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Snow report

Updated: 12.25pm Thursday 13 November 2014

Following a very messy period of weather we are left with highly contrasting snow conditions from one Alpine region to the next. Broadly speaking the best snow is at altitude in the south-western Alps – namely the southern French, western Italian and southern Swiss Alps. The least snow, relative to altitude, is in the north-eastern Alps, which basically means Austria, even if there appear to be plenty of options thanks to the large number of skiable glaciers.

Most of the recent snow has fallen at altitude across the south-western Alps. By “south-western” we mean the southern French Alps (e.g. **Risoul, Serre Chevalier, Montgenèvre**), the western Italian Alps (e.g. **Sestriere, La Thuile, Cervinia, Monte Rosa**) and the southern Swiss Alps (e.g. **Zermatt, Saas-Fee** and even **Andermatt**). It hasn’t been cold though, indeed below 2000m or so much of the precipitation has fallen as rain, but higher up these areas now have impressive (and in places exceptional) bases.

Elsewhere in the Alps snow cover is much more hit and miss. The same southerly winds that have delivered so much snow to higher parts of the southern Alps have been compressed and warmed as they descend over the northern Alps (the Foehn effect), which has eaten most of the low-lying snow that fell over Austria earlier in the month.

The northern French and northern Swiss Alps also have plenty of work to do before they can start dreaming of a bumper start to the season. Yes there is snow at high altitude – but lower down cover is still patchy or non-existent. Still, nothing unusual about that – it’s only mid-November and some of the best seasons have not got going until well into December.

Austria

So far this autumn most of the action has been on the glaciers (**Kitzbühel** and **Schladming** are two rare examples that have defied this rule with very limited non-glacial openings). However, more resorts are starting to open including **Obergurgl** (today). It may not have any great amount of snow yet, but the fact that it can open at all (without a glacier) is credit to its excellent early season snow record.

The best skiing in Austria, however, remains in glacier resorts such as **Sölden** (150cm upper base), **Hintertux** (185cm upper base) and **Stubai** (105cm upper base).



Sölden is as good an option as any in Austria right now - Photo: soelden.com

France

Tignes (40cm upper base) is the only French resort open today, though it is not beyond the realms of possibility that somewhere will attempt an unscheduled pre-season “taster” this weekend. The Grande Motte glacier is in pretty good nick, but much more snow is needed lower down before the area as a whole can be comfortable with its 29 November opening date.

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Skiing in June? Yep, there are plenty of good options in the Alps! tinyurl.com/llt6xzy



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Good skiing on the Grande Motte glacier above Tignes right now, but more snow is needed lower down - Photo: tignes.net

Italy

Western Italian resorts have seen massive dumps in recent days, at least above 2000m, with **Cervinia** (115/185cm middle/upper base) offering some of the best skiing in the Alps right now - as well as the biggest vertical drop. **Val Senales** (205cm upper base) in the South Tyrol is another Italian option.



Masses of snow in Cervinia, which is skiing as well as anywhere in the Alps - Photo: cervinia.it

Switzerland

Zermatt (130cm upper base) and **Saas-Fee** (265cm upper base) are the places to be right now with huge snowfalls at altitude over the last few days, though at the time of writing they were still avalanche controlling the pistes in **Saas-Fee**.

Other Swiss options this weekend will include **Glacier 3000** (near Les Diablerets), **Diavolezza** (near St Moritz), **Laax** and **Verbier** - though all on a very limited scale.



Zermatt is another resort that has witnessed huge snowfalls at altitude - Photo: zermatt.ch

USA

After a slow start, conditions are improving in Colorado with colder temperatures and new snow in most resorts - and more in the forecast. **A-Basin**, **Loveland**, **Keystone** and **Copper Mountain** are the main names already operational, with **Breckenridge** set to join them this weekend.

Further north, **Jackson Hole** (Wyoming) has also had some decent falls and is set to open on 27 November.



Snow has been falling in the Rockies too. This is Jackson Hole.

Canada

In Canada, **Lake Louise** opens today and nearby **Sunshine** tomorrow. Both have seen plummeting temperatures and new snow after a protracted mild spell of weather.

Next full snow report will be on Monday 17 November 2014, but see [Today in the Alps](#) for daily updates