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Latest snow report

Updated: 3.15pm Monday 12 December 2016

For the fourth year running, there is much less snow than there should be in the Alps as we approach the middle of December. That doesn't mean that there isn't some perfectly good piste skiing to be had but, with one or two exceptions this is largely down to man-made efforts.

Decent natural snow cover can be found in some high altitude resorts, mostly in the western or south-western Alps. It could still even be considered impressive above about 2000/2200m in most north-western Italian resorts (including the Monte Rosa region, Cervinia, Pila and Courmayeur) and close to the Italian/French border from Val d'Isère southwards (including Tignes, Bonneval-sur-Arc, Val Cenis, Sestriere, Prali, Bardonecchia and Puy St Vincent - to name a few). In Switzerland, only the upper reaches of Zermatt and Saas-Fee have anything like "normal" cover for the time of year and just about everywhere else in the Alps is now considerably below par. Indeed, generally speaking, there is very little natural snow at all below 2000m.

This is quite a turnaround from this time last month when some north-western parts of the Alps were looking at the best snow for 20 years (at least at altitude). It does, however, go to show just how quickly things can change early in the season, especially if the weather conspires against you - as it has done in recent weeks with a mixture of rain, Foehn and endless sunshine.

There are a few positives though. It is snowing in parts of Austria today, especially to the east of Salzburg where some resorts look like winter again, albeit only temporarily. The coming week will also be cooler than last week, which means that snow-making operations can operate at something like full capacity again. So this does mean that, even in the worst case scenario of there being no snow before Christmas, most resorts will be able to offer at least a reasonable amount of piste skiing over the festive period.

Things are better across the pond, with cold temperatures and plenty of new snow for most western US and Canadian resorts...

Austria

It is snowing across some parts of Austria today (above 600-900m), chiefly in the north and north-east where a few centimetres are possible here and there. It won't do a great deal to change the overall situation though, with most resorts still heavily or entirely reliant on artificial snow. However, with the weather in the Austrian Alps remaining relatively cold this week, the snow guns should be back up to full capacity.

Some of the better non-glacial options right now include **Ischgl** (0/40cm), where 179km of pistes are now open, **Obertauern** (30/60cm) with 92km of pistes, and **Schladming** (40/100cm) with 82 slopes open.



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A dusting of snow in the Gastein valley this morning – 12 December 2016 – Photo: gastein.at

France

The best snow conditions in France remain at altitude in the resorts close to the Italian border, from **Tignes** (40/135cm) and **Val d'Isère** (5/140cm) southwards, including **Val Cenise** (which opens properly next weekend), **Montgenèvre** (70/180cm) and **Isola 2000** (30/100cm).

However, there is very little natural snow below 2000m, which means that areas such as the **Portes du Soleil** (0/40cm) and **Megève** (figures not yet available) are struggling once again as we approach Christmas.



Good snow cover at altitude in the southern French Alps. This is Isola 2000 – 12 December 2016 – Photo: isola2000.com

Italy

The best natural snow cover in Italy remains at altitude in the west, where on-piste conditions remain excellent in the likes of **Cervinia** (31/60cm), **Pila** (20/200cm) and **Sestriere** (40/120cm).

Generally speaking, the further east you travel the more the resorts are reliant on artificial snow. However, this isn't much of a problem in the Dolomites where nearly 700km of runs are now open in the Dolomiti Superski area (e.g. **Cortina**, **Kronplatz**, **Selva** and **Alta Badia**) despite a very modest 20-40cm upper base.

No significant new snow is expected anywhere in the Italian Alps this week.



Reasonable snow depths up top in La Thuile – 12 December 2016 – Photo: lathuille.it

Switzerland

Snow cover is very patchy below 2000m in Switzerland, so the best skiing is naturally to be found in resorts with plenty of high altitude skiing, such as **Zermatt** (0/105cm) and **Saas-Fee** (0/125cm).

Elsewhere in the Swiss Alps there are lots of partial openings, but snow depths are very modest and resorts are heavily reliant on artificial help. **Wengen** and **Davos** both have 0/28cm of snow depending on altitude, with no significant snow in this week's forecast.



Sunny skies in Laax – 12 December 2016 – Photo: laax.com

Rest of Europe

Broadly speaking the Pyrenees are in a similar situation to the Alps, with some reasonable piste skiing on offer at high altitude but very patchy cover lower down. Piste depths in Andorra's **Soldeu** are 20/50cm depending on altitude, but just 5/25cm in Spain's **Baqueira Beret**.

Bulgarian ski resorts have decent early season snow conditions thanks to a big snowfall at the end of November. **Borovets** has 20/40cm of settled snow depending on altitude, while **Bansko** has 20/50cm.

There are also plenty of options in Scandinavia - Norway's **Geilo**, for example, has 80cm packed down mid-mountain. In Scotland, however, there is still insufficient snow to reopen any lift-served terrain.



Decent piste skiing up high in the Pyrenees. This is Cauterets – 12 December 2016 – Photo: cauterets.com

USA

Snow conditions are excellent across most western US resorts thanks to fresh snow over recent days, with lots more in the forecast this week.

In Colorado, **Winter Park** has seen over 70cm of new snow in the last week and has a mid-mountain base 89cm deep. Even better is **Jackson Hole** (114/168cm) in Wyoming, where 76cm has fallen in the last three days alone with a lots more forecast later in the week.

Canada

Snow conditions are generally very favourable across the western Canadian resorts. Although there may not have been as much snow as in some of the western US resorts, it has been cold, meaning that the slopes have remained in great condition.

Whistler continues its excellent early season with 166cm packed down on the upper mountain. Further inland, all lifts are now open in **Revelstoke** (123cm mid-mountain) where the snow quality is described as powdery.



Fabulous conditions in Whistler right now – 12 December 2016 – Photo:
[facebook.com/whistlerblackcomb](https://www.facebook.com/whistlerblackcomb)

**Next full snow report will be on Thursday 15 December 2016,
but see [Today in the Alps](#) for regular updates**