

## 10 Undiscovered Ski Spots

Searching for an up-and-coming ski destination where you can still find great powder and crowd-free runs? Look no further. **By Christopher Solomon**

Big, busy [Aspen, Colo.](#), and [Whistler, British Columbia](#), certainly have their fans. But for many other skiers and snowboarders, there's an abiding allure to less marquee slopes—where you don't have to jockey with the locals to enjoy great powder turns the morning after a big storm, you're not shoehorned onto crowded runs and buying a lift ticket doesn't require taking out a second mortgage. Sounds nice, doesn't it? A major tradeoff of such finds can be a lack of off-the-hill glamour. But after a day of hard skiing followed by a hot tub dunking and a good meal, you won't much miss the lack of nightlife.

We've traveled the world on skis and have sniffed out some of the best undiscovered spots, here and abroad. Point your tips toward these places on your next vacation. We think you'll be glad you did.

### North America

#### Crystal Mountain, Wash.

Set dramatically in the shadow of [Mount Rainier](#), Crystal Mountain is a well-known playground for Seattleites but familiar to few others. Why? Maybe because the snow is heavier than Utah's fluff, or because Crystal has scant at-base lodging or nightlife. But pass up this gem and you'll miss a place whose trail map looks like it was assembled by a ski bum with some serious wish-fulfillment issues: Steeps like those that crown Bridger Bowl, Mont. Lingered ridge runs like [Jackson Hole, Wyo.](#)'s Hobacks. Unique avalanche-controlled backcountry areas that bookend the resort. And all in a spraddle of terrain—2,600 acres, 3,100 vertical feet—that place Crystal solidly among the big boys in scale. Yet Crystal can be a ghost town midweek on a powder day. (360) 663-3050; [www.skicrystal.com](http://www.skicrystal.com)

- [Expedia: Ski season is here! Find flight + 3-night ski getaways from \\$335](#)

#### Kicking Horse Mountain Resort, British Columbia

Kicking Horse, 165 miles west of [Calgary](#), sits at the tail of the Purcell Mountains, its slopes facing the [Rockies](#) across the deep, green scoop of the Rocky Mountain Trench. Six national and provincial parks loosely ring the ski resort, so the views are sublime. But the skiing ain't bad, either—if you're up to it: 2,750 acres of terrain, and 4,133 vertical feet ([Canada's](#) second biggest after Whistler/Blackcomb). Caveats: This is not a mountain that's ideal for those of modest ability; nearly half the terrain is rated "advanced." And Golden, a roughneck timber-and-railroad town near the ski area's foot, doesn't offer much after hours. (866) 754-5425; [www.kickinghorseresort.com](http://www.kickinghorseresort.com)

#### Le Massif, Canada

Some resorts overlook a pretty mountain lake. Quebec's Le Massif seems to dip its feet into the massive, ice-choked St. Lawrence River, which is about 10 miles wide where it meets this ski resort less than an hour from [Quebec City](#). Owned now by the entrepreneur who co-founded Cirque du Soleil, Le Massif boasts the highest vertical drop in eastern Canada (an impressive 2,526 feet). The slopes here aren't curl-your-toes difficult, but skiers love the sustained pitch that permits fast, uninterrupted skiing from top to bottom. And, of course, they love those views. (877) 536-2774; [www.lemassif.com/en](http://www.lemassif.com/en)

#### Mount Bohemia, Mich.

In the flat-as-a-frying pan Midwest, 7-year-old Mount Bohemia is a delicious freak. Its 900 vertical feet of skiing is most in the Midwest, and its 273 inches of lake-effect snow—enough to rival some [Colorado](#) resorts in quantity, if not quality—make Bohemia a standout ... even if the place is a little bit, er, unorthodox. To wit: The base lodge (actually a few yurts) sells ramen noodles. No ski lessons are offered. Ditto trail grooming. The 350 skiable acres are almost all rated expert, and this winter the operators have added a new area for experts called Outer Limits. And women always ski free at this Upper Peninsula ski destination, about a 35-minute drive from Houghton on the Keweenaw Peninsula. (906) 360-7240; [www.mtbohemia.com](http://www.mtbohemia.com)

