

WITH AUSTRALIA'S SNOW SEASON BEING IN FULL SWING, YOU MIGHT BE MOTIVATED TO EXPLORE SOME OF THE BIG WHITE OPTIONS THAT LIE BEYOND OUR BORDERS. MARIE BARBIERI SHARES HER TOP PICKS OF THE WORLD'S COOLEST OPTIONS



BE TEMPTED BY THE WHITE STUFF

## 5 Val d'Isere, FRANCE

Linked to neighbouring Tignes, this is one giant snow playground for learner skiers and seasoned novices. Yet it's also the favourite for advanced adrenaline-seekers due to its lift-served off-piste areas.

Val d'Isere allows the distance-hungry to put a thrilling 300 kilometres of slopes beneath their skis, making it little wonder this is the site of the World Alpine Skiing Championships.

With snowshoe hiking, ice-climbing, sleigh-riding and parasailing on offer here, you'll need large stores of energy at hand. Val d'Isere also showcases a snowpark for maximum thrill and free-ride areas. Along with a first-class après ski culture, garnished with a wide range of chalet accommodation, Val d'Isere remains at the beating heart of European skiing.

## 4 Aspen, USA

The ritz and glitz capital of America's ski resorts. Located in the White River National Forest in the heart of the Rockies, Aspen was originally a silver-mining town, opening as a ski resort in 1947 with the world's longest chairlift.

Aspen Mountain is craved for by dare-devil skiers, with intermediates heading for Snowmass. Beginners will take to the long and winding slopes of Buttermilk Mountain, and snowboarders will carve their trails on Buttermilk's 167m superpipe. For creature comfort-cravers, a plethora of luxury accommodation awaits weary muscles.



"Whether your love for the big white lies in gently traversing across powdered glaciers or heli-skiing from the heavens, you can never fall short of choice."

## 3 Zermatt, SWITZERLAND

Probably the most charming of all ski resorts; it's a shoes or skis-only world once you arrive by train in car-free Zermatt. The timeless, cobbled laneways, Hansel and Gretel chalets and horse-drawn sleighs make this a snow-packed paradise.

Sandwiched between the serrated mountainscape of the super-swish Swiss Alps, this alpine village, with year-round glacial skiing, is dominated by the country's most notable landmark – the ever-present 4,478m-high Matterhorn. It's also Europe's highest ski resort, with 90 per cent of the terrain above tree level. And when you can see as far as Italy and France from the best mountain restaurants in the Alps, you might not even want to descend.

Zermatt also boasts the highest ski lift in Europe up to the Klein Matterhorn, planted at 3,885 metres. From here, you can tackle Europe's longest ski run, a 13km pine-forested trail back down to the village.

It may be pricey, but Zermatt is European skiing at its best. North-facing slopes at high-altitude offer the best powder, with Zermatt's highest runs seemingly dusted with a layer of crushed diamonds. And snowboard parks and half-pipes will satisfy every boarder eager to expend their adrenalin.

Don't miss Zermatt's unique Glacier Palace. Frozen in time, it hides 15 metres below and is studded with ice sculptures that leave you thoroughly awe-smacked.

## 2 Coronet Peak, NEW ZEALAND

Queenstown is the adventure capital of the world. Rip up the slopes of the Southern Alps from June to October on uber-cool Coronet Peak, which just got even better. A recent NZ\$30 million-dollar upgrade has opened a brand new base area with tantalising cafés, sundeck and cutting-edge snowmaking facilities to keep the resort the adrenalin-hungry's favourite.

Coronet Peak is suitable for all skiing levels

and a multi-pass option can also integrate nearby ski fields. At Coronet Peak the super-swift quad chair will whiz you up the 1,650 metres of the mountain, so prepare to gasp the crisp air as you are blasted by dramatic views of The Remarkables, Crown Range and pristine Lake Wakatipu.

New Zealand is actually one of the world's most affordable places to heli-ski. If being flown by helicopter to the top of a 3,000m mountain erects your poles, then prepare for super soft, dry powder, unaffected by the heat of the sun to carve your memories in forever. This virgin snow, so unlike the lower altitude variety, makes for a truly spiritual experience.

## 1 Revelstoke Mountain Resort, CANADA

Still a relatively well-kept ski-secret, Revelstoke is a billion-dollar skiing Mecca born recently in December 2007. Planted firmly on the Selkirk Mountains, Revelstoke is British Columbia's new buzz word, with real estate so hot it's threatening to melt the ice! Okay, so the secret is out.

Up to 18 metres of champagne powder coats the slopes annually here, with over 200,000 hectares of skiable, icing sugar-like fields to get lost in. More suited to the advanced skier, Revelstoke is fast becoming a rival to world-renowned Whistler. The Stoke and The Ripper are super-fast quad chairlifts that get you up top before you can scream 'slalom'. But you'll have to prepare for burning thighs to handle North America's newest and longest (lift-equipped) vertical descent at over 1,800 metres.

Expansion continues, and by completion the resort's 100+ ski runs and over 5,000 new houses will be part of a fully-fledged (or sledged) town, including a golf course, designed by Nick Faldo.

So calling all powder-hounds – come to Revelstoke before the hordes do, where you're sure to find that perfect piste; maybe all to yourself.



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