



## GOURMET SKI CHALETS

Fine food and fine conditions are the hallmarks of any memorable ski trip – but why stray from your cosy nook when the best meal is at yours? Gabrielle Sander gives her guide to Europe’s finest places to ski, eat, sleep and repeat



### KILCO PENTHOUSE VAL D’ISÈRE, FRANCE

Unclip your skis, step into a private lift then walk straight into this double-height penthouse chalet, where you can warm yourself by the roaring fire and soak up uninterrupted views of the slopes scaled just moments before. Soothe aching calves in its basement swimming pool and Moroccan-tiled hammam, then head back upstairs for a gin tasting, or one of the other epicurean activities your host has laid on for the evening.

The meal that follows – a reflection of Italian chef Giacomo’s experience working in Michelin-starred restaurants – will be equally top class, and guaranteed to please thanks to a menu consultation before you arrive for likes and dislikes. Asian and Mediterranean influences are combined in dishes such as tiger prawn patties with baby fennel, halibut with pistachio crumb, and sweet potato and ginger cake with freshly churned maple syrup ice cream. It’s a well-balanced and delicious offering even Jamie Oliver (who learnt to ski in Val d’Isère) would approve of.

Situated a mere 100m from the main Bellevarde and Solaise lifts, at Kilco you really are in the heart of the action. All within strollable reach are the village’s boutiques and bars. Live music is particularly popular here and well worth checking out.

There’s over 300km of skiing on offer (not to mention the off-piste opportunities), which is more than enough to keep you entertained for a week. To make it easy – and give you optimum time on the slopes – Kilco has a Land Rover and chauffeur on hand to whisk you different parts of the resort and further afield.

**EAT ON THE PISTE** Hop off the Fornet cable car and ski halfway down the blue Mangard run to reach L’Edelweiss restaurant for just the sort of dish one craves after a morning on the slopes: Royan ravioli with creamy Beaufort cheese. [restaurant-edelweiss-valdisere.com](http://restaurant-edelweiss-valdisere.com)

**THE DETAIL** Sleeps ten guests across five rooms. Exclusive use from £14,000 per week, catered. [hiphideouts.com](http://hiphideouts.com)



**CHALET 1936**  
**VERBIER,**  
**SWITZERLAND**

Clockwise from top left:  
 Swiss digs; A-list dishes;  
 room with a view; relax  
 by the pool; pretty plates;  
 dining in the snow; cosy  
 surrounds; fresh fish;  
 slowing the pace



A welcome bear hug after a day traversing some of the best skiing in the Swiss Alps, this vast Verbier abode even has its own lift to whisk you from one splendid floor to the next. Dotted with pieces of pop art, it has a sprawling cinema and games room, an indoor pool and glass hammam, and a glorious master suite equipped with a copper roll-top tub. There's a fully kitted-out gym too, but it's unlikely to be required: a swift jaunt to the village centre and you can access the lift to ski across the incredible 4 Vallées area. At 3,330m, Mont Fort is the highest point in the resort and a popular spot with freeriders.

Keep your eyes peeled for Verbier's celebrity regulars – Leonardo DiCaprio, Richard Branson and the Beckhams all like to ski here. And get a taste the good life over supper picked from the chef's menu du jour: venison carpaccio with pickled

blueberry, risotto nero topped with crispy squid and Pecorino, and apple and maple syrup cheesecake. Dial the frivolity up an extra notch with the chalet's Acoustic Après Ski experience. You'll be helicoptered to a remote mountaintop location, to dine on a lavish seafood feast at a table carved out of ice, while sipping spiced pear and gin cocktails and listening to a live acoustic band. We'll say *santé* to that!

**EAT ON THE PISTE** At an altitude of 2,457m, situated off Les Gentianes or La Chaux runs, Cabane du Mont-Fort isn't short of picture-perfect views. For a hearty classic, order the *croûte au fromage* – it's the perfect lunch before tackling the descent back to town. [cabanemontfort.ch](http://cabanemontfort.ch)

**THE DETAIL** Sleeps 14 guests across seven rooms. Exclusive use from £47,200 per week, catered. [hautemontagne.com](http://hautemontagne.com)



**CHALET CATELINE ST MARTIN DE BELLEVILLE, FRANCE**

Sure, St Martin de Belleville may not be as well known as its peers, and Chalet Catelina may not be as conspicuously luxurious as some of the others on this list, but the elevated position provides it with arguably some of the best alpine views, stretching across to the neighbouring hamlet of Le Châtelard. If you live for the après-ski, you'll be much happier in nearby Méribel; if you don't, this quiet village may be just the ticket.

