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## Snow report

**Updated: 1pm Thursday 20 March 2014**

Spring has really taken hold of the Alps this week, with lots of sunshine and temperatures often close to 20°C in the lower valleys. This has obviously taken its toll at low altitude, particularly in Austria where, away from the far south, there is virtually no natural (unmanaged) snow below 1000m – and much higher on south-facing slopes.

Elsewhere in the Alps snow cover is still reasonable to good – very good even across Italy and much of the southern Alps. Snow quality is an altogether more complex subject at this time of year and depends a lot on altitude and orientation.

With clear nights and (mostly) sunny days it's been a case of classic spring-skiing with rock hard snow first thing in the morning, softening up as the day goes on. The snow has been staying grippiest for longest on high north-facing slopes, turning to slush the quickest on lower slopes more exposed the sun.

The worst thing that can happen in spring is for it to be both warm and cloudy – as it was temporarily in the eastern Alps this week. This means that the snow does not refreeze overnight and is already soft or slushy from the word go. The best resorts in the sort of weather that we have seen this week are those with plenty of north-facing slopes above 2000 or even 2500m. These include **Val d'Isère/Tignes**, **Val Thorens**, **Zermatt** and **Obergurgl**.

The weather is now on the change, though with much colder, unstable air filtering in from the north-west this weekend. This will bring snow to many resorts, heaviest in the west on Saturday night and Sunday.

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### Austria

The warm weather this week has really taken its toll on the lower resorts, especially in the north. There is still some reasonable piste skiing in the likes of **Zell-am-See** (5/80cm) but, as you can see from the picture, runs to resort are no longer complete.

The best conditions right now are in resorts with plenty of skiing above 2000m. Glaciers aside, **Ischgl** (10/100cm) and **Obergurgl** (45/120cm) are as good as any.

The weather is on the change, however, with some snow expected on Sunday and Monday, heaviest in the west.



It's no longer possible to ski down to some of the lowest Austrian resorts. This is Zell-am-See - Photo: foto-webcam.eu

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### France

Generally speaking, snow cover is holding up well considering the roasting the French Alps have received this week. Ok, the lower slopes of the likes of

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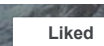
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**Morzine** (40/270cm) are now looking a bit patchy, but you can still comfortably ski back to resort and higher up there is some excellent spring-skiing to be enjoyed.

As with everywhere else, however, the best snow conditions are in resorts with plenty of high shady slopes including **Val d'Isère** (100/160cm), **Val Thorens** (115/220cm) and **Arc 1950/2000** (100/195cm).

The weather is about take a dramatic turn with snow expected in most resorts this weekend – especially Saturday night and into Sunday.



Plenty of snow at resort level in high altitude Tignes - Photo: tignes.net

### Italy

Italian resorts continue to offer the best overall snow cover (though not necessarily snow quality) in the Alps thanks to the massive storms earlier in the season. The pistes in **Selva** (60/220cm) are still generously covered, though the modest altitudes in these parts do mean that slush is a problem relatively early in the day.

For the best conditions in Italy right now you need to aim high, to the likes of **Cervinia** (60/310cm) or **Passo Tonale** (60/550cm).

Expect a big change in the weather this weekend with colder temperatures and snow in most resorts – especially Saturday night and into Sunday.



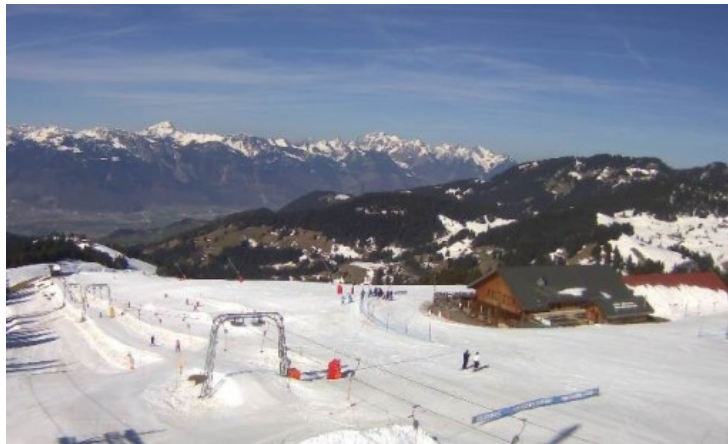
Good snow cover in the Aosta valley still, even at relatively modest altitude. This is Saint Rhémy en Bosses - Photo: regione.vda.it

### Switzerland

The hot weather this week has taken its toll on some lower slopes in the northern Alps but, generally speaking, snow cover is holding up quite well with the best overall conditions in the higher resorts of the south. These include **Zermatt** (20/215cm) and **Saas-Fee** (90/345cm), which have led the way in Switzerland for most of the season.

Further north, **Klosters** (30/130) and **Flims** (15/145cm) have not had such a bumper season, but here too there is plenty of decent skiing to be had, particularly at altitude.

A big change in the weather is promised this weekend with colder temperatures and significant snow for many.



Hanging on in Villars during this hot spell, which is set to end on Saturday - Photo: villars.ch

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### Rest of Europe

The Pyrenees have endured the same spring conditions as the Alps in recent days, but snow cover is still generally excellent with 145/325cm for Spain's **Baqueira Beret** and 140/250cm for Andorra's **Soldeu**.

In Bulgaria, **Bansko** (5/165cm) still has some reasonable piste skiing up top but is struggling a bit lower down.

By contrast, Sweden's **Åre** (45/85cm) has fresh snow and excellent conditions, despite the modest base depths. The best conditions in Scandinavia, however, are in Norway where **Hemsedal** has 160/180cm.



Excellent snow cover still across the Pyrenees. This is Baqueira Beret, Spain.

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### USA

There was snow earlier this week across most of the Rockies, including in Colorado's **Breckenridge** (236cm mid-mountain) which has had something of a bumper season.

Further north, **Jackson Hole** also continues to impress with 299/345cm, but over in California the frustrating winter continues with no new snow for quite some time again in **Heavenly** (132cm mid-mountain).

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### Canada

Most resorts have seen significant fresh snow this week which means excellent conditions right now in **Banff/Lake Louise** (138/230cm) with more in the forecast.

Further west, **Whistler** (260cm mid-mountain) also has new snow and is in pretty good shape, particularly at altitude.



Lots of new snow in Lake Louise this week - Photo: skilouise.com

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**Next detailed snow forecast will be on Thursday 27 March 2014, but see [Today in the Alps](#) for daily updates**