

Top tips for planning your ski trip



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Your one-stop guide to ski vacations

Even when you hear the call of the mountains, planning a ski trip can feel like an adventure in itself. Looking to get organized? We've got you covered. We've planned a lot of snow vacations and have some handy tips to help get you started.

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Do I need ski lessons?

01

Beyond teaching you the fundamentals of skiing or snowboarding, lessons ensure you're safe on the mountain. You learn to slow, stop, turn. And you learn to conduct yourself properly on the mountain – respecting others, controlling your speed, overtaking, merging, and giving way safely.

Lessons grow with you, too. When you've mastered the basics, ski and snowboard instructors can help you can step up the speed or difficulty level with confidence. You might even want to get to grips with moguls, pipes, parks, jumps, freestyle, and backcountry.

Top tip: Join a group rather than having one on one lessons if you're watching your spend. They're cheaper and usually more fun!



Do I need ski gear rental?

02



Buying all your own gear is expensive and really unnecessary. Rental shops have everything you need, from beginner equipment right up to advanced gear. Certainly, as a beginner, renting means you can decide if you even like it before dropping dollar on kit you might never use again.

There might be less need to rent if you know you're going to hit the slopes each season or more. But particularly early in the season, when the snow is still thin and the shops have new equipment, you might appreciate a rental board. You can usually switch kits during your visit and try out different brands and types: ideal if you're in the market for a new purchase.

Top tip: On rental shop websites you can select your kit before you arrive and have it delivered to your accommodation – so there's no hanging around in long lines.



Should I get insurance for my ski vacation?

Best-case scenario: you go out there, explore the slopes, maybe hit a couple of kickers then head out for après ski and generally have an amazing time. Brilliant. But things can go wrong on mountains – and on icy paths outside resort nightclubs – so stumping up for insurance is wise.

Maybe you have to claim for a lost ski you watch disappear over a cliff. Maybe your new helmet and goggles are stolen at lunch. Maybe you have to be helicoptered off a mountain, a broken mess.

Here's hoping none of that happens. But if it does, having insurance cover will take away a lot of stress when you really don't need it.

Top tip: Insurance is not a moment to cut back. Get cheaper rentals, get lunch from a supermarket, but make sure you have full insurance cover.

03



What do I need to know about ski lift tickets?

04



Make no mistake, lift tickets are expensive. But there are ways to reduce the bite¹. To pay a premium, rock up to the resort and buy a single day ticket at the window. Even week-long tickets or X days in Y tickets cost more when you buy when you arrive.

Last-minute deals are not a thing with ski tickets – planning is your friend. To get the best deals, book ahead, online. Many resorts sell cheaper tickets (up to 30 per cent cheaper) before the season starts.

Top tip: It's common for resorts to encourage you to create bundles of lift tickets, rentals, and lessons ... and a stack of other bits. This is a good thing!

Will I get altitude sickness when I ski?

05

Above 2,400m (8,000 feet), it's reasonable to expect some symptoms of altitude sickness². Oxygen is lower than at sea level, so headaches, maybe some weakness, general fatigue, and a loss of sleep and appetite are common. They usually clear after a day or so as the body adjusts.

Top tip: To lessen the symptoms, maybe keep alcohol to a minimum on day one. Drink more water than you usually would and pop a couple of ibuprofen.



What should I pack?

06



They say there's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing. But kitting yourself out for a ski trip is tricky. If you're going hard, a day on the black slopes is quite a workout. If you're pottering around on the blues and greens, you're less likely to work up a sweat.

Layers are the answer. A good set of skins, top and bottoms, are a must, as are waterproof jackets and pants. To bundle up, regular sports tops, fleeces, running vests work perfectly well.

There's no need to overspend.

While après usually just happens in the kit you come off the mountain in, you might want to pack a couple of outfits for the evening. Also throw in bathing costumes, something to lounge around in on days off, sunscreen, a daypack and/or water pack.

Top tip: If you're taking your own gear, use the space in your board or ski bag to pack clothes and other kit.

