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## The world's best 10 ski-spa retreats

After an active day on the slopes, nothing makes you feel as good as a swim and a massage. Francesca Syz picks the best resorts offering both an excellent spa and world-class skiing.



The Bagni di Bormio Spa Resort has been a spa town since Roman times

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Skiing and spa-going are about as far from each other as you can get in terms of ways to pass the time. But think about how each makes you feel and you realise they are a natural combination physically and psychologically, exercising both body and soul. The world's top ski hotels now have full-service spas and sophisticated treatment menus to rival anything to be found in an urban five-star hotel. A spa is now an integral part of the ski-holiday experience.

"The snow is so seductive, people want to get right out on to it as soon as they arrive," says Dr Ada Mihaela Pein, spa manager at Hotel Aurelio in Lech, Austria. "But the average person underestimates the importance of preparing for skiing."

Spa treatments can be helpful here, right from the start. Take a pre-ski massage, for instance. A great way to begin your holiday, it draws a line under your working week and a tiring journey, improves circulation and increases muscle and tendon elasticity – all of which reduce the chance of injury on the slopes. Likewise, a post-ski massage improves circulation, helps to break down the build-up of lactic acid that can occur when muscles have worked hard, and reduces the onset of muscle soreness. "Ideally, after a day's skiing, you should soothe your muscles with a steam, followed by a deep-tissue massage," advises Dr Pein.

"Most British skiers get on to the slopes only once or twice a year, so they are going to ache," says Andrew Dunn, founder of the ski holiday operator Scott Dunn. "So what better excuse can there be to head to the hotel spa?" Here, we review 10 of the most innovative.

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## ITALY

### Bagni di Bormio Spa Resort, Bormio

A spa town since Roman times (Leonardo da Vinci recorded a visit here in 1493), now with a grand 17th-century centre, Bormio has twice hosted the Alpine World Ski championships. The Alta Valtellina ski pass also covers the neighbouring Santa Caterina and Livigno ski areas. A few minutes' walk from the town centre, in the Stelvio National Park, Bagni di Bormio comprises two hotels and two spa centres, backed by forest. The 74-room main hotel, the five-star Grand Bagni Nuovi, first opened as a spa resort in 1836 and was reopened in 2003 after a long refurbishment. It remains redolent of the belle époque, with Murano glass chandeliers and art nouveau flourishes in the grand public rooms.

The spa experience here starts in the bathroom – where the hydro-massage bath is fed with thermal water. In the spa, indoor and outdoor thermal facilities include 11 open-air baths, Jacuzzis, saunas and a Turkish bath, with 70 treatments on offer, including facials with mud made from the thermal waters. Guests can walk through the park (or take the hotel shuttle-bus) to the 12-room Hotel Bagni Vecchi, where the outdoor pool has magnificent mountain views. In a grotto in the grounds, guests follow a path 50 yards into the mountain to the source of the water, bubbling out at 104F (40C).

**Bookings:** 00 39 0342 910 131, [bagnidibormio.it](#). Doubles from €132 (£115), b&b. Taxis from Milan charge €250 (£218) for up to three. **BA** (0844 930 0787, [ba.com](#)) flies to Milan from £183 return.

### Alpina Dolomites Gardena Health Lodge and Spa, South Tyrol

There is a real sense of drama about the Dolomites (designated a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site in 2009), with their extraordinary jagged peaks, ravines, and Europe's largest high-altitude plateau. The Alpina Dolomites hotel is on this plateau, right on the slopes of the Dolomiti Superski circuit (the biggest in the Alps, with 12 resorts sharing a single ski pass, 758 miles of pistes and 37 miles of cross-country tracks). The sleekly modern 56-room hotel, which opened in 2010, is built from wood, stone and glass and is home to a strikingly beautiful spa. There, you can enjoy a goat's milk facial or just relax and enjoy the spectacular views from the indoor and outdoor pools, while a medical centre offers de-stressing Ayurvedic massages and the chance to sign up for a serious, bespoke health programme that can be continued at home.

**Bookings:** 00 39 0471 79 6004, [alpinadolomites.it](#). Doubles from €189 (£165), half-board. **BA** (0844 493 0787, [ba.com](#)) flies to Verona from £77 return.

### Tschuggen Grand Hotel Arosa

With its "home from home" philosophy, the 130-room Tschuggen Grand Hotel is a genuinely friendly place. The hotel sits in a valley sheltered from the wind and is surrounded by 43 miles of piste – suitable for every level of skier – and 15 miles of cross-country trails, with a two-cabin mountain railway, the Tschuggen Express, to whisk guests to the ski area in two-and-a-half minutes. Morphed from a 19th-century sanatorium for patients with lung conditions (the original structure burnt to the ground in 1966, but the hotel was rebuilt in 1970), it has always had healthy living at its core.

