potential of tourism as a force for good, the TUI Care Foundation promotes education and the wellbeing of children and young people, the protection of nature and the environment, and the positive impacts of tourism on people and places in destinations worldwide. Visit tuicarefoundation.com to find out more.

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Getting started on the slopes

So you're thinking about a ski holiday? We've answered your most common questions to help you get the most out of your first time in the mountains

Q: Where do I go?

As with any holiday, you'll need to look through your options and pick a resort. To make it easy, we've marked our 'best for beginners' resorts – use the filters on the Crystal website or read the next few pages for ideas of where you could start your ski journey. Lots of beginners choose Andorra, Bulgaria or Slovenia as they tend to be more affordable for your first time on the slopes.

Q: Do I really need to book lessons?

Even if your friends think they can teach you, always get lessons for your first time skiing or snowboarding – you'll learn the basics, meet other beginners and see the mountain with a local expert, aka your instructor.

Q: Do I need to take lessons before I go?

You don't need to take ski or snowboard lessons before you go. But if you fancy giving it a try before booking, take a couple of lessons at one of the UK's snow centres.

Q: How does ski school work?

Ski school is typically for five or six days, and there are separate groups for adults and children. Full-day tuition is often available, but lots of beginners like half-day lessons in the morning, so they can practise in the afternoon.

Q: Which is easier, skiing or snowboarding?

There's an old saying that skiing is easier to learn but harder to master, whereas snowboarding is harder to learn but easier to master. Children can start ski school as young as 3 or 4 years old in most resorts, but they often need to be 7 or 8 to take snowboarding lessons.

Q: What do I need to budget for?

First, choose a ski holiday package, which includes your flights or train travel,



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transfers and accommodation. Or you can book a self-drive holiday, which also comes as a package with your accommodation. Once you've picked one, think about ski clothing, equipment hire, lessons and your lift pass. Activities and meals are other costs you'll need to consider.

Q: Do I need to buy lots of ski clothes and equipment?

Most people pre-book their skis or board, boots and helmet hire, and then you just pick them up when you arrive. As for what to pack, you'll need a ski jacket and salopettes (ski trousers), ski gloves and goggles. Don't forget ski socks plus warm layers, like microfleece, thermal tops and leggings. Instead of buying brand-new ski gear, why not borrow from family or friends, or see what you can pick up second-hand. Off the slopes, sturdy shoes, sunglasses, gloves and a hat will come in handy, along with comfy, casual clothes for the evenings. And don't forget sun cream as the snow glare is strong, even on cloudy days.

£

Crystal tip

Lots of skiers choose half-board accommodation because it's usually good value for money, plus you can try local dishes on the mountain at lunchtime.



Learn the lingo

Get a head start before your holiday with this jargon-busting rundown of common ski terms

Après-ski: Pronounced ap-ray ski, this is French for 'after ski', so it's the stuff you do once you've finished on the slopes for the day. Après-ski often means unwinding in bars, but it can also include spa time and other activities, like ice skating.

Piste: The marked routes that you'll ski on (often called runs or slopes too). Pistes are colour-coded according to difficulty – in Europe it's green or blue for beginners, red for intermediates and black for experts.

Snowplough: A technique to control your speed and make turns when you learn to ski. You push the backs (called tails) of your skis apart and bring the fronts (called tips) together so they almost touch. Lots of people call this V shape the 'pizza'.

Lift pass: A lift pass is your ticket to the slopes, giving you access to the lifts on the mountain. It's usually a plastic card that you keep in your jacket pocket – it'll scan as you go through the barrier at the base of the lift.

Lifts: Ski resorts have different types of lift to carry you and your skis or snowboard up the mountain. Common ones include chairlifts and drag lifts, which you keep your skis on for, plus gondolas and cable cars. You'll take your skis off for these, and either keep them with you inside or pop them on a rack on the outside.

Piste basher: The vehicle that drives up and down the slopes when the mountain is closed. It rakes or 'grooms' the snow on

the pistes to leave it smooth for the next day.

Ski-in, ski-out: An accommodation that's right next to a lift or piste – so you can ski to and from the door, or to within 50 metres of it, as long as there's decent snow on the ground.

Bluebird day: Clear blue skies and sunshine – the perfect weather for cruising the pistes.

Visit our [Ski-Buzz blog](#) for more beginner ski tips and advice



Find out how a Crystal holiday works

Getting you ready for the mountain

When your plane lands or your train arrives, we'll text you with where to find your transfer to resort. After you've got your bags, you can head straight there. Just so you know, when you arrive in your resort you might then take a smaller shuttle to your accommodation.

You'll either get your Welcome to the Mountain pack from a Crystal Rep at the airport, on your transfer, at the resort meeting point or in your hotel room. Sometimes, you'll receive it by email. This pack will include info on any ski essentials you've added to your booking with Crystal, like lift passes, lessons and equipment hire. If you add your booking to the Crystal Ski Explorer app you'll find these details here as well.

Try to pick up your equipment from the ski hire shop when you arrive in your resort so you're ready for the next day. You can still go in the morning before lessons start but leave extra time. At the end of your holiday, you'll need to return your equipment.

On your first day of lessons, head to the ski school meeting point where your instructor will be waiting for you. They'll make sure you're in the right group.

Need help during your trip? Many of our resorts have a Crystal Rep you can call or chat to in person – check our Ski Explorer app for their number and where to meet them. If there's not a Crystal Rep in your resort, you can still contact us 24/7 during your holiday. The number's also in the app, along with lots of useful resort info.

Towards the end of your holiday, we'll text you to let you know what time your transfer will pick you up to start your journey home.





How to get the best deal

There are lots of ways you can keep costs down on your ski trip, whether it's your first holiday or you've been skiing for years. Here are our tips for bagging the best value

Pick a less popular week

Holiday prices increase with demand, so pick a time of year that's less popular – weeks in early January or late March tend to have lower package prices compared with February, for example.

Choose a good-value destination

Andorra, Slovenia and Bulgaria are well known for being good value. Not only do the holidays and lift passes generally cost less than in countries like France and Austria, but you can keep your spending down while you're away as food and drink on the mountain is easier on the wallet too.

