



Amy Murrell

INSPIRATION

A family-friendly ski guide to Europe

Here's how to embrace a ski holiday with children, from the best hotels and chalets to insider tips

BY ROSALYN WIKELEY

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Already aglow with fairy lights and flickering **chalet** windows, **Europe's best ski resorts** are oiling their chairlifts and praying for an almighty snow dump (snow cannons poised as backup).

The Alps' glacier areas have already welcomed skiers (mostly Austria), while **Scandinavian skiing** has been in full swing for some time – courtesy of their longer winters. But where to take the family? Some of Europe's most alluring snowglobe resorts simply don't cut the mustard with multi-level broods in tow.

Zermatt may have guaranteed snow, but there are scant ski-in/ski-out options (if you've ever tried to squeeze tots into ski gear before herding them and their **ski clobber** to the lifts, you'll appreciate the insider tip). Similarly, Chamonix may have upped the ante on its family-friendly pistes and areas with the Mont Blanc Legend area on Flégère, but the resort remains largely geared towards the serious skier, with steep, challenging runs (teenager territory). In short, all ski holiday ingredients must be considered when travelling with sprogs: hotels and chalet options, mountain lunches, small group skiing, viable routes on a piste map. As with life, there is skiing *before* and there is skiing *after* children.

As keen skiers, we're still on a quest to find the best young family ski holiday formula, with the eldest now old enough for ski school, but the youngest requiring daycare for us, as parents, to even consider hitting the slopes. Arriving in world-class resorts without the right childcare and floor-to-ceiling windows teasing us with skiers whooshing past on fresh powder is not an experience I'd like to repeat.

Moreover, the family-friendly claim is ill-defined and incredibly vague on age and requirements – a cot and baby monitor are simply not enough to get you clicking into

skis and bundling into a gondola if you're **travelling with a baby or toddler**. Check the small print before you book: are your children old enough for the Kid's Club, and what age does the recommended ski club take from? Is it ski-in/ski-out or an easy walk to the lifts? Do the restaurants open during children-friendly hours, and is there a playroom or area for them to burn off steam?

Everyone does it differently, some with a chalet and babysitters or grandparents holding the fort while parents squeeze in a few runs and a long lunch, others with hotel kids clubs or pricey nannies. Ultimately, it's how to avoid the mountain equivalent of all-inclusive plastic chair and waterslide territory while keeping everyone entertained, parents on the slopes, and limiting cortisol levels during precious family time.

So, from the best nursery slopes and ski schools to winter afternoons of huskies, sledge rides, and ice skating en famille, here's our guide to the world's best family-friendly ski resorts (which will make for an *actual* winter holiday).

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Our 5 favourite family ski hotels in Europe

Our 5 favourite family ski chalets in Europe



Our 5 favourite family ski hotels in Europe

Méribel, France

Everyone knows that Méribel has always been a hit with Brits (one of them founded the resort in 1938). Those who skied here as youngsters return every year with their own broods, citing not only profound nostalgia but the snow parks (the Piste des Inuits and the Yeti Park at Mottaret), the cosy, traditional chalets and the tear-jerking views of the mighty Mont Blanc. The relentless investment in chair lifts ensures a well-oiled system connecting 600km of pretty Trois Vallées pistes – limiting queues and sibling squabbles. Under-fives ski for free – a boon for young families eager to find their tots' ski legs (as the French do), and easy links to Val Thorens' soaring peaks and Courchevel's slicked blues and greens serve up endless squiggles for families to pore over after supper, planning steak frites stop offs at Le Clos Bernard or Le Rond-Point (Ronnie's).

Where to stay: Not only is **Le Kaïla** Méribel's plushiest hotel (expect fur throws and deep woods softening the sharp, contemporary angles and a serious spa), it also has one of the best kids areas in the resort, with workshops for all ages (from cooking classes to DJ sessions for teens). Spacious rooms are carved up for maximum sleep (go for the *privileged* room option for children under 5). **Hotel Le Coucou** is a chic arrival to the Méribel hotel scene, where the retro, boutique hotel interiors belie the plugged-in Kid's Club and general family-friendly elements. **Fish & Pips** are Méribel insiders on the swishiest, family-friendly chalets, such as the light-filled Chalet du Valon, Nordic-style Chalet de Koisseu and Chalet du Cygne, with extraordinary valley views to gawp at over croissant breakfasts.

Alex Kaiser

Lech, Austria

Lech's understated, discreet spirit, its wide, powder-laden slopes and ruddy-faced taverns emitting wafts of schnitzel and apple strudel make it high on the list of family ski resorts of choice (including **the royals**). Aside from an abundance of nursery and beginner slopes and ski schools, one of Lech's greatest draws is the relatively unknown fact that under-eights ski for free. The Arlberg ski area's 502 kilometres of spruce pistes is a playground for children or teenage shredders, with easy connecting lifts to St Anton, Suben and Zürs and a new 85km-long circuit, the 'Run of Fame,' which winds through the entire Arlberg ski area. Family *après* usually convenes in the pastel-hued town for ice skating and horse-drawn sleigh rides, where cafés selling thick hot chocolate and timber chalets peer over the Lech River. The Austrians take family lunches seriously – clicking skies off in a hurry for fondues and Gröstle at Hus Nr 8 and The Stube – a toasty spot at the swish Alberg Hotel.

