

Snow Skiing Vacation



Whether you just conceived the brilliant idea to jet away on an epic ski vacation with friends, or the plan has been brewing for some time, we've got the insider guide you need to execute the perfect group ski vacation. Top locations are:

Wilmington, New York

You'll find not only a ski mountain committed to sustainable policies – such as generating its own solar power and protecting native wildlife – but also the tallest vertical drop in the eastern U.S. Other unique features at this mountain resort include one of the longest intermediate runs in the Northeast, plus The Slides: steep, chute-like drops classed as double black diamond difficulty. For an adrenaline rush that may be a bit less intimidating, skiers can also head over to the terrain parks.

The secret weapon here is the fact that nearby Lake Placid has hosted the winter Olympics twice, with plenty of events on Whiteface Mountain. Some of those facilities are still active,

meaning off-mountain activities like Olympic-grade bobsledding are an option. After you're done shredding, you can check out other Olympic sites in the area – such as the ski jumps, where lucky visitors may even get to see professional athletes training.

Breckenridge, Colorado

If you've made it to Breckenridge, you're already in one of the country's best skiing destinations and the amenities at the resort will help you make the most of this wintertime paradise. This mammoth mountain resort (about 80 miles southwest of Denver) is a maze just waiting to be explored: Its summit towers at just about 13,000 feet, and the mountain offers more than 185 trails serviced by a few dozen ski lifts. You can practice your tricks at one of the resort's terrain parks or attempt the high alpine terrain trails unique to this region.

After you work up an appetite on the slopes, it's time to hit the town. The historic downtown area of Breckenridge is home to boutiques, cafes, galleries, and breweries galore, turning your ski trip into a full cultural experience. Consider coming in late January, when you can check out the International Snow Sculpture Championships, where artists carve 25-ton hunks of snow into wildly elaborate creatures.

Teton Village, Wyoming

The resort in Jackson Hole Mountain is worth a visit any time of year, the property's ski season is superb. Lift tickets can be purchased ahead of time, and there are winter sports galore on offer in addition to skiing. Head to Jackson Hole to go snowmobiling, ice skating, snowshoeing and even heli-skiing. Travelers can even book a winter sleigh ride or go dog-sledding. As for the skiing, the resort there is a great spot for adventurers. Half of its 130-plus trails are for experts, and it's known as a

hotspot for backcountry skiers. Beginners may want to beware, as only 10% of trails cater to them – but on the upside, there's ski instruction readily available for all ages and abilities. Visitors will find a variety of dining options throughout Jackson Hole, which makes this destination a good choice for foodies.

Aspen and Snowmass Village, Colorado

This notoriously upscale Colorado ski resort famous for its award-winning slopes and glamorous patrons is not to be missed. Aspen Snowmass, located about 200 miles southwest of Denver, is a must-visit for any skiers looking for killer runs and a vibrant après-ski scene. The resort boasts more than 5,500 acres of terrain across four different mountains. You'll find a variety of beginner-friendly trails at Buttermilk, but the other three mountains consist primarily of intermediate and expert terrain. At Aspen Mountain and Snowmass, about a third of the runs are double black diamonds, while Aspen Highlands provides the ultimate test for the most daring skiers with 65% expert terrain.

Park City, Utah

As the largest ski resort in the U.S. at 7,300-plus skiable acres, this Utah complex offers a summit elevation of about 10,000 feet, more than 40 lifts and plenty of amenities. With more than 330 trails there, you're sure to find terrain suitable for your skiing or snowboarding style. If you're a first-time skier or just want a quick refresher before embarking on your downhill excursion, there are private and group lessons available for children, teens, and adults. The mountain's many terrain parks – which welcome skiers and boarders of all levels to try out the jumps, half-pipes and more – are also a major draw for visitors. If you're not in the mood to hit the slopes, the Flying Eagle Zipline and the Alpine Coaster will give you an exciting adrenaline rush.

Since the resort is in Park City, which is relatively large for a ski town, there are numerous bars, breweries, and restaurants within reach. The resort is situated about 35 miles east of Salt Lake City International Airport, making it an easier commute from airport to mountain compared to other popular resorts out west.

Big Sky, Montana

A massive mountain complex featuring 5,850 skiable acres, diverse trails and many different lodging options, selected resort in southern Montana promises a memorable trip for every type of traveler. You'll have easy access to 320 named runs, nearly 40 lifts and five terrain parks at this resort.