Pick a lesser-known resort

Most well-known ski resorts have a lesser-known neighbour. For example, if you

really want to ski in the Three Valleys, you could stay in Les Menuires or La Tania over bigger name resorts like Méribel or Val Thorens.

Weigh up self-catering vs half board

Booking self-catering accommodation is cheaper upfront, but buying food in mountain supermarkets and eating out can add up quickly. Sometimes, booking a half-board hotel, where your breakfasts and evening meals are included, is more convenient and cheaper overall.

Be savvy about skis

Entry-level skis and snowboards are just fine if it's your first time. Even if you've been skiing before, you may not notice a lot of difference between standard skis and more advanced models – you can have just as much fun on the slopes without spending more on top-of-the-range equipment.

Buy a local lift pass

It's unlikely you're going to cover an entire ski area on your first ski holiday, so beginners – or anyone not fussed about

skiing for miles each day – can ditch the area lift pass and stick to a local one. They're typically much cheaper.

Book a bundle

Beginner or Improver ski/board bundles include your equipment, lessons and lift pass – it's the cheapest and most convenient way to get everything sorted. Beginner packages are for people on their first ski holiday, while Improver bundles are ideal if you can already ski or snowboard but want to improve your skills. First-time bundles are available in lots of resorts across Europe, including in Italy, Austria, Andorra, Bulgaria and Finland. Improver bundles are available in several resorts across Andorra, Bulgaria and Finland.



Head this way to see some of our top picks for great value

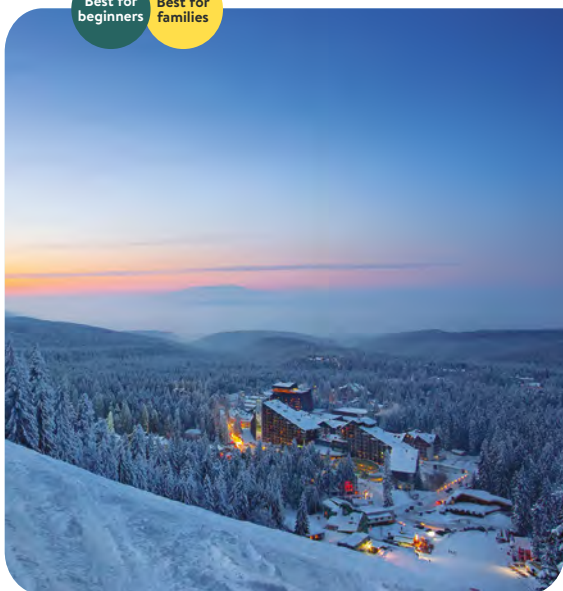


Great value

Max out on mountain fun while keeping costs down with a ski trip to one of these budget-friendly resorts

Best for
beginners

Best for
families



Borovets, Bulgaria

- A big tick for cash-savvy skiers, with essentials like lift passes, equipment hire and ski school all easier on the wallet than in most other resorts.
- Many hotels sit close to the slopes and have quality facilities, plus they're noticeably cheaper than elsewhere in Europe.
- Known for its varied and cheap après, from nightclubs and sports bars to traditional Bulgarian 'mehanas' (taverns).
- Most slopes are pretty and tree-lined – 'Borovets' translating to 'pine resort' – so you can find decent visibility even on snowy days.

Ski area: Borovets

Pistes 24km 29km 5km
Km of piste: **58** | Resort height: **1,350m** | Say it: **Boh-roh-vetz**
Transfer: **1hr 30mins** - Sofia

Best for
beginners

Best for
families



Arinsal, Andorra

- Lots of budget-friendly accommodation – from self-catered apartments to hotels with all the mod cons.
- Beginners can learn with one of Europe's best ski schools. And with high-altitude nursery slopes, you can enjoy amazing mountain views from day one.
- Traditional village filled with stone-clad buildings and friendly, pocket-pleasing après venues.
- Families love the kid-friendly activities in town, such as the bowling alley and games arcade. Plus there's a babysitting service for parents who want some fuss-free ski-time to themselves.

Ski area: Pal Arinsal

Number of pistes 19 18 5
Km of piste: **63** | Resort height: **1,500m** | Say it: **Ah-ren-sal**
Transfer: **3hrs 45mins** - Toulouse | **3hrs 45mins** - Barcelona

©Vallnord - Palarinsal



📍 Borovets, Bulgaria

Best for
beginners

Best for
families



Kranjska Gora, Slovenia

- High-quality stays that won't break the bank make it a favourite for families.
- Some of the lowest costs for ski hire, lift passes and lessons in Europe – plus meals on the mountain.
- Peaceful, picture-book village just a few miles from the Italian and Austrian borders. Head to the festive Alpine Village for mulled wine and sweet treats.
- The ski area's small in size but big on scenery, with beautiful wooded hillsides and snow-capped peaks all around. It's a fab option for beginners, with nursery slopes right next to the resort centre.

Ski area: Kranjska Gora

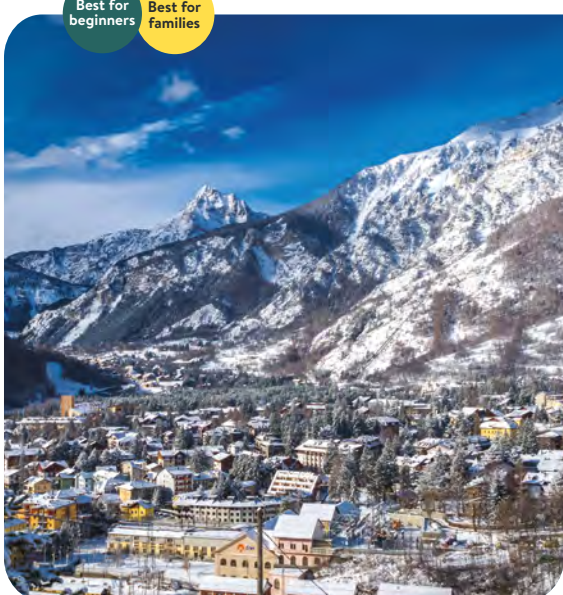
Pistes 10km 8km 2km

Km of piste: **20** | Resort height: **838m** | Say it: **Kran-ska-gor-ra**

Transfer: **1hr 20mins** - Ljubljana | **3hrs 30mins** - Salzburg

Best for
beginners

Best for
families



Bardonecchia, Italy

- Known to be one of the most affordable ski resorts in Europe, from the cost of ski essentials to meals on the mountain.
- Quiet runs and short lift queues make for laid-back ski days. There's a good deal of red runs here too, so intermediates have plenty to play with.
- Top-quality wines and produce of the Piedmont region are a real highlight. And with over 50 restaurants in and around the resort, foodies can mix up their mealtimes.
- Try other winter activities, from snow tubing to riding the alpine coaster.

