

Third edition
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CHECKIN

& Upgrade

GREEK ISLANDS

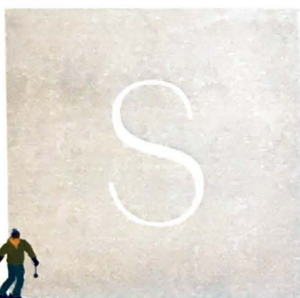
Six beautiful hotels to escape to

DENMARK DELUXE

Street art and shifting sands

MIDDLE EAST FEAST

A modern take on traditional flavours



SOMETHING amazing is happening on mountain tops all round the world: resorts are busy upgrading everything they can think of to make sure this winter's skiers have their best holiday ever. Better still, the changes aren't just taking

place on the slopes. Hotels are adding stunning spas to boost the après-ski experience. Resorts are luring in celebrity DJs to keep festival lovers entertained, mountain villages are employing everyone from yoga masters to photography instructors to attract non-skiers - and tour firms are making it easier and cheaper to reach the resorts and rent the very best kit.

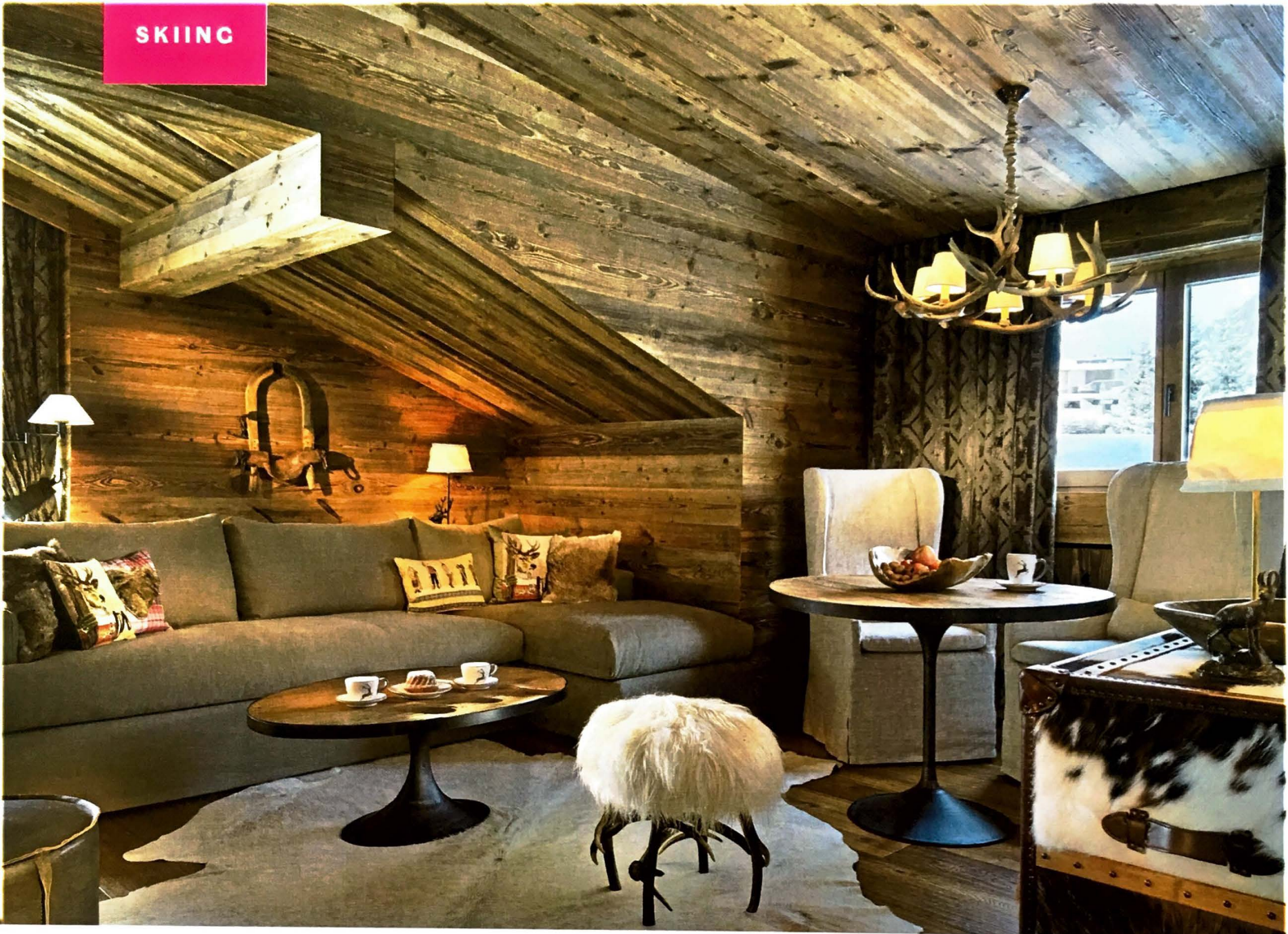
So where's good to go this winter and what can you expect when you arrive? Here's our guide to the ski trends of the year.

