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Snow report

Updated: 12.15pm Thursday 18 December 2014

As we mentioned in our "Today in the Alps" daily snow report this morning, it's been a case of one step forward, one step back this week.

Yesterday afternoon social media was awash with pictures of heavy snow falling across the northern and western Alps. Today (alas) freezing levels have rocketed and it is raining to 2500m in places!

It is important to stress two points right now... Firstly that there is, of course, plenty of decent skiing to be found if you know where to look. This is mostly at high altitude and towards (but by no means exclusively) on the southern side of the Alps. Secondly though, and this is where some sections of the industry seem to still be in denial, many lower (and a few higher) resorts are in dire trouble.

At the time of writing (Thursday lunchtime) only a tiny handful (perhaps three or four) of the dozens of resorts in the Haute Savoie region of France have any prospect of opening this weekend (the start of the busy Christmas week) with little sign of any relief in the medium term forecasts. Among the big name resorts that remain closed are **Morzine/Les Gets** and **Flaine**.

Across the pond, conditions are more consistent with great skiing in many western US and Canadian resorts...

Austria

There is a little fresh snow in Austria, mostly in the north and west, though freezing levels have now risen again which means rain at lower altitudes. The best snow conditions remain at altitude and in resorts with glaciers such as **Hintertux** (15/195cm) and **Sölden** (0/190cm), where 112km of pistes are open.

Of the non-glacial options **Ischgl** (0/40cm) and **Obergurgl** (8/92cm) remain by far the best bets though more snow would still be welcome. Further west, the Arlberg region remains in poor shape with just a tiny fraction of both the **St Anton** (5/30cm) and **Lech** (10/25cm) ski areas currently open.

Not surprisingly it's also bad news for the large number of low Austrian villages, but there is some limited skiing here and there, such as in **Westendorf** (5/20cm) and **Alpbach** (0/25cm) to give you a couple of examples.



Still waiting for winter in the lower Austrian resorts. This is Kitzbühel - Photo: kitz.net

France

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



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Wednesday saw moderate snowfalls in many resorts, though any benefit at lower altitudes will be quickly eroded by the massive rise in temperature today (Thursday).

The best place to be right now is **Val Thorens** (50cm upper base) where around 90% of its ski area is open and there is plenty of snow, even at resort level. Elsewhere in the **3 Valleys** snow cover is sketchier, particularly lower down, but there are still over 100 runs open in total.

Further east, **Val d'Isère/Tignes** (20/60cm) are now linked with 45 of 155 runs available and some decent skiing at altitude.

Good skiing is also possible in the southern Alps, but again only high up. **Serre Chevalier** has a 100cm upper base and around half of its 56 lifts open.

Further south still, **Isola 2000** (40/120cm) has 105km of its 120km of runs operational and good cover all the way down to its 2000m base.

Lower down, however it's not good news, particularly in the Haute Savoie region where only a handful of resorts will be open this weekend and even then on a very limited basis. **Avoriaz** (30/60cm) and **Chamonix** (n/a) are two resorts that will offer some very limited skiing, but many resorts simply don't have enough snow to open - including the rest of the **Portes du Soleil** (**Morzine, Les Gets, Châtel** etc.) and, amazingly, **Flaine** (which is normally fairly snow-sure).



After yesterday's snowfall it is much milder with light rain in Méribel - Photo: meribel.net

Italy

In general, Italian resorts saw less snow from yesterday's storm though some did creep over the border to affect places like **La Thuile** (10/30cm) and **Courmayeur** (0/30cm). Like everywhere else in the Alps, it has turned milder again with the best conditions at high altitude.

Cervinia (25/180cm) continues to lead the way with (weather permitting) over 200km of pistes now open if you include the link to **Zermatt**. Other decent bets are **Champoluc** (5/85cm), **Livigno** (26/127cm), **Passo Tonale** (40/350cm) and **Selva** (0/40cm) where 40 lifts are open despite the modest cover.

Generally speaking though, much more snow is needed in the lower resorts.



Decent skiing at altitude in the Milky Way area. This is Claviere (not yet open) near Sestriere - Photo: vialattea.it

Switzerland

Most Swiss resorts saw snow yesterday - up to 30cm in places - though milder air and some rain today (Thursday) has spoilt the party somewhat.

The best skiing remains at altitude and in the south, especially in **Zermatt** (5/180cm), **Saas-Fee** (10/210cm) and **St Moritz** (10/95cm).

Further north openings are (on the whole) more limited. **Davos/Klosters** (5/69cm) have a respectable 34 lifts open, but **Verbier** (5/50cm) and **Wengen** (0/25cm) are a long way from being fully operational and more snow is needed, especially lower down.



Reasonable snow cover in the St Moritz area - Photo: engadin.stmoritz.ch

Rest of Europe

Elsewhere in Europe, **Norway** seems to be the place with **Hemsedal** (64/75cm) offering great conditions top bottom. **Sweden's** premier resort **Åre** is still struggling with just 10/20cm of settled snow, depending on altitude.

The **Pyrenees** have had a reasonable if unspectacular start to the season though, like in the Alps, milder air and some rain have put a dampener on things today. **Soldeu** (Andorra) currently has 30/70cm of snow depending on altitude.

The **Bulgarian** season is underway, though they could do with more snow lower down in **Bansko** (0/60cm) where about half the lifts are running.

Scotland is also offering some limited skiing in **Glenshee**, **Cairngorm** and the **Lecht**, all of which have between 10 and 50cm of packed snow on their runs.



Milder weather with some rain taking its toll at lower elevations in the Pyrenees too. This is Barèges - Photo: grand-tourmalet.com

USA

Light snow showers are continuing across much of Colorado and follow a more substantial dump last weekend. All in all then conditions are pretty good for the time of year, with 84cm of settled snow at altitude in **Winter Park** and 104cm in **Aspen**.

Utah is also offering good skiing with 91cm mid-mountain at **Snowbird**, though much of the off-piste is tracked out.

One of the best starts to the season, at least in big-name resorts, has been in **Jackson Hole**, Wyoming (126cm upper base) where most runs are open, there is a little fresh snow and plenty more on the forecast.

Over in California, **Mammoth** has also seen new snow - 30cm in the last 48 hours - and now boasts base depths of 76/107cm depending on altitude.

Canada

Conditions in **Whistler** have been steadily improving with plenty of fresh snow and upper mountain base depths now approaching 1m.

Further inland, the **Banff/Lake Louise** area is also in decent shape for the time

of year (despite no recent snow) with practically all lifts open and 80/88cm of settled snow depending on altitude.



Plenty of early season snow up top in Fernie - Photo: skifernie.com

Next full snow report will be on Monday 22 December 2014, but see [Today in the Alps](#) for daily updates