Ski area: Bardonecchia

Pistes 45km 50km 5km

Km of piste: **100** | Resort height: **1,312m** | Say it: **Bard-o-neck-ya**

Transfer: **1hr 15mins** - Turin

Find your mountain match

There's no one size fits all when it comes to ski holidays. Try our quiz to see what kind of skier you are and the resorts you might love...





CRYSTAL

SKI HOLIDAYS

What kind of energy are we talking?

Go hard or go home

Getting stuck into activities

Prefer your fun by day or by night?

What are you hungry for on hols?

I'm a night owl

Bring on action-packed days

Tipples and tunes

Trying local dishes

Après animal
Love to let your hair down? Not much beats alpine après-ski. Hit up a slopeside party as the sun sets for a night you'll never forget – dancing on the table optional.
Head to p16-17

Action seeker
Pick a spot with more than just skiing for extra adrenaline or family fun. Think wish list activities like snowmobiling and sleigh rides, or climbing walls and swimming pools.
Head to p18-20 and p22-23

See ski deals and all our destinations at crystalski.co.uk

Spa, swim, relax

Skiing and spa time is a dream combo. Bubbling hot tub sessions, leisurely pool laps, a little massage therapy – it all hits differently after a day on the mountain

Some ski spots come with a serious side of self-care, like the Sport Hotel Hermitage & Spa – a five-star retreat at the foot of the slopes in **Soldeu, Andorra**. And gawp-worthy alpine scenery meets world-class wellness at the vast Tauern Spa, near **Zell am See, Austria**. Aquamotion, Europe's largest mountain waterpark, brings splash-tastic family fun to **Courchevel, France**. Or check out **Bad Gastein, Austria** – a historic spa town famed for its healing thermal springs. Where will you pick?







Foodies

Sometimes it's not just about chasing piste time – it's about chasing delicious dishes too. These resorts deliver on both



Zermatt, Switzerland

- For Michelin-starred spots and gourmet bites, this is the place – you might even catch a Matterhorn view from your table.
- Calling all cheese-lovers – fondue was born here in Switzerland and it's still an absolute ski food staple. Raclette's a solid shout too.
- Fancy a break from melted cheese? You'll also find Thai, Italian, Chinese and Japanese eateries here.
- Fun fact: Zermatt brewery's beer is brewed with the village water. Add a glass of Valais wine to your must-try list too and you've got local sipping sorted.

Ski area: Zermatt-Cervinia

Number of pistes 35 83 14

Km of piste: 350 | Resort height: 1,620m | Say it: Zer-mat

Transfer: 4hrs - Geneva | 4hrs - Zurich

Best for
beginners

Best for
families



Saalbach, Austria

- Fill up on hearty local dishes in cosy mountain huts – think comfort food, alpine-style.
- This one's a crowd-pleaser for its variety of slopes and foodie options alike, with around 70 places to eat and terrain for every level.
- Schnitzel's a must-eat, but don't skip tiroler gröstl (pronounced ti-roller grerr-stul) – a Tyrolean mash-up of potato, bacon, onion, herbs and fried egg.
- Après delivers too, so you'll find lots of bars and clubs for tabletop dancing with a stein and schnapps, or whatever floats your boat.

Ski area: Skicircus Saalbach-Hinterglemm-Leogang

Pistes 140km 112km 18km

Km of piste: 270 | Resort height: 1,003m | Say it: Sal-back

Transfer: 2hrs 45mins - Innsbruck | 1hr 45mins - Salzburg



Whistler, Canada

© Tourism Whistler / Justa Jeskova



Courmayeur, Italy

- Lap up long lunches of proper Italian food in this chic town, on the sunny side of Mont Blanc.
- With nearly 100 places serving up all sorts – from après-ski buffets to art-on-a-plate fine dining – you're spoilt for choice.
- Test the town's bold 'best pizza' claims one slice at a time or go for creamy polenta – a northern Italian classic.
- Warm up post-ski with a bombardino – advocaat or eggnog n' brandy, and a swirl of whipped cream. It's like a hug in a mug.

Ski area: Courmayeur

Number of pistes

11

17

5

Km of piste: **42** | Resort height: **1,224m** | Say it: **Cor-my-yur**

Transfer: **2hrs - Turin**



Baqueira-Beret, Spain

- Swap fondue for tapas-style small plates at this resort full of Spanish flavour.
- Exploring one of the country's biggest ski areas works up an appetite – good thing there are plenty of slopeside spots to refuel, and even more in the village.
- Fresh Cantabrian seafood's not your usual mountain fare... but it goes down a treat with a crisp regional white wine.
- When the need for a nibble strikes, go for pintxos – a platter of bite-sized crusty bread, topped with cheese, cured meats and fish. It's traditional, and it's tasty.

Ski area: Baqueira-Beret

Pistes

77km

68km

20km

Km of piste: **165** | Resort height: **1,500-1,750m** | Say it: **Bak-ee-rah Beh-ret**

Transfer: **2hrs 30mins - Toulouse**



Après-ski

If your main question is ‘Where’s the nightlife good?’, we hear you. Here are the resorts to know about if what comes after the skiing is just as important to you as the slope time



Ischgl, Austria

- A proper farming community with a glitzy centre – rustic meets ritzy.
- Big clubs bring Ibiza vibes to the Alps, with DJs and dancing into the early hours.
- After cruising some of Austria’s top intermediate slopes (most above 1,800m), slide into a slopeside bar for a stein, or try the outdoor ice rink and Bavarian-style curling.
- Trofana Alm serves up beers on a loooong wooden tray – they’re super Instagrammable and ideal for sharing with your mates.

