



The 15 best ski resorts you can reach by train

From new rail-ski packages on the Eurostar Snow service to a host of other options beyond France, here's everything you need to know

For the second ski season in a row, this winter Eurostar will run an indirect service, to the Tarentaise region of the the French Alps. Called Eurostar Snow, the service combines two trains – a Eurostar from London to Lille and then an onward connecting Eurostar continental (formerly Thalys) train. The service stops at six stations in France: Chambéry, Albertville, Moûtiers, Aime la Plagne, Landry and Bourg St Maurice, giving skiers a wider choice of resorts than previous years. What's more, this season several tour operators and travel agencies will sell rail-inclusive packages using the service. These include Inghams, Peak Retreats, Travelski, Ski Solutions, Skiline, Snowfinders and SNO. Eurostar also sells seats independently, giving skiers the chance to use the service in combination with any accommodation they like. There are 347 seats for skiers on the service, up from the 250 available last season. Yet it's still a paltry amount compared to the 900 seats on each of the two Eurostar Ski Trains that used to run. Eurostar Snow serves a multitude of resorts – including La Plagne, Les Arcs Peisey-Vallandry, Les Menuires, Méribel, St Martin de Belleville, Sainte Foy, Valmorel, Tignes, Val d'Isère, Val Thorens, Courchevel and La Rosiere. This winter, the first Eurostar Snow outbound departure is on Saturday, December 21 2024 and the final departure is on Saturday, March 1 2025. Skiers wanting to travel to French ski resorts by train in March and April, will need to travel using a combination of Eurostar to Paris and TGV. For skiers travelling on other rail services to the Alps, ticket sales open in October, for dates 60 to 120 days ahead. Around November 15, tickets for winter trains in Europe, for dates between February 10 and 24 March 2025, will go on sale. Some international routes, such as Paris to Geneva and Turin go on sale a month earlier than that. Travelling via Paris, Lille or Brussels, combined with onward high-speed or sleeper trains, has become an increasingly popular choice for British skiers and snowboarders looking for relaxing, scenic journeys and no airport queues or long drives. Indirect routes open up many more resorts in other regions of the Alps. These include Alpe d'Huez, Avoriaz and Les Gets in France, Sauze d'Oulx in Italy, and the Swiss resorts of Saas-Fee and Zermatt – by using a combination of Eurostar to Paris and TGV from Paris to the Alps. Travellers can also travel from Paris by sleeper train to resorts such as Serre Chevalier in France and Claviere in Italy, or take high-speed services via Brussels to Cologne to take the NightJet sleeper trains to the ski slopes of Austria. Below we run through the best ski resorts to reach by rail, and how to do it this winter. Find out more about this winter's Eurostar Snow service here. 1. Morzine, France Central to the vast 650km Portes du Soleil, Morzine is a resort with something for everyone. Chalet-style buildings give the village bags of ambience, and the lift system gives easy access to neighbouring Avoriaz, Les Gets and beyond. For eco-conscious train travellers, the resort has been awarded the prestigious Flocon Vert for its environmental steps and train travellers can received discounts around the village. The journey Depart London St Pancras on Saturday on the 09:31 Eurostar to Paris-Nord. Change to Paris-Lyon and take 14:18 TGV, changing at Bellegarde, to arrive in Cluses at 18:51; from there it's 40 minutes by bus or taxi. Rail journey time 8 hours, 20 minutes Journey highlight Gliding through the Arve valley on the approach to Cluses. How much? Return rail fares from £124 per adult, booked through Trainline or Rail Europe. Peak Retreats offers seven nights at Les 3 Sophies apartments, Morzine, in a two-bedroom apartment sleeping 4, from £954 per person, including return train travel and transfers. 2. Les Arcs, France Les Arcs' four villages are part of the Paradiski, a huge 425km ski area that caters for all abilities. The villages, 1600, 1800, 1950 and 2000, offer convenient, often ski-in/ski-out access to the slopes – and with its upgraded, unique funicular railway. Daredevils can try the resort's zipline, which speeds from the Aiguile Rouge at 3,226m at speeds up to 130km/h. The journey Depart London St Pancras 09:01 on Saturday on the Eurostar Snow service via Lille arriving at Bourg St



