

Skiing

Beds with altitude

What's the best way to beat the lift queues? Stay up on the mountain itself. These 10 Alpine lodges offer amazing views and powder on the doorstep

Best for romance

Wedelhütte, Hochzillertal, Austria
New this year, this atmospheric ski lodge is perched at 2,350m. Its 11 suites deliver panoramic views of the Tirol's splendid Hochzillertal - perfect for romantic sunsets. Inside it blends contemporary pleasures such as DVD players and Wi-Fi with saunas and traditional chalet style. Slide in on skis or by gondola at the lift valley terminal for Kaltenbach/Hochzillertal, and indulge in a snowshoe excursion before tucking into a four- or five-course dinner. They've even made room for a full wine cellar. *From €149pp pn half-board. +43 66 418 18 804, wedelhuetten.at.*

Best for hardcore skiers

Matterhorn Glacier Paradise Hut, Zermatt, Switzerland
You may have to sleep eight to a bunk room in this new state-of-the-art, eco-friendly hut at the top of the Klein Matterhorn gondola, but those prepared to share will be rewarded with a bird's-eye perspective on the world's most recognisable mountain - and the opportunity to make first tracks in the morning. Take your own food, water and aspirin: at a super-elevated 3,800m, a night here truly takes the breath away. *Around €36pp. +41 27 966 01 01, zermatt.ch.*

Best for families

Hamilton Lodge, Belalp, Switzerland
Deep within Unesco-protected Aletsch glacier territory, the bijou, car-free ski area of Belalp makes a tranquil

retreat for families (the children's ski area is right beside the hotel) as well as ski tourers in search of big terrain. The newly expanded lodge now offers 22 rooms and suites: 10 new ones are lovingly decorated in haute-rustic style, with handmade quilts and rough wood accents. There's a kids' games room, and a new spa is fed with glacier water. *Double rooms from around £117 B&B. +41 27 923 20 43, hamiltonlodge.ch.*

Most remote

Roc de la Pêche, Pralognan, France
One valley - and a world away - from Courchevel sits what may be Europe's only hut equipped with an outdoor Jacuzzi. This remote refuge is on the doorstep of the wild splendour of Vanoise national park; approach on snowshoe from Pralognan or, with a guide, by a fabulous ski tour from the backside of Val Thorens. The food is far beyond standard hut fare. Along with ski touring, there is snowshoeing, dog-sled tours and cross-country skiing. *Dorm rooms and half-board from €53pp, +33 47 908 79 75, rocdelapeche.com.*

Best-kept secret

Hameau les Clèves, Haute Nendaz, Switzerland
No car? No problem. You and your kit are ferried by snowcat to this cosy, elevated Four Valleys hamlet. The Hameau, which opened in 2007, inhabits its own snowbound world: a charming chalet-style hotel with two restaurants and less than a dozen rooms, a few luxury chalets, and one tiny - yet hopping - après-ski bar. What more could you want? Only a perfect ski-in, ski-out position on the piste - one of 400km-worth that winds through Switzerland's second-largest linked ski area. *From around £46 B&B. +41 27 565 80 80, hameaulescleves.ch.*

Best views

Almhotel Piz Seteur, Sella Ronda, Italy
Surround yourself with 360 degrees of



visual Dolomites dynamite at the newly rebuilt three-star Piz Seteur. Offering ski-in, ski-out convenience in the heart of the Sella Ronda, it reopened just before Christmas. Have lunch on the sunny terrace at the foot of the Sella massif on the Plan de Gralba slopes accessible by Piz Seteur chairlift. *Seven nights' half-board based on two sharing from €357pp. Discounts for children. +39 33 9712 74 79, pizseteur.it, valgardena.it.*

Best powder perch

Cabane Mont-Fort, Verbier, Switzerland
Perched at 2,500m on the piste, mid-Verbier, most know this postcard-perfect stone hut as a friendly fondue lunch stop, yet few realise you can push on through till breakfast, in bunkrooms and a few simple doubles that sleep a total of 58, with showers on each floor. It's a regular pit stop on the fabled Haute Route, but you can bathe in the same hardcore cred with just a little skate and pole from the La Chauz lift. Reserve three days in advance; it closes in bad weather.

Half-board around £56 adults, £50 juniors. +41 27 778 13 84, cabanemontfort.ch.

Best for foodies

Hôtel Allodis, Méribel, France
Allodis has one of the finest gastronomic restaurants in Méribel and a lunch terrace speckled with beautiful people. Rich red decor, an open fire and the scent of lilies and *chocolat chaud* wrap guests in a cocoon of Alpine elegance. It has a pool, a hammam, and a lavish Clarins spa opened last year. You can almost catch the Rhodos gondola with a leap from your balcony; the hotel is above Meribel village on the edge of the piste, you arrive by road but can ski out of the front door on to the pistes. *From €231pp half-board, €211pp B&B. +33 47 900 56 00, hotelallodis.com.*

Best for old-fashioned glamour

Hotel Bellevue des Alpes, Grindelwald, Switzerland
Dinner jackets to the fore. Not that

this place is stuffy - anything but - rather that it is the most beautifully preserved fin de siècle mountain hotel in the Alps. The Bellevue's corridors heave with climbing lore and the ghosts of Eiger Alpinists long lost. Make sure you ride the little cog train up to Kleine Scheidegg to drink and dine like a Victorian on a Grand Tour. *Doubles from around £225 B&B. +41 33 855 12 12, scheidegg-hotels.ch.*

Best wellness retreat

Hotel Maiensee, St Christoph, Austria
Ah, the Arlberg, there's no skiing like it. Stay up in tiny St Christoph and you're already one step ahead of the happy hordes down in St Anton who are just joining the lift queue. The family-run Maiensee guarantees a classic Tirolean Alpine HQ with pretty pine-lined Tirolean Stuben, lavish breakfast buffet, wine cellar carved into the mountain and a massive wellness centre with saunas, hay baths, mud treatments and steam rooms. *From €133pp pn half-board. +43 54 462 16 10, maiensee.com.*
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