Ski area: Silvretta Arena

Pistes 38km 132km 48km

Km of piste: 218 | Resort height: 1,400m | Say it: Ish-gul

Transfer: 1hr 40mins - Innsbruck



Sauze d’Oulx, Italy

- This characterful village is known as the liveliest après hotspot in the massive Milky Way.
- Once famous for wild ‘80s parties, it now blends good-time vibes with a family-friendly feel.
- Head to laid-back pubs for a few beers, or sip a glass of local red at a snug little wine bar.
- Fancy swapping skis for snowshoes? Join a guided stomp through the snowy landscape for a different kind of après that goes big on scenery.

Ski area: Milky Way

Number of pistes 57 109 36

Km of piste: 400 | Resort height: 1,509m | Say it: S-ow-zee-doo

Transfer: 1hr 15mins - Turin



Best for
beginners



Pas de la Casa, Andorra

- Après here goes big for less – this is a high-altitude party town in the Pyrenees, minus the alpine price tag.
- Great for beginners and mixed-ability groups on a budget, with one of Europe's top ski schools and cruisy blues and reds to hit, before moving on to the wallet-friendly food and drink.
- What it lacks in charm it makes up for in its huge selection of pubs and bars – expect DJ sets, big-screen sports and happy hour deals.
- Caldea Spa brings the chill – steamy pools, soothing massages and a mirrored pyramid exterior that glints in the sun.

Ski area: Grandvalira

Number of pistes 56 32 22

Km of piste: 215 | Resort height: 2,080m | Say it: Paz-de-la-cass-a

Transfer: 3hrs 15mins - Toulouse | 3hrs 30mins - Barcelona

Best for
beginners

Best for
families



Val Thorens, France

- Europe's highest ski resort, with slopes up to 3,230m – and some of the best après in the Alps.
- In the world's biggest ski area, there's skiing for every level and après for every vibe – from open-air mountain raves to summit dinners with a view.
- Dancing on tables? Tick. La Folie Douce and 360 Bar serve up the kind of high-energy atmosphere that made this scene iconic.
- For more off-piste thrills, zoom down Europe's highest zipline or longest toboggan run.

Ski area: Three Valleys

Number of pistes 172 125 33

Km of piste: 600 | Resort height: 2,300m | Say it: Val-tor-on

Transfer: 2hrs 45mins - Chambéry | 3hrs 45mins - Geneva | 55mins - Moûtiers

Wish list activities

Memory-making activities and snowy holidays go together like a boot in a ski. Don't just take our word for it, though. Have a look at just some of the things you could be ticking off your wish list this winter...



Turn over
for more

Action on ice

Gear up with a drysuit and oxygen tank, and dive into the frozen lake in [Tignes, France](#), to see an underwater world of ice formations, shifting colours and bubbles. River floating in [Ruka, Finland](#), is more proof that water and winter mix. Suit up and relax as the current carries you through snowglobe surroundings.

If speed is more your style, hop in a car, buggy or kart, and drift around Europe's highest ice driving circuit in [Val Thorens, France](#). Or let gravity do the work as you zoom down bobsleigh tracks in resorts like [La Plagne, France](#), and [Whistler, Canada](#).

Magical moments

Is seeing the Northern Lights on your wish list? Ski spots inside the Arctic Circle, like [Pyhä, Finland](#), are go-to places for a chance to catch this natural wonder. You can even join a photography workshop to learn how to snap the perfect pic of the shimmering light show.

Festive fun is also front and centre for families in Finnish resorts like Levi and Salla. Let's face it, nothing's more magical for little ones than a trip to see Santa. Meanwhile, in [Myrkdalen, Norway](#), you can swap Christmas feels for a cruise on a fjord. With sheer peaks and mirror-flat water, this trip shows off Scandi scenery at its most spectacular.



📍 Tignes, France © Evolution 2, Andy Parant



📍 Park City, USA © Park City Chamber / Bureau

Frosty thrills

Snowmobiling is fast, fun and available in lots of places, from Finland and France to Italy, Austria and Andorra. Prefer paw power to horsepower? Dog sledding is another crowd-pleasing fave that you can find in lots of resorts. In [Iso-Syöte, Finland](#), an e-fatbike safari is a different way to explore your snowy surroundings. Think mountain biking, but with chunky tyres to grip the snow – and an electric motor to keep the pedalling sweat-free.

Or to bag the best views, you can't beat a tandem paragliding flight.

[Serre Chevalier, France](#), is a top spot to try it on your trip, while in [Zermatt, Switzerland](#), you will have iconic Matterhorn views as a backdrop.



Want more ideas?
Turn to page 22 to read about our
fave budget-friendly activities

Ski the Scandi way

We're talking quiet, tree-lined runs, slopeside stays and short transfers from the airport. That's skiing in Norway's Trysil and the Sälen ski area in Sweden for you



SCANDINAVIAN
MOUNTAINS
AIRPORT



See Scandinavia
ski deals

Wallet-friendly activities

Time off the slopes can be as chilled or as energetic as you like – and it can be wallet-friendly too

Make a splash

A trip to the pool is usually a crowd-pleaser and if your accommodation doesn't have one, loads of resorts have somewhere to take a dip. Swim amongst palm trees at the tropical-themed Aquariaz in [Avoriaz, France](#) or you can mix pool time and pampering at Mille8 in [Les Arcs, France](#). In [Mayrhofen, Austria](#), the giant slide in the Erlebnisbad will keep water babies happy for hours. And if bigger is better, you'll love Europe's largest waterpark – Aquamotion in [Courchevel, France](#).