Maurice at 17:45. From there it's a 35-to 45-minute transfer to Les Arcs' villages. Rail journey time 8 hours, 19 minutes Journey highlight Direct overnight travel gives holidaymakers an extra day's skiing. How much? Return rail fares with Eurostar Snow, from £198, booked with Eurostar. Travelski offers an eight-night at the Residence Charmettoger, Arc 1800, which sleeps six, at £755 per person, based on four sharing. Includes return train travel, lift pass, accommodation and transfers. 3. Sauze d'Oulx, Italy This relatively unheard of Italian resort forms part of the 400km Milky Way ski area, shared with neighbouring Sestriere and Claviere and is ideal for confident intermediates. It's possible to cover miles and miles of terrain in a day, including many blissfully quiet runs. Sauze d'Oulx's village is a mixture of charming cobbled streets and rather more brash architecture, and has a lively après scene. The journey Depart London St Pancras on Saturday on the 09:31 Eurostar to Paris-Nord. Change to Paris-Lyon and take the 14:45 TGV to Oulx, arriving at 19:23. From there it's 15 minutes by taxi or bus. Rail journey time 8 hours, 52 minutes Journey highlights A ringside view of Lac du Bourget. How much? Return rail fares from £132 per adult, booked through Trainline or Rail Europe. Inghams offers seven nights, half board at Park Hotel Gran Bosco, Sauze d'Oulx from £809 per person, based on two adults sharing. Train travel and transfers included. 4. Val Thorens, France Val Thorens' enviable position perched at 2,300m in the huge Trois Vallées ski area makes it a popular choice for British skiers and snowboarders. The resort has excellent beginner slopes and all the skiing that intermediates and experts could dream of, with 600km of slopes in total. There's an abundance of stylish hotels and a dedicated ski touring zone in the Borgne sector of the ski area. The journey Depart London St Pancras 09:01 on Saturday on the Eurostar Snow service via Lille arriving at Moutiers at 17:05. From there it's 50 minutes by taxi or bus. Rail journey time 7 hours, 29 minutes Journey highlight The varied scenery of the Tarentaise valley. How much? Return rail fares with Eurostar Snow, from £198, booked with Eurostar. Snowfinders offers eight nights at the Les Temples de Soleil, Val Thorens, in a one-bed apartment, from £933 per person, based on four sharing, including return train travel, lift pass, accommodation and transfers. 5. Alpe d'Huez, France A quick jaunt by train brings you to the heart of the Isere region, where Alpe d'Huez's vast 250km ski area encompasses five villages, including the longest black run in Europe – La Sarenne. The terrain here will suit beginners through to advanced, and is dotted with cosy restaurants such as La Bergerie, at Villard Reculas – an ideal place for a coffee stop at the end of a powder run. The journey Depart London St Pancras on Saturday on the 09:31 Eurostar to Paris-Nord. Change to Paris-Lyon and take the 14:14 TGV to arrive Grenoble at 17:13. From there it's 90 minutes by taxi or bus. Rail journey time 6 hours, 42 minutes Journey highlight Paris to Grenoble by TGV, through the French countryside. How much? Return rail fares from £124 per adult, booked through Trainline or Rail Europe. 6. Tignes, France Tignes has a high proportion of ski-in/-ski-out accommodation in its higher villages, and an inviting array of traditional chalets at Les Brevières, its lowest. There are 300km of slopes to explore, which it shares with neighbouring Val d'Isère. Alternative activities include ice diving, ice climbing, snow tubing and Bun J Ride – a hybrid combination of a ski jump, bungee and a zip-line ride. The journey Depart London St Pancras 09:01 on Saturday on the Eurostar Snow service via Lille arriving at Bourg St Maurice at 17:45. From there it's a 40-minute transfer. Rail journey time 8 hours, 19 minutes Journey highlights The views onto mountain villages in the Tarentaise valley. How much? Return rail fares with Eurostar Snow, from £198, booked with Eurostar. Inghams offers eight nights at Hotel Le Paquis, Tignes from £1,258 per person, based on two adults sharing, including return train travel, transfers. 7. Söll, Austria The impressive SkiWelt region, of which the compact village of Söll forms a part, boasts 284km of ski runs dotted with 77 rustic Alpine huts and après bars. The views over the Wilder Kaiser mountain range are stunning and you can even ski at night, as well as enjoy some of the longest floodlit toboggan runs in Europe at Hexenritt and Mond. The journey Depart London St Pancras on Friday on the 15:04 Eurostar to Brussels, arriving 18:05; take the 18:25 ICE from Brussels to Cologne, arriving 20:15; have dinner and take the 21:45 NightJet sleeper train to Kufstein, arriving 08:26; from there it's about 25 minutes by bus or taxi. Rail journey time 16 hours 22 minutes How much? Return rail fares from £202 per adult booked through The Travel Bureau. 8. St Martin de Belleville, France Far less famous than its neighbours, St