Where to stay: Lech's grande dame, **Hotel Alberg** (where Princess Diana famously took Prince William and Prince Harry skiing) is an antlered, silver service paean to Austrian Alpine tradition – though there's a sense that only well-behaved youngsters are welcome. At the modern end of the design scale, **Severin*s Lech Hotel** is a bond-worthy lair with children's bunks carved into family suites, and a children's playroom with snooker and ping pong.

Courchevel, France

Swanky chalets, groomed pistes, and restaurants flashing more Michelin stars than Fendi logos on the Bambi beginners. Doesn't sound like your archetypal **family holiday** spot. But amid the oligarch diamante, the lobster lunches and altiport fanfare in Courchevel is a returning tribe of families who relish the veiny map of vast Trois Vallées ski runs for all levels and winter folklore spirit in town. Up in glossy 1850, with its string of Bond-worthy chalets and glamorous hotels, Ecole du Ski Français' ski instructors lead tots down beginners' slopes to la Croisette in duckling formation while budding snowboarders and skiers listen into ESF Courchevel's technique tips in understated 1650 (while parents sneak in an hour or two of skiing, à deux). More grown-up children tend to make a beeline for the snowpark for its kickers, jumps and airbags or join their parents on powder-fuelled epics through the scenic backcountry

with a seasoned private guide. Families bed into various cockle-warming mountain restaurants for tartiflette and fondue, such as Pilatus and La Soucoupe, or collect crêpes from vendors in town to the background din of huskies, psyched for their evening sledging session.

Where to stay: Haute 1850 hotel, **Cheval Blanc Courchevel** manages to absorb spirited children into the calm, high-design chalet picture with its Carousel Kids Club (putting top **West London** nurseries to shame), the roster of stimulating outdoorsy activities (while parents ski or spa) and refreshingly unpretentious take on highchairs and sticky fingers amid the duck foie gras and cowhide. 1650's more understated Portetta, with its hygge-style family suites, has partnered with Scott Dunn's Explorers Kids Club – a mere snow plough away from the hotel's boot room after a morning chocolat chaud.

Richard Waite

Megève, France

Founded as a ski resort by Baroness de Rothschild in 1916, in a bid to replicate St Moritz's charm in a French setting, Mediaeval Megève attracts the smart leather weekender set who were sent down the slopes on skis before they could walk. They, along with their well-mannered broods, return year after year for rounds of raclette at the buttoned-down l'Alpage and the superb Piou Piou Club's ski school, or for toddlers, Les Petites Frimousses day nursery, (read: child-free ski time). In town, Christmas

markets, sleigh rides and old fashioned toy shops surpass all ages' fairytale expectations. The easy transfer to Megève (just over an hour from [Geneva](#)) is a game changer for families, as are the town's car-free cobbled streets and generously varied pistes for all levels. La Cabochette is the first-timer spot, the run to St Nicholas from L'Épaule is intermediate bliss, and a handful of thrilling blacks, such as Emile Allais, and freeride terrain (particularly Magic Garden Coté 2000) is a siren call for the advanced families and adrenaline-seeking teenagers.

Where to stay: Families au fait with turn-down service hang their helmets at [Four Seasons Hotel Megève](#) or its more private [Les Chalets du Mont d'Arbois](#), (all named after various members of the Rothschild family). [Beaumier l'Apaga's](#) Hotel and Chalets reference Megeve's rural past through cosy wood cladding and farmhouse tables, with a gentle modernism and unpretentious spirit. Check into [Les Fermes de Marie](#) for spacious family-friendly rooms, a raft of outdoorsy activities and an adult-only spa area separated from the family pool (five years +).

Alex Filz Photography

Val Gardena, Italy

The skeleton key to 740 miles of Dolomite piste, South Tyrol's Val Gardener may be a hit with the pros and backcountry enthusiasts, but it's also a stellar choice when it comes to family ski resorts, without the Cortina or St Moritz price tag. They return each year for the trusty Selva Ski School and Funslope just below the Dantercepies lift, as well as the apres tobogganing, ice skating and snowshoeing. The lofty ski school standards spill into the other two villages of St. Christina and Ortisei, and Val Gardena's Mini Club keeps sprogs aged 2 onwards entertained while parents snake down the labyrinthine runs. Crisp, corduroy pistes and clean mountain air lure all ages outside with their skis and high hopes – jacket pockets bulging with chocolate for chairlift breaks. Younger families tend to head to the beginner terrain at Seiser Alm, while the thrill-chasing aficionados carve up the Sella Ronda – a famous run that loops around the dramatically steep and craggy Sella massif. Really though, it's the resort's (and its hotels') knack for smoothing over the pain points of skiing with children that makes it so appealing, from all-in ski packages (where skis, lessons and lunch are figured out) to outdoorsy activities for children once they've peeled their goggles off.