The spectacular new four-storey subterranean Tschuggen Bergoase Spa, designed by Swiss architects Mario Botta (creator of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) and Carlo Rampazzi, opened in 2006 and is lit by a series of sail-shaped windows protruding from the snow. Highlights are the indoor and outdoor pools, an open fire, a Kneipp trail (where guests can wade barefoot over stones through a mixture of warm and icy water), beautiful saunas and steam baths, and Thai and hot-stone massages.

**Bookings:** 00 41 81 378 9999, [tschuggen.ch](#). Doubles from CHF225 (£159). **Powder Byrne** (020 8246 5300, [powderbyrne.com](#)) offers week-long stays aimed at families at half-term (February 11-18) and in the first week of the Easter holidays (March 31-April 7) from £3,633 per person, half-board, including return flights from London, transfers, and special ski classes for children.

## SWITZERLAND

### Victoria-Jungfrau Grand Hotel & Spa Interlaken

The Grand Dame of alpine hotels, opened in 1856, the Victoria-Jungfrau sits at the foot of the Jungfrau Massif in Interlaken, in the heart of the Bernese Oberland, gateway to the three excellent ski areas of Wengen (birthplace of alpine downhill skiing), Grindelwald and Mürren. A shuttle bus connects the hotel with the ski slopes, and the local railway – the most scenic option – links all three. The hotel has not one but two spas:

the first to be opened has 16 treatment rooms and more than 30 ESPA treatments involving Eastern-influenced techniques (including a Swiss Alpine herb-poultice massage). The recently added Sensai Select spa has seven treatments designed by the Japanese company Kanebo exclusively for the hotel. The spa facilities are connected by a huge indoor-outdoor pool with hot tubs, and the steamy outdoor area is a marvellous place to be when it is actually snowing. There is also a spa café for refreshing vitamin-rich juices and aromatic teas.

**Bookings:** 00 41 33 828 28 28, [victoria-jungfrau.ch](#). Doubles from CHF500 (£350). **British Airways** (0844 493 0787, [ba.com](#)) flies from London Heathrow to Zurich from £118 return.

## AUSTRIA

### Hotel Aurelio Lech

With 14 bedrooms and five suites, the supremely chic, ski-in ski-out Hotel Aurelio in the exclusive resort of Lech am Arlberg has the feel of a private chalet (and a section of it can be hired as such). Despite its relatively uncrowded slopes, this part of Austria has a good snow record and is superb for intermediates. The Aurelio may be small, but its sleek new seven-treatment-room holistic spa is huge, with two beautiful indoor pools (including one for light and sound therapy), a meditation room with an open fire, a thermal suite with classic and herbal saunas, an aroma steam bath, herbal/floral baths, a Jacuzzi, a multi-sensory shower, ice pools and a snow atrium. There are several relaxation areas and a bar stocked with fresh fruit, tea and snacks. Treatments are by Ligne St Barth, whose products are all made from locally sourced ingredients on the island of St Barts, and the high-tech Swiss range Valmont.

**Bookings:** 00 43 5583 2214, [aureliolech.com](http://aureliolech.com). Doubles from €750 (£650). The **Oxford Ski Company** (01865 398 130, [oxfordski.com](http://oxfordski.com)) is offering seven nights half-board, including flights and transfers, from £2,475 per person.

## FRANCE

### Le Chabichou Courchevel 1850

This 42-room, family-run rustic-chic alpine retreat in the heart of Courchevel 1850 is renowned for its piste-side location – it is well connected to the entire Trois Vallées ski area and 373 miles of well-maintained slopes, as well as cross-country and snowshoeing routes. It is also noted for its exceptional food (the restaurant has two Michelin stars) and for the personalised treatments at its spa. In December, the spa will relaunch as Cha'Banya, a subterranean wellness centre under the ski slope, with a 51ft pool and treatments using anti-ageing Carita and aromatherapy-based Decléor products. The new spa will champion multi-sensory experiences, with a tropical-rain trail, Dead Sea pool, Russian sauna, hammam, Polar bath, ice fountain, saline cave and musical pool. A series of treatment programmes includes a six-day "intense skiing journey" involving two preparatory sessions, daily après-ski massages, four facials, and more.

**Bookings:** 00 33 4 908 0055, [chabichou-courchevel.com](http://chabichou-courchevel.com). Doubles from €375 (£326), b&b. **Scott Dunn** (020 8682 5050, [scottdunn.com](http://scottdunn.com)) is offering seven nights at Le Chabichou from £2,300 per person, b&b, including return flights with British Airways and private transfers.

## SWEDEN

### Copperhill Mountain Lodge

Perched high on Mount Förberget, ski-in ski-out Copperhill Mountain Lodge is a cool, Scandinavian take on an alpine chalet and sits at the heart of one of Europe's largest skiing areas in Are, Sweden's most popular resort. The 112-room hotel features cosy bedrooms with tactile rugs and bed throws, Smeg kitchenettes and great food in front of crackling fires. The Kerstin Florian spa – with five treatment rooms – was inspired by the local Sami people and uses only natural ingredients in its treatments. It features a glassed-in steamy indoor pool, and tepee-like treatment rooms furnished with reindeer hides and filled with the sound of Sami music. The signature treatment is the 160-minute Copperhill Privilege, which includes a body scrub, a hot lava-stone massage and a penetrating facial using protein-rich caviar.

