

# SNOW DOUBT ABOUT IT

Chasing guaranteed snow for the end of the season? **Fraser Wilkin** picks the prettiest places to go

**S**PRING conditions have been very much in evidence across the Alps this week. One the whole there's still plenty of snow but, lower down at least, freeze-thaw cycles have seen it alternate

between bullet-proof (first thing) and slush (later in the day). The good news is that it has now turned colder again, and there is also snow in the forecast, mostly across the Italian and southern Swiss Alps.



### Arabba, Italy

With its notoriously erratic natural snow record, the Dolomites isn't the first area to spring to mind when looking for ultra-reliable conditions. But you'd be foolish to dismiss this breathtaking region on its low snowfall average alone. The Italians are master snow-makers. On-piste at least, this means that skiing carries on even in the leanest of years. Arabba is an uncommercialised base from which to explore some of the most snow-sure terrain. *neilson.co.uk offers a week at the four-star Sporthotel Arabba from £715pp on March 21 departure and inc flights, transfers and half board*



### Lech, Austria

Although there are other resorts as pretty as Lech, few get anything like as much snow. With an average snowfall of more than 7m a season, Lech is up there with the best of them. This is due to its proximity to the northern edge of the Alps, which is exposed to storms from the Atlantic and the Arctic. The slopes themselves are best suited to intermediates, with groomed pistes and heated chairs. *skitotal.com offers a week at the four-star Chalet Hotel Elisabeth for £699pp based on an April 5 departure inc flights, transfers and chalet board*



### Saas-Fee, Switzerland

For a combination of village charm and reliable snow cover, Saas-Fee takes some beating. Not only is its 3,500m top height impressive, most of the slopes are concentrated on the upper half of the mountain, which faces north and is equipped with one of the best glaciers in the Alps. Skiing is possible here for nine months of the year, with snow all the way down to the village from November until early May. Known as the 'Pearl of the Alps', the traffic-free village is a delight to explore. *crystalski.co.uk offers a week at the three-star Hotel Alphubel from £711pp based on March 21 departure and inc flights, transfers, half board and childcare*



### Montgenèvre, France

France may be synonymous with snow-sure skiing but more often than not this means functional high-rise resorts lacking in village atmosphere. So say hello to Montgenèvre, a high but unspoilt family-friendly destination at the snowier end of the vast Via Lattea [Milky Way]. Montgenèvre is best suited to beginners, families and leisurely types happy cruising around gentle pistes. Once a sleepy backwater, the village has also become more animated in recent years with a wide selection of bars, cafés and restaurants. *peakretreats.com offers a week at the four-star Chalets Les Dolines from £286pp based on four sharing a two-bed apartment, March 28 departure and Eurotunnel*



### Zermatt, Switzerland

If you are looking for the perfect all-round winter sports resort then Zermatt is hard to beat. Not only are its slopes high, extensive and varied, they also offer some of the finest scenery, not to mention best mountain restaurants in Europe. The village is equally captivating, especially early in the season when the busy main street is a hive of festive activity. As for the snow, Zermatt may have a relatively dry climate [which means plenty of sunshine], but it also has the highest pistes in the Alps, so the snow that does fall tends to stick around. *Snow-wise.com offers a week at the four-star Hotel Alex from £1,395pp based on an April 11 departure inc flights, transfers and half board*



### Obergurgl, Austria

Tucked away in a high, remote corner of the Ötztal valley, not far from the Italian border, lies the tiny unspoilt ski resort of Obergurgl. At 1,930m, the village is the highest parish in Austria and, with slopes reaching more than 3,000m, has arguably the best snow record of any entirely non-glacial resort in the Alps. The resort enjoys a loyal clientele that appreciates the sophistication offered by its many luxury hotels. Slopes are best suited to beginners and intermediates who enjoy cruising around on reliably good snow with few off-piste ambitions. *espritski.com offers a week at the Chalet Verwall from £809pp based on a March 22 departure inc flights, transfers and chalet board*