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Snow report - Wednesday 17 April 2013

It's been a very warm week in the Alps, however 2 factors have meant that, off-piste at least, spring skiing conditions have been less than ideal.

Firstly the transition from winter to spring was a quick one - indeed this is really the first week that we have seen a serious and sustained spell of warm weather. This is unusual - normally you would see several attempts at spring beginning in March - and has resulted in some serious purging (i.e. avalanching) of the very deep snow pack, particularly in the western Alps.

The second problem is that the snow has not always been freezing well overnight (due to cloud). This means that the snow is unstable and prone to avalanche earlier in the day than might be expected if it had frozen hard overnight. This is not true everywhere, but it doesn't take much (even thin high cloud) to stop a solid overnight re-freeze and to interfere with the spring cycle required for more predictable off-piste skiing.

On-piste, as well, skiers have been forced to go higher and higher in order to find firm snow, particularly later in the day. The best resorts are those that offer plenty of north-facing slopes above 2500m, preferably even above 3000m during the current very warm weather.

The good news is that it will turn much colder on Friday and over the weekend with some fresh snow to quite low levels in places.

Austria

Most of the lower resorts are now closed for the season, but there is still some decent skiing to be had higher up. The greatest extent of open slopes (172km) can be found in **Ischgl** (0/130cm), but given the very warm weather right now the snow is better in glacier resorts such as **Sölden** (10/252cm) and **Hintertux** (20/290cm).



Plenty of good snow high up above Sölden.

France

There are still plenty of options in the French Alps right now, but the best ones are those with plenty of skiing above 2500m - ideally even above 3000m in the next couple of days due to the very high temperatures. My picks would be **Val d'Isère /Tignes** (125/310cm), **Val Thorens** (145/365cm) and **Les 2 Alpes** (100/245cm), all of which also have glaciers.

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8h

Italian village breaks world 24hr snowfall record!

[#snow](https://tinyurl.com/o4u6lmb)
pic.twitter.com/JqVV9dRD5C

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10h

Colder with some snow in the far eastern Alps. Mostly fine elsewhere.

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The highest resort in Europe - Val Thorens is as good a place to be skiing in the current warm spell...

Italy

Italy does not have many very high options to turn to in hot weather this late in the season. One major exception is **Cervinia** (0/300cm) which is probably the country's best bet right now. **Passo Tonale** (80/400cm) is another possibility, although the extent of high altitude skiing here is much more limited.



Great skiing still on the upper half of Cervinia's slopes - Photo: www.cervinia.it

Switzerland

There is still plenty of skiing above 3000m in Switzerland right now, the sort of altitude you need to be aiming for in the current "heat-wave". **Zermatt** (0/220cm) and **Saas-Fee** (40/290cm) offer the highest skiing in the country and are as good a bet as any. You could also try the Corvatsch sector of **St Moritz** (15/150cm) which is very shady and whose upper runs at least tend to hold their snow well in this sort of weather.



Zermatt has the highest pistes in the Alps and is always a good late season bet.
Photo: www.zermatt.ch

Rest of Europe

In Andorra, the **Grandvalira** area (90/200cm) is still open and cover is good, but the snow is turning very slushy early in the day. Up in Scandinavia, many Norwegian resorts have had some recent snow and conditions are still very good in **Hemsedal** (75/110cm). Closer to home, all 5 Scottish ski areas still have good cover for the time of year, but it has warmed up a little so the snow quality in **Cairngorm** (60/200cm) is not as good as it was last week.



Snow cover is still excellent for the time of year in Cairngorm even if the recent milder weather is beginning to take its toll.

USA

It's been snowing hard in Colorado, just as many resorts are winding down (or have closed down). However, **Vail** and **Winter Park** have extended their seasons and will reopen temporarily this weekend. Elsewhere in the western US, **Snowbird** (Utah) also has fresh powder and is skiing superbly right now with a mid-mountain base of 277cm. Over in California, **Mammoth** (147/432cm) also has excellent cover, but not much in the way of new snow.

Canada

There is still some good skiing to be had in Canada, particularly at altitude. Snow depths are still good in **Whistler** (240cm mid-mountain) though conditions are spring-like on the lower half of the mountain due to the mild weather. Further inland, the best bet is probably **Banff/Lake Louise** (215cm), where temperatures are a little cooler and there has been more in the way of fresh snow.

Next full snow report on Wednesday 24 April, but see [Today in the Alps](#) for daily updates