A big focus at ski giants such as Crystal is to look after 'new to ski' families, making sure there are plenty of extras - think ice skating, outdoor film screenings and all-day kids' clubs. Best places include most resorts in Andorra or Slovenia, the big three of Borovets, Bansko and Pamporovo in Bulgaria, the *Continued on page 12*

"A BIG FOCUS IS TO MAKE SURE THERE ARE PLENTY OF EXTRAS"



POWER STEERING: Enjoying the slopes, left; cable cars at Bansko in Bulgaria, above



Italian favourites of Bardonecchia, sunny Passo Tonale and Pila, plus La Plagne, Chamrousse and Alpe d'Huez in France.

Adrenaline seekers will be happy on the slopes this season as well. Snow mountain biking is becoming huge, as are snow-shoeing, ice-fishing and snow-tubing – plus all the old favourites, such as bobsled and husky rides. Top locations for activity-hungry holidaymakers include Les Deux Alpes in France, La Thuile in Italy and Mayrhofen in Austria, as well as less obvious destinations such as Finland, where you can get close to nature by lying in a thermal glass igloo to watch the Northern Lights dance across the sky.

If you love luxury and think spas are as important as snow, then you're in luck as well. Crystal says the family-run Hotel Tirolerhof in Zell am See in Austria doesn't just offer an indoor pool and a rooftop spa with a garden-like relaxation area. It's also got a 'secret' VIP spa for extra privacy and the ultimate relaxation. Or head to another family-run hotel, the glorious five-star Hotel Arlberg in Lech, Austria, where a brand new outdoor pool will let you float under the stars after a long day on the slopes.

Over in France the good news is that you may get luxury for less. Some prices are falling, in what is still our favourite country for ski trips. All-inclusive
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***“AN OUTDOOR POOL
WILL LET YOU FLOAT
UNDER THE STARS”***



**APRÈS-SKI
CHILLING:**
Sit and enjoy the
view outdoors,
right, or cosy up,
in rooms such
as those at
Hotel Arlberg,
Lech, above



GETTING to your ski resort can be easier than ever this winter – because holiday companies are offering a lot more seats on the ‘ski trains’ that let you skip crowded airports and reach your hotel ready to hit the slopes, not the bottle. Ski favourite Inghams is one of many firms to give holidaymakers the choice of train versus plane. Here are **SIX** reasons to stay on the rails.

1 YOU join Eurostar at London’s glorious St Pancras station. Or hop on board further down the line at Ebbsfleet or Ashford in Kent.

2 FORGET arriving at an airport two or more hours before departure. Train check-in normally lasts up to one hour.

3 DON’T worry about baggage fees or long waits at luggage carousels overseas. With the ski train, your bags stay with you, so they can’t go missing. You can pack more, as well – two suitcases each, plus skis or a snowboard.

4 THERE’S entertainment on tap. Trains have free Wi-Fi, and if the kids want to stretch their legs, send them to the buffet car.

LET THE SKI TAKE THE STRAIN



5 LOTS of trains go direct to the mountains. This winter Inghams has Eurostar trains going straight to the heart of the French Alps for short onward transfers to Courchevel, Méribel, Val Thorens, Les Arcs, Val d’Isère or Tignes.

6 THE train is just as good on the way home. You get a whole holiday without bag-drop lines, crowded airports or air traffic control delays.

holidays from specialists such as Club Med are particularly on trend for 2019-20: you can have breakfast, lunch, dinner and drinks all included in an increasing number of glorious ski-in, ski-out hotels. With Neilson, both solo and group ski holidays look particularly popular as well.

Chocolate-box-style ski chalets are also smartening up their act. Ski insiders say the number of chalet beds has fallen lately. But standards are rising. En-suite bathrooms are now commonplace, hot tubs and saunas are popular and Wi-Fi is a given. Travel agents say chalets are particularly busy in December, with

*“BRIGHT BUT EARTHY
COLOURS WILL BE
ON EVERY NEW JACKET”*



families wanting to spend the ultimate white Christmas in the snow. Book a Christmas-week ski chalet with Inghams and you’re guaranteed a Christmas tree, and on the big day pre-dinner Champagne, crackers, turkey with all the trimmings, Christmas pudding – and no washing up to do afterwards.

Getting to the mountains should be easier this year as well. Package firms are offering extra direct flights from regional airports, so no need to schlep to Heathrow to fly. Or get the ski train – see panel, above.

Fashionistas say wearable tech is going to be bigger than ever this season, and that bright but earthy colours will be on every new jacket. Ski and snowboard kit itself can also be better and cheaper – if you’re clever about how you book it. Long-established players such as SkiSet.co.uk have signed up the best rental firms in more than 400 resorts across Europe and North America. Staff at these local firms tend to be ski- and snowboard-mad, so you know the equipment will be top notch. Booking in advance lets you enjoy discounts as deep as the snow. ♡