Where to stay: Adler Spa Resort's turreted, Wes Anderson-worthy exterior belies its smooth, contemporary innards – where a stellar kid's club, cavernous pile-them-all-in suites and daily menu of children's activities roll out for returning families. Biancaneve Family Hotel's name is the giveaway, with tots donning armbands dotting the pool, the ski school a mere snow waddle away and the full face painting, rabbit-petting, table tennising shebang in the kids club (the sort that achingly chic chalets simply can't stoop to).

Paul Thuysbaert

St Moritz, Switzerland

The form, according to **St Moritz** veterans, is to rely on its slew of swanky hotels' creches and nothing-is-too-much approach to sprog paraphernalia and pool times for an *actual* family holiday. Not only is St Moritz and Engadine area high enough for a generous helping of snow and sunshine, but its Cresta-focused, Slim Aarons-documented history of frozen lakes and snow-capped palaces also evokes child-like awe in all those lucky enough to chug into the enchanting resort. So, naturally, it's a hit with families... and any child under the age of 10 raised on a diet of *Frozen*. Suvretta and Celerina run the best ski schools with children's ski lifts, moving carpets and at the base station of the Celerina-Marguns gondola lift, the Snowli restaurant – a family classic with hearty menus for smalls. Seasoned skiers will relish the tangle of scenic reds on the mighty Corviglia, and an abundance of cruisy blues carry schnitzel-satisfied families back to their chalets or fairytale hotels for Swiss hot chocolate and

fireside board games. Expect Brother's Grimm-worthy horse-drawn carriages, tobogganing, and cross-country challenges for St Moritz's take on extracurricular.

Where to stay: Gothic grande dame, **Badrutt's Palace** invented skiing and really all winter frolicking (along with the original après). Its 3-12 children's club adheres to the aforementioned St. Moritz form, while fairytale turrets and the Palace's own ski school keeps the whole clan happy. The **Grand Hotel des Bains Kempinski** partners with top-brass Suvretta House ski school pulls the proverbial rabbit out of the hat at its kids' club and keeps a generous slot for *splash time* at the spa's pool.

Pål Harald Uthus

Geilo, Norway

Not only is **Norway's** Geilo a great backup if the Alps suffers an absence of snow, but the whole resort has also been choreographed with families in mind, from its fantastic six-months-and-up creche and gentle slopes at Trollklubben (located at the base in Vestlia) to the forest trails and fun snow playgrounds at Slatta. An abundance of nursery slopes is ideal for tots and first-timers to practice those tricky turns and snow ploughs with the Norwegian broods, while the runs for older children and parents are challenging enough, without encountering sudden icy blacks (a scenario that can often

arise in Les Trois Vallées). A new family-friendly lift now takes children to Kikutoppen from the Kikut base, while Havsdalen allows beginners to gradually edge up the mountain to Fjellcrossen, where they can show off new ski school skills. Geilo, like most Norwegian resorts, excels at traditional winter merriment, with dog sledging and horse-drawn sleigh rides – the authentic sort that is deeply embedded in Norse lore. Even the [Oslo to Bergen railway](#), chugging into the resort, has its playroom carriage for the sprogs.

Where to stay: [Geilo Mountain Lodge's](#) in-house ski pass and equipment set-up avoids the familiar post-transfer hustle into town and buys more time on the pistes. The locavore restaurant serves traditional, hearty crowd pleasers which families ready themselves for after a quick stint in the sauna. Trawl Airbnb for rustic cabins and chalets, such as ski-in-ski-out [Tabu](#), which sits on the edge of hardagervidda National Park.

Helmuth Rier

Morzine, France

One of the Alps' most picturesque villages, Morzine has retained its authentic spirit with a deep sense of community and skiing families who have come here for

generations. Part of the Portes du Soleil ski area, the resort enjoys wide, cruisey (and generally sunny) pistes with a hypnotic Mont Blanc strutting in the distance. Parents can accompany tots to Action sports or Felix Ski at the Pleney's base for their first taste of skiing (on plastic) or dog sledging, while the marginally older lot tend to head to The Piou Piou Club, which progresses through its Ecole du Ski Francais affiliation to higher levels and age groups. There are raclette and fondue-filled restaurants easily accessible for the non-skiers and plenty of cream-topped hot chocolate spots for that long stretch between breakfast and lunch. Teenagers will relish the more challenging slopes and après snowmobiling, while beginners and intermediates can put ski school hacks into practice on the Little Indian Run and Burton Riglet Park. The town centre recalls a **Christmas market** for most of the winter, with a traditional carousel, ice rink and horse-drawn carriages that jingle past the bobble hats and **winter coats**.

