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night life

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FEBRUARY 2007



FLORENCE UNCOVERED

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LOS ANGELES

FILM, FASHION, FANTASY

THE BEST IS YET TO COME

It isn't too late to book a skiing holiday. In February, March and even April, you can still find perfect snow conditions on both sides of the Atlantic. **Felice Hardy**, co-editor of *The Great Skiing & Snowboarding Guide 2007*, has the lowdown on the best late-season picks



TELLURIDE USA

The old mining town of Telluride has a more colourful history and more present-day charm than any other ski resort in the US.

On arrival at Denver International most skiers head west to Vail, Aspen and the other winter playgrounds of Colorado. Instead, spend the night at the Loews Denver Hotel (www.loewshotels.com) close to the airport, before heading south for the 325-mile drive (about five-and-a-half hours) into the San Juan Mountains.

Telluride is developing into the smartest resort in the Rockies, with a new Four Seasons Resort and a St Regis hotel under construction. Back in 1889, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid relieved the San Miguel Valley Bank of \$24,000, and Jack Dempsey washed dishes in a brothel here before moving on and making his fistful of dollars elsewhere. Tom Cruise, Daryl Hannah, Sylvester Stallone, Sting, Mel Gibson and Alanis Morissette are among the resort's fans.

You can stay in the atmospheric old town or up at Mountain Village, linked to the town by a free gondola until late at night. The Peaks Resort & Golden Door Spa, at Mountain Village, makes a comfortable base convenient for skiing. Facilities include a climbing wall where Tom Cruise learnt his fingerholds for *Mission Impossible 2*. The hotel spa stretches across five floors.

By day, a couple of the 15 lifts give access to tough skiing, but there's plenty of terrain for beginners. By night, sip martinis at the Noir Bar, with faux-fur seating and leopard-spotted carpets. Then relish the best sushi in the Rockies at Honga's Lotus Petal.

From \$457 (£230), including two lift passes, at The Peaks Resort & Golden Door Spa (+1 800 789 2220; www.thepeaksresort.com). BA flies to Denver from London Heathrow. Visit ba.com

SAN CASSIANO ITALY

The Dolomites turn roseate in the setting sun, forming a magical backdrop to this beautiful ski area. The Alta Badia region is huge: there are 52 lifts and 130km of easy runs in the immediate area and the Dolomiti Superski pass covers 450 lifts. This corner of Italy is a 90-minute drive from Innsbruck and less than three hours from Venice. One enchanting village leads to another, giving you the feeling of going somewhere rather than always skiing the same stretch.

Hotel & Spa Rosa Alpina is in the centre of San Cassiano, a free minibus ride from the gondola. The hotel, owned by the Pizzinini family since 1940, has taken traditional South Tyrolean design and tinted it pink. The entrance hall is decorated in shades of cool cream and rose, with pine doors, the palest marble floor, a vaulted ceiling, and wooden angels.

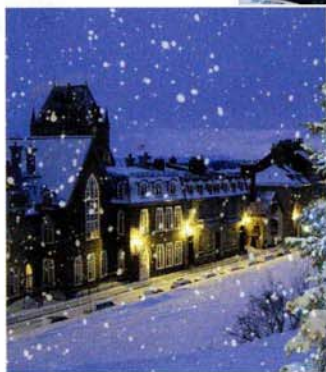
The best lunch is at Rifugio Scotoni – take the Lagazoi cable car. At the top of the lift, ski a long red run into the Hidden Valley, past a frozen waterfall that shimmers turquoise. You will find a cosy hut serving steak, lamb chops, sausages and baked potatoes, cooked on a barbecue. Later, take the horse-powered lift back to the main ski area.

The quiet village doesn't have much nightlife beyond a few bars, but St Hubertus, the Rosa Alpina's Michelin-starred restaurant, serves such unusual dishes as fillet of beef wrapped in mountain hay and baked in a salt crust.

Hotel & Spa Rosa Alpina (+39 0471 849500; www.rosaalpina.it): From €390 (£264) bed and breakfast. BA flies to Innsbruck from London Gatwick. Visit ba.com



QUEBEC CITY CANADA



Romantic, beautifully preserved – and reasonably priced – Quebec City, less than three hours from Montreal, is one of Canada's unsung secrets with easy access to some of the best skiing on the East Coast.

The town where General Wolfe's army of British Redcoats scaled the Heights of Abraham to seize it from the French dates back to the early 17th century. It feels like a perfectly preserved European style. Cobble streets are lined with enticing restaurants, shops, galleries and museums, and there's a buzzing club scene. The best address is the Fairmont Le Château Frontenac, which has views of the St Lawrence River.

A handful of ski resorts – each of them worth at least a one-day visit – are within a 45-minute drive by hire car or shuttle bus. Le Massif, training centre for the Canadian ski team, has the unusual attribute of being upside down – you park at the top of the mountain then ski down to the lifts that line the St Lawrence shore. The main run gives you the optical illusion that if you take a tumble you'll end up on the majestic ice floes.

Larger Mont-Sainte-Anne is known locally as La Belle et La Bête – beauty because of the dramatic views from its 15 lifts; beast because of its sometimes severe midwinter temperatures.

Stoneham is 20 minutes from the city, and you can start your skiing at teatime – the resort has one of the most extensive network of floodlit trails in Canada, and remains open until 10pm.

Fairmont Le Château Frontenac (+44 (0)845 0710153; www.fairmont.com/frontenac). From \$249 (£110). BA flies to Montreal from London Heathrow. Visit ba.com