

Off-Piste Destinations

During peak winter periods, even the most exclusive of Europe's alpine resorts and the USA's Rockies can feel congested, but a fistful of less obvious locations are offering improved accessibility, lifts and lodgings just in time for the 2019/2020 season. Made up of 60 per cent mountainous terrain, Georgia boasts Europe's highest peak: Mount Elbrus in the Caucasus range stands 800m higher than Mont Blanc at 5,642m. Gudauri, a two-hour drive from Tbilisi, is the largest of the country's resorts, and locals don't turn up until lunch, so for a couple of hours you'll have the slopes to yourself. The Caucasus, and Elbrus in particular, can be wild and windy – so be sure to book a guide (or

try Mountain Heaven's nine-day itinerary through Georgia launching in March). Take refuge at high-design brutalist hotspot Rooms Hotel Kazbegi, where staff were recruited from film schools to inject creativity into the post-Soviet project. In Japan, ski-in ski-out Park Hyatt Niseko on Hokkaido island (famed for its snowboard-perfect soft-dry 'Japow') opens this month with lofty ceilings and unspoilt views of Mount Yotei and access to plenty of backcountry routes, and the end of 2020 indie opening Sansui Niseko is set to attract a fresh-faced, high-octane crowd (*sansui* translates as both 'water' and 'mountain').

mountainheaven.co.uk; hyatt.com; roomshotels.com; ansuiniseko.com

POWDER PLAY

WHAT'S NEW AND WHERE TO FIND THE WHITE STUFF THIS 2019/2020 SEASON

Words: Anna Prendergast



◀ Gulmarg in Kashmir should also be on the serious skier's radar for the new year, as tourists tentatively trickle back into the region after political unrest (check travel advice on gov.uk before booking). Its vertical drop beats St Anton and Jackson Hole for size, but despite its Himalayan scale it has a village-like feel, and The Khyber's personal brand of hospitality envelopes newcomers into the community. khyberhotels.com



FROM TOP
Napapijiri jumper, £299, farfetch.com; Dr Barbara Sturm sundrops, £110, cultbeauty.co.uk



Completo skis with custom design, £960, folsomskis.com

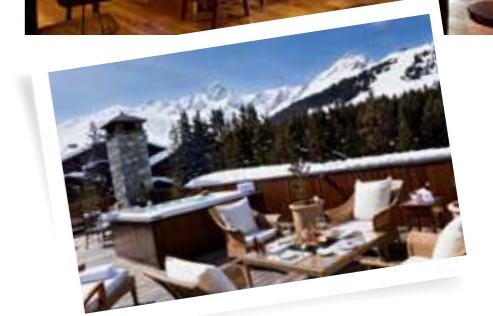
LUXURY LONDON
ESCAPE



CALDERA HOUSE, JACKSON HOLE



BRUSH CREEK RANCH, WYOMING



▲ Les Airelles' sister property Mademoiselle recently opened in Val D'Isere

In-the-Know Itineraries

Ahead of the year's biggest sporting event in Tokyo, carve out time for classes with an Olympian. Pro racer and snowboarder Bode Miller will lead skiers from clubby Caldera House in Jackson Hole, where freeriders and adrenalin junkies convene year after year; follow Ashleigh McIvor's tree-lined tracks (if you can keep up) at Whistler's Blackcomb Snow School and book into a workshop with British bronze medal winner Jenny Jones at mellow Sainte-Foy-Tarentaise. Brush Creek Ranch in Wyoming, where Miller lives, now offers guests exclusive access to Green Mountain, and is easier than ever to get to with new direct flights to Denver from Heathrow, and its terrain offers more than 1,000ft of runs, including double diamonds.

If the pros and the private access aren't enough, take up 2020's most exhilarating winter sports trend: night-skiing. Slalom under the stars on Corvatsch with a VIP Snow Night at Carlton Hotel in St Moritz; head to Hirafu Gondola in Niseko for clear skies; find floodlit fun in the pretty, provincial landscape of Bormio's World Cup run in Italy. In Courchevel, dine and ride at Les Airelles, where supper is served under the stars in a mountainside yurt only accessible by snowmobile before night-skiing back to base, or try night tobogganing in Sölden (we put the slopes to the test on page 106). Newly-opened Design Hotel Levi in Finnish Lapland offers the unbeatable experience of skiing beneath the northern lights – book for March for your best chance of seeing them.

