

SUMMER SNOW

As the Aussie summer kicks in, ski resorts in the northern hemisphere are gearing up for winter. **Toni Krasicki** points to four resorts to escape the summer heat.

Niseko, Japan

NISEKO

Japan

What's not to like about a ski trip to the land of the rising sun? There are metres of featherlight, bone-dry snow, not to mention the fabulous food, welcoming people and coma-inducing hot springs for soaking sore muscles. There are 600 ski resorts on the islands of Hokkaido and Honshu, and most resorts get 10 to 18 metres of snow per season.

But it's little wonder Niseko, in the northern Hokkaido, gets voted as one of best overall ski resorts in Japan. Suitable for all levels and abilities, Niseko is also well-known among international visitors for the consistent quality and quantity of powder, the impressive off-piste terrain and the combination of tree and alpine skiing. Although the resort does well in catering to English speaking guests, it also retains its authentic Japanese vibe. jnto.org.au/hokkaido

ZERMATT

Switzerland

There are loads of world-famous ski resorts in Switzerland, and whichever one you choose,

expect well-organised service and charming ski resort villages. Considered one of Europe's finest, Zermatt delivers the quintessential ski holiday. Its sheer size – including three main ski areas, long ski runs, awesome scenery and picture postcard village all nestled under the shadow of the majestic Matterhorn – makes the schlep to the other side of the globe worth the effort. However, it'll take mental grit to make it through the 360km of well-groomed ski slopes, if you include Valtournenich and Cervinia in Italy, which are interlinked with Zermatt. Finish the day on the slopes enjoying a well-deserved après ski session that will more than likely take you well into the night! zermatt.ch/en

GULMARG RESORT

Kashmir, India

Looking for an alternative to the well-trodden pistes of the US and Europe? Intermediate and advanced skiers and boarders can sniff out some serious powder at the world's second highest ski resort in an

unexpected place: Kashmir, India. Ride powder-filled bowls and gullies in the mighty Himalayas and have access – if you dare – to endless off-piste powder fields. Don't go for the glam or infrastructure, as there's only one gondola and one chairlift that feeds about 30km of ski runs. The gondola reaches 3,980m, and provides access to mixed terrain on both the north and south aspects of the bowl. This is definitely powder hound territory!

skigulmarg.com

PARK CITY

Utah, USA

Utah's deep, dry, and light powder snow is legendary. And the good news for Aussie snow bunnies is that Perisher's Epic Australia Pass can get you in for their snow season. With three mountain access points – Canyons Village, Park City Base, and Town Lift – there's over 3,000-hectares of skiable terrain, transforming Park City into the biggest ski resort in the states.



Park City, Utah, USA

What surprised me was the lack of crowds – there was no lift queues and some runs were literally empty. I stayed in February; the snow covering was fabulous, the terrain varied and the runs long and so damn spectacular that I didn't want my stay to end. Locals tell me that the mountain is super quiet at the end of January, when Park City hosts the Sundance Film Festival. The celebrities hit the town to party, accommodation prices soar, and the rest of the US steers clear, while the locals have the mountain to themselves.

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