Where to stay: OK, it may not light up the design world, but **Hôtel les Côtes'** soothing simplicity, cosy family suites and children's après activities (expect anything from bowling to ping pong) is a resounding hit with families who return year after year. The self-catering chalet apartments are a best-of-both option, with families enjoying the Hôtel les Côtes' service alongside the privacy of a private chalet, dipping into the hotel restaurant as they please. **The Farmhouse in Morzine** is where the aesthetes and traditionalists take their broods, with cosy rooms of Persian rugs, wooden beams and French antiques sleeping up to four. The slightly eccentric refurbished manor house is a home-from-home refuge, where families debrief ski adventures over third helpings of potato dauphinoise along a communal farmhouse table.

Romain Ricard

Arosa, Switzerland

Families travelling from the UK searching for the perfect ski resort can't go far wrong with the sub-two-hour flight from London to **Zurich**, Switzerland. As with most snowy destinations, Arosa is a lengthy, steep drive up the mountains, but stepping out into the crisp altitude makes the additional journey time worthwhile. One of the largest terrains in the country, Arosa's slopes are ample, which makes it the perfect destination for a group of varying abilities. Beginners and children should head to the nursery slopes in Inner Arosa to gain confidence before progressing to gentle but slightly more advanced runs at Tschuggen. Nightlife here is far from booming, so families won't be out of place when the sun sets; Apres Ski feels more like a social get-together and a chance to refuel than a wild affair.

Where to stay: **Faern Arosa Altein** opened in December 2022, bringing a taste of modern design to its historic village. Elements of the original building remain pivotal to the interior: marble columns, dark wood wall panelling and tall ceilings bordered with intricate coving have been polished and restored to look brand new but bring charisma to the entrance hall and downstairs bar. Two floors down is an amalgamation

of rooms dedicated to kids. Things are more colourful here, and there's a cinema room, a pool table and arcade games for teens, and a specially designed space with child-friendly toys like duplo, books and wooden building blocks. The swimming pool is also family-friendly, as is the restaurant. Spacious deluxe corner bedrooms offer views across the mountains, and connecting doors make retreating in the evening a joy, no matter how early that might be. Sustainability efforts are being made, so bring your own toiletries and expect to choose your evening meal in the morning to support minimal food waste. *Sarah Leigh Bannerman*

Ortisei, The Dolomites

Ortisei in Val Gardena spans the **Dolomites**' mountainous terrain, sparkling like glitter in the harsh winter sun. It draws established snow babies and intrigued newcomers alike. What makes this place special is its lack of pretence, which infiltrates the crisp Italian air in a way that instils confidence in the youngest skier. Perhaps the adrenaline junkies are 'carving it up' off-piste (the region spans 176 km of slopes), but across the main expanse of snow, children not only seem welcome but celebrated. When they're ready to upgrade from the dedicated 'Bunny Run' at the foothills of Ortisei, they pepper the glossy mountains in tandem, sporting matching high-vis jackets that spotlight their location and encourage respectful adults to slalom around them. Après lodges fuse Austrian flair with Italian finesse, their cosy fireside interiors and scents of spaghetti and apple strudel, making it all the more tempting to take a rest bite. Kids' menus are par for the course and set the tone for an all-generation catch-up post-session.

Where To Stay: Family-run **Gardena Grödnerhof Hotel & Spa** couldn't be better located for the Ortisei Alpe di Siusi cable car and the child-friendly slope, nor better designed for families visiting Val Gardena. The Mini Club spans two floors and offers supervision from 3pm until 11pm daily, as well as ample activities from crafts and a 'disco floor' to a motorised climbing wall, cinema room and racing car arcade-style games. In addition, families can book a private snow-shoeing excursion, enjoy the indoor pool and debrief over complimentary snacks in the Lobby every afternoon.

Sarah Leigh Bannerman

Saint-Gervais, Mont Blanc

Perhaps the most child-friendly element of Saint-Gervais in Mont Blanc is Charlotte's Snowboard Cross Track. The specially designed course allows young skiers free reign to a vast area of snow where they're encouraged to learn freestyle confidently; it's dotted with obstacles and mini jumps designed to advance their skills in ways only dedicated space and time can. The small, historic town at the foot of the mountain is also home to many family-friendly restaurants. The expected apres-ski hotspots and the landscape's terrain is made up of 21 per cent beginner-level runs well suited to multi-level groups looking to spend time together.

Where To Stay: *Armanette* is an intimate 19-room hotel nestled snugly into the mountainside at Evasion Mont-Blanc. It's the epitome of 'picture-perfect alpine bolthole', and checking in goes hand-in-hand with an overwhelming sense of escapism from the everyday. Chic yet understated interiors reflect its surroundings: layers of cosy blankets, wood panelling on the walls and alluring open fireplaces. Family-friendly well-being, comfort and outdoor immersion are at its heart. Alongside dedicated ski schools, it offers experiences that suit all ages and adventurers, from snowshoeing, hiking and e-biking to dog sledging, helicopter rides and canyoning.

