



[Latest snow report](#)

[Latest snow forecast](#)

[Season progress report](#)

[Who got the most snow?](#)

[The complete guide to...](#)

[The snow quality equation](#)

[What is the Foehn?](#)

[Avoiding rain](#)

[Avalanche awareness](#)

[Archive](#)

[2016-17](#)

[2015-16](#)

[2014-15](#)

[2013-14](#)

[2012-13](#)

Latest snow report

Updated: 6.10pm Thursday 22 December 2016

If you are off to the Italian Piedmont this Christmas or New Year then you are in for a treat. Resorts in this region (e.g. Sestriere, Bardonecchia, Prali and Alagna) have seen between 30cm and 80cm of new snow at altitude over the last few days, and over 1m locally in the far south (e.g. Prato Nevoso). Some Aosta valley resorts (e.g. Cervinia, Gressoney) have also seen a useful fall of snow, as have a handful of French resorts close to the Italian border (e.g. Isola 2000, Montgenèvre and Bonneval-sur-Arc).

Elsewhere in the Alps there have been a few light snowfalls here and there this week but not enough to radically change anything, and many places have actually stayed dry.

So, with the exception of some south-western parts of the Alps, Christmas snow conditions are below par for the fourth year running. That doesn't mean there isn't still some perfectly good piste skiing to found – prolific snow-making (especially in the eastern Alps) has seen to that. However, this cannot disguise the fact that below 2000m, there is very little if any natural snow to speak of across a good portion of the Alps.

The lower resorts of the north-western Alps are those that are causing the greatest concern right now, not least because snow-making has not been as effective here as it has been further east. Morzine, Les Gets, Megève, Villars, Grindelwald and Adelboden are just a few examples of resorts that are only able to offer a tiny number of runs right now and are desperate for new snow.

Meanwhile, snow conditions are generally excellent across the pond, in both the western US and western Canada...

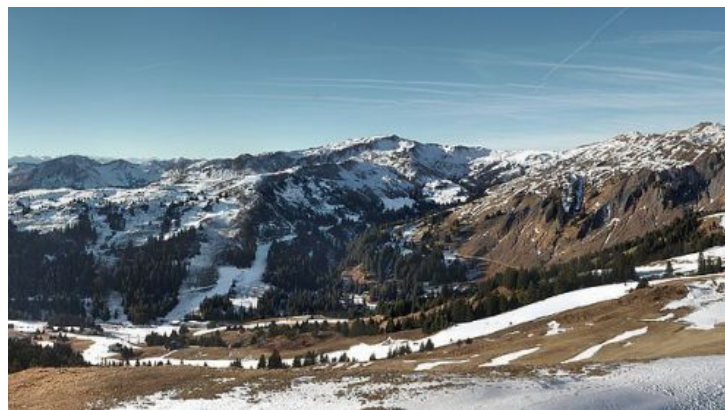
Austria

On-piste snow conditions are generally OK in Austria, even if snow depths are universally below par for late December. Off-piste opportunities are very limited, however.

The patchiest snow cover (relative to altitude) is in the far west, where **Lech** (5/30cm) is still heavily reliant on artificial snow and only a third of the runs in the Arlberg area are currently open. At the opposite (eastern) end of the Austrian Alps the snow-line is a bit lower, leaving it looking more wintry in **Lofer** (10/60cm) in the eastern Salzburgland, despite its lower average altitude.

Don't be fooled into thinking that a higher altitude makes a huge difference to snow cover right now. Glaciers aside, even the high Austrian resorts such as **Ischgl** (0/40cm), **Obergurgl** (10/55cm) and **Kühtai** (15/20cm) have paper thin cover although, as we stressed earlier, on-piste conditions are perfectly reasonable.

Some snow is forecast in the Austrian Alps later this weekend and early next week but only in very modest quantities. The wait for the "big one" continues...



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Patchy snow cover in the Austrian Vorarlberg. This is Damüls – 22 December 2016 – Photo: damuels.at

France

Snow conditions in the French Alps are highly mixed right now.