How do I pick a ski resort?

07

This is the tricky bit: choosing where to go. Every resort and mountain has its own character, but a good starting point is identifying what level slopes resorts have³. Choose somewhere that has the skiing you want.

US and Canada

- Green: beginners
- Blue: intermediate
- Black diamond: advanced
- Double black diamond: expert (challenging/dangerous)

Europe and Japan

- Blue: beginners
- Red: intermediate
- Black: advanced
- Double/triple black diamond: expert (steep/narrow/challenging/dangerous)





US and Canada

Every ski and snowboarder's once-in-a-lifetime, Alaska is exceptional. No sanitized skiing and refined après ski here – this is rugged backcountry, epic heliskiing, and an unbridled sense of adventure. Head to Valdez for steep, deep-powder runs from a heliski drop – or slide around the corner to equally stunning but less intimidating, gentler runs⁴.

For beginners, Whistler, Tahoe, or any of the 32 ski resorts in Colorado are well set up with large ski schools, well-oiled rental systems and gondolas and lifts that get you to where you need to be quickly. The entertainment and après are arguably as important as the slope time in these resorts.



Europe

Under the gaze of stunning Mont Blanc, Chamonix is the jewel in the French skiing's crown. With some of the highest skiing in Europe, it calls to advanced skiers, but there's also more than enough for beginners and intermediate skiers and boarders⁵. Wide, low runs, well-organized schools, and instructors with twinkly eyes are par for the course.

For cheaper ski vacations in Europe, look to Austria and Andorra. Lower resorts with fewer runs and fewer people are a pleasure to cruise around, especially when they're not hitting your bank account so hard. Family-run restaurants serve up hearty, home cooked meals at reasonable prices and you can pick up fresh produce in the local supermarket.



Japan

For super-light powder snow and sensational tree runs, Japan tops the bill for advanced skiers and riders. On a powder day in Hokkaido, point your nose downhill and it truly feels like you're flying. The 600 resorts⁶ in Japan get very busy particularly in January and early February.

If you're a beginner in Japan, spring skiing is bliss. The tricky-to-ride powder no longer covers the gentle slopes, the cherry blossom is in bloom, and the onsen and sushi are great for everyone. Hakuba Valley in Nagano is a great all-rounder⁷, but if you're keen on your après, head to Niseko.



South America

While the northern hemisphere lounges in summer, in South America, the ski season is in full swing. For challenging steeps, endless backcountry, and full-on nightlife, Las Leñas, Argentina⁸ is the win (it's probably less appealing if you're still learning). For something a little more adventurous, Pucon on the Villarrica volcano in southern Chile opens out into incredible backcountry.

For a more chilled vibe, great ski schools, and fantastic après, wine, and food, look at Valle Nevado and Ski Portillo in Chile, both icons in the South American ski scene.



The perfect ski trip awaits

Making memories in the mountains is truly special. You can't beat that sense of freedom that comes with being on the slopes and having fun with the people you care the most about in a spectacular destination.

So talk to us and we'll find you a ski vacation that checks all your boxes – our ski specialists know exactly where's good, when, and for who. So, get in touch today and we'll put the perfect ski trip in your sights.



Footnotes

- 1 <https://www.wagnerskis.com/blogs/journal/lift-ticket-purchasing-strategy-101>
- 2 <https://www.visitsaltlake.com/blog/stories/post/how-to-recognize-treat-prevent-altitude-sickness>
- 3 <https://skiprofiles.com/ski-slope-levels-what-skill-do-i-need/>
- 4 <https://welove2ski.com/ski-resorts/skiing-in-alaska>
- 5 <https://www.chamonix.net/english/winter-activities/skiing/ski-slopes/beginners>
- 6 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/everettpotter/2018/10/21/powder-in-japan-with-ski-com/>
- 7 <https://www.hakubavalley.com/en/>
- 8 <https://en.laslenas.com/>
- 9 <https://skiprofiles.com/ski-slope-levels-what-skill-do-i-need/>