



GO TO THE SNOW

Late bookers can't be choosers when it comes to February half-term ski holidays. This is by far the busiest week of the year, but – perhaps surprisingly – it is still possible to find some availability, even at classic resorts. Overall, though, Italy is the place to find the best value

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Ski Italy

One of the great advantages of skiing in Italy is that you avoid the half-term scrum at Geneva airport. Selva, one of the prettiest resorts of the Superski area in the Dolomites, is accessed via Innsbruck airport, about two hours away. It offers very good value and also has excellent snow at the moment. There is lots of variety for families of all standards, too – it is suitable for beginners, but has plenty to entertain better skiers and snowboarders, too. Linked to the resorts of Arabba and Cortina, Selva is a gateway to the Sellaronda ski circuit, a 25-mile tour of the red-tinted and craggy Gruppo Sella mountains which rise dramatically above the pistes.

Inghams (01483 944384; inghams.co.uk) offers the four-star Hotel Oswald in Selva, a five-minute walk to the gondola, with an après-ski bar and sauna, from £679 half-board, based on a family room. Departs Manchester on February 11

Time for Tignes

The snow is in great shape up here, and the good news is that there is still some half-term availability. Tignes itself is not beautiful, but it does have an excellent location, with lots of good-value family accommodation and access to a total ski area comprising 300km of pistes and plenty of blue and red runs. Non-ski activities include ice-diving, tobogganing, dog-sledding and snowshoeing, and there is a big aqua centre. *Peak Retreats (023 9283 9310; peakretreats.co.uk) offers the four-star Altaviva Residence, next to the Bosses gondola in Tignes 1800, with indoor pool, sun terrace, hot tub, hammam and sauna, from £821 self-catering and self-drive, including Eurotunnel crossing with a FlexiPlus upgrade.*

France en famille

Compact and ideal for families, Arc 1950 – the highest, most luxurious and most attractive part of Les Arcs – didn't have great Christmas snow, but there have been some serious falls since then and it now looks well set for the rest of the season. The ski-in, ski-out convenience is a big plus point, and there are plenty of easier runs and a link to neighbouring La Plagne for those who enjoy doing some serious mileage. This self-drive option keeps costs down.

Erna Low (020 7584 2841; ernalow.co.uk) offers the five-star Residence in Arc 1950 from £942 self-catering, based on four sharing a ski-in, ski-out apartment, self-drive including Eurotunnel crossing. Departs February 11

An Austrian classic

Sure, St Anton is a serious resort with plenty of challenging skiing – but it can also work very well for families. The slopes around Nasserein and Rendl are good areas for building confidence, but there are lots of other options for more confident children and parents – including the link to Züers and Lech. If you have teenagers who enjoy some nightlife, you may want to set a curfew, however; this is a resort where the après-ski goes on and on.

Crystal Ski (020 3451 2821; crystalski.co.uk) offers the four-star Hotel Arlberg in St Anton, a few minutes' walk from the gondola and town centre, with indoor pool and spa, from £1,402 half-board, based on a superior room. Departs Newcastle on February 11

Alternative Austria

The village of Pertisau on the shores of Lake Achensee in the Austrian Tyrol is





an interesting suggestion from Inntravel, which still has availability over half term. It offers families a gentle introduction to skiing, combined with a variety of other winter activities: you can try horse-drawn sleigh rides, snowshoeing and tobogganing, for example. There is a ski school offering lessons for children aged between three and 12 years, with a practice slope in the centre of the village and access to the small Zwölferkopf ski area.

Inntravel (01653 617000; inntravel.co.uk) offers the four-star Hotel Wiesenhof, with spa, indoor pool, playroom and babysitting service, from £1,629 half-board, based on a family room and including local bus pass. Departs February 11 or 12

Winter in Whistler

Make a virtue of the fact that Canadian schools have no half-term holiday in February, so the slopes are less inundated with families and prices don't spike in the same way as they do in Europe. Whistler is a top choice - not only does it offer world-class skiing, with every level of skier and snowboarder catered for, but also plenty of off-piste activities including tobogganing and snowshoeing. The Whistler Sliding Centre on Blackcomb mountain offers beginners aged 14 years and over a chance to try bobsledding, too.

Ski Solutions (020 3918 9392; skisolutions.com) offers the three-star Blackcomb Spring Suites in Whistler, the resort's highest hotel, with indoor pool, kitchenettes and ski-in, ski-out access, from £2,735 room only, based on two rooms. Departs February 11

