



# More Powder to You

Where to go off-piste? Where to party? Where to take the family? You make the call. But first, let **DUNCAN MADDEN** inform you with his top tips for both established and upcoming ski resorts

PHOTOGRAPH Leeh

## OFF-PISTE ON THE MONEY

### Whistler, Canada

Ah, Whistler... Mention its name to any serious off-pister and you'll see their eyes glaze and their imagination leap into action as they mentally carve their way through the perfect powder of a thousand untouched trails.

The largest ski area in North America is famous (or should that be infamous?) for its phenomenal high bowls and chutes, which are now easily accessible on both its mountains – Whistler and Blackcomb – thanks to the introduction of the Peak 2 Peak gondola.

You'll be spoiled for choice: don't just stick to the easy to reach backcountry but instead hike up the brilliantly named Spanky's Ladder on Blackcomb to reach a vast powder playground. And if that's not enough for you, cat- and heli-skiing options abound, bringing the backcountry to intermediates as well as experts. What more could you want?

### STAY: Pan Pacific Whistler

It may look like a mega-resort – this is North America and that comes with the territory – but the Pan Pacific is a suite-only, lodge-style retreat that delivers luxury by the hot tub-load and boasts mountain views that will make you drool. Crucially, it's also the closest hotel to both the Blackcomb Valley and Whistler Village gondolas, which means you'll never find yourself too far from the white stuff.

For more information, see [panpacific.com](http://panpacific.com)

## OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

### Niseko, Japan

Strangely, Japan still flies under the radar of many skiers who crave the untracked adventures of true off-piste action. Maybe it's the location on the other side of the world, maybe it has remained hidden behind the jagged Alpine and Pyrenean peaks of Europe – but if you're someone with an affinity for backcountry riding, this is a place that really should be at the top of your list.

Blessed with incredible annual snowfall, Niseko can say it offers both quantity and quality. Super dry and deep snowpacks ensure unrivalled powder set among awesome wooded slopes around Hanazono,

Miharashi and the pièce de résistance, the back bowls, as well as the alpine ridges above. And, of course, all the off-piste and backcountry skiing and boarding is legal here – which is nice.

### STAY: Sekka Annapuri Lodge

A classic blend of contemporary western modernity and Japanese *Wa* (harmony), the stylish Sekka's secret weapon is its proximity to the Hanazano treeline, the premium off-piste skiing to be found in Niseko. It's very close to the Annapuri gondola, which means you'll be able to get to the fresh powder long before the hordes have arrived from nearby Hirafu – and that, of course, is exactly what you'll have come here for, isn't it?

For more information, see [sekkalodge.com](http://sekkalodge.com)

## FAMILY

### ON THE MONEY

#### Deer Valley, USA

Nowhere does family friendly like the good ol' US of A, and few places do it better than Utah's Deer Valley – a vast, uncompromising natural Disneyland of resorts, trails and activities catering for anyone and everyone with an interest in the great outdoors.

Covering six mountains including the famous Flagstaff and boasting 'The Greatest Snow on Earth' (a term that's trademarked), Deer Valley has snow and slopes for every conceivable skillset. And once you and the kids have tired of traditional snowbound fun, why not try ▶



📍 CANADA: The Pan Pacific Whistler is one of the best hotels in Whistler Village only offering suites – but the real fun is to be had out on the slopes

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► sleigh rides, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, dog sledding... or you could leave the kids at one of the many child centres and indulge yourselves in a meal. If you can think of it, Deer Valley offers it.

**STAY: Casa Nova**

Part of the Luxury Chalet collection, Casa Nova takes family friendly to a new level of luxury. Sleeping 14 and with room for another 11 (now that's a big family) it offers a ski-in-and-out setting to a privately patrolled piste. Throw in hot tubs, a cinema, a dance floor, games room, bar and spa, and you're in danger of never actually reaching the slopes.

*For more information, see [skicasanova.com](http://skicasanova.com)*

**OFF THE BEATEN TRACK**

**Klausberg, South Tyrol, Italy**

Quick to get to, South Tyrol serves up more than 1,200km of family-suited skiing across a huge region of the Dolomites.

Extraordinarily scenic (the region is actually a 200 million-year-old primordial sea and many of the mountains are ancient atolls), it offers you the opportunity to take your pick from the restaurant-laden tracks of the Alta Badia or head down to the Ahrntal Valley and make for Klausberg. Here, among many blue and red runs, you'll find the amazing Dino Fun Line, where the kids can glide from life-sized sculptures of T-Rex and Triceratops to a brilliant toboggan run. Trust us – you'll love all this every bit as much as they will.



**SNOW HOW:** (above) The Feldmilla Designhotel in South Tyrol is great for families; (top right) Klosters has been the resort of the well-heeled for decades

PHOTOGRAPH (Klosters) by Robert Boesch, [swiss-image.ch](http://swiss-image.ch)



**STAY: Feldmilla Designhotel**

The family-run Feldmilla is the first climate-neutral hotel in the region and provides a perfect blend of modern style and luxury. From the funky Warhol-esque pictures on the wall to the amazing indoor/outdoor pool and the bells and whistles spa, there's something to entertain everyone. Lots of great pizza restaurants are nearby, too.

*For more information, see [feldmilla.com](http://feldmilla.com)*

**JET SET**

**ON THE MONEY**

**Klosters, Switzerland**

When it comes to luxury, there are almost too many options to choose from. But, put simply: if it's luxurious enough for the royal family, it's probably luxurious enough for you. If truth be told, Klosters and nearby Davos are a broad mix of luxury and convenience coupled with typically good snow, a relaxed, easy Alpine atmosphere and superb mountain restaurants.