Let the games begin

If you're up for some friendly rivalry, Galaxy Bowling in [Flaine, France](#) has six bowling lanes, a games room and pool tables. It's just a quick hop from your accommodation door to the Vattufjäll leisure centre in [Stöten, Sweden](#), with bowling and a games arcade that teens will love. In [St Anton, Austria](#), the escape rooms at Arlberg Escape are just the thing if you're up for some clue solving and code cracking.

Add in some action

Mini golf and an obstacle course suspended from the ceiling are just two of the activities to get stuck into at the Palais de Sports in [Alpe d'Huez, France](#). Ice skating's a winter classic – glide around the slopeside outdoor rink in [Les Deux Alpes, France](#) or [Sestriere, Italy](#). In [La Rosière, France](#) you can strap on skates or watch the pros in an ice hockey match.



Keep it simple

Sometimes it's the little things that make a holiday – and they're often free too. Why not cosy up by the fireplace and crack out a board game or play a round of cards? Look out for accommodation with things like pool tables, kids' games rooms, saunas and hot tubs so that you've got post-piste time covered with little or no price tag. And nothing beats a winter wander, especially when you add in a pitstop for snack o'clock. From mouthfuls of apple strudel to hot choc moustaches, there's something special about eating in the mountains.





©Visit Gello - Paul Lockhart





Getting kids started on the slopes

We've caught up with experts from ski schools across Europe to answer your questions about teaching kids to ski, from the best age to learn to what they should wear

Q: What's the best age for kids to learn?

Children can start ski school from as early as 3 years old. At this age, it's more about playing in the snow and gently sliding on skis for the first time. Older children will still play games, but there's more focus on skiing technique. As for snowboarding, children can try it out from around 7-8 years old.

Q: How long does it take to pick up the basics?

Just like in school at home, it varies from child to child. At first, the most important thing is to get children familiar with the equipment and to teach them how to stop safely. Then we build things up step by step – depending on how confident they are and how quickly they pick up the basics, some kids will be independent on green and blue slopes within a week.

Q: Should children always have lessons?

Habits you form when you first start skiing or snowboarding tend to stick for life, so lessons help kids start off on the right foot. Plus, ski school's more than just tuition – they'll get to have fun, play games and make new friends.

Q: Do they need to have lessons at an indoor snow centre before a ski holiday?

It's not necessary, but it can be a good idea so your children can have a go and get familiar with ski clothes, goggles and a helmet.

Q: Do you have any top tips for parents?

Arrive at ski school early to watch other kids having fun. It's fine to stick around for the first few minutes of your child's lesson, but it's best to observe from a distance so they don't get distracted.

Q: What makes a good family ski resort?

Try to pick a resort with plenty of accommodation that's ski-in, ski-out, or a short walk away from the lifts or slopes. And if everyone in the family's just starting out, you'll want lots of wide, easy runs to practise on together.

Q: When's the best time for a family trip?

If your children aren't in school yet, January is normally good for snow conditions and quieter resorts. Otherwise, skiing over Christmas is magical. Going over spring half term or at Easter means you're more likely to have warmer temperatures.

Q: What should children wear on the slopes?

Pretty much the same as adults. So a ski jacket, salopettes/ski trousers and ski socks – don't be tempted to put two pairs of socks on at once – as well as a helmet, gloves, goggles and sun protection.

Q: Is it better to buy or hire their gear?

Most people hire clothing, buy second-hand or borrow from friends as it gets expensive to size-up each year. And it's best to hire boots and skis. Height and weight change the ideal length of skis – and children shoot up every year.

With contributions from:

Mark Neville, ESF UK

Matteo Bertolino, Ride'em Ski School, Cervinia

Daniel Pezzani, Scuola Sci Tonale Presena, Passo Tonale

Roland Rahm, Ski School SMT, Mayrhofen

Visit our **Ski-Buzz** blog
for more family ski tips
and advice



Childcare in the mountains

Our Crystal Childcare team are ready to make sure your little ones have the best ski holiday ever. We're talking days filled with magic moments outside, from building snowmen to making time for just one more slide on the sledge. Then it's inside to warm up with hot chocs and story time, followed by messy play, crafting and plenty of games.

You can book our Pepi Penguin Nursery for the youngest ones. Or for bigger kids, there's Beanie Bear Club. And because we're all about cutting the faff from family ski holidays, if you book ski school for your child through Crystal, you'll get ski school pick-ups included as well.

"The kids loved Beanie Bear Club so much they didn't want to leave. They can't wait for our next ski holiday."

The Sinclair family



Save on full-day childcare

Book either Pepi Penguin Nursery or our Beanie Bear Club for both the morning and the afternoon and you'll get a discount on the overall price.

Pepi Penguin Nursery

6 months to 3/4 years

What's included?

- Morning or afternoon care for 3, 5 or 6 days.
- Lots of indoor and outdoor activities.
- A daily routine and activities report.
- 2-course hot lunch with afternoon care.



Beanie Bear Club

3/4 years to 8 years

What's included?

- Morning or afternoon care for 3, 5 or 6 days.
- Pick-ups from ski school if you've booked lessons through Crystal.
- Crafts, activities and indoor and outdoor play.
- 2-course hot lunch with afternoon care.



Evening childcare

Our evening childcare sessions mean you can have some time to yourself. Choose from our Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings – or even add them all when you book your holiday. Both Pepi Penguin Nursery and Beanie Bear Club evening care includes a 2-course hot meal.

Take your pick from these hotels with Crystal Childcare



Hotel Club MMV Le Flaine
Flaine, France

- Big buffet meals
- Close to ski school



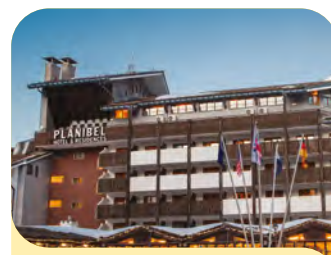
Hotel Club MMV Les Bergers
Alpe d'Huez, France

- Slopeside outdoor pool
- Games room



Hotel Grand Paradiso
Passo Tonale, Italy

- Next to chairlift
- Padel court



Hotel Planibel
La Thuile, Italy

- Big indoor pool
- Ski-in, ski-out



Valtur Cervinia Cristallo Ski Resort

Other childcare options

Crystal Childcare not available where you want to go? You can find kids' clubs and hotel-run childcare at other accommodation too. Just add the 'hotel-run kids' club' filter when you search on the Crystal website to see if it's available in the resort that you want to visit.