There's a nursery on site for the smallest members of the group and panoramic views of one of the most famous mountains in the world for adults to enjoy while little ones are entertained. *Sarah Leigh Bannerman*

Our 5 favourite family-friendly ski hotels in Europe

South Tyrol Sonnwies

Once a small guest house, this South Tyrolean family favourite has morphed into a sort of anti-screen nirvana for parents, reluctant to give up all aesthetic standards and luxe touches, yet acutely aware that romantic boutiques are a thing of the past. By virtue of its spectacular natural setting, on the fringes of the cinematic Dolomites, wellness permeates every aspect of Sonnwies, most notably its weekly activities programme – hiking, biking, pony rides to nearby lakes, wildlife spotting – where children can gulp in that crisp mountain air. Children can even collect eggs from the onsite farm and learn to churn butter from the cow's milk. As for the skiing, a nursery slope is easily accessible on the hotel's own magic carpet, while families can hop onto a free ski bus to the nearby Plose ski resort. There's the five swimming pools, the cinema

sauna for children and the family-optimised rooms, suites and chalets (this is a family only hotel), but the real draw of this hotel for parents with ski or spa ambitions is the remarkable 70 complimentary hours of childcare.

Family rooms from £517 per room per night based on two adults and two children sharing a Double Room on a full-board basis, excluding alcohol and drinks from service.

BOOK YOUR STAY: SONNWIES

Portetta, Courchevel 1650

From the team behind Limewood and [The Pigs](#), now scattered in all corners of the UK, Portetta brings a now signature rustic chic to the Alps, and in particular, 1650. A short piste glide or car wind down from flashy Courchevel, 1650's restaurants and traditional villages houses sit closer to the region's Savoyard soul than the louche lobster and caviar scene a few hundred metres up mountain. The village itself is also more manageably sized for families, without constantly needing a pricey taxi to get around. And Portetta has conveniently plonked itself right on the Belvedere piste for

easy morning cruises to the lifts and ski school (ESF). Interior wise, it's precisely the sort of merlot-hued, thick curtained and wooden-beamed chalet cosiness that brings families together – a fresh play on traditional Savoyard style. Upstairs, families should make a beeline for the loft rooms for enough space to keep the peace, crackling fires to warm ski toes on and little kitchenettes to avoid the dreaded room service milk dance. Children will relish **Angela Harnett** house-made pasta at Cucina Angelina, while outside, the Fire and Ice Bar terrace serves up some of Courchevel's finest wood-fired pizzas – ideal for an early après supper for the younger sprogs. The superlative Scott Dunn Explorers Club, split into three age categories spanning 4 months to 7 years (with age-specific outdoorsy activities), buys parents time to zip up the mountain, while the hotel has collaborated with Le Bureau des Guides Courchevel for off-piste adventures en famille (for older kids), keeping eyes peeled for chamois, ibex and marmots while gliding through untouched powder.

Family Valley Room from £299 per person per night sleeping four; the Loft rooms from £7,080 per week.

BOOK YOUR STAY: MR & MRS SMITH

Four Seasons Hotel Megève

Founded as a ski resort by Noémie de Rothschild (with a little help from the banking scion's ski instructor), Megève has managed to preserve its Medieval horse-and-sleigh Alpine spirit. Its fringes are lined with smart, incredibly discreet chalets, and old money charm appears to be the order of the day, particularly at the unapologetically classic Mont d'Arbois chalet (part of the invisible Rothschild estate). But head up the mountain (or glide there in your Bentley transfer), and you'll discover a fresher, more modern take on Rothschild winter leisure. There's a sense here, at Four Seasons Megève, that the whole family's along for the dynastical ride – racing past artworks from the Rothschild's private collection, scoffing elaborate crêpes against a Narnia-like backdrop, slumping out the backdoor in skis with an instructor (having has equipment sorted in house) than meeting the folks for piping hot tartiflette at plush sister mountain lodge, Mont Arbois' L'Idéal 1850. The Kid's Club is top-drawer, with retro ride-on cars, mini kitchens and games in a fun, futuristic playroom. 3-12s are entertained with weekly programmes that include foraging for wild plants, picnics in igloos and dog sledding, while the Teen Zone's juke box, life size Mario Kart games and cinema corner offer a fun hangout zone after a long day on the slopes. And having splashed around during family hours in the hotel's romanesque indoor-outdoor pool, sprogs can even check into the spa for facials and fairy finger and toe treatments. Those with tots should enlist a babysitter through the hotel (for one night at least) to dive into Anne-Sophie Pic's alchemic menu or Kaito Megève's superior Japanese fusion joint, for sushi and Wagyu beef sliders washed down with saké cocktails.

