

Why All-Inclusive Ski Trips Are A Great Vacation Now And Next Winter

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It's over 100-degrees in parts of the country right now, so think how cool it would be to go skiing ... [+] GETTY

French Chalets

If you want a true luxury ski vacation with a super-relaxed, laid-back vibe and nothing to worry about, check out [Purple Ski](#) and its managed chalets at the largest ski resort in the world, plus others. Last year Purple's Chalet Machapucare in Val d'Isere won "Best Chalet in France" at the World Ski Awards, with full-sized indoor pool and hotel-quality gym.



Billiards? Gourmet dining? Skiing? When you book one of Purple Ski's luxury chalets in France the ... [+] [PURPLE SKI](#)

The British invented the ski vacation, crossing the Channel to ski in the Alps, and to them, a ski vacation has long meant a chalet vacation. Now Americans are finally catching on to this entirely different model for a ski vacation—and when they do it is hard for them to go back. [I wrote about the European chalet model and why it is so great at length here at *Forbes* back in December, so you can check that out for more detail.](#)

Here's the short version: vacation home rentals in this country usually come with little more than the key. The European model for an all-inclusive trip is the staffed chalet, a luxury home that in addition to things like hot tubs, sauna, steam room, gym, and even full-size indoor swimming pool, comes with chef, service staff and a chalet manager.

Rates usually include all meals (with one night out on your own), all booze, including free flowing real champagne, and on-demand local transportation. Wake up to your hot cooked breakfast, come back to be greeted at the door with après canapes and flutes of bubbly, then hot tub or get a massage or nap or play board games until it's time for a gourmet dinner with perfectly matched French wine pairings. If you want a masseuse, ski instructor/guide, rentals delivered to the chalet, or lift tickets (many of the big European resorts are on global passes such as Epic or Ikon and many Americans don't need lift tickets) they will gladly add this in to the rate and it stills plays as all-inclusive since you know in advance and pay the chalet company.

It's also worth noting that in general, rentals and especially private guides are significantly cheap in Europe than the U.S. [Oxygene](#) is one of the largest ski schools in France with English instructors and operates at 15 of the nation's the biggest resorts. When I booked last winter in Meribel they got about \$600 for a full day private. The priciest resorts in the U.S. get \$1400-ish, and in 2023 ski website [peakrankings.com](#) wrote that over 25 North American resorts now get over \$1,000. Deer Valley had highest-season pricing of \$1,470 last winter, and that's not likely to drop when they announce new rates.



Why share a pool or gym with hotel guests when you can have your own? This is Chalet Machapucare in ... [+] [PURPLE SKI](#)

It's literally less than half the price in Europe, and rentals and lift tickets are also significantly cheaper. Even the massages cost less, and right now the dollar is strong against the Euro. In the U.S., the big resort operators have vertically integrated and run the instruction and rentals (and food), whereas in Europe it's a competitive independent market with multiple players. And the on-mountain dining for lunch is dramatically better across the board, better by a wide margin than even the fanciest resorts in this country, just no comparison.

But on top of that, companies like Purple get extra discounts and when they book your lessons or rentals or lift tickets, they are even cheaper.

I like Purple in particular because a big part of the chalet experience is the food, and the company has strict rules for experience in top restaurants and have won major awards in the UK for their chalet chefs. This is not a seasonal ski bum short order cook—when our chef made shasuka for breakfast one day, it was the best I've ever had, and it's a dish I've had around the world. I asked him how he learned to make it so well and he told me it was when he was working in London for Israeli-born chef Yotam Ottolenghi, one of the most acclaimed restaurateurs and cookbook authors in the world.

I've personally done chalet vacations in France twice and both times the food was excellent—on the off night we went to a Michelin-starred restaurant and it felt like a letdown. They send questionnaires in advance and can cater to any special diets and will make special occasion meals if you want.

There is also a lot of advance organizing if you want things like spa services, instruction and a reservation on your free night, and Purple has an excellent concierge to handle this. They are probably the company in this space most devoted to focusing on the U.S. market. Their chalets are primarily in Meribel and Courchevel, both part of the world's largest interconnected ski resort, Trois Vallees. They also operate in Val d'Isere, which connects with Tignes to form the gigantic Espace Killy mega-resort, also one of the world's biggest ski areas.

For the level of luxury provided, the value proposition is almost impossible to beat, and it crushes luxury hotels at the same level. Put 12 people (it holds 15) in the recently completely renovated Chalet Iona in Meribel in mid-March and it costs less than \$3000 per person for the entire week, including all food and drink. You'd pay more just for a mid-level ski-in/out hotel room in many places, and that comes with nothing. I just priced out a guided ski week in Italy for six people staying at mid-range 3 and 4-star (Italian system, not Forbes) hotels, and the total price was about the same as renting a much higher-end Purple Chalet in Meribel for 10 people—and Italy doesn't include all meals or any drinks. Believe me, free flowing champagne, carefully curated wines and craft cocktails for 10 people on a ski week can add up pretty fast if it's extra.

There is also a camaraderie aspect that cannot be beat, as you can have your friends, family or both all under one roof, eating gourmet dinners at a giant table, playing cards, enjoying the spa facilities or chatting by the fire. There's nothing to think about or worry about and the experience is just liberating—this is why they call it vacation.