Scott Dunn has created the ultimate itinerary, too, with a 34-day ski safari touring five countries



Globe Trotter suitcase, £2,535, globe-trotter.com



Hemisphere goggles, £110, zealoptics.com



CARLTON HOTEL, ST MORITZ

from Aspen to Iceland, and a heli-ski ocean voyage will take adventure addicts through virtually-untouched terrain in Antarctica which will take place in 2021 (spaces are limited and tickets are on sale now).

calderahouse.com; carlton-stmoritz.ch; airelles.com; designhotellevi.fi; notabene.global.com; scottdunn.co.uk



Acne beanie, £130, matches-fashion.com



▲ Alberta Ferretti has teamed up with the eco-warriors at Eco-Age to create a line of sustainably made knitwear made from 100 per cent wool, spun using renewable energy, and GRS certified recycled cashmere created in Prato, Italy. From £390, harrods.com

The Green Scene

Winter sports are nothing without nature. The mountains, the snowfall, the wildlife – they must all be protected. And the industry is stepping up, with Swiss resorts setting the standard. At Lagom's chalets in Verbier and Zermatt, decide whether you need toiletries, how often you'd like linen laundered and whether to carbon-offset your trip. In November's World Ski Awards 2019, carbon-neutral crashpad Valsana took the title of World's Best Green Ski Hotel 2019 (it assists guests with tree-planting and off-setting) and in 2020 Laax plans on being the first self-sufficient resort while remaining one of Europe's best for big-air seekers and freeriders. Colorado's family-owned,



Burton snowboard, £120, burton.com

snowsure Wolf Creek became the first solar-powered resort in the world in 2018, harnessing the state's yearly average of 300 days of sunshine, and this year will celebrate its 80th season with the reopening of a nostalgic poma lift. In late 2021, top-tier, environmentally-friendly hotel group Six Senses will open in Kitzbühel, where residential buyers will drive the new zero-emissions Porsche Taycan supercar and LEED-certified chalets will be heated solely through geothermal energy.

levlagon.com; valsana.ch; flimslaax.com; wolfcreekski.com; sixsenses.com



▲ Six Senses Kitzbühel will be the wellness group's first resort in the Austrian alps



FINNISH LAPLAND BY VISIT FINLAND

Nouveau Après Ski

Fuel up before you get down, and fill your ski boots this season with Michelin-star menus, chef residencies and exclusive invites. Leo Trippi is shipping out some of London's biggest names, such as Hide's Ollie Dabbous and Frog's Adam Handling, who will be showing off their carving skills in the kitchen and on the slopes, as well as hosting private classes for curious epicures. At Badrutt's Palace, Jason Atherton (whose restaurant King's Social House opened at Badrutt's in winter 2018), Andreas Caminada and Nobu Matsuhisa will throw an intimate supper club for guests in February, bringing their collective expertise to the experience, and in Lech, award-winning Tom Aikens will join Severin's head chef Kevin Szalai (known for his signature dish Deer & Moss, but this season launching his first vegan menu, too). In France, retired three-Michelin star chef Antoine Westermann has donned chef whites once more to design La Table d'Armante's new menu at Armancette, while Michel Rochedy announced his own retirement, handing over two-starred Le Chabichou to prodigy Stéphane Buron, following the hotel's \$11m makeover and signalling a new era for the big hitter. Meanwhile, Meribel's Le Coucou opened in December with an entire restaurant dedicated to fine cuts of beef; for spirited live music go to Rond Point up the road (known by regulars as 'The Ronnie').

leotrippi.com; badruttspalace.com; severins-lech.at; armancette.com; chabichou-courchevel.com; lecoucou.com



◀ Meredith Erickson's guide to Europe's alpine kitchens is filled with recipes for comfort food and stories from the mountains. £30, waterstones.co.uk



THE JAPANESE AT THE CHEDI ANDERMATT, SWITZERLAND



BADRUTT'S PALACE, SWITZERLAND

▲ The Japanese by The Chedi Andermatt opened this December with Michelin-star chef Dietmar Sawyere at the helm



LEO TRIPPI'S CHEFS AT NEW HEIGHTS