You can only book these options when you get to the accommodation so they're great if you want to keep things flexible, but spaces aren't guaranteed. Clubs may also only run during local school holidays, so it's well worth checking the dates on the accommodation page before you book.

Popular picks with hotel-run kids' clubs:

- [Gourmet & Wine Hotel Austria](#) | Obergurgl, Austria
- [Valtur Cervinia Cristallo Ski Resort](#) | Cervinia, Italy
- [Sport Hotel](#) | Soldeu, Andorra

All eyes on Andorra

Varied slopes, fab stays and pocket-pleasing après. Tick.



 Andorra



See Andorra
ski deals

SLOPE STARTERS

Slope Starters packages include:



Flights



Transfers



Accommodation



Lift pass



Equipment hire



Ski school

Hassle-free holidays just for first-timers

Our Slope Starters weeks make heading to the mountains as easy as one, two, ski. Everything's sorted for you in one simple package. Then once you get to the slopes, you'll learn with other first-time skiers and boarders – everyone's on the same page here.

We'll also be there every step of the way to take care of all the details, from lift passes to lessons, so you can look forward to enjoying the good stuff. We're talking those first-run high fives. That hot choc that hits the spot like nothing else. And of course, the mountain scenery you just can't take your eyes off.

Where you can go with Slope Starters:

- [St Johann in Tyrol](#) | Austria
- [Beitostølen](#) | Norway
- [Soldeu](#) | Andorra

"I like that it came as a bundle – it made learning to ski so easy. I'm now encouraging all my friends to go on a Slope Starters trip"

*Elaine,
Slope Starters 2024*



Read more on
Slope Starters

Chock-full of charm

Quiet slopes and snow-coated hills. Picture-perfect mountain villages. Cosy evenings by the fire. These seriously snowglobe-y spots might just blow your woolly socks off

Ruka, Finland's got cosy cabins, Santa's Secret Cottage and a chance of Northern Lights. Follow that glow to **Gausta, Norway**, where Scandi stillness hugs a pine-fringed lake and a tramway tunnels through the mountain.

Alpbach, Austria's traditional chalet-style buildings huddle round a church spire, while **Cavalese, Italy**'s all age-old architecture, characterful cobblestones and rustic mountain huts, tucked among the jagged Dolomites. Which one takes your fancy?







High-altitude

These high-up heroes are heaven if you're looking for good snow and wide-open slopes – a no-brainer for early or late-season trips in particular

Best for families



Tignes, France

- Sitting high and proud, with slopes reaching up to 3,456m on the Grande Motte glacier – perfect if you're chasing that powder all season long.
- Ski a big variety of high-altitude slopes shared with Val d'Isère, from beginner runs and gentle blues to tree-lined descents and steep blacks.
- The resort's made up of several villages at different levels, from bustling Val Claret to laid-back Les Brévières – all with ski-in, ski-out stays and easy access to lifts.
- Off the slopes, there's heaps to do too – think tobogganing, ice diving, swimming and more.

Ski area: Tignes-Val d'Isère

Number of pistes **88** **41** **29**

Km of piste: **300** | Resort height: **2,100m** | Say it: **Teen**

Transfer: **2hrs 30mins - Chambéry** | **4hrs - Geneva** | **Bourg-Saint-Maurice - 40 minutes**

Best for beginners

Best for families



Obergurgl, Austria

- At 1,930m, Obergurgl is one of Europe's highest ski villages, so it's hard to beat for the chance of reliable snow all winter.
- Take in the postcard-worthy views even from the beginner slopes, with some rising up to 3,000m.
- Linked to Hochgurgl at 2,150m, so you'll have access to a variety of runs – from gentle nursery slopes and tree-lined trails to wide-open pistes, plus kid-friendly spots, tunnels and mini jumps.
- The centuries-old village is filled with traditional wooden buildings and top-notch hotels, most just metres from a lift.

Ski area: Obergurgl-Hochgurgl

Pistes **60km** **33km** **19km**

Km of piste: **112** | Resort height: **1,930m** | Say it: **O-ber-gur-gul**

Transfer: **1hr 45mins - Innsbruck**



Best for
beginners

Best for
families



Alpe d'Huez, France

- This high-altitude gem is the perfect balance between great snow and bluebird days with over 300 days of sunshine – no wonder it's nicknamed 'The Island in the Sun'.
- The ski area has serious range, from wide greens and blues cruising down from 3,000m to the legendary 16km Sarenne – the longest black run in the world.
- A top pick for families all season long – with slopeside accommodation and easy-to-reach ski school.
- There's tons to get stuck into off the slopes too, from ice caves and an alpine coaster to a standout après scene.

Ski area: Grand Domaine

Number of pistes **38** **68** **17**

Km of piste: **250** | Resort height: **1,860m** | Say it: **Alp-do-wez**

Transfer: **2hrs 15mins - Chambéry**

Best for
beginners



Cervinia, Italy

- One of the highest resorts in the Alps, Cervinia serves up sunny slopes and Matterhorn views that seriously deliver.
- There's skiing for everyone here – whether it's glacier cruising on the Klein Matterhorn, finding your rhythm through a mogul field or lapping wide, easy-going runs.
- Ski two countries in one trip, with 350km of slopes shared with Switzerland's Zermatt – all connected by a glass-bottomed cable car with knockout views.
- Don't miss out on a trip to Europe's highest ice grotto to see sculptures and tunnels carved underground.