The freshest snow is in resorts close to the Italian border, from the Maurienne valley southwards including **Bonneval-sur-Arc** (45/250cm), **Val Cenis** (25/220cm) and **Isola 2000** (60/120cm). One resort worth a special mention is **Montgenèvre** (90/200cm), which has probably offered the most consistently good top to bottom snow conditions of any resorts in the Alps so far this season.

Elsewhere in the French Alps, **Val d'Isère/Tignes** (30/140cm) and **Val Thorens** (60/135cm) are two good bets but, generally speaking, there is very little natural snow below 2000m and most resorts are heavily reliant on man-made efforts.

Weathertoski is just back from **Courchevel** (15/70cm) which is typical of the current situation – little or no natural snow at resort level but still offering plenty of good piste-skiing, especially at altitude.



Good piste skiing in Courchevel, despite the relative lack of snow – Photo: weathertoski.co.uk

Italy

The snow situation in the Italian Alps is a contrasting one with lots of fresh snow in the west, but very little in the east where they are much more reliant on artificial snow.

The very best snow conditions are in the southern Piedmont region, where **Sestriere** (50/140cm) is skiing as well as any mainstream resort in the Alps right now following 50cm+ from the recent storm. Other good bets include **Bardonecchia** (40/160cm), **Cervinia** (35/170cm) and the **Monte Rosa** region (5/200cm), though do be careful off-piste as there is very little base at low altitudes.

The further east you travel, the more the resorts are reliant on man-made snow. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the **Dolomiti Superski** area (e.g. **Kronplatz**, **Val Gardena**, **Alta Badia**, **Cortina**) where 880km of runs are open despite a modest (mostly artificial) base of just 20-40cm.



Fabulous snow conditions in the Italian Piedmont. This is Bardonecchia – 22 December 2016 – Photo: bardonecchia.com

Switzerland

The Swiss Alps have seen bits and pieces of fresh snow here and there over the last few days, with 20cm in **Andermatt** (0/95cm), and a little on the ridges and

peaks above **Zermatt** (0/105cm) and **Saas-Fee** (30/105cm), for example.

However, for the vast majority of resorts there hasn't been any really significant snowfall for several weeks, which means that they are heavily reliant on man-made snow.

Among the more extensive options are **Verbier** (10/80cm), **St Moritz** (3/45cm) and **Grimentz** (20/50cm). However, there are few if any decent off-piste opportunities anywhere in the Swiss Alps and still no major dumps on the horizon.



Desperately short of snow at low altitude in the Bernese Oberland. This is Adelboden – 22 December 2016 – Photo: adelboden.ch

Rest of Europe

Some Pyrenean ski resorts saw a little snow earlier this week which has freshened up the pistes in Andorra's **Arcalis** (35/70cm). However, generally speaking, snow cover is still poor for late December especially low down. Spain's **Baqueira Beret** only has 5/25cm of snow depending on altitude and is heavily reliant on snow cannons.

Most Scandinavian ski resorts are now open and offering steady rather than spectacular snow conditions. Norway's **Geilo** has 40/65cm packed down on its pistes, while Finland's **Levi** has 45cm.

There is still not enough snow in Scottish ski resorts for snow-sports.



Reasonable snow cover at altitude in the French Pyrenees but more is still needed, especially lower down – 22 December 2016 – Photo: peyragudes.com

USA

Early season snow conditions are generally excellent in the western US.

Jackson Hole in Wyoming has done particularly well with over 1m of new snow in the last week and plenty more in the forecast. Colorado resorts have seen more modest falls but are also skiing well for late December, with 88cm mid-mountain in **Beaver Creek** and 86cm in **Telluride**.



Lots of fresh snow in Jackson Hole (Wyoming) where 2.2m of snow has already fallen this December – 22 December 2016 – Photo: facebook.com/JacksonHole

Canada

Outstanding early season snow conditions continue in **Whistler** (178cm mid-mountain base), with fresh snow and more in the forecast early next week.

Most other western Canadian resorts are also in great shape, including **Revelstoke** (166cm mid-mountain base) which has clocked over 70cm of new snow in the last week, and **Fernie** (176cm upper mountain base) which has seen 65cm.

**Next full snow report will be on Tuesday 27 December 2016,
but see [Today in the Alps](#) for regular updates**