It's easy to see why founders James and Ruth Downey swapped city life for the slower pace of this area, two hours' drive from Geneva Airport. Great skiing is a given – check out the 28km cross-country track running between St Martin and Les Menuires. For something different, hit the snowshoe tracks

or book a ride on the dog sleigh. When it comes to the food, provenance is key. Bread hails from nearby bakeries, while meat and cheese from local producers are championed in dishes such as pistachio, thyme and Beaufort-stuffed guinea fowl, and ham hock terrine with cider-braised apples.

**EAT ON THE PISTE** You'll find great piste-side restaurants serving typical mountain fare, but serious bon vivants should head to the neighbouring village of St Marcel, for La Bouitte. Expect Savoie fare spun into memorable morsels worthy of the three Michelin stars held since 2015. [la-bouitte.com](http://la-bouitte.com)

**THE DETAIL** Sleeps ten guests (single-room rental available). From £700pp per week, catered. [whitemountain-chalets.com](http://whitemountain-chalets.com)

Photos by Jeremy M Wilson; Yves Gameau; Angela Duker



## CHALET MERLO SAINTE FOY, FRANCE

Top: the outstanding views, beamed ceilings and culinary creations at Chalet Merlo. Below: luxury in the Dolomites from the exterior to homely living spaces



You'll dine out on the memory of your host lowering bottles of champagne to you by bucket as you soak in the steamy outdoor hot tub long after you return from a week at Chalet Merlo. So too, the panoramic views of Mont Pourri spied from said tub and through the windows of this lofty four-storey abode.

They'll have you up and out for the first lifts, while the daily feasts served up by your personal chef will be enough to tear you away from the slopes afterwards. Think pancetta and pea purée to start, tender côte de boeuf for main, a chocolate fondant for dessert, then a platter of superb local cheeses, such as Tomme de Savoie and Persillé de Tignes.

Fit for a family of 12, this homely bolthole is nestled in the pretty hamlet of Le Miroir, a 20-minute drive from Bourg St Maurice railway station and its direct Eurostar service

from London. Popular with snowboarders and fresh-powder seekers, Sainte Foy is among a handful of world-class resorts in the upper Tarentaise Valley, and can be reached from the chalet via a challenging off-piste route. The likes of Tignes, Val d'Isère and Les Arcs are all around 30 minutes away, offering fantastic skiing for all levels – and the chauffeur's twice-daily drop-offs mean you can tick the lot off in one week. A helipad 500m from your door provides the option of heli-skiing forays over the border and into Italy.

**EAT ON THE PISTE** An off-piste track runs straight to rustic, family-run Chez Mérie, serving chestnut soup and huge cuts of meat cooked on an open fire. Book ahead. [00 33 479 069 016](tel:0033479069016)

**THE DETAIL** Sleeps 12 guests across six rooms. Exclusive use from £10,000 per week, catered. [premiere-neige.com](http://premiere-neige.com)



## PINE LODGE DOLOMITES SELVA GARDENA, ITALY

There's nothing quite like the warmth of a bubbling hot tub to welcome you in from the biting cold – add ridiculously good views of the Dolomites and a glass of something chilled to enjoy while immersed in bubbles, and life gets a little better.

Unesco World Heritage Sites aside, the main draw at the impeccably presented, four-bedroom Pine Lodge, is its proximity to so much good skiing. If you're channelling Alberto Tomba, you should join the hordes tackling the Sellaronda circuit of the Sella Massif: 40km of uninterrupted pistes across four Dolomite passes, and part of the Dolomiti Superski – one of the world's biggest ski areas (1,200km of slopes, 450 lifts and 50 towns). There's a starting point for this escapade, as well as

more leisurely slopes and the nursery runs of the vast Alta Badia, which is just 300m from your front door.

Wind down afterwards in the lodge's indoor subterranean pool and sauna, or while away time on the consoles in the games snug, before filling up on some prosecco, oysters and chateaubriand, with a side of Sella Massif vistas.

**EAT ON THE PISTE** Exceptional views and a 300-strong wine list make Sofie Hütte a super mountain stop, moments from the Seceda chairlift (get there via the Col Raiser gondola). The freshly made spinach ravioli will not disappoint. [seceda.com](http://seceda.com)  
**THE DETAIL** Sleeps eight guests across four rooms. Exclusive use from £16,630 per week, catered. [pinelodgedolomites.com](http://pinelodgedolomites.com)



Left: relax in Méribel Village. Below, clockwise from left: lemon tart; lemon drizzle cake; breakfast pancakes; sleeping under the eaves; the approach to the chalet; a healthy start to a day's action; dinner is served; floor-to-ceiling windows make the most of the stellar view

## CHALET CERF ROUGE MÉRIBEL, FRANCE

Any skier will know just how good it feels to score the first tracks on a freshly groomed piste. At Cerf Rouge you can beat the crowds to do just that. It's 350m (or private shuttle) to the Golf chairlift, which drops you at the top of the blue Lapin run. From here, the Three Valleys and its network of over 160 lifts is your oyster. Hop back on the Lapin for a speedy return to your Méribel Village abode in time for the rocky road brownies that'll await you at afternoon tea.