Rooms starting from £1,667 in the winter season

BOOK YOUR STAY: [BOOKING.COM](https://www.booking.com)

Le Coucou, Méribel

Its pisteside positioning, making the short glide to the Adret lift a breezy one, is just one of Le Coucou's winning charms. There's also the astronomy, chocolate making and igloo building sessions in the switched on Kids Club, and the in-house boot room that fills little skiers' pockets with water, snacks and lip balm. Alongside Pierre Yavanovitch, the Maisons Pariente family (behind Crillon Le Brave and Lou Pinet) have decked this 39-suite, 16 room mountain hotel in scalloped headboards, terracotta paint shades, retro lamps and white-freckled carpets reflecting the Narnia-like scenery outside. It's a stellar option for families where the youngest is four or over (the Kid's Club is from four-nine, and there's a Teens Lab for 10-15 with the usual games room suspects. And while suites are deftly sectioned off for guaranteed sleep, two chalets, cleverly chipped into the main hotel, offer the best of both worlds, with chalet-grade privacy that families relish and the hotel buzz and facilities – the Tata Harper spa's treatments are a good choice of après. Menus cater to refined palates, whether it's the Wagyu bolognese in the beef bar or the elevated spins on fondue.

[BOOK YOUR STAY: BOOKING.COM](https://www.booking.com)

Naturhotel Forsthofgut, Leogang Austria

Another ski-in/ski-out favourite, Naturhotel Forsthofgut operates a well-oiled childcare service that plays to frazzled parents tired of paying extortionate babysitter fees or watching those 'extras' rack up at other Alpine hotels. Here, it's a plush all-inclusive model, which begins to feel wildly generous after the third round of art classes in the studio, pony grooming at the stables, or waterslide shoot in just one of seven pools. But what sets Naturhotel Forsthofgut apart from its family-friendly contemporaries is the Rocky Club's 2+ complementary childcare provision, the organic, nutritious food for all ages, and the not-so-insignificant perk that it's open seven days a week (and a shrewdly separated adult-only spa area and lake house). Toddlers can waddle off to the children's farm to pet bunnies, goats and piglets, and the forest playground helps young children let off steam, when not on the pistes with their parents or at *ski kindergarten*. It's worth scanning through the website for various age-appropriate family packages, but parents can book safe in the knowledge that they'll have ample time to lean into the Saalbach-Hinterglemm-Leogang-Fieberbrunn ski circus (with its scribbles of multi-level pistes dotted with **Glühwein** and Schnapps pit stops), or the treatment menu at the sprawling, outdoorsy spa.

Family rooms from £415 per night

BOOK YOUR STAY: NATURHOTEL FORSTHOFGUT

Our 5 favourite family-friendly chalets

Chalet Harmony, Méribel

Fresh to the Méribel chalet scene, this svelte Trois Vallées bolthole sits in the central Duo du Pont area, a whisker away from the snow-doused boutiques, restaurants, and crucially, the main ski lifts. Its interior honours Méribel's traditional Savoyard spirit, just with right-on technology, soft uplighting warming blonde woods and modern floor-to-ceiling windows framing the fairytale scenery outside. Beyond the large indoor swimming pool, the tiered cinema room and children's bunk area, a real perk of this chalet is the sprawling master suite (occupying its own floor) so, whoever picks up the tab, is guaranteed a healthy degree of separation and space in their own quarters. And with a total of seven en suite bedrooms (including the bunk room), Chalet Harmony is a superb choice for multigenerational ski holidays, or a snowy escape with friends. Meribel's ski schools are the gold standard, and buy parents plenty of time to take the lifts over to Courchevel for a long lunch or wiggle through the Trois Vallées pine trails. And any chalet bound après plans typically centre around the high tech wine cellar and hot tub.

A seven-night stay at Chalet Harmony starts from £35,000 on a catered basis.

BOOK YOUR STAY: PURPLE SKI

Arula Chalet 2, Lech

The Arula Chalets, perched above the valley in old money Oberlech, recall a Bond villain's Alpine lair – one with Balinese-style indoor pools, piste-side jacuzzis and butlers who know how you like your martinis. But it's Arula Chalet 2 that really pulls the proverbial rabbit out the hat for families, within the louche, mountain-luxe narrative. Practical perks include a swishy children's bunk room chiselled from the same 'aged and baked' oak as the suites, two of which can be split into twins, the highly nutritious, wildly tasty menus that can be tailored to fussy eaters, and piste being a wee boot shuffle away from the breakfast table. But then there's the games room, replete with a pool table, and cinema room for cosy evenings or white outs. The round-the-clock butler service is the holy grail for parents in need of a proper break, as is the Sharky and George immersive activities, where children are encouraged to reconnect

with nature and their magical location, whether that's learning to cook traditional Austrian dishes, snowshoeing through the silent pine woods or sledging down the pistes. The chalet have a trusted handful of nannies and babysitters up their sleeve, freeing up parents to explore Lech's wide, cruisey pistes and its quietly superb food scene.