Ski area: Cervinia-Zermatt

Number of pistes **23** **67** **26**

Km of piste: **350** | Resort height: **2,050m** | Say it: **Chair-vin-ya**

Transfer: **2hrs - Turin**



Big ski areas

Ready to start racking up the miles? Explore well-connected slopes, varied terrain and more runs than you can shake a ski pole at

Best for
beginners



Sestriere, Italy

- Part of the 400km Milky Way ski area, this is a top base for packing in the piste – stay local and explore wide-open pistes or cross the border over into Montgenèvre, France.
- At 2,035m, Sestriere's one of Italy's highest resorts, so you can expect great snow conditions from first lift to last.
- Whether you're just starting out or looking to push your limits, there's something for everyone – from the big nursery area next to the village to the Olympic run Kandahar Banchetta.
- With piste-side accommodation options, it can be super easy to click into your skis just steps from the boot room.

Ski area: Milky Way

Number of pistes **104** **154** **37**

Km of piste: **400** | Resort height: **2,035m** | Say it: **Sess-tree-air**

Transfer: **2hrs - Turin**

Best for
beginners



Les Menuires, France

- Sitting within the Three Valleys, the world's largest ski area, Les Menuires gives you direct access to 600km of slopes to explore.
- From quiet local greens and blues to high-altitude reds and blacks, it's a great base whether you're building confidence or chasing miles.
- Sitting at 1,850m with ski-in, ski-out access, you've got quick connections across the whole area and there should be reliable snow.
- Hop on one of the fastest cable cars in France – the Pointe de la Masse – and reach fresh terrain in record time.

Ski area: Three Valleys

Number of pistes **172** **125** **33**

Km of piste: **600** | Resort height: **1,815m** | Say it: **Lay-men-weer**

Transfer: **2hrs 30mins - Chambéry** | **3hrs 30mins - Geneva** | **45mins Moûtiers**



©ph-dominic-ebenbichler

Mayrhofen, Austria

- Set between two mountains, Mayrhofen's local slopes are an intermediate's playground – clock up the kilometres cruising down reds and blues.
- Max out your area lift pass and hop on the ski bus to the Hintertux glacier for year-round snow and high-altitude skiing or explore the wider Zillertal area with 548km of piste.
- Test your ski legs on the Harakiri, Austria's steepest run, or hit the Penken snow park, one of the top freestyle spots in Europe.
- The lively après scene kicks off well before you leave the mountain – think slopeside bars, lively pubs and dancing 'til late.

Ski area: Zillertal

Pistes **181km** **274km** **93km**

Km of piste: **548** | Resort height: **630m** | Say it: **My-er-hof-en**

Transfer: **1hr 45mins** - **Innsbruck**

Best for families



Whistler, Canada

- North America's biggest ski area gives you a massive 8,171 acres to explore – from cruisy greens to double black diamonds.
- With 216 tree-lined runs within the 16 powder-filled bowls, it's easy to clock up the miles each day.
- Hop on the Peak 2 Peak gondola to switch between Whistler and Blackcomb mountains – it's the longest and highest lift of its kind in the world.
- Off the slopes, dive into buzzing après, go ziplining or bobsleighbing and eat your way through over 170 restaurants.

Ski area: Whistler Blackcomb

Number of pistes **42** **116** **58**

Skiable area: **8,171 acres** | Resort height: **675m** | Say it: **Wiss-ler**

Transfer: **2hrs 30mins** - **Vancouver**

Your stay, your way



Pick your ski base

Hotels

Best for: Convenience

A classic pick, often with lots of facilities for time away from the slopes.

Pros

You can pick a hotel with just the facilities you're after – from bars and restaurants to wellness areas, kids' clubs and games rooms.

Some hotels have our own Crystal Childcare.

Cons

Families sleep in one room, or larger families may need to stay in separate rooms.

Usually the most expensive option upfront.



Guesthouses

Best for: An authentic experience

Mainly in Austria (where they're known as pensions), you can look forward to a warm welcome and simple, cosy décor.

Pros

Small, traditional and often family-run.

Owners typically have loads of local knowledge.

Some have facilities like a bar or spa.

Cons

May be further from the slopes.

Less likely to have facilities like swimming pools.



Apartments

Best for: Doing things your way

Apartments make for a practical and often budget-friendly stay, with the option to make your own meals and a living area to relax in.

Pros

Families and groups can stay together in one shared space.

You can prepare meals in the kitchen/ kitchenette.

Some apartment buildings have extra facilities such as pools, bars and restaurants.

Cons

Supermarkets are small and can be pricey in resorts.

You might need to pay extra for towels, bed linen and end-of-stay cleaning.

Sometimes you need to make your own bed on arrival.



Cabins

Best for: Winter wonderland stays

If you're looking for something a bit different, cabins have all the perks of an apartment with a unique Nordic feel.

Pros

Homely décor with your own space to relax in.

Big families and groups can stay in one space.

Some have a private sauna.

Cons

May be in a quiet spot away from the slopes and further from facilities like pools and spas.

As with apartments, you sometimes need to make your own bed on arrival and there may be extras to pay for like towels, bed linen and end-of-stay cleaning.



SUMMIT
COLLECTION

We've cherry-picked a selection of stays that are a cut above when it comes to choosing your accommodation

Highly rated

Everything in our Summit Collection has a Crystal accommodation rating of at least 4.5 out of 5, and is rated 4 and above on Tripadvisor too. T&Cs apply.

Everything taken care of

From fab facilities and top-notch food to first-class service, our Summit picks have



got all the bells and whistles you'd expect (and more). Plus, there'll be a Crystal Rep in your resort, so you can swoosh soundly knowing we're right there if you need us.

Perfectly placed

Our Summit accommodation is less than a 5-minute walk from the slopes or ski lifts, and always in resorts we've rated at least 3 out of 5 for beginners, intermediates and advanced skiers. So, there really is something for everyone.



Choosing your board basis



Room only

Pros

- Choose where you eat for all meals.

Cons

- Can be expensive to eat out every day.



Self-catering

Pros

- Flexibility to cook what you like, when you like.
- You can still eat out if you want to.
 - Often budget-friendly.

Cons

- Ski resort supermarkets tend to be small and pricey.



Bed & breakfast

Pros

- Breakfast is included and you can try out local restaurants for other meals.

Cons

- Restaurants can fill up quickly – it's a good idea to reserve a table.



