

THE ULTRATRAVEL TOP 10

MOUNTAIN HIGHS

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





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?" Overleaf, we review 10 of the most innovative.

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WINTER 2011

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Ski-spa retreats

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 & 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