**Bookings:** 00 46 647 1 4300, [copperhill.se](http://copperhill.se). Doubles from Swedish Kr1,390 (£133). Return flights from Gatwick to Trondheim – taxi fare €200 (£175) – cost from £125 (00 47 2149 0015, [norwegian.com](http://norwegian.com)).

## JAPAN

### The Green Leaf Niseko

#### Village Hirafu

Japan's northern island of Hokkaido has reliably fantastic snow between December and April. Of its four resort areas, the best is Niseko, which overlooks the Mount Yotei volcano. Skiers get a long day on the slopes here, with night skiing routinely offered until 9pm. After a major refurbishment last year, the quintessentially Japanese 200-room Green Leaf Hotel, which has ski-in ski-out access to deep powder slopes as well as a beautiful spa, is the best place to stay. Among the bonuses are the onsen (hot spring) facilities, which include an open-air bath within a natural outdoor rock pool fed by a clear mineral spring that emerges from the ground at 127F (53C) and is cooled to about 104F (40C) – deemed the perfect temperature for the body to benefit from the healing natural salts. So, there you sit, surrounded by snow-covered rocks, pine trees and Mount Yotei. The hotel also has a western-style spa offering everything from acupressure to Ayurveda and treatments such as The Rubber Neck, which involves the back being tapped with bamboo sticks.

**Bookings:** 00 800 9899 9999, [thegreenleafhotel.com](http://thegreenleafhotel.com). Doubles from ¥9,690 (£80). **Inside Japan Tours** (0117 370 9730, [insidejapantours.com](http://insidejapantours.com)) is offering 10 nights in Japan from £1,999 per person. The price includes four nights in Tokyo and six nights at Green Leaf Hotel, domestic flights between Tokyo and Sapporo, and a six-day Niseko ski pass. BA (0844 493 0787, [ba.com](http://ba.com)) has return flights from London to Tokyo from £603.

## CHILE

### Puma Lodge, The Andes

Chile's new 24-room Puma Lodge is causing quite a stir among heli-skiing fans. Located in the exceptionally beautiful Cipreses National Park, which encompasses three mountain ranges and more than 50 glaciers, the lodge has special privileges, with its guides and guests the only people permitted to ski in the park. At the moment, it is accessible by heli-ski only, but next year a cross-country option is being added.

The spa, Los Cipreses, has four treatment rooms, an outdoor sauna and wooden hot tubs, and is staffed by two of Chile's top therapists, who specialise in combating the effect of the intense ski experience with deep-tissue massages combined with techniques borrowed from

Thai massage and Ayurveda. Product-wise, there's the exclusive Spanish brand Germaine de Capuccini, which uses largely natural ingredients. The spa also uses as many local ingredients as possible – including stones from the national park for the hot-stone massages and clay from the local mining town of Coya for detoxifying treatments.

Latin American travel specialist **Dehouche** (0871 284 7770, [dehouche.com](http://dehouche.com)) offers three nights' heli-skiing at Puma Lodge and two nights in Santiago from £5,616 per person. The price includes flights from London with Iberia, transfers, full board, use of ski equipment, professional guiding and training, and three spa treatments.

## **Canada**

### **Fairmont Banff Springs Alberta**

There is nothing understated about the Fairmont Banff Springs – a colossal ocean liner of a hotel, built in 1888 to resemble a Scottish baronial castle, whose completion marked the launch of tourism in the Canadian Rockies. With three of the finest skiing mountains in North America just a short hop away, the hotel is a very good base from which to enjoy different terrain every day. Add a season stretching from mid-November right through to mid-May and

it is a pretty attractive package. Then there is the award-winning Willow Stream spa. In homage to the area's original hot springs, there are waterfalls, a mineral pool, whirlpool, steam room, sauna and eucalyptus inhalation room, as well as indoor and outdoor heated pools. An exhaustive list of spa "experiences" combine multiple disciplines – for example, a mud wrap will be followed by a therapeutic bath and then a massage. The 60-minute après-ski massage is designed to improve performance, avoid injury and aid rapid recovery with a combination of massage and stretching to decrease muscle soreness and increase flexibility.

**Bookings:** 00 1 866 540 4406, [fairmont.com/banffsprings](http://fairmont.com/banffsprings). Doubles from C\$389 (£242); Ski Independence (0131 243 8097, [ski-i.com](http://ski-i.com)) is offering seven nights from £1,413 per person, including flights from Heathrow to Calgary with Air Canada, shared transfers, and a six-day lift pass.