

More Skiing, Less Money: Why You Should Ski Or Snowboard In Europe

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Chalets: The Lodging Secret Of European Skiing

One other thing ski or snowboard vacations in Europe have going for them is staffed chalets, an entire category of vacations missing in our country. I've talked to skiers from the UK who have never taken a ski vacation and stayed in a hotel, because this concept is so normal to them, and it should be normal to us too, because it is awesome.



A typical luxury staffed ski chalet in France, this is Purple Ski's Chalet Iona in Meribel, spanning ...
[+] PURPLE SKI

There are myriad agencies that manage and book staffed chalets, and since many of them are aimed at the UK market, staff speaks English and many of these companies are based in the UK. I've written a lot more on this here at *Forbes* ([read here](#)) but in a nutshell, you book a week at a luxury home that has a full staff including private chef (with extensive restaurant experience). Your full cooked breakfasts and multi-course gourmet dinners are included, and having done this three times in different places, I can say that the food quality is exceptional, and rivals the local restaurants, which are outstanding (you still get to eat lunch out every day, plenty of variety). Also included are après ski canapes, which meet you at the door upon returning from the slopes—along with flutes of champagne. In fact, at many of these chalets, unlimited adult beverages—fine wines, real champagne, cocktails—is included 24/7.

The chalets are luxurious, and standard amenities include hot tubs, saunas, steam rooms, pool tables, game rooms, home theaters and fireplaces, while some add indoor pools and gyms. They typically sleep 8-14 and are ideal for families, groups of friends and multi-generational travel. You can add every amenity you'd get at a hotel, from in-chalet ski rental delivery and spa treatments to some you cannot, like free laundry. In many cases if you book an instructor, he or she will meet you at the chalet and go door to door. Top chalet companies like Purple Ski (see below) also include a full-time local driver for on-demand trips to or

pickup from town or the lifts. Last year in Trois Vallees we skied down to a different base area at the end of the day, stopped for a beer, then got picked up at the bar by our driver. Yet while staffed chalets are a true luxury experience, it is almost always cheaper than replicating it at a similar quality hotel, where food and drink tend to be overpriced.



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

Here's a quick example. [Purple Ski](#) is a leading UK chalet company I have used that is best in class. Their [Chalet Machapuchare in Val d'Isère](#) has won "Best Ski Chalet in France," two years running (2024 and 2023) at the World Ski Awards. Bear in mind that there are a lot of chalets, hundreds if not thousands, in France, and this is among the very best—meaning many others are even less expensive. Machapuchare has seven en suite bedrooms, sleeps 14 and has a full-size indoor swimming pool with waterfall and current system for exercise, a massage room, full gym, hammam (steam room), outdoor hot tub, cinema room with tiered seating and high-end sound system, and large ski room with boot heaters, plus an elevator.

France

France is the giant of European skiing with the most huge resorts, including the world's biggest, Trois Vallees (including Courchevel and Meribel). Then there is Val d'Isère-Tignes, Portes du Soleil (including Les Gets, Morzine), Paradiski (Les Arcs and La Plagne), all huge and interconnected, plus several others. Most are accessible via Geneva or Lyon's international airports.



French resorts Meribel (Trois Vallees) and Val d'Isere are also home to the most famous "day clubs" ...

[+] GETTY

French resorts typically have a great mix of French and alpine cuisine, the latter being a style common to Switzerland, France and Italy with lots of melted cheese and potatoes, think fondue, raclette, tartiflette. France is by far the leader in the chalet vacation niche mentioned above, common at Val d'Isere and Trois Valles, especially Meribel, the ski chalet capital of the world. Top tier luxury hotels abound, especially in Courchevel (Cheval Blanc, Airelles, Aman).