



Two of the best ski valleys are the Val Badia and the Val Gardena.

The Val Badia (Corvara, Cortina, La Villa and San Cassiano) is a tremendous beginners country with miles after mile of gentle skiing and some of the best mountain restaurants anywhere.

Better skiers will have a ball just over the pass in the Val Gardena resorts of Selva, Santa Cristina and Ortisei, which have more than a hundred runs for all standards, including advanced, served by 90 linking lifts. Many of the runs are through the trees and everywhere the scenery is magnificent.

Distance skiers are catered for too—on the Seila-Ronda run, a 25-mile trip on skis round the 10,000ft Seila massif, which even moderate skiers can handle.

There is a big Austrian influence in the Dolomites so the apres ski is of the best champagne-pipe type.

There are two other classy resorts, Cortina and Madonna di Campiglio, both of which I recommend for skiers looking for something special.

Italy is the number one destination for British ski holidaymakers (25,000 alone go to Sauza d'Ola every season) and the big attraction, apart from the skiing, is the low prices, especially for food, drink and accommodation.

I visited two bargain resorts in the Sondrio region in spring and found the value for money phenomenal.

The skiing at Bormio is a lot more interesting than is first apparent. There are fair nursery areas at the bottom of the mountain and at the 2,000 metre resort just above. Everywhere there are fine runs to suit the third year skier onwards.

Bormio also boasts one of the longest runs in the Alps, a 10 kilometre varied run from the top station (9,900ft) all the way to the village 4,000ft.

After a run like this you don't need an aperitivo to work up an appetite, but should you want one the town makes it own, Bravolo.

Apres ski life goes with a swing—mainly in the cafes. The town attracts large numbers of Milanese, who entertain in the evening by doing the ski resort equivalent of the volta.

Before, and after dinner, they tour the town in groups of up to 10 chattering merrily. Their favourite trick, and it drives cates and bars to despair, is to descend on a bar and stand talking for ten minutes while only one of the group has a drink. Then they wait off to the next, where the curious single-drink custom is repeated.

Bormio's other apres ski attractions include a swimming pool filled with water from radio-active thermal springs (it's supposed to be good for you), mud baths and caves where natural steam give you the sauna effect.

There's plenty of super eating out. I lived as well here as I did in the French Alps. Regional specialities like pizzoccheri and canederi, washed down with the splendid Valtellina wine are magic.

It was fresh year—too little snow and too much ice. Conditions were not good during my visit—and not for the first time. I did bless my super Olim skis, which ate up acres of ice while other skiers slithered and slipped all over the place.

Fifteen minutes up the valley lies the small but picturesque resort of Santa Caterina, whose lift system will eventually be linked to Bormio once the god-avails in the villages can sort out their money squabbles. Santa Caterina's skiing is a lot more gentle than Bormio's and is therefore more suitable for beginners. This resort also has some long runs from top to bottom of the mountain, so better skiers would not be out of place here.

The Good Ski Guide for
Beginners



IT IS vital for the ski beginner to go to the right resort, at the right time with the right preparation.

PREPARATION should include a course on an artificial slope in Britain because the leaching and equipment-familiarisation means you arrive in the snow resort three or four days ahead of those who haven't had any lessons.

FITNESS is important, not vital. The fitter you are the more likely you are to enjoy skiing—and to progress quickly. Exercises in the books mentioned below.

BUY OR HIRE: Always rent equipment until you know what you want to buy. You can do it either here or in the resort.

Absolute beginners don't need, and won't get full value from the long-run resorts which cater for all grades of skier. They are best sticking to resorts suitable for beginners.

Here are the Good Ski Guide recommended resorts for beginners:

FRANCE: Avoriaz, Les Arcs, La Plagne, Isola, Courchevel.

ITALY: Corvara, Selva, Bormio, Santa Caterina.

SWITZERLAND: Wengen, Thyon 2000, Villars, Leysin.

AUSTRIA: Alpbach, Brand, Lech, Gerlos, Nidervau, Westendorf.

SCOTLAND: Aviemore.

WHEN: If you have a choice miss Christmas and Easter (too busy and expensive). Peak season is best, but generally too busy. Good time is late January, first week February.

AT THE RESORT: This will be a strange new world for you. Remember not to overstretch yourself physically, and get plenty of rest. Always listen carefully to what your instructor is saying.

A guide to ski safety, including the Ski-Way Code and what to take on holiday is contained in The Ski Diary.

BOOKS to read should include We Learned to Ski (Sunday Times & Collins) probably the best learn-to-ski book available; and Dry Slope Skiing (Oxford Illustrated Press) written specially for British skiers who learn on artificial slopes before going to the snow. See order form page 22.



The Val Gardena in the Italian Dolomites, is an ideal base from which to take advantage of the endless skiing possibilities. It is certainly a marvellous choice for skiers who like to explore on their own and love the freedom and exhilaration of leaving no slip from one village to another. The Superbious Dolomiti can be used on over 400 lift networks which allow you to tackle the famous Seila-Ronda's Skies of pain. You will find plenty of mountain huts for good shelter and hearty lunch-time snacks, surrounded by the breathtakingly beautiful Dolomite scenery. Hotels, pensions, self-catering apartments and private houses offer an accommodation choice of over 16000 beds.

World Championships were held here in 1970, and every year the snow's world cup downhill takes place. The growing number of steady skiers from all countries has led to the popularity of the Val Gardena's friendly hospitals.

Selva — 1563 m.
S. Cristina — 1428 m.
Ortisei — 1236 m.

Information:
Tourist board — 39048
SELVA — tel. 75122 telex 400359
Tourist board — 39047 S.
CRISTINA — tel. 76346
Tourist board — 39046
ORTISEI — tel. 76328 telex 400305

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For inclusive tours contact Neilson Holidays Leicester (0533) 554646. For flight information and fares only phone Western on Crawley (0293) 543301.

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Air fares to the States were around £1200 return then came Western with a £244 Denver return, beaten by Freddie Laker's £100 each way flights to LA, and planes full of skiers in winter.

First Non-Stop Flights to Denver