

Life travel

Your guide to hitting the slopes this winter

Snowfall across the Alps has been record-breaking this season. Here's our guide to the best destinations for 2012
 By Fraser Wilkin

LUXURY

Zermatt, Switzerland
Pistes: 200km
 Zermatt is enjoying a boom right now – mostly at the expense of the exclusive French resorts. Perhaps the upper classes are beginning to see there's more to life than Courchevel, Méribel and Val d'Isère. Great as those resorts are, hotel prices have gone stratospheric in recent years and the hunt is on for a more affordable luxury experience. Enter Zermatt. Hardly a recession-busting choice, I know (it does have Europe's most expensive lift pass, after all), but the comparison with top French hotels is startling. Zermatt is at



least 30 per cent cheaper than its Gallic rivals and more charming to boot. OK, it can't compete on convenience but on just about everything else, it wins my vote. No other resort combines skiing with such breathtaking scenery. **Sleep: Hotel Alex. Seven nights from £1,445pp. Tel: 020 7471 7700. www.skisolutions.com**

Madonna di Campiglio, Italy
Pistes: 150km
 Ever wondered where the Italian cool set hang out in winter? Try Madonna di Campiglio in the magnificent Brenta Dolomites. Granted, the ski area isn't huge but it is scenic, varied and served by a state-of-the-art lift system that now links to nearby Pinzolo. And, if it's affordable luxury you're after, you could do much worse than the four-star Hotel Majestic Mountain Charm, with its fabulous roof-top spa (left). **Sleep: Hotel Majestic Mountain Charm. Seven nights from £995pp. Tel: 020 7471 7700. www.skisolutions.com**

NORTH AMERICA AND CANADA



Kicking Horse, Golden
Acres: 2,825
 Development in Kicking Horse, one of Canada's newest resorts, stalled since the first lifts arrived a decade ago. But new investors promise to double the skiable terrain over the next few years. If all goes to plan, expect one of Canada's top resorts for skiers. **Sleep: Glacier Mountaineer Lodges (above). From £1,102pp for seven nights, including flights and transfers. Tel: 0844 493 0430. www.skiworld.co.uk**

Telluride, Colorado
Acres: 2,000
 Once home to Butch Cassidy and still steeped in western folklore, Telluride may be modernising but it is in little danger of losing its cult status. The antithesis of its gilded state cousins (Vail and Aspen), it is too remote to become mainstream but does boast Colorado's finest scenery and some of its toughest terrain. **Sleep: Hotel Madeline. From £1,225pp for seven nights. Tel: 01273 224060. www.skisafari.com**

SHORT BREAKS

Courmayeur, Italy
Pistes: 100km
 Accessible from three major cities (Geneva, Turin and Milan), Courmayeur has long been one of Europe's most popular weekend ski destinations – and it's not difficult to see why. With traditional Italian hospitality, magnificent Mont Blanc scenery and some of the best mountain restaurants in the Alps, the limited runs hardly seem to matter. With prices in popularity with Brits is soaring. **Sleep: Hotel Centrale. Four nights from £495pp. Tel: 020 7471 7734. www.ijouski.com**

Isola 2000, France
Pistes: 120km
 If the uncompromising 1970s architecture doesn't faze you, then



CATERED CHALETs



little old Isola 2000 (just north of Nice) has the perfect credentials for a short-break destination – short transfers, super-convenient slope-side accommodation and 'weather proof' terrain that is both high (snow-sure) and wooded – a great asset in poor visibility. And, in such times of austerity, what better place to stay than in the 'roll in, roll out' all-inclusive Club Hôtel Pas du Loup, where food and drink is on tap virtually all day. **Sleep: Club Hôtel Pas du Loup. Four nights from £545pp. Tel: 020 7471 7734. www.ijouski.com**

Ischgl, Austria
Pistes: 240km
 Thanks to the Mafia-like stranglehold imposed by local hoteliers, Ischgl has long been off-limits to British chalet operators – but no longer. In 2010, Ski Total launched Chalet Abendrot; recently, it added Chalet Zita. Both have been selling like hot cakes – and no wonder, given Ischgl's reputation for extensive snow-sure slopes. **Sleep: Chalet Zita. Seven nights from £679pp. Tel: 01252 618333. www.skitotal.com**

St Christoph, Austria
Pistes: 280km
 If you love St Anton but can't stand the scrum getting up the mountain each day, then St Christoph (above) could be just the ticket. This hamlet offers access to Austria's premier ski resort. And in a traditionally pricey area, what better place to stay than in the new Chalet Hotel St Christoph, arguably the best value hotel in the Arlberg. **Sleep: Chalet Hotel. From £649pp for seven nights. Tel: 020 8780 6680. www.inghams.co.uk**

SNOW WATCH

By Fraser Wilkin of Ski Solutions

PICK OF THE WEEK St Anton (right) will see huge snowfalls this weekend and will offer epic powder skiing once skies start to clear early next week. **SUMMARY** Following several days of unbroken sunshine, Atlantic storms are piling into the Alps. The heaviest snow is falling across the higher resorts of the north but fluctuating temperatures mean rain lower down. Not for the first time, very little snow is getting through to the Italian Dolomites.

FORECAST More snow is expected across the northern Alps this weekend before brighter skies edge in from the west early next week. **RESORT FOCUS** Some rain is falling on Austria's lowest slopes but this should soon turn back to snow with an excellent week in prospect. It's dumping again in Lech (170/340cm) but low-lying Söll (50/200cm) also reports good cover with fresh snow at altitude. High French resorts such as Val d'Isère (135/210cm) continue their outstanding season and further snow will fall this weekend. It may rain for a time in Megève

(60/220cm) but this should turn back to snow and prospects are good. Fresh snow is getting through to the western Italian resorts of Courmayeur (65/165cm) and Cervinia (120/280cm), both of which offer excellent skiing but more would be welcome further east in Selva (40/50cm). Fresh snow is also falling across Switzerland, where Zermatt (115/190cm) and St Moritz (90/120cm) will miss the rain that will temporarily affect some lower resorts further north. Across the pond, there is fresh snow in Whistler (193cm mid-mountain) and conditions in Colorado have improved in Vail, for example, (73cm) with more snow forecast.

