



Whisper it quietly, but there is a sense of optimism among the snowy set this season. Ski guru Gaby Le Breton rounds up the highlights and newcomers on the slopes

After years of relative hibernation, the ski industry appears to be stirring again, with resorts once more investing in new lifts and mountain restaurants and swanky new hotels and top-end chalets popping up across the Alps.

There's a palpable sense of optimism in the air and according to the annual ski stats collated by Consensio Holidays (consensioholidays.co.uk), up to 70% of skiers will probably have booked their ski trip by this point in the season. If you want to get your London-based clients in wintry mood, point them towards Montague on the Gardens hotel (montaguehotel.com), which has set up a cosy, fairylight-bestrewn chalet.

MEGEVE, FRANCE

Several properties are set to breathe new life into this chic yet traditional resort this winter. Le Chalet Zannier (lechaletzannier.com) comprises three individual chalets and an adorable Lacroix ski rental chalet, while Chalet One Oak (akvillas.com), is a privately-owned chalet with quirky details. Meanwhile, Sibuet properties (sibuet-hotels-spa.com) such as Fermes de Marie chalets, l'Hotel Mont-Blanc, Le Lodge Park hotel and Au Coin du Feu guesthouse (*above*) look better than ever.

THREE VALLEYS, FRANCE

The resort also welcomes two new chalets to its stellar collection. Le Coquelicot and Edelweiss, both featured by Oxford Ski (luxurychaletcollection.com). Meribel has now got a five-star hotel. Le Kaila (tekaila.com).

IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS

If your clients want to arrive in style at the airport of their choice nearest the resort, see what routes are being offered by private jet share community Victor (flyvictor.com). Pre-fit delivery (prefitdelivery.com) comes to skiers' homes to equip them with ski or board rental and delivers it to their hotel or chalet in advance of arrival (for groups of five and up). If your clients have their own kit, Piste of Mind (pisteofmind.com) will collect it and deliver it to their hotel or chalet.

located in La Chaudanne with a Nuxe spa, and welcomes a new La Folle Douce (*below*) restaurant and bar to its slopes. In Val Thorens the sumptuous Altapura (altapura.fr) has opened – and it's a long season in Val Thorens, the highest resort in the Alps, making it a great choice for spring skiing.

ST ANTON, AUSTRIA

No longer the exclusive domain of ski bums, St Anton has gone upmarket with several new four and five-star hotels launched last winter and more to come. Pick of the bunch is the trendy, boutique slopeside Mooser Hotel (moosershotel.at), which launched last winter and has just taken on a Michelin-starred chef, although the mountain views from designer hotel Anthony's (anthonys.at) slick spa are stunning. Kaluma Travel (kalumatravel.co.uk) is your operator for all things St Anton.

VERBIER, SWITZERLAND

Hardly strapped for benchmark chalets, Verbier gets two more gems this winter – the antique-filled Trois Couronnes (summitretreats.com) and contemporary Norte (luxurychaletcollection.com). Marcus Bratter, the entrepreneur behind the Hotel Neval, King's Parc Hotel & Farm Club, has revamped Neval and given it a new sushi restaurant – he is also launching Hotel Cordees des Alps (cdaverbiere.ch) in December, with a stunning spa and 34 rooms featuring vintage ski design details and state-of-the-art technology. The legendary Le Farinet (hotelfarinet.com) will feature a new pop-up restaurant, Pot Luck Club.

CRANS-MONTANA, SWITZERLAND

Word is that the Crans Ambassador still won't open this winter but the delightful Chetzeron (chetzeron.ch), which boasts a fine restaurant, is unveiling four rooms in December. The chic rooms will offer access to the slopes. Happily, local favourite the Memphis Lounge is reopening in December at the Grand Hotel du Golf.

ST MORITZ, SWITZERLAND

Levels of service at the privately-owned chalet Chesetta (chesetta-stmoritz.com) are set to get even better, as the team is joined by a former butler to the Queen. More than 100

hotels are participating in St Moritz's Hotel Ski Pass scheme (engadin.stmoritz.ch), with visitors who book a minimum two nights' accommodation able to get daily lift tickets for €16. Super-cool hotel Nira Alpina (niraalpina.com) goes even further, offering free lift passes to all its guests.

SOLDEU, ANDORRA

The new five-star Sport Hotel Hermitage (sporthotelsandorra.co.uk), home to one of Europe's largest spas, shows that Andorra can be a luxury destination, particularly when combined with helicopter transfers, heli-skiing and Michelin-starred dining.

DOLOMITES, ITALY

At last, the Dolomites have a luxurious catered chalet to match the quality of the hotels and restaurants in Alta Badia and Val Gardena. Owned and run by the Barbinis, former Escada fashion bigwigs, The San Lorenzo Mountain Lodge comes with unbroken views, a heli-pad, outdoor whirlpool, wine cellar and private golf course (sanlorenzomountainlodge.com).

NORTH AMERICA

In Colorado, Vail celebrates its 50th birthday with a new gondola and gourmet mountain restaurant. The 10th, while Aspen's iconic Hotel Jerome opens in December after renovations, Montana's Ranch at Rock Creek offers the ultimate "wild west" luxury break (carrier.co.uk). Heli-ski fans need to know about Revelstoke's Bighorn Lodge (bighorn-lodge.com), a palatial pad that enables heli-skiers to lap up the British Columbia powder.



16

in the know
winter 2012 tjgurus.com