#### Powder Mountain, Utah

Only in a state with such a wealth of world-famous slopes within an hour's drive of [Salt Lake City](#) could "Pow Mow," as the locals call this ski area about 55 miles northeast of the [Utah](#) capital, remain so little-known. Powder Mountain has as much terrain—5,500 acres—as the Wasatch Range darlings Snowbird and Alta combined. And about 500 inches of Utah's famous talcum snow fall here annually. Relatively few of the slopes are groomed here, and glades and unnamed powder shots abound. Even going uphill at Pow Mow is part of the adventure: Skiers hitch rides on a snowcat or a school bus to access part of the terrain. (801) 745-3772; [www.powdermountain.com](http://www.powdermountain.com)

#### Schweitzer Mountain Resort, Idaho

Schweitzer Mountain Resort, tucked at the base of the Selkirk Mountains in [Idaho's](#) panhandle, is a 2,900-acre secret that won't remain one forever. Just 45 miles south of the Canadian border, this largely intermediate mountain (40 percent of its slopes are for those of moderate ability) gives guests commanding views of the Selkirk, Cabinet and Bitterroot mountains as well as views down to Lake Pend Oreille—a lake so deep and dark the U.S. Navy still performs secret tests there. But up high it's all white: 300 inches of snow fall on the mountain, and during the week there are few people around to share it with. (800) 831-8810; [www.schweitzer.com](http://www.schweitzer.com)

### **Snowbasin, Utah**

Pow Mow's high-end counterpart, Snowbasin lies across the Ogden Valley, 43 miles north of Salt Lake City. A big reason for Snowbasin's great-skiing feel is that deep-pocketed owner Earl Holding, who also owns Idaho's Sun Valley Resort, built a ski area worthy of hosting the men's and women's 2002 Olympic downhill races and other competitions. Two high-speed gondolas, a tram, and a high-speed quad all whisk skiers around a 2,820-acre blend of steep shots, well-combed groomers and intermediate terrain. Snowbasin also boasts an impressive 2,959-foot vertical drop. Off the mountain, though, Holding hasn't yet built any of the stuff (like lodging) that brings the crowds. (888) 437-5488; [www.snowbasin.com](http://www.snowbasin.com)

### **Europe**

#### **Alagna, Italy**

Europe is famous for its massive ski networks—a skier can travel sometimes for days among valleys without riding the same lift twice. One of the largest—yet least ballyhooed—of these networks is the Monterosaski, which surrounds the massif of Monte Rosa, Europe's second highest peak. The sleepy hamlet of Alagna (population 400), about 70 miles north of [Milan](#), lies on the eastern side of Monterosaski, and is a great starting point for skiers to access the adjacent valleys of Gressoney and Champoluc. While skiers can use marked pistes, many opt to hire guides to explore the area's massive terrain, huge descents and to keep them out of crevasses on the glaciers. What Alagna lacks in wild nightlife it makes up in genuine Alpine charm, with some 200 preserved chalets dotting the hillside. One warning: Many of Alagna's slopes are south-facing, so go here only if it's a good snow year. 39 0163 922993; [www.alagna.it](http://www.alagna.it)

#### **Andermatt/Engelberg, Switzerland**

In the past three years the neighbor resorts of [Andermatt](#) and Engelberg have become the darlings of the American ski-movie industry. Still, the average North American skier has yet to discover these areas. Andermatt, about a 90-minute drive from [Basel](#), has 25 lifts that serve a broad mix of terrain on three peaks, including the 9,843-foot Gemsstock. Down the road, Engelberg is relatively modest-sized but has a lot going for it: It's close to [Zurich](#) airport, its runs are high (up to 9,934 feet on its marquee peak, Titlis), virtually assuring good skiing and—like Andermatt—it's prized for its off-piste skiing opportunities. Hire a guide if you really want to explore, though. 41 887 14 54, [www.anderlatt.ch](http://www.anderlatt.ch); 41 639 77 77, [www.engelberg.ch](http://www.engelberg.ch)

### **Asia**

#### **Niseko, Japan**

After years of rumor, Westerners are only beginning to sniff out this resort on [Japan's](#) northernmost island of [Hokkaido](#), which receives some 500-plus inches of ultra-light snow each winter. Niseko actually is several ski areas cinched together, providing some 3,000 vertical feet of skiing, near the summit of volcano-like, 4,291-foot Mount Niseko An'nupuri. But the real gem here is the abundant backcountry skiing among the birches, which should only be skied with a guide. After the lifts close, head for one of the several traditional rock-lined hot springs before enjoying your bento box. 81-136-22-0109; [www.niseko.ne.jp/en](http://www.niseko.ne.jp/en)

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