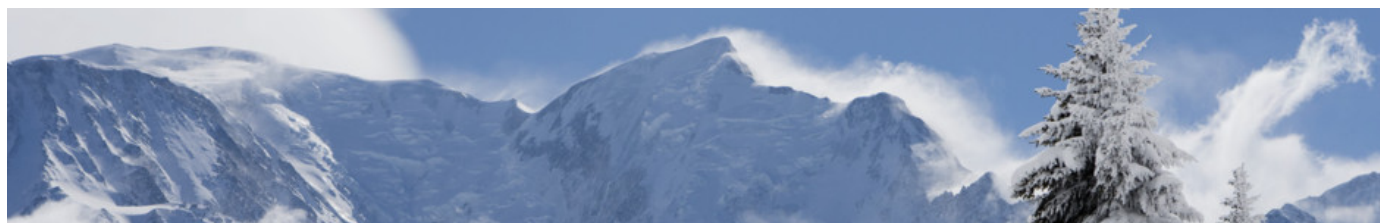




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Latest snow report

Updated: 1.30pm Thursday 24 December 2015

Snow conditions in the Alps continue to be a major concern as we approach the busiest week of the season. What's more, the weather will stay mild, with no significant or widespread snow in the forecast for the rest of 2015.

There remains hope that the pattern will change in early January, but the weather models are very inconsistent right now, and this is still far from certain.

Anyone who has been following the snow situation in the Alps through social media will know that people have still been enjoying some decent on-piste skiing in recent days. Given the acute lack of snow, this may seem contradictory, but there are three main reasons:

1. It has been mostly sunny
2. It has, until now, been relatively uncrowded
3. People's expectations are already low

These three factors combined can work wonders on your perception of snow conditions in the Alps. However, the truth remains that this is now another exceptionally poor start to the Alpine season with no absolute guarantee of a reprieve any time soon.

The best skiing in the Alps right now is to be found in the ski resorts with plenty of terrain above 2300m, such as **Val d'Isère**, **Tignes**, the **3 Valleys**, **Les Arcs**, **La Plagne**, **Zermatt**, **Saas-Fee**, **Verbier**, **Engelberg**, **Sölden**, **Obergurgl**, **Ischgl**, **Hintertux** and **Kaprun**, to name just a few. However, even here, the pressure will really increase with the crowds after Christmas. Remember, there is no off-piste to speak of and the pistes themselves are often hard, fast and icy.

The areas struggling the most are the low resorts of the north-western Alps such as **Morzine**, **Megève**, **Villars** and **Gstaad**, where snow-making has been limited by mild temperatures and higher humidity than on the south-eastern side of the Alps (snow-making is easier in drier air).

The southern side of the Alps, as regular followers will know, has very little or in some cases no natural snow at all. However, this is where some of the world's best snow-making can be found. Nowhere is this more true than in the **Dolomiti Superski** region, where over 700km of runs are open on entirely man-made snow.


The low Austrian resorts have also showed fantastic snow-making capabilities (e.g. **Ski Welt**, **Saalbach**) even if the overall situation is also far from ideal.


If you are wondering where all the snow has gone, then the answer is the western US and Canada. Here, pretty much all areas are in great shape, with the deepest, freshest snow in the Pacific North-west (e.g. **Whistler**, **Mt Baker**), Utah (e.g. **Snowbird**) and California (e.g. **Heavenly**).

Austria


Glaciers aside, the best snow conditions in Austria are in the higher western resorts, such as **Ischgl** (0/30cm), **Obergurgl** (0/60cm) and **Lech** (30/35cm), though even here cover is very thin for late December and more snow is urgently needed.

Lower down, the valleys are mostly green, but areas such as **Saalbach-Hinterglemm** (5/20cm) can offer a good variety of runs thanks to state-of-the-art snow-making.



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



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

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Reasonable piste skiing still in the Vorarlberg. This is Damüls - Photo: damuels.at

France

The high resorts of the Tarentaise are among the best bets in the Alps right now, with reasonable cover at altitude even if any serious off-piste is out of the question. **Val d'Isère** currently has 29/60cm depending on altitude, while **La Plagne** has 5/80cm.