Resist the urge to crawl back into your super-king Hypnos bed, and make it up to the first-floor balcony in time for a sunset gin and tonic when the valley is at its most ethereal. You'll have prime views of the seasonal firework displays from

here, too. Food and drink matches the mountain location: wines are solely French (*bien sûr*), and so too the laden boards of cheese rolled out at the end of each evening's meal. Bread hails from a village bakery considered the best in the Three Valleys. **EAT ON THE PISTE** Le Clos Bernard is a relatively new kid on the Méribel block, and with its magical forest location, sun-baked terrace and wood fire-cooked courses, it's steadily becoming the most popular. Book ahead, and you can be taken by Ski-Doo to the front door, saving precious time for navigating the Savoyard set menus. [restaurantleclosbernard.com](http://restaurantleclosbernard.com)  
**THE DETAIL** Sleeps ten guests across five rooms. Exclusive use from £6,450 per week, catered. [fishandpips.co.uk](http://fishandpips.co.uk)



## CHALET SHALIMAR ZERMATT, SWITZERLAND

Fitting 20 people comfortably across ten bedrooms under its timber-framed wings, Chalet Shalimar is one for a big group holiday. Its sleepy location in the heart of Winkelmaten, a 15-minute scenic walk from the charming town of Zermatt, makes it a top choice for a winter escape, where the remit is equal parts ski, après-ski and relishing in doing absolutely nothing at all. An indoor pool faces the mighty Matterhorn, which juts above its alpine siblings like the tip of a wizard's hat.

The summit may be the preserve of experienced climbers but you can get a decent way up on the Matterhorn Glacier Paradise cable car. The 40-minute trip takes you to the highest viewing platform in the Alps, a breathtaking panorama across

38 peaks. It'll wink at you through the windows while you're eyeing up the day's equally majestic selection of food and drink: pastries from the local bakery for breakfast, afternoon cakes, flutes of champagne come evening, and meals finished with Swiss cheeses. Zermatt is car-free, but the Sunnegga funicular is a stroll away, and the railway station has links to Zurich Airport. **EAT ON THE PISTE** Take a ride on the funicular and over to Findlerhof, a sweet mountain lodge serving such comforting delights as five-hour-cooked lamb shank, with excellent reds from owner Franz's carefully curated wine list. [findlerhof.ch](http://findlerhof.ch)  
**THE DETAIL** Sleeps 20 guests across ten rooms. Exclusive use from £23,660 per week, catered. [brambleski.com](http://brambleski.com)

Photos by Yves Garneau and Yoko Soti





**SEVERIN\*S –  
THE ALPINE  
RETREAT  
LECH AM  
ARLBERG,  
AUSTRIA**



Clockwise from top left: Severin\*s at dusk; late-afternoon swims await; modern interiors in Switzerland; the spa setup at Tivoli Lodge

**TIVOLI LODGE DAVOS, SWITZERLAND**

This Small Luxury Hotels of the World member is as lovely as they come. The only hotel on our list with nine bedrooms and a four-bedroom Residence, the boutique address in Lech am Arlberg is off the beaten track, a short drive from lifts serving the Lech and St Anton regions, renowned for their marshmallow off-piste and slopes to ease beginners in.

Plump beds mingle with modern tech, while the Residence is two floors of excess involving a piano, cinema and Jacuzzi. There's a bounteous wine cellar offering tutored tastings of Austrian wines, while the restaurant serves a delicious modern takes on traditional fare, using organic ingredients sourced from all across Vorarlberg. Tuck into the likes of 'Deer and Moss' – tender rounds of venison melded with artichoke, wild mushrooms and stone pine. Severin\*s – The Alpine Retreat is a three-hour train ride from Zurich Airport to Langen am Arlberg station, followed by a short shuttle to reach the hotel.

