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Switzerland: your last chance for a festive ski holiday (and how to do it)



Swiss ski resorts are hoping to stay open over the festive period. CREDIT: ANDERMATT-SEDRUN-DISENTS

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How to go from sofa to slopes this Christmas and New Year

With the majority of ski resorts across the Alps currently closed, and most of England now told to avoid going on holiday under Tier 3 restrictions, you'd be forgiven for assuming the chances of skiing this Christmas and New Year are slim.

But as the saying goes, where there's a will there's a way, and with the quarantine for travellers returning to England from high-risk countries (currently all Alpine nations) now reduced to 10 days (or as little as five if you take a test), there's still some hope that it might not be impossible to celebrate the festive season in the mountains.

That hope lies in Switzerland. It is the last remaining country where Britons can (feasible) travel to for a ski trip in the Alps. Unlike its neighbours Italy, France and Austria, Switzerland has allowed ski resorts to stay fully open and remain so over the festive period (for now). Granted, tougher restrictions have recently been implemented, but the Swiss have remained steadfast in their passion for skiing, and the economy, and are welcoming foreign visitors with open arms.

It may involve travelling against Government advice (though that doesn't mean you'd be breaking the law), and you will need to self-isolate on your return home - but is an escape to the mountains worth it? Many would firmly agree, with research showing that the majority of skiers are willing to quarantine to get a ski holiday under their belts this year.

Those prepared to jump through the hoops could find empty slopes in Switzerland and the (very) white Christmas and happy New Year we're all dreaming of. Here's, tentatively speaking, everything you need to know about escaping to Switzerland before the chime of the New Year.

Are Britons welcome on the slopes in Switzerland?

In short, yes, as long as they act responsibly.

"Switzerland remains open to British guests without a need to quarantine upon arrival, and while we are currently not actively promoting travel to Switzerland to potential guests in the UK, we look forward to welcoming them back soon, hopefully in time to enjoy winter in the Swiss Alps," said Myriam Ziesack, head of communications for the Switzerland Tourist Board in the UK.

It is also important to remember the implications a no-deal Brexit could have on travel after December 31. "UK nationals qualify as third country nationals from 1 January 2021," explains Ziesack. "This means that based on the current status, UK nationals will no longer be able to travel to Switzerland for tourism purposes from January 1 2021. The Covid-19-related restrictions will remain in place as long as the UK is categorized as a high-risk country by Switzerland."

Which resorts are open?

Here's a snapshot of what some of the country's biggest resorts are doing to combat the spread of coronavirus and remain open.

Zermatt

Zermatt, the picture-perfect car-free resort in the shadow of the Matterhorn mountain, has been open for skiing since the summer, on its high-altitude glacier. This has provided bosses with extensive experience in operating during the pandemic. All lifts, shops, hotels, apartments, leisure facilities (including museums and swimming pools) are open. Bars and nightclubs are closed but restaurants are not, with similar rules in place to those in the UK, plus a daily curfew of 10pm, which will be extended to 1:00am on Christmas and New Year's Eve. For anybody who develops symptoms whilst in resort there are PCR tests available for CHF180 (£150) or rapid antigen tests from CHF90 (£75). Find out more about Covid rules in Zermatt [here](#).

Crans-Montana

Crans-Montana, in the Valais region, lies quietly under the radar of most British skiers and snowboarders, but this year it was one of the first resorts to offer skiing during the summer. Now that winter's underway its ski area is fully open, with masks compulsory on ski lifts and indoors and a traffic light signage system to help guests understand the rules. The resort has confirmed that the police will be carrying out checks on establishments to ensure everyone is complying.

"Skiers from the UK are very welcome to visit Crans-Montana over Christmas and New Year, providing they can travel within the laws of the UK and they respect the extra measures that have been put in place here in the resort," said Pierre-Henri Mainetti, sales manager at the resort. The Crans-Montana prepaid card is helping businesses go contactless - visitors can purchase a prepayment card, which they can load with money and use to pay for things such as lift passes, meals and activities during their stay, with a 20 per cent discount. Find out more about Covid rules in Crans-Montana [here](#).

Where to stay

A break from the eye-wateringly expensive hotels that Switzerland is famed for, the family-run Hotel Elite in Crans-Montana is a budget-friendly three-star choice. A week's stay over New Year costs £850 per person, including bed and breakfast and a six-day lift pass, departing December 26.

St Moritz

Skiing has been possible in the glitzy resort of St Moritz for almost