Martin de Belleville delivers the huge Trois Vallées ski area while providing an authentic, relaxed base. The picturesque Savoyard village has been adopted by innovative chalet providers, and its superb local restaurants such as the high-end Le Montagnard and the hearty L'Eterlou are helping create a loyal following. The journey Depart London St Pancras 09:01 on Saturday on the Eurostar Snow service via Lille arriving at Moutiers at 17:05. From there it's a 30-minute transfer. Rail journey time 7 hours, 29 minutes Journey highlight Snacks at high-speed in the café bar carriage. How much? Return rail fares with Eurostar Snow, from £198, booked with Eurostar. Ski Solutions offers eight nights at the The M Lodge Hotel. St Martin, from £2,245 per person, half board, based on two sharing, including return train travel and transfers. 9. St Anton, Austria You can't walk through St Anton's charming centre without being impressed by the bustle and character. This is a resort with buzz, and part of the excitement stems from the fact that it's blessed with some of the Alps' finest expert off piste, in addition to 340km of pistes, as part of the giant Arlberg ski area. The journey Depart London St Pancras on Friday on the 07:31 Eurostar to Paris-Nord. Change to Paris-Lyon and take the 12:22 TGV from Paris-Lyon, changing in Zurich onto the 12:40 RailJet to arrive at 21:01 in St Anton. Rail journey time 12 hours, 30 minutes. Journey highlight Passing by Lake Zurich and later through the Arlberg Valley. How much? Return rail fares from £174 per adult booked through The Travel Bureau. SNO offers eight nights at Chalet Valluga, St Anton, from £1,099 per person, chalet catering, based on two sharing, including return train travel and transfers. 10. Val Cenis, France The piste map is a giveaway as to why French families love the ski area of Val Cenis Vanoise: an impressive 125km-strong network of green, blue and red runs spread across the terrain. There's also a 900m toboggan run in resort and a pool and spa complex. Self-catering accommodation is good value here, with high quality residences at prices below the French average. The journey Depart London St Pancras on Saturday on the 09:31 Eurostar to Paris-Nord. Change to Paris-Lyon and take the 14:45 TGV to Modane, arriving at 18:49. From there it's 30 minutes by taxi or bus. Rail journey time 8 hours, 18 minutes Journey highlights Plunging into the French countryside from Paris. How much? Return rail fares from £124 per adult, booked through Trainline, Rail Europe) or The Travel Bureau. Peak Retreats offers seven nights at Les Chalets de Flambeau apartments, Val Cenis, in a two-bedroom apartment sleeping 4, from £925 per person, including return train travel and transfers. 11. Serre Chevalier, France Made up of four villages, Serre Chevalier is a friendly, unpretentious resort with access to some marvellously varied terrain and plenty of wooded runs. The 250km of pistes suit intermediates perfectly, with long reds and simple off piste. Alternative winter activities here include paintballing on snow, dog sledding and fat biking. The journey Depart London St Pancras on Friday on the 15:31 Eurostar to Paris-Nord. Change to Paris-Austerlitz and take the 20:51 Intercités de nuit to Briançon, arriving at 08:21. From there it's 15-25 minutes by bus or taxi to Serre Che's other villages. Rail journey time 15 hours, 50 minutes Journey highlights Waking up in the Southern Alps, looking forward to an extra day's skiing. How much? Return rail fares from £128 per adult, booked through Trainline, Rail Europe or The Travel Bureau. Peak Retreats offers seven nights at Cristal Lodge apartments, Serre Chevalier, in a two-bedroom apartment sleeping 4, from £820 per person, including return train travel and transfers. 12. Peisey-Vallandry, France Located right at the heart of the 425km Paradiski region, between its more famous neighbours, Les Arcs and La Plagne, this resort is made up of several charming villages with old farmhouse buildings converted into beautiful chalets and apartments amid a friendly, laid-back vibe – and a superb Nordic ski network of slopes too. There's a museum of mountain wildlife, too. The journey Depart London St Pancras 09:01 on Saturday on the new Eurostar Snow service via Lille arriving at Landry at 17:38. From there it's a 35-minute transfer. Rail journey time 8 hours, 8 minutes Journey highlight The scenery in the Tarentaise valley. How much? Return rail fares with Eurostar Snow, from £198, booked with Eurostar. Peak Retreats offers seven nights at l'Oree des Cimes apartments, Peisey Vallandry, in a two-bedroom apartment sleeping four, and an eighth night in Basecamp Lodge, Bourg St Maurice, from £771 per person, including return train travel and transfers. 13. Montgenèvre, France Montgenèvre's nursery slopes sweep down right into its pretty village centre, making it an attractive destination for families with young children. The resort also has plenty of intermediate-



friendly terrain and links into the 400km Milky Way ski area, which includes Sestriere in Italy. The journey Depart London St Pancras on Saturday on the 09:31 Eurostar to Paris-Nord. Change to Paris-Lyon and take the 14:45 TGV to Oulx, arriving at 19:23. From there it's 35 minutes by taxi or bus. Rail journey time 8 hours, 52 minutes Rail journey highlights A ringside seat passing Lac du Bourget. How much? Return rail fares from £124 per adult, booked through Trainline, Rail Europe or The Travel Bureau. Peak Retreats offers seven nights at Le Napoleon apartments, Montgenève, in a two-bedroom apartment sleeping 4, from £918 per person, including return train travel and transfers.

