

[TRAVEL TALK]

WINTER WONDERLANDS

Hot spots for the coolest season

OK, so you have two left feet on skis, and when you think of snowy mountains, only frostbite comes to mind. Ah, but from Courchevel, France, to Vail, Colorado, we found luxurious hotels in the hottest resort areas that afford the latest in creature comforts, such as spa and pamper treatments and plenty of outdoor alternatives to skiing. Many offer cross-country skiing, snowboarding, ice-skating, sledding, horseback riding, and nature watching. And in case you change your mind, the slopes are great, too.

■ **Courchevel, France.** It is the crème de la crème of all French ski resorts and the favorite among the Paris jet set. Courchevel

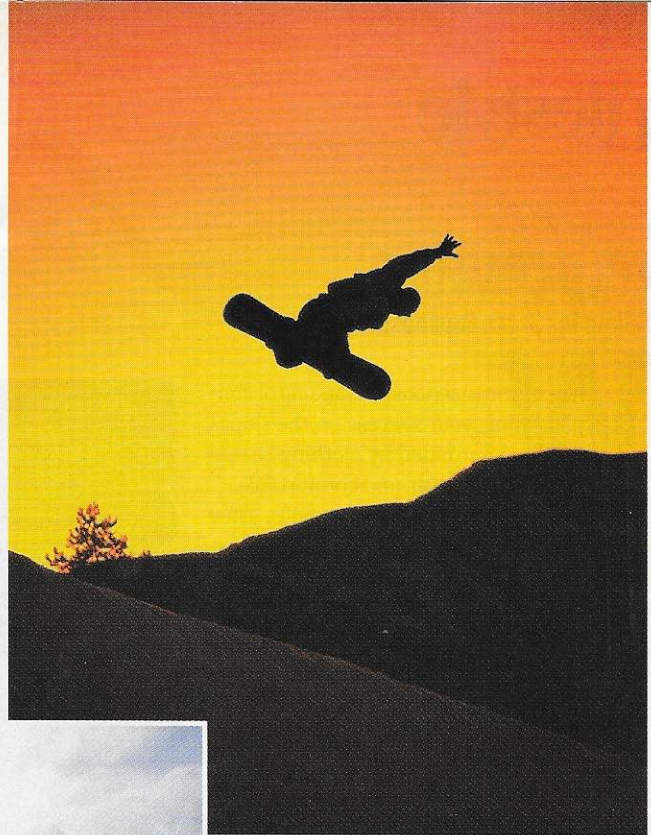


is known for great hotels and even better restaurants. Oh, and did we mention shopping? Look for Hermes, Chanel, Yves Saint Laurent, Givenchy, Kenzo, Versace, Armani, Lanvin, Cartier, and every Swiss watchmaker worth knowing. We recommend a stay at the Hôtel Annapurna and Byblos des Neiges.

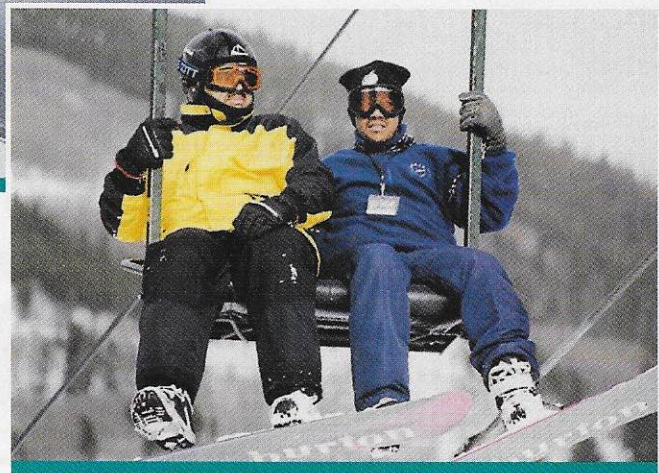
■ **Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy.** Not to be outdone by the French, the who's who of Italian society favors this spot. The main pedestrian thoroughfare, Corso Italia, is home to some 250 elegant shops and chic boutiques offering the latest in Italian fashions and furs. And the food is outstanding. Hotel Ancora or Hotel Cristallo come highly recommended.

■ **Zermatt, Switzerland.** A pristine environment, it was one of the first ski resorts in the world to ban cars, and is known for its sheer beauty and spectacular mountain scenery. Views of the Matterhorn, the mountain on the Italian-Swiss border, dominate. Thanks to the altitude, stargazing is a romantic pastime. The mountains of Zermatt are accessible to skiers and nonskiers alike, allowing everyone to take advantage of the many fine mountaintop restaurants. The Grand Hotel Zermatterhof and Mont Cervin are excellent choices.

■ **Vail, Colorado.** It is one of America's most glamorous ski resort areas. If you're into stargazing (we're talking celebrities here), Vail is a great place to catch a glimpse of the glitterati. For



HAVE SKIS, WILL TRAVEL. TOP RESORTS IN FRANCE, ITALY, AND THE U.S., HOWEVER, CAN OFFER A LOT MORE THAN JUST GREAT SLOPES.



a personal five-star experience, try a dinner sleigh ride to some small isolated mountain cabin. While Vail is the United States' largest ski area, this scenic and quaint village attracts those looking to get away from the hustle and bustle of city life. Vail is loaded with great hotels and cabins. Pay particular attention to the Lodge and Spa at Cordillera, Vail, and the Vail Cascade Resort, where **BLACK ENTERPRISE** will host its 4th Annual Black Enterprise/AXA Advisors Ski Challenge next month (see "What's Happening").

Other great resort areas to consider are St. Moritz, Switzerland, Madonna di Compiglio, Italy, Kitzbuhel, Austria, and Whistler/Blackcomb resort in British Columbia, Canada. A little closer to home, head to Deer Valley and Park City, Utah, after this year's Winter Olympics in late February.

—Michael Bennett