

Ski Holiday Jargon

If you don't ski or sell ski holidays the following terms may not be obvious to you. This quick guide may help when dealing with client enquiries but if there's anything else you don't understand please just call / email or even drop us a quick WhatsApp message. There are no silly questions and we are here to help. This stuff is second nature to us but we'd have no idea where to start when dealing with cruises or safaris!

Apres Ski

The time spent in often rowdy bars at the end of the ski day. Skiing tends to finish around 1600 hrs and the period from then until dinner is known as apres ski. Some resorts are better than others with the noisier ones boasting plenty of live music, DJ sets etc.

Avalanche

Not something your client wants to be caught in and if they are serious about off-piste skiing they need to be aware of the risk. Some areas are more prone to avalanches than others.

Button / Drag Lift

A ski lift with a round plastic disc at the end of a long pole. The disc is placed between the legs and gently pulls skiers and boarders up the slopes. These are often found in resorts with older infrastructure and whilst ok for beginner slopes they are generally despised by more experienced skiers for being slow. Snowboarders generally dislike them too as they were really made for skiers. Most well known resorts are replacing drag lifts with more efficient uplift.

Cable Car

A bigger aerial lift that transports skiers up the mountain inside and without needing to wear their skis. Often found at key access points to get queues moving.

Catered Chalet

A very British concept and found mostly in the French Alps. Properties that are smaller than hotels and normally staffed by Brits working a gap year (Brexit is challenging this though!). The normal size is 4 - 6 bedrooms and sleeping 8 - 15 people although larger ones also exist. You could book a room and share the space with strangers, or book the whole place for your group. Initially designed as a halfway house between a self-catered rental and a hotel, most suitable for sociable guests.

Chairlift

An aerial lift that you sit on, with your feet resting on a bar. You do need some technique to use one however as it is important to be able to ski or board away as the chair reaches the summit (it doesn't stop!).

Chalet Board

Catered chalet staff often provide breakfast, afternoon tea and evening meal with wine on 5 or 6 out of 7 days with one or two days off whereby guests would try a local restaurant or look after themselves.

Clothing

Not a difficult term in itself but if you are wondering what people will wear for snow sports the basics are thermal trousers and top, long ski socks, salopettes (waterproof ski trousers), gloves, a mid layer such as a fleece or roll neck top, ski jacket (waterproof and windproof). Eyewear is also important as cold winds and bright reflections from white snow can cause damage. Depending on weather people will wear goggles or dedicated ski sunglasses with high UV protection. Remind your clients not to forget their sunscreen too. It is far easier to burn on a sunny day in the mountains than anywhere else.

Cross Country / Nordic Skiing

A far less common sport whereby people propel themselves along a narrow track with their poles. The skis are longer and thinner and no uplift is needed. Think biathlon without the shooting bit! Some resorts are far better than others for dedicated nordic tracks.

Dump

Tons of snowfall in a short space of time making for excellent deep **powder** skiing conditions.

Equipment

A general term used for the hardware associated with winter sports. For most people this will involve either snowboard and boots or skis, boots and poles. Snowboarders do not use poles. Increasingly, the vast majority of people also wear a helmet and in some places (particularly for children in ski lessons) it is now compulsory.

First Tracks

Catching the first lift up the mountain to be the first person down, making the first tracks on the freshly groomed piste. In some resorts you can book special packages with private cable car rides and breakfast on the mountain before the lifts open for the day to the public.

Green / Blue / Red / Black Run

Resorts tend to classify their slopes by colour to indicate difficulty level. A slope will be graded based on both its steepness and its width (a narrow slope is often far trickier) and you'll hear people boasting of conquering a black run (the most difficult). Beginners will be particularly keen to ensure that a resort has plenty of green nursery runs or gentle blue runs. Most resorts strive to achieve a majority of slopes suitable for intermediates.

Heliskiing

A niche and often very expensive experience whereby a helicopter is used to access terrain that is untouched by ski lifts. This fabulous way to access off-piste areas is not available in all resorts and in fact not even legal in all countries.

High Resorts

With global warming comes a decrease in reliability of snow cover. More and more customers will look to resorts that are higher up in order to have the best chance of good snow cover. In this sense a high resort would be at an altitude of 1500/1600m plus with lift infrastructure extending upwards from there.

Liftie

The operator of a ski lift, employed by the resort to help guests and keep them safe as they get on and off.

Lift Pass / Ski Pass

Effectively your ticket to the ski lift infrastructure. There are very few lifts that your client can ride without a lift pass. Prices vary from resort to resort (depending on the amount of terrain available) and there are normally different prices for adults, youths, seniors and children. A big expense that needs to be budgeted for and it is not unusual for a lift pass to be priced at £250 - £300 for 6 days (the standard amount of skiing on a 7 night holiday).

Magic Carpet / Travelator

A conveyor-belt like lift where you stand on the lift and it carries you to the top of the slope. Usually found on beginner slopes and children's areas and increasingly the uplift of choice for teaching total novices of all ages.

Moguls

Essentially large bumps in the snow that are enjoyed by experienced skiers who like to punish their knees! Generally detested by snowboarders who struggle to turn quickly enough on them. Moguls may be formed naturally by simply not grooming the slope for several days, or they can be cut by machine for a more uniform look (for example for a mogul race).

Off-Piste

Ski slopes are prepared overnight by resort staff for our skiing pleasure but experienced skiers or snowboarders may like to venture away from these groomed slopes to escape the crowds and feel more at one with the mountain. You'll hear people talking about their love of **Powder** - a term for deep snow that hasn't been groomed by a **Piste Basher** (a cat tracked machine that prepares slopes for skiers).

Park

Snowparks and freestyle areas are more common in ski resorts than ever with the increasing popularity of jumps and tricks. Your client may be an experienced skier or boarder that enjoys **jumps**, **halfpipes**, **boxes**, **kickers** and **rails**.

Piste

A frequently used term for a downhill ski slope. Originally the French term but widely used all over Europe.

Piste Basher / Piste Bully

Also known as a Cat in North America. These big machines generally work after the slopes close to get them ready for the next day, moving the snow around and combing it flat again.

Season

The ski season in the Northern Hemisphere is typically from December until April (often just before Christmas until just after Easter). Higher resorts and those with glaciers open earlier and close later but if your client is looking to ski in October/November or late April/May we will need to be very careful when it comes to resort selection.

Snow Cannons

Can be fixed or mobile and are essentially machines that turn water into snow and spray it on the slopes to improve the coverage. Seen as being a safety net for many as they can prolong the period of opening by weeks in some cases or keep critical slopes open for access to the resort centre.

Ski School

The provider of snowsport instruction in a resort. Lessons may be taken as part of a group with fixed class timings (often every morning for example) or your client may prefer more flexible one to one instruction in a private lesson. These are more expensive but learners progress faster than in a group that may have 8 or 10 people in it. Many parents prefer traditional classes for their children as it gives them time to ski a bit further and faster whilst the kids are with their instructor each day!

Touring / Ski Touring

Some people like to climb up the mountain on their skis before descending. They have specialist skis for this purpose with removable skins on the bottom to prevent them from slipping backwards.