**EAT ON THE PISTE** Right next to Zugerbergbahn station in the heart of Lech, (accessed via the cable car), Balmalp is a good mountain choice. Feast on the Balmalp Giant Pizza. [balmalp.at](http://balmalp.at)  
**THE DETAIL** Junior Suites sleep three, from £610 per night; Residence sleeps eight from £4,407 per night. [severins-lech.at](http://severins-lech.at)

It may ooze chalet chic on the outside, but Tivoli Lodge feels every inch a stately manor within. Having sumptuous en-suite bedrooms with open fires, a pool, cinema and soft play area for children, you'll be crossing your fingers for a white out, so you can linger in its lavishness for longer. Epicures will delight in a champagne reception, house mixologist and Master of Wine selection of local and rare bins. Skilled chefs prepare the likes of quail breast with maple Dijon-charred leek, beef fillet with confit garlic and truffled red wine jus, and gin lemon sorbet.

When you're ready to don the salopettes, Davos – one of Europe's highest resorts – awaits with 300km of piste. This is a truly ski-in, ski-out chalet, so you can be at the Parsenn lift in seconds and arrive back at the lodge via a friendly black run. Keep an eye out for royal regulars the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, or the heads of state that flock to town for the World Economic Forum (some of whom have stayed at Tivoli).  
**EAT ON THE PISTE** Head to unassuming Gemsli for hearty Swiss fare, from porcini pizza to rosemary lamb chops fit for royalty (Prince Charles is said to be a regular). [gemsli-davos.ch](http://gemsli-davos.ch)  
**THE DETAIL** Sleeps 12 adults and four children over seven rooms. Exclusive use from £46,160 per week, catered. [tivolilodge.co.uk](http://tivolilodge.co.uk)

Photos by Ydo Sol and Alison Hammond



This image: Tivoli Lodge boasts many notable guests and is set within the Swiss town of Davos



## CHALET DEBUSSY MORZINE, FRANCE

The pièce de résistance of this 200-year-old gem is the dining and living room, with a suspended fireplace casting a warm filter over proceedings as you tuck into canapés like croque madames with quails eggs the second you kick your boots off. The snug area is another joy – a prime spot for postprandial port and backgammon – and there’s no shortage of nooks to sup fine wines selected by Magnum d’Or-winning consultant Rob Wade.

When it comes to the kitchen, everything from the stock to the Reblochon ice cream is made from scratch, using regional ingredients from the local market. Expect the likes of fresh mountain cheeses, plum chutneys and ethically reared meat.

Naturally, you’ll have a driver on call to whisk you off to anywhere in the Morzine region and pick you up at the end of a day on the wide, tree-lined pistes the area enjoys. The Ardent *télécabine*, six minutes away, is a speedy link to the Avoriaz ski area. There’s a route here for everyone, with the added bonus of seven snowparks – boarders feeling tricky should carve over to the Superpipe, while speedsters will love the SkiCross.

**EAT ON THE PISTE** For a glass of draught American IPA, French or German-style beer, brewed on site, and a menu that serves both carnivores and vegetarians alike, head to Bec Jaune Brewery in central Morzine. The Scotch eggs and ‘superfood’ vegan burgers are particularly good. [becjaunebrewery.com](http://becjaunebrewery.com)

**THE DETAIL** Sleeps eight adults and seven children across four rooms. Exclusive use from £7,110 per week, catered. [alikats.eu](http://alikats.eu)

Photos by Reuben Shaul; Damien McArthur; Ian Barr



Above: Chalet Debussy is renowned for its wines and designer looks: Left: a labour of love, this eco-retreat on the doorstep of Mont Blanc combines local fare with superb skiing



## HUSKI ECO FARM LES HOUCHES, FRANCE

It took Tim and Gaby Newman five years to transform a 200-year-old traditional Savoyard farmhouse into this eco-friendly chalet, combining the original wooden structure and traditional alpine comforts with clever contemporary touches, such as geothermic underfloor heating.

This ethos extends to their gourmet offering and typical mountain menu, including beef and game stew with red wine, served with nut and cranberry terrine – all sourced locally. Vegetables grown in the house patch during summer are turned into jams and pickles for the winter; eggs from their small flock of hens are served at breakfast, while cheese and air-dried meats, and other ingredients sourced from the valley or producers they trust, pepper the rest of the day’s eating.

Huski’s location in the heart of Les Houches village means you can be at the nearest ski lift in two minutes and 1,800m up on mighty Mont Blanc not long after. From here, there’s a nice selection of tree-lined, multi-ability routes for you to schuss back to town for some après-ski. Chamonix is a ten-minute drive away, and home to the Vallée Blanche – at 22km, the longest ski run in the world. And for a wide selection of routes, a Mont Blanc Unlimited ski pass is the gateway to exploring Switzerland and Italy over the course of several days.