14. Les Gets, France Part of the huge 650km Portes du Soleil, Les Gets is dotted with chocolate-box chalets that give it an enduring charm. You can ski to some wonderful mountain restaurants, such as the panoramic Grand Ourse on Mont Chéry and La Croix Blanche at the top of the Chavannes cable car. The resort has electric snowmobiling for children, as well as a geocaching trail and chocolate-making workshops to add to its already family-friendly appeal. The journey Depart London St Pancras on Saturday on the 09:31 Eurostar to Paris-Nord. Change to Paris-Lyon and take 14:18 TGV, changing at Bellegarde, to arrive in Cluses at 18:51; from there it's 40 minutes by bus or taxi. Rail journey time 8 hours, 20 minutes Journey highlight Gliding through the Arve valley on the approach to Cluses. How much? Return rail fares from £124 per adult, booked through Trainline or Rail Europe. Peak Retreats offers seven nights at Residence Annapurna, Les Gets, in a two-bedroom apartment sleeping 4, from £1331 per person, including return train travel and transfers.

15. La Plagne, France The 11 villages that make up the resort of La Plagne are dotted across some tantalising terrain, with much of the accommodation being ski-in/ski-out. There's a vast range of activities here, including electric Moonbikes — a cross between a snow-scooter and a skidoo, ideal for exploring the terrain once the lifts close. You can also stay in a luxury converted snow groomer, under the stars at the top of the Arpette slopes. The journey Depart London St Pancras 09:01 on Saturday on the new Eurostar Snow service via Lille arriving at Aime la Plagne at 17:27. From there it's a 20-40 minute transfer. Rail journey time 7 hours, 57 minutes Journey highlights The scenery en route to the Tarentaise. How much? Return rail fares with Eurostar Snow, from £198, booked with Eurostar. Skiline offers eight nights at the Araucaria Hotel & Spa, La Plagne, from £2,062 per person, half board, based on two sharing, including return train travel, transfers and lift pass. Travel tips and essentials Useful resources for rail travel to the Alps The Rail Map of Europe 3rd edition (£12.99; europeanrailltimetable.eu) is a fantastic companion for planning rail journeys. Change stations in Paris (Gare du Nord to Gare du Lyon) with a pre-booked taxi from companies such as City Airport Taxis (city-airport-taxis.com) or Paris Private Cab (parisprivatecab.com). For travellers visiting France a new Rail Ski Map features 35 train stations in the French Alps and the Pyrenees, serving 93 ski resorts, and is a useful resource to help plot your journey. How to book independent tickets Plan your trip and book your tickets direct through rail booking agencies such as The Travel Bureau (rail-travel.co.uk), Trainseurope (trainseurope.co.uk), International Rail (internationalrail.com) and Ffestiniog Travel (ffestiniogtravel.com). Alternatively use online ticket agents such as Rail Europe (raileurope.co.uk) and Trainline (trainline.com). When to book tickets Eurostar offers travellers the ability to change tickets to a different date and time, paying only the difference in fare and with no fee to do so. And because of this, rail-booking agents and websites generally advise that to save money, skiers should book their Eurostars in advance first, rather than waiting for onward trains to go on sale. David Walters, managing director of rail-booking agency The Travel Bureau, said: "Booking the Eurostar in advance is the way to get the cheapest fares. As soon as you know what your dates are and where you're going, we advise that it's worth getting the Eurostar legs booked first, and then onward trains later." Further information The three major rail companies skiers and snowboarders need to be familiar with are Eurostar (eurostar.com), SNCF Connect (snCF-connect.com) and Deutsche Bahn (bahn.co.uk). For more information about NightJet sleeper trains, see the NightJet website (nightjet.com).

Useful guides on journeys into Europe and the Alps can be found at Seat 61 (seat61.com) and Ski Flight Free (skiflightfree.org). Daniel Elkan is founder of snowcarbon.co.uk, an independent guide to how to travel to ski resorts by train. The website has train journey schedules up to one year in



advance, ski packages with rail travel included, detailed guidance on independent travel, videos and by-skier-for-skier stories of ski holidays by train. Reader Service: Planning on travelling to the continent? Make sure you book European travel insurance before you go. This article was first published in October 2021, and has been revised and updated.