Lower down, however, **Morzine/Les Gets** (0/25cm) are really struggling, with just a tiny percentage of the overall area open.

More generally, the southern French Alps are also very threadbare, with no natural snow at all in **Isola 2000** where the artificial base is 30cm deep.

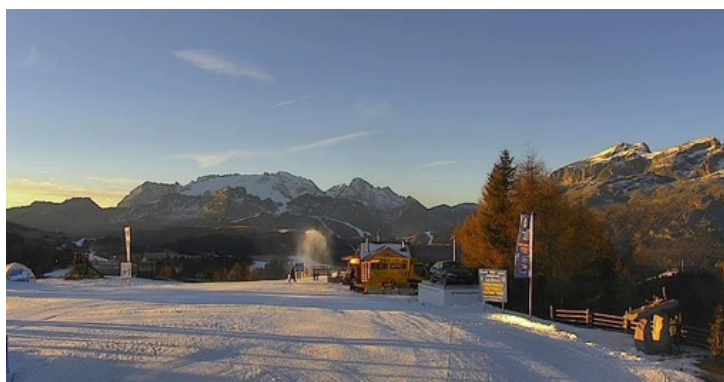


Patchy cover at resort level in Méribel, but reasonable snow still higher up - Photo: meribel.net

Italy

Italian ski resorts have the least natural snow of any of the four main Alpine countries. However, many resorts have put their considerable snow-making facilities to excellent use. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the **Dolomiti Superski** area where over 700km of pistes are now open on an entirely artificial 20-30cm base.

For a mix of natural and man-made snow, **Cervinia** (5/120cm) is your best bet, especially considering its high altitude links to **Zermatt** in Switzerland.



State-of-the-art snow-making in the Alta Badia region - Photo: dolomitisuperski.com

Switzerland

The best snow conditions in Switzerland are in the higher western resorts, such

as **Zermatt** (0/125cm), **Saas-Fee** (10/115cm) and **Zinal** (10/55cm).

Lower down, snow-cover is patchier, but resorts such as **Villars** (5/45cm) and **Wengen** (0/30cm) are still hanging on, with some help from the cannons.



Snow holding up OK at altitude in Laax - Photo: laax.com

Rest of Europe

The Pyrenees have also been mild and snowless for some time now. That said, conditions at altitude are holding up OK, with some decent on-piste skiing in the likes of Spain's **Baqueira Beret** (25/65cm) and Andorra's **Pas de La Casa** (20/50cm).

In Norway, **Geilo** (60/70cm) and **Hemsedal** (45cm mid-mountain) are both in good nick, with a little fresh snow yesterday and plenty more in the forecast. The most consistent snow conditions in Scandinavia, however, are up in Finland where **Levi** has 60cm of settled snow, which should again be topped up over the next few days.



Decent cover at altitude in the Pyrenees. This is Baqueira Beret - Photo: baqueira.es

USA

Snow conditions are excellent just about everywhere in the western US with the biggest recent dumps in the Pacific North-west, Utah and California. **Mt Baker** (Washington) has seen 30cm in the last 24 hours alone, and now boasts an upper base of over 4m!

Utah's **Alta** (170cm mid-mountain base) has had over 1m of snow in the last week, as has **Heavenly** (132cm mid-mountain base) in California.

Most Colorado resorts are also reporting fresh powder. **Vail** now has a mid-mountain base of 107cm.



Huge snowfalls in the Pacific North-west. This is Crystal Mountain in Washington - Photo: facebook.com/crystallmountainhotels

Canada

Whistler (183cm mid-mountain) continues to catch the eye, with an additional 80cm of snow in the last week and excellent skiing conditions at all levels.

Further inland, **Fernie** has also seen significant recent snowfalls. Here all 10 lifts are now open and the upper base is nearly 2m deep.

Next full snow report will be on Monday 28 December 2015, but see [Today in the Alps](#) for regular updates