BOOK YOUR STAY: ARULA CHALETS

Chalet Tataali, Morzine

Let's start with the futuristic slide, shooting joyous sprogs from the chalet's main hall into the games room, where monkey bars line the ceiling – it's what they'll remember from a week here with the clan (eclipsing skiing and suppers). The climbing wall in the bunk room, where a bed is carved into a cosy pine alcove, will be a resounding hit too, as will the pool table for teens, and the time spent together in a contemporary space wrapped in snowglobe scenery and warmed by an angular, glass-encased fire. While Leo Trippi can organise top-drawer nannies or babysitters in advance, the real joy of Chalet Tataali is how its facilities – from the swing over the glossy indoor pool, to the plush cinema room – encourage family time. Parents could feasibly book their broods into Morzine's exemplary ski schools, or sort childcare during precious skiing hours, before regrouping for hot chocolates around the fire, artistry in the games room and stretching out ski legs together in the pool.

From £38,748 fully serviced

BOOK YOUR STAY: LEOTRIPPI

La Ferme de Mon Grand Père, Méribel

For a little Alpine heirloom magic, as the name suggests, Méribel's La Ferme de Mon Grand Père tickles all rustic mountain fantasies, just with luxe trimmings. Families angling for a cosy, traditional Savoyard-style chalet will relish the family sitting room area, replete with an old fashioned bar and an open fire. Upstairs, bedrooms assume a more zhuzhed up design – still encased in pine, but with modern furniture and fur throws flung over ludicrously comfortable beds. Siblings can fight over the top bunk before scouting out the plush, velvety cinema room, the vaulted games room with its billiards and table football, and the spa's illuminated wall art, reflecting an Alpine landscape onto the pool. Versatile sleeping arrangements ensures that the eight chalet

en suites can shapeshift to suit all families (double beds can be separated to form twins), while no one misses out on terrace or balcony access in the three family suites. It may not tick the ski-in/ski-out box, but the lefts are a quick snow boot trudge away,

From 21,000 per week fully serviced

BOOK YOUR STAY: LEOTRIPPI

Chalet Harmony, Méribel

Fresh to the Méribel chalet scene, this svelte Trois Vallées bolthole sits in the central Duo du Pont area, a whisker away from the snow-doused boutiques, restaurants, and crucially, the main ski lifts. Its interior honours Méribel's traditional Savoyard spirit, just with right-on technology, soft uplighting warming blonde woods and modern floor-to-ceiling windows framing the fairytale scenery outside. Beyond the large indoor swimming pool, the tiered cinema room and children's bunk area, a real perk of this chalet is the sprawling master suite (occupying its own floor) so, whoever picks up the tab, is guaranteed a healthy degree of separation and space in their own quarters. And with a total of seven en suite bedrooms (including the bunk room), Chalet Harmony is a superb choice for multigenerational ski holidays, or a snowy escape with friends. Meribel's ski schools are the gold standard, and buy parents plenty of time to take the lifts over to Courchevel for a long lunch or wiggle through the Trois Vallées pine trails. And any chalet bound après plans typically centre around the high tech wine cellar and hot tub.

A seven-night stay at Chalet Harmony starts from £35,000 on a catered basis

BOOK YOUR STAY: PURPLE SKI

Chalet 1597, Lech

Lech's family-friendly credentials are well-documented, though in the well-behaved children sense (the Dutch royals often ski here, en famille). By virtue of its old money spirit, a few chalets can feel a little dated (showers competing with the antiques), but not this one. Ebony timbered and shuttered Chalet 1597 has been beautifully restored, with techy touches and a five-star grade of comfort woven into a proudly traditional Tyrolean picture. Enormous cushioned check headboards, thick reindeer rugs and the wood carved ceiling in the stube set an immensely cosy bass note for family time,

though the restrained curation of antiques and sumptuous fabrics feels chic and fresh. After ski school or long stretches on the slopes with the whole clan, children can ski back to base (directly from the gentle slopes) and bundle into the cinema room while parents enjoy a steam. It's worth noting that Chalet 1597 is located in the Stubenbach area of Lech (a two minute drive from the main town or a half an hour Narnia-like woodland trail trudge away), which suits families after maximum privacy and the option to join the action when suits (a dedicated drive is included). Ski clobber is pulled together by the concierge team well before arrival, along with housekeepers, nannies and babysitters, if required, and catered bookings include all the afternoon tea, pre-dinner canapé and Champagne trimmings (as well as the early children's suppers). They'll be tired after ski school, or following long mornings carving Lech's wide, scenic slopes (under eights ski for free in Lech), and the older lot can join parents on the more challenging runs (another jammy inclusion in the weekly rate is a ski instructor for the initial two days). Family friendly highlights also include the four separate beds in the children's room and ski-in/ski-out positioning (the boot room and sunny terrace literally brush the piste).

Scott Dunn offers seven nights at Chalet 1597, Lech, from £44,000 on a half board basis (breakfast and six 4X course dinners), return flights from the UK and private transfers

[BOOK YOUR STAY: SCOTT DUNN](#)

Tips for skiing with children

Any family ski trip begins with the resort. If it's your first time, check the ski school quality and age categories, as well as its proximity to the chalet (this needs to be as simple as possible, particularly with smalls). Is there enough to do in town on white out days or for après fun, and more importantly, where to go with young children that's well away from the boot-thumping après scene (or with teens and *twenteens*, within easy reach of it)?

