

Bored of the same big-name resorts? **Fraser Wilkin** picks five you've probably never heard of

Yad Moss, England

Surprising as it may seem, England is home to a number of 'ski fields' scattered across the Lake District and northern Pennines.

Run by volunteers, their slopes are served by rope tows that are cranked into action at the first sign of any significant snow. Cover is notoriously erratic (in fact, it's often non-existent) but in good conditions there are runs of half a mile or more to be enjoyed in Cumbria's Yad Moss, perhaps the most intriguing of England's secret ski resorts.

Don't expect any creature comforts: facilities are limited to a self-catering day lodge and you have to hike for ten minutes off the B6277 to reach the place.

Nearest town: Alston, Cumbria plus a 15 minute drive by car, lift pass from £20 a day. yadmoss.co.uk

Smokin': Mount Etna is one of Europe's most active volcanoes and home to two ski resorts
PIC: WWW.ETNASCI.IT



Make mine a lava top, I'm going on the piste

Serra da Estrela, Portugal

Better known for its beautiful beaches and luxury golf courses, Portugal is also home to a solitary ski resort located in the Serra da Estrela national park. The resort was established in the early 1950s but has only seen serious investment since British phone giant Vodafone stepped in with a sponsorship deal back in 2005.

Now independently run again, five lifts serve nine mostly gentle runs that include a token black one and a terrain park. Snow reliability is surprisingly good given its southerly latitude and modest top height (1,967m), with snow

cannons covering all 8km of pistes. Facilities include a ski school and ski hire shop but most of the accommodation is a ten-minute drive away in the village of Penhas da Saúde.

Nearest major airport: Porto (£58 return, easyjet) plus 2.5-hour transfer, lift pass from £15 a day. skiserradaestrela.com

Mount Hermon, Israel

Given Israel's myriad alternative attractions, not to mention political unrest, skiing is not the first thing that springs to mind in this troubled land.

Yet tucked away in the far north of the country, straddling the disputed Syrian-Lebanese border, lies the imposing and (in winter) snowy

2,814m Mount Hermon. Israel only lays claim to a portion of the southern side but has created a surprisingly attractive ski area with 45km of pistes between 1,640m and 2,073m above sea level. Off-slope diversions include tobogganing and winter walking with breathtaking views. Most visitors are day-trippers but there are a number of B&Bs in the area.

Nearest major airport: Tel Aviv (£169 return, easyjet.com) plus a 3.5-hour transfer, lift pass from £42 a day. hermonski.co.il

Mount Etna, Sicily

Skiing in Italy is synonymous with skiing in the Alps but there are numerous other areas including on the island of Sicily.

Here, one of Europe's highest and most active volcanoes, Etna, is home to two contrasting resorts. The most popular is Rifugio Sapienza (sometimes known as Nicolosi), which has the more austere landscape.

On the north side of the mountain, Piano Provenzana (sometimes known as Linguaglossa) is smaller but often has the better snow. Both areas offer fabulous views of the 3,350m snow-capped (and often smoking) summit above.

Nearest major airport: Catania (£103 return, ba.com) plus a 45-minute transfer, lift pass from £22 a day. etnasci.it



Iberian isolation: Serra da Estrela, Portugal (above)

Afriski, Lesotho

Afriski is one of only two ski resorts in southern Africa, the other being Tiffindell in South Africa. Afriski's slopes may be very modest by international standards but cater superbly for beginners with extensive snow-making facilities ensuring good cover even in the leanest of years. There is one main T-bar serving an open intermediate slope of nearly 1km, a dedicated nursery area and, for more experienced riders, a revamped snowboard park. There is also a wide range of accommodation to suit most tastes and budgets, from simple backpacking hostels to chalets.

Nearest major airport: Johannesburg (£923 return, virginatlantic.com) plus a five-hour transfer by car, lift pass from £22 a day. afriski.net

Brit's great: Yad Moss in Cumbria (above)



Promised land: Mount Hermon in Israel has breathtaking views (left)