



travel

news

The hottest holiday news and suggestions on the destinations to thrill

COMPILED BY SUKI KING

SNOW TRENDS

Keen to follow the ski-season crowds? Take a look at the five most popular resorts in each of the world's top ski countries, according to the Ski Club of Great Britain:

AUSTRIA: Kitzbühel, Lech, Obergurgl, Saalbach and St Anton

FRANCE: Les Arcs, La Plagne, Meribel, Tignes and Val d'Isère

ITALY: Alagna-Gressoney, Cervinia, Courmayeur, Sauze d'Oulx and Sestriere

SWITZERLAND: Davos Klosters, Saas Fee, Verbier, Wengen and Zermatt

CANADA: Banff, Fernie, Lake Louise, Tremblant and Whistler

USA: Aspen, Breckenridge, Jackson Hole, Vail and Winter Park



SKI WITH THE STARS

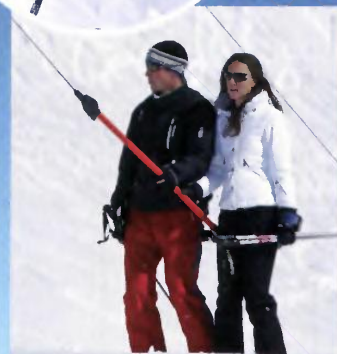
Fancy hanging out on the slopes loved by royalty and celebs? Then pack your skis and boards, and head for one of the following...

- **Klosters**, an old-school Alpine village in Switzerland, first welcomed winter sports enthusiasts in the early 1900s and it's where **Prince Charles** and **Prince William** have been regularly seen speeding down the vast number of pistes on offer. The resort is packed with first-class hotels, chalets and restaurants. myswitzerland.com
- Another Swiss resort, **Verbier**, is an uber-glam spot steeped in connections to royalty. **The Duke and Duchess of York**, and daughters **Beatrice** and **Eugenie**, have been regulars here for many years. **James Blunt** and **Richard Branson** have also been spotted in 'Verbs' (Branson owns The Lodge ski chalet [thelodge.virgin.com] and **Coco Club** nightclub.) And it offers excellent skiing, both on- and off-piste. verbinet.com
- At the foot of the mighty Matterhorn, **Zermatt** in Switzerland has hosted the now **Duke and Duchess of Cambridge**, **Prince William** and **Kate Middleton**. With skiing on the Klein Matterhorn glacier at over

3,500m, and links over to the **Aosta Valley** in Italy, the area offers miles of skiing and boarding for all levels. zermatt.ch

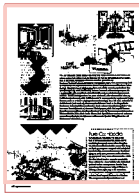
- **The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge** have also spent a week skiing in **Courchevel**, France, in the vast Three Valleys ski area. **The Beckhams** love 'Courch', too, and are regularly spotted, while other sightings include **Geri Halliwell**, **Robbie Williams** and **Boris Johnson**. Courchevel is the most up-market of the three valleys, having benefitted from recent investment. Courchevel 1850 has a buzzing nightlife, while the satellite village of 1650 offers a more laid-back scene. courchmet.com

- Just across the valley, **Meribel** is the home of the British National Ski Championships, and **Prince Edward** and **Sophie, Countess of Wessex**, are frequent visitors. Meribel was founded in 1938 and has a huge network of fast lifts and miles of cruising terrain. **Rob Brydon** is among the recent celebrity sightings at the resort. merinet.com



FROM THE TOP: VICTORIA BECKHAM AT COURCHEVEL, THE DUKE AND DUCHESS OF CAMBRIDGE, THE DUKE OF YORK AND PRINCESS BEATRICE AT VERBIER





Arabian adventure

A new Moorish-style palace at the foot of Morocco's Atlas Mountains will shortly be unveiled and will begin welcoming guests from January 2012. The USP of the Selman – which will have 56 rooms and five private riads, each with its own garden, pool and butler service – will be its collection of 16 purebred Arabian horses, available for guests to hire to go trekking through the desert. A 15-room spa, indoor and outdoor pools, a gym, two restaurants and three nearby golf courses are its other attractions. glahotels.com



ONE NIGHT IN...

Vienna



Why go? Although it's cold in the winter months, it's the best time to visit Vienna. Its palaces and parks look their twinkly best, and it's also the city's ball and opera season. Plus, in December, the magical Christmas markets get underway.