Half board

Pros

- Morning and evening meals are taken care of.
- You can eat lunch wherever you like.

Cons

- It can mean less variety as you'll eat at your accommodation rather than in local restaurants.



Full board

Pros

- Your main meals are sorted and paid for with your package.

Cons

- Lunch options vary – from packed lunches to eating in a specific mountain restaurant or back at your accommodation.
- You'll still need to pay for drinks.



All-inclusive

Pros

- All food's paid for upfront.
- Some drinks are included too.

Cons

- Not common in ski resorts, so you'll be limited on where to go.
- As with full board, lunch options vary.

Fab facilities to look out for

Lots of ski accommodation has handy facilities you might not have come across on other holidays. Here's what it all means

Ski-in, ski-out

Accommodation where you can ski to and from the door, or within 50 metres of it, as long as there's decent snow on the ground. Turn to the next page to see some of the best resorts for ski-in, ski-out convenience.



Close to the slopes

Accommodation that's up to a 2-minute walk from the nearest lift or piste, so it's easy getting on and off the slopes.



Shuttle services

A hotel-run or local bus that takes you to the slopes or ski lifts. Look out for this if your accommodation is a little further out of the resort.



Ski lockers

A safe place to store your equipment, especially your skis or snowboard, poles and boots. There's often room for your helmet, goggles and gloves too.



Boot rooms

A communal area to put on, take off and store your ski or snowboard boots. Many have a heated storage rack that dries boots at the end of the day and warms them up ready for you in the morning.



Ski-in, ski-out

Whether you're a seasoned pro or just starting out, staying slopeside with quick, easy access to the mountain might well be your no.1 priority. In these resorts, convenience is king

Best for
beginners



Obertauern, Austria

- Austria's only purpose-built ski resort, with most hotels right by the bottom of the pistes – including fabulous 5-star stays.
- There's a nursery area and beginner slopes just by the village. And with decent all-round slope variety, it means mixed-ability groups are sorted.
- Explore the 'après-ski mile' – over 25 mountain huts, buzzing bars and lively terraces just a snowball's throw from the slopes.
- Try night skiing from the top of the Edelweissbahn chairlift on Mondays and Thursdays.

Ski area: Obertauern

Pistes 61km 35km 4km
 Km of piste: **100** | Resort height: **1,750m** | Say it: **Ober-tow-ern**
 Transfer: **3hrs 30mins - Innsbruck** | **2hrs - Salzburg**

Best for
beginners

Best for
families



Avoriaz, France

- Fully ski-in, ski-out village – a massive tick for convenience. And it's at the centre of one of the world's biggest ski areas, shared with neighbouring Switzerland.
- Completely car-free streets mean you can ski right through town. And to get around off skis? Just hop in a horse-drawn sleigh.
- The nursery area in the village is connected to wide, gentle runs – so if you're a beginner, there's a variety of slopes close by to explore as your technique improves.
- Lots of good-value, self-catering apartments – with distinctive wood-clad looks that blend into the mountain scenery.

Ski area: Portes du Soleil

Number of pistes 162 106 28
 Km of piste: **650** | Resort height: **1,800m** | Say it: **A-vor-ee-az**
 Transfer: **2hrs 30mins - Chambéry** | **2hrs 15mins - Geneva**



Les Arcs, France

Best for
beginners

Best for
families



Les Arcs, France

- Four well-linked, high-altitude villages between 1,600m-2,000m. Every village has accommodation where you can practically roll out of bed onto the slopes.
- Arc 1950 is totally pedestrianised and has a real family-friendly atmosphere. It's also the most charming pick of the bunch.
- Each of the village hubs have beginner slopes near them, plus easy access to more advanced terrain – so all abilities are well catered for.
- With a Paradiski area pass you can venture over to La Plagne and tick off the runs there too.

Ski area: Paradiski

Number of pistes **140** **65** **37**

Km of piste: **425** | Resort height: **1,600-2,000m** | Say it: **Lez-ark**

Transfer: **2hrs 30mins - Chambéry** | **3hrs 30mins - Geneva** |

25mins - Bourg-Saint-Maurice

Best for
families



Stöten, Sweden

- Ski-in, ski-out access with all the accommodation just steps from the slopes.
- Reach the resort in only 20 minutes from the airport.
- Families love the seamless experience you get with this compact resort. From the kids' club and restaurants to the pool, sauna and bowling alley at the Vattufjäll centre, everything's a short walk away.
- The easy-to-navigate ski area is ideal for progressing beginners. It's filled with wide greens and blues with far-reaching views over the sprawling forest landscape, all filtering back down into the village.

Ski area: Stöten

Number of pistes **30** **5** **6**

Km of piste: **41** | Resort height: **398m** | Say it: **Stoh-ten**

Transfer: **20mins - Scandinavian Mountains Airport**



Your ski snaps

See what our Crystal customers got up to in the mountains last winter. Ready to make memories of your own?

Share your own holiday highlights with us



Where next...?

Feeling inspired and ready to book your ski holiday? Perhaps you've got questions or want to hear from us about deals, ideas and offers. Wherever you're at in your planning, here's where you can go next



Head to our website

Choose from **over 150 resorts** in **14 countries** at crystalski.co.uk – and find all you need for a **hassle-free holiday**.



Chat with us

Got a question or prefer to book over the phone? Call us on [020 3451 2821](tel:02034512821) or use our **online chat**.



Visit us in person

Drop by one of our Crystal Hubs at **The Snow Centre Manchester**, **Tamworth SnowDome** and **Snozone Milton Keynes**.
Or visit your **local TUI store** or **travel agent**.

Sign up to our newsletter

Get offers and ski inspo delivered direct to your inbox – plus, hear all about competitions, expert tips and new ski spots to get excited about.

[Sign up now](#)

Get the Crystal app

Download the free Crystal Ski Explorer app to see resort info and tips. Once your trip's in the diary, add your booking to get your holiday info all in one place.

[Download the app](#)



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We know a thing or two about planning the perfect winter holiday. Don't just take our word for it – see what other customers are saying about us on Trustpilot.

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