With runs that will test your limits at that resort, you can take your time traversing the face of this mountain. Advanced, expert, and extreme trails make up 50 percent of the mountain's offerings, leaving the other half of trails for beginner and intermediate skiers and snowboarders. Zip lining adventures, dog-sledding excursions, sleigh rides, snowmobile tours and other activities mean a visit to that resort is about much more than just skiing. To get to Big Sky, the nearest airport is in Bozeman, about 50 miles away.

Sun Valley, Idaho

With this area in central Idaho known as the site of the world's first chairlift, Sun Valley strives to provide top-notch skiing conditions for all. Two mountains, Bald and Dollar, give this resort ample ground and diverse terrain. Bald Mountain draws intermediate and advanced skiers to venture along the 65 runs serviced by 13 lifts, including some beginner trails. Dollar Mountain, however, with four lifts and two people movers, is the ideal place for novices and students, given its treeless trails and terrain park.

The resort's lodges make it convenient to stop for a midday bite to eat or a moment to rest in a cozy atmosphere, with hearty food from burgers to tacos on offer. You'll have access to all the exciting activities in Sun Valley, including sleigh rides, ice skating and ice shows.

Vail, Colorado

Colorado's Vail should also make it on your list of ski resorts to visit during winter, especially if you're an experienced skier. There are 5,300-plus acres of skiable terrain in total here, more than half of which is considered advanced or expert level. The nearly 200 trails to choose from at that resort are serviced by more than 30 ski lifts to get you to your starting point. Riva Ridge, the resort's longest run, even lasts for 4 winding and exciting miles.

If you're a foodie, consider booking a trip to Vail to coincide with the Taste of Vail food festival (usually in early April, late in the ski season), when a host of chefs and wineries put on special dinners, tastings and more around the village.

Taos, New Mexico

While many would associate New Mexico with deserts rather than snowcapped peaks, some of the country's best skiing can be found at this resort near the Colorado border. The 110 trails are split about evenly between options for experts and those for beginners or intermediate skiers and snowboarders. Great skiing weather is frequent with 300-plus sunny days per year here. Lessons of all kinds are available, for everyone from beginners up to seasoned skiers looking to start racing.

Off the slopes, the Taos area is a cultural hot spot with plenty of unique activities, including galleries and museums in the main town, the UNESCO-listed Taos Pueblo site, and the Ojo Caliente hot springs a little to the south. Getting to Taos depends on where

you're based: There are limited flights to Taos Regional Airport from Texas and California, but otherwise the airport in Santa Fe, about 100 miles away, has more options.

Stowe, Vermont

Consisting of two mountains (Mount Mansfield and Spruce Peak) connected by a gondola, Stowe offers nearly 120 trails and a dozen lifts. It's great for mid-tier skiers and boarders, with 55% of its trails marked as intermediate. Located around 40 miles east of Burlington, Stowe is also a renowned spot for cross-country skiing, with hundreds of miles of trails – some groomed, some backcountry.

Plenty of other wintery activities are available too, from snowmobiling and fat biking to ice climbing, ice fishing and dogsledding. Warm up in the Spruce Peak village, situated at the base of the resort: It has breweries and restaurants specializing in local produce, as well as spas, a performing arts center, and an indoor rock-climbing center.

Lake Tahoe, California

Unlike many ski destinations, Lake Tahoe has more than just one resort to choose from: In fact, there's more than a dozen scattered around this gigantic alpine lake. The resort boasts the highest mountain in Lake Tahoe at 10,000-plus feet as well as 4,800 acres of skiable terrain. It has a little something for all abilities – and a reputation for particularly gorgeous views. Its nearly 100 trails are served by 28 chairlifts, nine of which are high-speed. The runs are largely geared toward intermediate skiers and snowboarders, but you'll still find options for beginners and pros, as well as a terrain park that includes a beginner section.

Alternatively, activities like snowshoeing, snow tubing and skating are available for those not looking to brave the slopes. The town of South Lake Tahoe has ample amenities and restaurants serving everything from pub grub to Thai food. To fly in to Lake Tahoe, the Nevada city of Reno has the closest major airport, and there are shuttles available to traverse the 55 miles to South Lake Tahoe.