The town centre's activities have to offset any cabin fever, whether it's Christmas market browsing and dense hot chocolates or more active swimming, ice skating, tobogganing to let sprogs burn off steam. And for any sickly travellers, go for resorts within easy reach of the airports or with transfers where hairpin mountain turns are limited (and check they bring the precise age category of car seats). Once you've narrowed down the resort, start inspecting the chalets and hotels for family-friendly credentials (or take our word for it above). And remember to go age-specific, ensuring you're childcare works for all ages and at the times you need to hit the slopes or simply carve out some off duty time, in the spa, town centre or hiding away with a book by the fire.

Avoid making my mistake – always check what age you can leave children from in the Kid's Club, and if not, if the hotel or chalet can organise a nanny or babysitter in advance (they're often unable to do this on the hoof). A good luxury travel operator will do all the hard work for you and have the insider knowledge on which mountain restaurants are family friendly etc., but it's worth pressing them on these elements, and ironing out any issues well ahead of arrival times.

Chalet

Go catered or fully serviced for a bona fide holiday – it's worth every penny. Though if that's a stretch, find reasonably priced restaurants on the piste or close to the chalet (a few lunches off duty goes a long way), and collaborate with the chalet to pre-order food to the cupboards and fridge. Whatever you opt for, don't skip the morning fresh pastries and baguette delivery – children love it and it's an easy breakfast. For serviced chalets, discuss any dietaries ahead of time and ensure there are plenty of pocket snacks for hungry (sometimes cold) children on the slopes. Ensure they have all the tot checklist – bottle steriliser, highchairs, cots, monitors that stretch to all corners of the chalet, blackout blinds etc.

If not bringing a nanny, work with a chalet or ski booking company to ensure a seasoned nanny or babysitter is selected (check their experience, language and any other reviews from those who've stayed at the chalet). I can't emphasise this enough as there are lots of young chalet girls who are often drafted in to babysit or even nanny for long days while parents ski. Young children require a safe pair of hands, someone who knows the resort well, can follow instructions to the 't' (milk temperature, measurements, allergy issues) and knows how to act in an emergency.

It's worth asking if the travel company or chalet have 'reserves' in case a nanny falls ill and you all lose a day (typically a sunny, fresh powder one) on the slopes. For teens, is there a safe, reliable taxi system back to the chalet after an evening in town – too often you hear stories of teens trudging up dark pistes or poorly lit roads home having hunted in vain for a cab (or refused an extortionate one). If your chalet is fairly remote, ensure it's brimming with facilities (a cinema room, playroom, spa) to keep everyone entertained, and a real basic, always check there's a large bath for young children (you'll be surprised how many swanky chalets pack in pocket-sized, deep ones you can barely bend over to wash your cubs in).

Hotel

The first thing to check with any ski hotel is if it's ski-in/ski-out, or at least easy access to the lifts and ski school, and if there's an in-house concierge to sort ski fittings (nothing worse than arriving with tired, peaky children off the transfer to then lug them to the ski rental). Chalets have an edge over hotels for family-friendly ski with their private lounge areas – check if the hotel has a relaxed 'chill' zone or lounge space where children are welcome, otherwise you'll be trapped in your bedrooms with pricey room service and limited space.

The ultimate set-up is a large suite or chalet-style space within a hotel, with your own lounge area. Are the balconies safe? Ostensibly a strange question, but I continually see furniture placed next to balconies (a death trap for excitable children when heads are turned) and swiftly pull it right back or even into the bedroom. I always ring up ahead and check that the bathrooms aren't clad in slippery marble floors, and if so, if they provide several rubber mats – lethal (for all ages) marble or porcelain floor bathrooms appears to be a mainstay of the luxury hotel scene, worldwide. Is your suite fully separated from young children's sleeping quarters, to ensure a full night's sleep, and are beds separated into twins for siblings unwilling to snooze ensemble? What are the family windows at the pool, and does this clash with ski school or other plans? Then there's the Kid's Club. Are they open on weekends? Is your youngest old enough to be left there, and if not, what's the alternative? I always check that they head into the

crisp mountain air on sunny days (the guilt only compounds when you've had a belter of a day on the slopes and they've been stuck inside colouring for hours).

Make sure you check that the restaurant opens for early kids' supper – crucial if you're hoping for a grown-up dinner later on. Sometimes, the Kid's Club staff also babysit, and it's worth asking so children have familiar faces throughout the week and aren't (quite rightly) losing it when they wake up to a stranger sitting in their dark bedroom. Lastly, check that the hotel can conjure up all the equipment required for babies and young children – all the tot paraphernalia to avoid you packing it and, a real basic, ask for a kettle and pints of milk for any tinies as it's often the last thing you'll remember before they're howling for it at 7pm.

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