

# WHERE EAGLES DARE

Powdery slopes reflecting silver is just the beginning. Here's what really counts when choosing between these European snow playgrounds.

PALLAVI PASRICHA

Along Europe's Alpine slopes, some ski resorts are great for newbies, others for hardcore enthusiasts; while glam and luxury take centerstage in others. But no matter which postcard perfect getaway you choose—whether in Italy, France, Switzerland or Austria—the heart-stopping beauty of these wondrously white pistes is the icing on the cake and the after-ski action a major draw.

TRAVEL  
SPORT

## FRANCE

### Courchevel

Along Courchevel's glistening slopes, skiing is not just a winter workout, it comes wrapped in layers of glamour. Part of Les 3 Vallées, the world's largest ski area, the immaculately groomed pistes spanning 150 kilometers are set against a backdrop of lavish hotels, Michelin-starred restaurants and designer boutiques. Courchevel 1850 is the highest and most glamorous of the six villages that make up Courchevel. There are more than 50 ski lifts and over 100 ski runs—perfect for both beginners and experts. Celebrity spotting is almost guaranteed here—Prince William and Kate Middleton are among those that Courchevel has hosted.

**Apres ski activities** Go snowshoeing and sledging, or relax in glitzy bars and restaurants along the slopes watching people glide down in designer ski suits. At restaurants like Bagatelle ([www.bagatelle.com](http://www.bagatelle.com)) get a taste of French gastronomy accompanied with lively music and a festive vibe.

**Cost** of one dish is upwards of Euro 12 (approx. ₹1,100).

**What's new** The Saulire cable car, an all-glass cabin, which glides up to 2710 meters is reopening this December. The Ski Mountaineering World Cup takes place from December 12 to 15. At L'Apogée hotel, ([www.oetkercollection.com/hotels/lapogee-courchevel/](http://www.oetkercollection.com/hotels/lapogee-courchevel/)) Giovanni's, an Italian restaurant, will pop up for the season. Alpage, that opened at Hotel Annapurna ([www.annapurna-courchevel.com](http://www.annapurna-courchevel.com)) in December last year has added a Michelin star to its feather.

<https://courchevel.com/en>

### Chamonix

When one of Europe's highest peaks is the backdrop, it can only put your skills of riding the deep powder snows to the ultimate test. Set against the gorgeous 4807-mt-high Mont Blanc, the precipitous slopes here are for extreme skiing and mountaineering. The tough 17-km run along the famed Vallee Blanche earns bragging rights for those who conquer it. Several villages that ooze Alpine charm lie around Chamonix, the main town of the Chamonix Mont-Blanc valley.

**Apres ski activities** Hop on to the Aiguille du Midi ([www.montblancnaturalresort.com/en/aiguille-du-midi](http://www.montblancnaturalresort.com/en/aiguille-du-midi)) cable car for the world's highest vertical ascent to 3,842 mt and get showstopping views of the Mont Blanc peak. Grab a drink and shake a leg at its most buzzing nightclub - L'Amnesia ([www.instagram.com/amnesiaclubchamonix/](http://www.instagram.com/amnesiaclubchamonix/)).

**What's New** A new gondola lift that opened this February provides easier access to La Mer de Glace, the largest glacier in the French Alps, where an ice cave carved into the surface is a tourist magnet. The oldest hotel in the valley—La Couronne—([www.hotelcouronne.com](http://www.hotelcouronne.com)), reopened last July after renovation with a new wing.

**Cost** of stay upwards of Euro 100 (approx. ₹9,200) per night.

**Closest airport:** Geneva

<https://en.chamonix.com/>

Feeling high gets a new meaning when skiing in the French Alps



## SWITZERLAND

## Zermatt

Stunning views of the Matterhorn mountain and year-round skiing has long made this car-free village a skier's dream. Its beauty is legendary and skiing is possible on the glacier even in warmer months in Europe's highest ski resort. Located in the Valais region of Switzerland, there are 54 mountain railways and ski lifts and 360 km of pistes to glide down.

**Apres ski activities** Hike along trails that vary from easy to hard, go ice skating and visit the Matterhorn museum ([www.zermatt.ch/en/museum](http://www.zermatt.ch/en/museum)). To get up and close to the famed peak, take two excursions to dizzying heights: A 33-minute ride in the Gornergrat Bahn train ([www.gornergrat.ch/en/](http://www.gornergrat.ch/en/)) goes to Gornergrat, a gorgeous observation point at 3,089 mts. Or glide in a cable car to Europe's highest mountain station, Matterhorn Glacier Paradise ([www.matterhornparadise.ch/en](http://www.matterhornparadise.ch/en)) perched at 3883 mt.



Closest  
airport:  
ZURICH

**What's new:** A new aerial cable car between Zermatt and Furi that started last November has also introduced a Rooftop Ride ([www.matterhornparadise.ch/en/book/experiences/rooftop-ride](http://www.matterhornparadise.ch/en/book/experiences/rooftop-ride)) this summer. For an extra CHF 10 (approx. ₹990) sit in an open balcony mounted on the cable car's roof for sweeping views.