Stay here: The most luxurious hotel in town is the Hotel Sacher Wien (sacher.com), which is where the Queen stays when she visits. Guests' every whim is catered for almost before they ask. For somewhere a little less grand but wonderfully romantic, try the Hotel Das Tyrol (das-tyrol.at), which has 30 softly lit rooms decorated with contemporary art. It's a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World (slh.com), so satisfaction is guaranteed.

Eat here: For Old World grandeur, live piano music and a slice of sensational cake, try Café Sacher (sacher.com), while Café Bräunerhof is recommended for apple strudel (enjoy live music with an orchestra playing waltzes on Saturdays). For a full meal, make time to visit Steirereck (steirereck.at), where complex dishes are based on local ingredients.

Don't miss: In the city's MuseumsQuartier, there's a cluster of world-class galleries – the lava-stone Mumok (mumok.at) showcases Warhol pop art, while the Leopold Museum (leopoldmuseum.org) has a dazzling collection of works by Viennese expressionists such as Klimt and Schiele. Book tickets for the Vienna State Opera (vienna-opera.com) and see an extraordinary display by the Lipizzaner stallions at the Spanish Riding School (srs.at).

Find out more: aboutvienna.org



Pure Cambodia

This December, Cambodia will launch the first of several planned private island resorts combining luxury and conservation. Song Saa, which is situated in Cambodia's remote Koh Rong archipelago, comprises two pristine islands joined by a footbridge over a marine reserve. One island offers 25 over-water, rainforest and beach villas – all constructed from sustainable materials – while the other island boasts a spa and a yoga centre. There will also be a large infinity-edge swimming pool and various watersports on hand to keep guests busy. Tour operator Bridge & Wickers is offering a three-night stay at the resort from £1,259 per person and suggests combining it with a visit to Siem Reap and the temples of Angkor Wat. songsaa.com; bridgeandwickers.co.uk



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Paradise in the Maldives

This autumn sees the opening of a stunning new 112-villa resort on the lush Maguhdhuvaa Island in the south of the Maldives. It ticks all the 21st century boxes for a relaxing, paradise island escape with your pick of over-water or seaside villas – all with private pool and terrace – plus a choice of seven restaurants; the Maldives' only Turkish hammam; an Espa-branded spa; tennis, volleyball and badminton courts; a dive centre; and extensive watersports. ayadamaldives.com



GLOBE TROTTER

Co-founder of Leon restaurants **Henry Dimbleby** reveals his travel secrets

What's your favourite hotel?

I used to love going up and down the lifts in hotels as a child. Up, down, up, down – over and over again. These days, I'm not quite so obsessed. I generally choose the shabbiest, cheapest thing available as they tend to be much more authentic than the big chains.

Your favourite restaurant?

Chez Maguy in Batroun, Lebanon. It's in a tiny shack on a rock looking out over the Mediterranean. The owner's daughter dives into the sea in a bikini and emerges, Ursula Andress-style, with sea urchins, which they cut open and serve immediately.

What do you never go abroad without?

Simply a notepad and pencil for writing down recipe ideas.

Sun lounger or ski slope?

Ski slope – or more likely in a food market or walking in a town near the slopes. Or sitting in a bar watching the world go by. I get very itchy feet – metaphorically – on a sun lounger after about five minutes and prefer to be doing something. Ski resorts are great for people-watching.

Best-ever holiday read?

It may sound like a cliché, but the holiday book that has brought me the most pleasure is *War and Peace*. Admittedly, it was quite a long holiday.

Next destination?

I want to write a book about vegetables and plan to take a motorbike around the Med from Spain to Morocco to get inspiration. I'm hoping my wife will let me take our four-year-old son, George, in a side-car. Negotiations are underway...

Leon: *Baking & Puddings is out now* (£20, Conran Octopus)



SOME LIKE IT HOT!

If sunshine rather than snow makes your heart flutter, and you're after guaranteed heat this winter, the BBC Weather Centre recommends the following destinations so you don't leave anything to chance...



