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CONTINENTAL CLASSICS
Badrutts Palace Hotel, in St. Moritz, where the service is as good as the skiing; opposite, waiting for Zermatt's Gornergrat train for the ride up to 10,000 feet.

White gold

By Katie Arnold

For Europeans, skiing is the winter equivalent of yachting: a different variety of fun to squeeze between parties. With that in mind, we've picked our favorite ski resorts across the Alps, where you can unwind amid stunning mountain scenery. There's plenty of powder to schuss and couloirs to drop—but don't forget, it's as much about soaking up winter with your entourage.

Chamonix and Courmayeur, Italy, the sunny and “more rustic side of Mont Blanc,” according to Canadian pro freeskiier Dana Flahr.

Go for it Click into your skis and strap on a mini-parachute for a “speed-flying” session at the Ailes du Mont-Blanc paragliding school (lesailles-dumontblanc.com). Or check out arguably the world’s most legendary ski tour, the six-day Haute Route, which wends from Chamonix to Zermatt (\$1,105; www.chamonix-guides.com).

Lodging The newly renovated, ultramodern Le Morgane sits right in the middle of Chamonix’s lively pedestrian district; downstairs, Le Bistro keeps a well-stocked wine *cave* (doubles from \$215; morgane-hotel-chamonix.com). It’s just a quick walk to the Aiguille du Midi cable-car station. Upvalley, between Chamonix and Argentière, the four-star Jeu de Paume has easy access to the steeps on the Grands Montets (doubles from \$205; jeudepaumechamonix.com).

Après At Hameau Albert 1er (hameaualbert.fr), chef Pierre Carrier serves seasonal delicacies like venison on pumpkin risotto and Jerusalem artichokes with truffles. The wine cellar stocks 20,000 bottles, including an exceptional sparkling white from vines in nearby Ayse.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

> With only two lifts and two marked trails, but more than 7,000 vertical feet of backcountry terrain, **La Grave, France**, is a miniature yet more extreme version of Chamonix. The focus is on the slopes of Le Meije, the 13,065-foot massif above town. **Stay** The centuries-old l’Edelweiss makes for a cozy base in town (doubles from \$80; hotel-edelweiss.com). > Situated at 5,000 feet, **Verbier, Switzerland**, is legendary for its accessible off-piste steeps and casual attitude. “The town is not conservative or stodgy,” says Swiss freeskiier Dominique Peret. **Stay** Chalet d’Adrien (doubles from \$450; chalet-adrien.com) is the hot hotel in town, serving some of Verbier’s only Italian cuisine.



Italian Largesse

Cortina d’Ampezzo, Italy



Only in Italy could eating come close to upstaging powder skiing. That’s saying a lot at Cortina, a megaresort complex in the Dolomites with 460 lifts and more than 700 miles of trails—the biggest interconnected winter playground in the world. Everything’s on a grand scale here, including the restaurants, of which there are hundreds scattered throughout Cortina’s hyper-stylish pedestrian center, the Corso Italia, and into the outlying villages. If the skiing weren’t so vast or varied, you’d think hopping on a lift was simply the easiest way to get to your next plate of stewed beef or gnocchi. “The Italians can drink and eat all night long, then get it together to meet for lift-accessed ski tours first thing in the morning,” says Kit DesLauriers, the first person to ski off the tops of all Seven Summits. “I suggest an afternoon nap to keep up.”

Snow Report The Dolomiti Superski, of which Cortina is the undisputed hub, swallows 12 separate ski areas. Start from Tofana village, on the west side of town, where you can make loops on the chutes below the gnarled face of 9,317-foot Tofana peak all day long. If you prefer roving farther afield, the 25-mile Sella Ronde loop, accessible from the Alta Badia ski area to the west, circumnavigates some of the region’s biggest spires, with plenty of *rifugi*, or mountain cafés, en route, serving espresso, wine, and fresh-made pasta. The Dolomiti Superski Skipass (from \$46; www.dolomitisuperski.com) lets you ride all 460 lifts.

Go for it S the Freedom Tour, a 60-mile ski/sleigh/bus ramble that follows the old front line between Italian troops and the Austro-Hungarian army, who fought for control of these peaks from 1915 to 1917.

Lodging Corso Italia’s Hotel Ancora has been a local favorite since 1826; the hand-carved ceilings give it an Old World aesthetic, and its proximity to high-end shops and restaurants makes it even more attractive (doubles from \$435; hotelancoracortina.it). In the village of San Cassiano, 16 miles west at the base of Alta Badia, **Rosa Alpina Hotel and Spa** (from \$370; rosalpina.it) is a refuge from the weekend crowds that pour into Cortina from Milan.

Après Dive into the culinary bounty at Baita Piè Tofana, a rustic wood cabin with an innovative Italian-country menu; ask for the table next to the fireplace. More stylish après can be had at the wine bar Enotoca and at L.P. 26, a café that pairs aperitivi with wild-boar antipasti.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

> **France’s Trois Vallées**, a three-way merger of the resorts of Courchevel, Méribel, and Val Thorens, features 360 miles of trails.

Stay At 6,000 feet in Courchevel, the ski-in Les Grandes Alpes (doubles from \$520; lesgrandesalpes.com) sets the standard.

> **Innsbruck, Austria**, is the gateway to nine Tyrolean ski areas, including the famed powder of Stubai Glacier. The Innsbruck Glacier ski pass (three days from \$135; www.innsbruck.info) serves all nine resorts, with bonus days at both **Kitzbühel** and **St. Anton**. **Stay** Mick Jagger is said to prefer Grand Hotel Europa (doubles from \$280; europatyrol.com), across from Innsbruck’s central train station, so why shouldn’t you?

FEAST OF PLEASURES

Too busy to take in the views of the Aiguille de Fruit, in the background, at Courchevel; opposite, never too busy for pasta in the sun at Cortina