Skiing options abound, from long intermediate runs to excellent off-piste areas. You're not here just to ski, though, but also to keep an eye out for paparazzi and the sniff of a selfie with Wills and Kate.

**STAY: Hotel Alpina**

Marrying modern luxury and Alpine authenticity, the chalet-style Alpina sits in the heart of Klosters, right by the main cable car station. After a tough day on the slopes, the in-house spa with its

signature treatments, two renowned on-site restaurants (and a third in the mountains) and exceptional service will indulge and inspire you in equal measure.

*For more information, see [powderbyrne.com](http://powderbyrne.com)*

**OFF THE BEATEN TRACK**

**Hemsedal, Norway**

Hemsedal is criminally underrated as a ski destination that serves up great snow and great big price tags to match. What that translates into is exclusivity – quiet, expansive runs, minimal lift queues, untracked powder for the off-pisters and the sort of unspoilt atmosphere that is almost impossible to find in traditional Alpine resorts.

The idyllic setting is matched by excellent snowfall thanks to Hemsedal's setting high in the Hallingdal valley. From November to May, the snow is abundant but the crowds largely absent, giving you plenty of time to enjoy the state of the art facilities before a leisurely cruise back to your luxury hotel of choice.

**STAY: Harahorn Hotel**

Less a hotel, more a scattering of beautiful cottages set in a mountain landscape, the Harahorn blends luxury and isolation in equal measure. Simply but beautifully appointed, it complements its amazing location and is famous for its culinary excellence and wine cellar. Mountain luxury at its most authentic.

*For more information, see [dvgl.no](http://dvgl.no)*




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► **APRÈS-SKI  
ON THE MONEY**

Verbier, Switzerland

Known the world over as much for its post-slope action as for its actual skiing, Verbier is the black run of après-ski – this place is full on and isn't a destination for the faint-hearted. Coupled with its role as the host destination for some of the coolest events imaginable, including Xtreme Verbier and the Verbier High Five, it attracts a lively and international clientele.

Partying doesn't have to wait until you leave the mountain either, with Bar 1936 sitting on the slopes and bringing the party to the snow. Once you do descend, don't miss Farinet Après-Ski, often voted the best après-ski bar in the world thanks to its live music, massive shots list and sliding roof.

**STAY: The Lodge**

Richard Branson's nine-bedroom mountain-top chalet is, as you might expect, the last word in luxury and the ultimate snow-centred party pad. There's a pool, jacuzzis, a spa, gym, private bars – there's even an ice rink. If you want to host the après-ski show (or just let the full complement of staff take care of all the hard work), there is nowhere better.

*For more information, see [summitretreats.com](http://summitretreats.com)*

**OFF THE BEATEN TRACK**  
Vals, Switzerland

Après-ski doesn't just have to be about

bad Europop and a world of Jägerbomb-induced hangovers. For an altogether more revitalising slice of post-snow recovery, the thermal mountain village of Vals offers visitors a fantastically refreshing slice of mountain life (within spitting distance of major party towns such as Brixen and Mühlbach should you feel the need for an old-school boozy blowout).

Here, you can indulge in the local manner, enjoying a wide variety of rustic restaurants serving hearty food, savouring the atmosphere, admiring the quartzite-inspired architecture and diving into the thermal spa to soothe your muscles and aid their recovery after a tough day.

**STAY: Hotel Therme**

The Hotel Therme takes spa-ing to the next level. Decadent, designer and utterly relaxing, its dedication to indulgence is matched only by its aesthetic beauty, which comes courtesy of architect Peter Zumthor. From thermal baths to wellbeing therapies, culinary art to perfect rooms, you'll wake up each morning feeling as though it's the first one of your holiday: ready to hit the slopes and ski rings around the booze-hampered masses. Amen to that.

*For more information, see [therme-vals.ch](http://therme-vals.ch)*

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**BEGINNER  
ON THE MONEY**  
Lech, Austria

As well-known for its clientele as its skiing,

Lech is the perfect place for beginners to sample the snow without being thrown in at the deep end. A classic Alpine resort, its ski schools are unrivalled, with English-speaking instructors and private slopes for first-timers so you don't have to worry about psychotic Italians flying past at a hundred miles an hour.

Once you're done with the lessons, you'll find the White Ring has a reputation as one of the great introductions to the slopes for a reason. A series of pistes and cable cars connecting the resorts of Lech, Züri and Zug, it provides two hours of skiing that ensures you won't have to endure the same run twice.

**STAY: Aurelio Lech**

There's almost too much luxury to choose from in Lech, but we love the Aurelio. Whether you opt for a hotel room or go for the full monty and rent the chalet, you're assured of the very best of everything. And in Lech that means huge rooms, unadulterated fineries – from bed sheets to multimedia suites – and views there just aren't enough adjectives to describe.

*For more information, see [aureliolech.com](http://aureliolech.com)*

**OFF THE BEATEN TRACK**  
Pila, Italy

Set high above the ancient Roman military settlement of Aosta, Pila is a lesser-known gem with easy, sheltered runs. Only a snowball's throw from the well-known resorts of Courchevel and Chamonix, it's close enough for you to get there easily should you feel the urge to ski with the jetset, but far enough removed to offer the space and solitude in which to brush up on your slalom skills first.

**STAY: Hermitage Hotel & Spa**

There really is only one option. Part of the Relais & Châteaux group, the Hermitage is one of the highest hotels in the world at 4,000 metres and straddles the Italian-Swiss border on the northern slopes of the Matterhorn. The Whympfer Suite is unique – a private chalet that offers what is arguably the best mountain view to be found in any resort in the world – while the award-winning restaurant specialises in old-time Valle d'Aosta dishes and looks out over the surrounding forests. **H**

*For more information: [relaischateaux.com](http://relaischateaux.com)*