**EAT ON THE PISTE** Traverse left from the Les Aillouds blue run and finish up in the 18th century at Les Vieilles Luges, where you can warm up with a *vin chaud* and feast of Savoyard fare, including *farçon*, a rather comforting baked dish of potatoes, bacon and prunes. Cash only. [lesvieillesluges.com](http://lesvieillesluges.com)

**THE DETAIL** Sleeps ten across five rooms. Exclusive use from £9,500 per week, catered. [huski.com](http://huski.com)

## ACTIVE TRAVELLER



From top: a starter at Chalet Neve; chalet hosts prepare the banquet table for supper; the fish course; Chalet Neve ready for breakfast; boarders celebrate a successful morning on the piste

### CHALET NEVE REBERTY, FRANCE

Huddle around the log burner with 17 of your nearest and dearest, swapping stories of the day's triumphs (and misjudged moguls) while gazing at the twinkling lights of Val Thorens, glass of Savoie wine in hand, and we'd wager there's no place you'd rather be. And that's even before chef Darren Wolsey begins your nightly multi-course dining extravaganza. His impressive CV includes stints at Gordon Ramsay at Claridge's and the renowned Aria in Sydney, so you can expect every mouthful to be superb. Torched mackerel on sourdough is a great way to start, before something hearty like scallops with pork belly and pak choi. When it comes to pudding, Wolsey's take on a salted caramel pana cotta is extremely hard to beat.

With direct access to the piste via the boot room, you can pop on your toasty-warm ski gear and be out on the slopes in no time. The village may be small but with the sprawling Three Valleys and 300-plus runs on its doorstep – all accessible via the blue Boyes run – the ski potential is mighty. Thanks to the high altitude – up to 3,230m at its loftiest point – the snow here is plentiful throughout the season. A superb spot for beginners, with plenty of red and black runs to entertain the rest.

**EAT ON THE PISTE** Chez P p  Nicolas is a twee spot found off La Chasse red run, with a sunny terrace to soak up some rays while you inhale a bowl of the creamiest pumpkin and chestnut velout  with Tomme de Savoie cheese. [chezpepenicolas.com](http://chezpepenicolas.com)  
**THE DETAIL** Sleeps 18 across six rooms. Exclusive use from  8,800 per week, catered. [powdernshine.com](http://powdernshine.com)

Below: the sophisticated interiors of newly renovated Ferme St Christophe with idiosyncratic modern charm



### FERME ST CHRISTOPHE SAMO NS, FRANCE

Fresh from a three-year renovation, Ferme St Christophe exudes the charm you'd expect from a 19th-century property with added sleekness: a sweeping limestone staircase, wool and cashmere mattresses, a 55-inch TV that ascends at the touch of a button, and a huge Swedish sauna nestled in the private garden. Curl up by the fire in one of the velvet sofas and await the bistro-style fare of Tim Maitland, founder of The Tasty Ski Company and a former chef at The Fat Duck. Think duck breast with dauphinoise potatoes and Madeira jus, sea bream ceviche, or simple macaroni and cheese.

A ten-minute walk takes to you the centre of Samo ns, a protected medieval town halfway between Geneva and Chamonix. Take the Grand Massif Express up to Samo ns 1600 and you'll have full reign of Le Grand Massif with over 265km of pistes across over 140 slopes. The 14km Cascades is the longest; an easy blue that winds to Sixt village, where you can catch a shuttle bus back to the ranch.

**EAT ON THE PISTE** Getting to Refuge du Lac de Gers is an adventure in itself, involving the longest blue run in Europe, a remote telephone box and staff collecting you by Ski-Doo. Your chalet host will fill you in. [refugedulacdegers.fr](http://refugedulacdegers.fr)

**THE DETAIL** Sleeps 15 across eight rooms. Exclusive use from  13,000 per week, catered. [thetastyski.com](http://thetastyski.com)

## BEST OF THE REST

### REFUGE MEG VE, FRANCE

Designed using natural materials, wood punctuates the space creating a warm, welcoming style that pairs classic and vintage. Sleeps six. From  4,100 per week, catered. [megeve-refuge.com](http://megeve-refuge.com)

### CHALET FOINSBOIS M RIBEL, FRANCE

The cossetting, contemporary design of this chalet makes it feel like a true home from home. Sleeps 12 adults and three children. From  19,030 per week, catered. [purpleski.com](http://purpleski.com)

### CHALET DU CHENE MORZINE, FRANCE

With its roaring fire, outdoor hot tub and cosy rugs, this oak split-level chalet is full of character. Sleeps eight adults and three children. From  5,450 per week, catered. [gourmetski.com](http://gourmetski.com)