USA: By November, when the hurricanes peter out, Florida is a safe bet with six hours of sun a day and temperatures within the 18-26°C range. visitflorida.com

The Caribbean: The winter months are dry, temperatures are 24-27°C and there are nine hours of sunshine a day. caribbeantravel.com

Thailand: Temperatures stay at 30-34°C all year round but, with less rainfall from November to April, it's the perfect time to visit. tourismthailand.org

Bali: The temperature stays around 29-31°C, with roughly nine hours of sunshine per day. balitourismboard.org

India: Enjoy temperatures of 28-32°C during the UK winter months. Goa tends to get more guaranteed sunshine than Kerala, which is more humid and shower-prone in October, November and March. incredibleindia.org





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HOTEL PRINCIPE DI SAVOIA



ESCAPES FOR FOOD LOVERS

● December is the perfect time to visit France's gastro capital, Lyon, with its annual Festival of Lights set to take place as well as the Salon du Chocolat. During the Festival of Lights, candles and lamps line the streets, while monuments are lit up with special effects. At the Salon du Chocolat, hundreds of artisan chocolate-makers gather to give demonstrations and hold tastings. Between times, there are some 37 one-, two- and three-Michelin-starred restaurants to indulge the taste buds in or near the city. Seasoned Travel is offering a three-night break, departing 8 December, including flights, accommodation and

entrance to the Salon du Chocolat. From £395 per person, seasonedtravel.co.uk

● Seasoned Travel is also offering a three-night break to San Sebastián, Spain, in January to coincide with the La Tamborrada festival, when hundreds of drumming bands take to the streets in a frenzied fiesta. The mini-break also includes a visit to the Basque Country cider houses, which throw open their doors following the fiesta, for visitors to taste their new season cider with rustic Basque food. From £499 per person, seasonedtravel.co.uk

● During October and November, the luxury Hotel Principe di Savoia in Milan – a sister of London's The Dorchester – is offering a three-night truffle package for guests to indulge in the region's ultimate ingredient. The package includes truffle hunting with dogs in Roddi, a tour of the Alba Truffle Fair, a visit to the best truffle shops in Alba and a four-course lunch celebrating the flavours of the black truffle. From €581 (£507) per room per night, call +39 02 6230 5555 or email reservations@hotelpincipedisavoia.com

Be like Bond

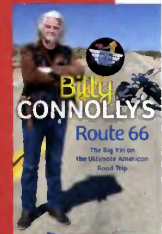
Visitors looking for a new high-velocity recreational water sport can now strap into the new JetLev R200 water-powered jet pack in Florida Keys. The pack gives an exhilarating levitation-like flight – just like James Bond in *Thunderball*. Flight controls allow individuals to pilot their water-powered jet pack, learning to take off, fly, make soft turns, hover and land. \$249 (£157.50) for a one-and-a-half hour introductory experience. More info at: fla-keys.com; jetpackadventures.com



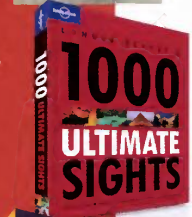
ARMCHAIR TRAVEL

Christmas is just round the corner and, with that in mind, we've got a round-up of the best newly published and about-to-be-published travel books for your wish list. These will really whet the appetite for future trips.

● **Billy Connolly's Route 66: The Big Yin on the Ultimate American Road Trip** (£20, Sphere) Connolly tells the tales he gathers on his 2,273-mile journey through the US, describing the sights and the people he meets along the way – funny, touching and inspiring.



● **1,000 Ultimate Sights** (£15.99, Lonely Planet) The most iconic, awesome, weird and spooky sights on the planet, illustrated with lavish full-colour photographs.

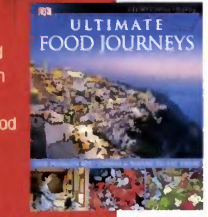


● **Best in Travel 2012** (£9.99, Lonely Planet) Travel experts profile the hottest trends, destinations, journeys and experiences for the year ahead. There's also a month-by-month travel planner of festivals and events for 2012.



● **Ultimate Food Journeys** (£19.99, Dorling Kindersley)

The essential what-to-eat-where guide for foodies who love to travel and for travellers who love to eat. The book reveals the origins of the world's most famous dishes and the best places to eat them, from boeuf Bourguignon in France to tapas in Spain, and from soul food in Louisiana to tacos in Mexico. A beautifully illustrated book, arranged continent by continent, with clear maps and mouth-watering photography.



● **Secret Journeys of a Lifetime: Volume II: 500 of the World's Best Hidden Travel Gems** (£25, National Geographic) A book for those who hate to holiday with the crowds, this is crammed with stunning photography and the details of 500 novel destinations that have managed to fly under the radar – gems that only the locals can guide you to.

