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Travel > Ski

The ski resorts where Europe's old-money elite go to play

These alpine villages have retained the down-to-earth charm that first attracted wealthy Europeans more than a century ago



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Megève has been a favourite among the rich and famous since the 1920s Credit: Anshar73

Wealthy Europeans have been [decamping to the mountains to ski](#) since the late 19th century and some of the oldest resorts have somehow managed to retain the down-to-earth charm that attracted people to them in the first place. So where can you go for that “old-money” atmosphere today?

Gstaad, Switzerland



Le Grand Bellevue sits in its own parkland a five-minute walk from Gstaad centre Credit: Raphael Faux

A wonderful spot for beginners, Grace Kelly taught her kids to ski in [Gstaad](#) and, like Julie Andrews and Elizabeth Taylor, owned a house here. When Taylor had an overflow of guests, she would book them into the Palace Hotel (now [Gstaad Palace](#)) and on one occasion Richard Burton, Roger Moore, David Niven and Peter Ustinov were all spotted at the bar. Today, you're more likely to see Leonardo DiCaprio, Madonna, Tiger Woods, and an assortment of European royals.



Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton were avid skiers - the late actress had owned a home in Gstaad Credit: Sygma/James Andanson

Against all odds, Gstaad has managed to maintain a down-to-earth rustic charm, attracting the international jet-set, yes, but remaining a working farming community. That said, the ultra-exclusive Eagle Ski Club is still going strong so if you know a member, get them to take you there for lunch for the people-watching.

At just over 1,000m with lots of gentle, wide, sunny slopes, 60 per cent of the runs are for beginners, 30 per cent for intermediates and 10 per cent for experts.

An excellent base is the whimsically historic palace hotel [Le Grand Bellevue](#), which sits in its own parkland a five-minute walk from the centre and has a huge spa.

How to do it

Rooms at [Le Grand Bellevue](#) start from £640 on a half-board basis.