<https://www.zermatt.ch/en>



## St. Moritz

The world's oldest ski resort on the Corviglia mountains that first brought jetsetters to snow-bound Alpine slopes, is still among the most exclusive. Apart from hosting the Winter Olympics twice, this is where one of the first ski lifts began operating in 1935. St. Moritz encompasses four large and five smaller skiing areas and a snow park with a fun slope for beginners.

**Apres ski activities** Yoga on the snow, vintage horse carriage rides, moonlit ice skating, ice cricket matches, polo and horse races on the frozen lake—there's much to do. For partying, head to Switzerland's oldest nightclub King's Social House ([www.badruttspalace.com](http://www.badruttspalace.com)) and if luxury shopping is on the agenda, then indulge at Palace Galerie. There are eight Michelin star restaurants here.



Closest  
airport:  
MILAN  
BERGAMO

**Cost** of stay Upwards of CHF 351 (Approx ₹34,500) per person for a night.

**What's New:** A sixth five-star hotel, Grace La Margna, ([www.gracehotels.com/en/destinations/grace-la-margna-st-moritz](http://www.gracehotels.com/en/destinations/grace-la-margna-st-moritz)) has opened doors in St. Moritz with 74 rooms and suites and many dining options.



The Matterhorn museum is a must-visit in Zermatt (Far left); The Gornergrat Bahn train is a gorgeous 33-minute ride from Zermatt (left); St Moritz is the oldest ski resort in the world





TRAVEL  
SPORT



● Clockwise from left: Many ski resorts have interesting activities for non-skiers as well; The party never stops at the après-ski bars; Going around on a horse-drawn carriage is great way to see a ski town

AUSTRIA

Kitzbühel

The more than 700-year-old picturesque town boasts medieval castles turned hotels, colourful homes and historical landmarks along cobble streets that give a unique character to its 233 km of slopes. One of Austria's most ritzy resorts, it is famed for the hair-raising Hahnenkamm ski race ([www.hahnenkamm.com/en/](http://www.hahnenkamm.com/en/)) that draws huge crowds each January.

**Après ski activities** Visit the Kitzbühel Museum ([www.museum-kitzbuehel.at](http://www.museum-kitzbuehel.at)) to understand the rich history of this town, which was once a copper mining district. At Arena 365 ([www.arena365-kirchberg.at](http://www.arena365-kirchberg.at)), a leisure and sports venue, spend an afternoon bowling, playing tennis or testing your archery skills. A 3.5km toboggan run starts next to the Gaisbergstüberl hut.

 **Closest airport: SALZBURG**

**What's New** The town centre will transform into a lively Christmas market (November 20 to December 26) with live music, horse-drawn carriages, a petting zoo and more. Watch the Snow Polo World Cup (<https://www.kitzbuehel.com/en/events/snow-polo-world-cup/>) one of the largest polo tournaments on powder, from January 16-19, 2025.

<https://www.kitzbuehel.com/en/sport/>



St. Anton

This isn't for amateurs. Known for its challenging slopes in the scenic Tyrolean Alps, St. Anton is the place for hardcore skiing and snowboarding in the day and equally hardcore action after the equipment

is stowed—it is one of Austria's top party hotspots. Set against the imposing backdrop of the Arlberg massif, breathtaking alpine views from nearly every spot, the exhilarating skiing and the plethora of après bars and nightclubs attract serious skiers and non-skiers alike.

**Après ski activities** Hiking trails varying from 2 to 20km, a 4km toboggan run from Gampen to Nasserein, tandem paragliding and ice skating are great options to explore the outdoors.

 **Closest airport: ZURICH**

At the arl.park Sports Center (<https://arlpark.com/>) climbing walls, bowling and squash will keep you busy. The St Anton Museum is housed in a gorgeous chalet. The night is always young at two its most popular bars, Mooserwirt (<https://www.mooserwirt.at/>) and Crazy Kanguruh ([www.krazykanguruh.com](http://www.krazykanguruh.com))

**What's New:** Watch the world's fastest women skiers race down the challenging 'Karl Schranz' slope on January 11 and 12 next year. It is one of the races held for the Women's Alpine FIS Skiing World Cup.

[www.stantonamarlberg.com](http://www.stantonamarlberg.com)

ITALY

Cortina D'Ampezzo

All eyes are on one of Europe's oldest and priciest ski resorts as it dresses up to host the 2026 Winter Olympics. Also known as the 'Queen of the Dolomites,' it is on every skier's wish list. Just going on a ski lift is a spectacular experience along these craggy mountains. There are excellent slopes for both beginners and pros.

 **Closest airport: VENICE**

**Après ski activities** Love the snow but don't want to ski? This town has you covered with 11 routes to explore the landscape on foot. Soak in this historic town's vibe via its museums, restaurants, bars and of course shopping.

**What's New** Cristallo Resort & Spa (<http://cristallo.it/>) will open with 83 rooms as the new Mandarin Oriental in 2025 after some major renovation.

[www.dolomiti.org/en/cortina](http://www.dolomiti.org/en/cortina)