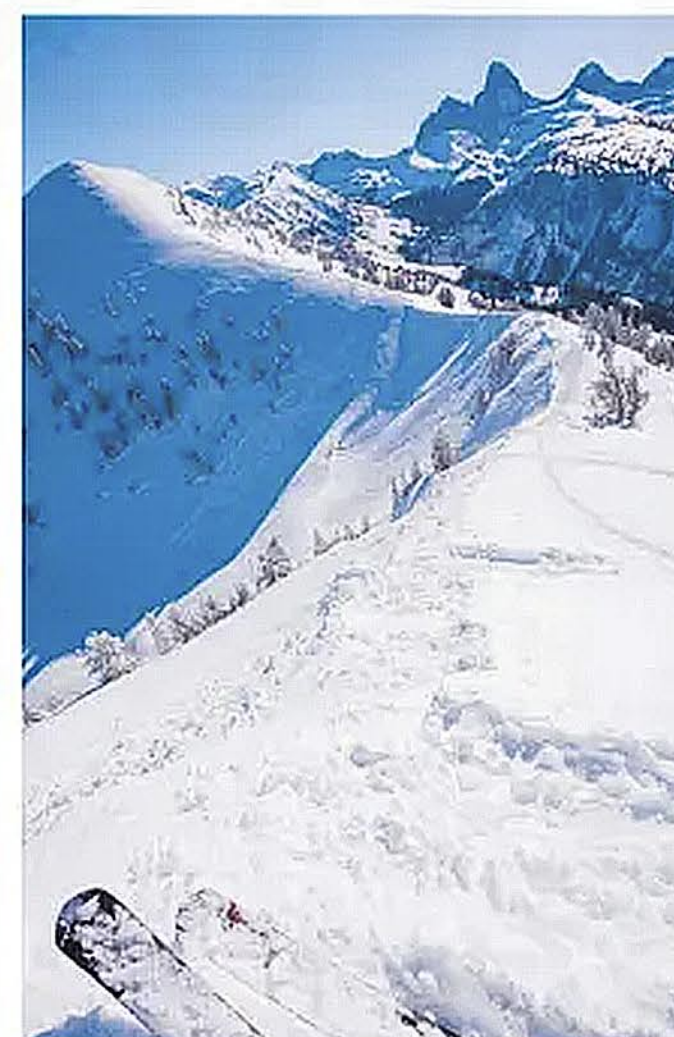


Hit the slopes without hitting your wallet



Winter Park in Colorado is probably the easiest ski resort in the US to get to; below, Ski Santa Fe is owned by a family, so it has a jovial, intimate, homey feel; enjoy family skiing in America without breaking the bank. Photos / Getty Images



find world-class art galleries, eclectic shops, and a dining scene that rivals the biggest cities. It's unlike any ski town you've visited before. Up on the mountain, you'll find a variety of terrain for all abilities, and with New Mexico's dry air, the snow falls as fluffy as candyfloss. And you know it's a great family resort because Ski

Grand Targhee regularly gets more than 12m of deep, cold powder every season; a lone snowboarder flies down the slopes at Tamarack ski resort in Idaho. Photos / Getty Images

Santa Fe is owned by a family, so it has a jovial, intimate, homey feel. Where: Ski Santa Fe is 22km from the centre of Santa Fe. And there's no need for car hire — the RTD Mountain Trail Bus Route runs from the town to Ski Santa Fe. skisantafe.com

There is a way to enjoy a US ski holiday without having to remortgage the house, writes Brian Thacker

If you walk up to the ticket office of a Big Name ski resort in the United States on a Sunday, a day lift pass will set you back NZ\$479. I'll give you a second to lift your jaw off the floor. Throw in lift tickets for the rest of your family, accommodation, food and \$50 on-mountain hot chocolate (yep, that's a real thing), you might need to remortgage your house to go on a US ski holiday.

But fear not, because fantastic skiing across the Big Ditch doesn't have to come with a quite-so-hefty price tag. There are 400 ski resorts spread throughout the country, and you can ski where the snow is just as fluffy, the runs just as long and exhilarating, but with prices that won't blow your budget. You only need to know where to go. Let's go on a tour of five of the best family-friendly and wallet-friendly ski resorts.

Tamarack, Idaho
"Where is everyone?" That's what I kept saying to my guide, Rob. On our first four runs of the day, Rob and I were the only people skiing. Another downside to some of the Big Name resorts is that they can get big crowds — and that meter is still ticking over while you wait in lift lines. You won't have that problem in Tamarack. On the day we skied, there were 498 people on the mountain. And, with 410ha of skiing, it's bigger than Mt Hutt or the Remarkables.

But here's the best part — a day lift pass (purchased a day in advance) at Tamarack is \$88. As Americans say, you do the math. The resort is also still all shiny and new. When Tamarack opened in the 2004-05 ski season, it was the first four-season resort to be built in the US in more than two decades. And no matter where you stay in the purpose-built, European-style village, you are only seconds away from that lift with no one on it.

Grand Targhee, Wyoming
Actually, Grand Targhee isn't quite sure where it is, which is a good thing. Grand Targhee is in what is known as Wydaho. Straddling the border, when you are skiing you look down into Idaho although you are in Wyoming. Their popular next-door neighbour, Jackson Hole, attracts the crowds, while this low-key ski area attracts the snow — over 12m of deep, cold powder every season.

The lift pass isn't as cheap as some other resorts, but the terrain is huge (more than double New Zealand's biggest ski area), with incredible views, powder bowl after powder bowl, and the icing on the cake is the on-slope lodging. It's some of the best value you'll find anywhere with cosy but basic accommodation only steps away from the lift, and includes access to hot tubs and pool — and one of the most fun apres-ski bars in the mountains. Have you tried dancing on a table in ski boots? Where: Grand Targhee Resort is 70km from Jackson Hole Airport in Wyoming. Six airlines provide direct flights to Jackson Hole Airport from 14 US cities. grandtarghee.com

Solitude, Utah
Utah claims the Greatest Snow on Earth, but great snow comes with a price and crowds.

Want some savings and solitude? Then head to Solitude. You'll get access to the legendary Cottonwood Canyons skiing at a price that won't frighten your bank account. You'll also get lots of that quality snow, fewer crowds, a chill vibe, a small but quaint village, friendly ambience, and the set-up of the resort funnels everyone into two



main base areas, so you don't have to panic about losing your kids. And if your little grommets know how to carve, they will love Honeycomb Canyon, which is an expert's haven of steep glades, fun cliffs (although that might be an oxymoron), and big, sugary-powdery bowls.

Where: Solitude is only 50km from Salt Lake City airport, which has connections to most US cities. solitudemountain.com

Winter Park, Colorado
Winter Park is probably the easiest ski resort in the US to get to. Fly to America's largest airport (Denver), jump on a 35-minute train to Union Station then cross the platform for the Winter Park Express. Just over two hours later you can be on a chairlift. Winter Park is Colorado's longest continually operated ski resort, boasting more than 1200ha of terrain with a little something for everyone — from mellow groomers to the steep and deep.

Have you ever dreamed of having a mountain all to yourself? At Winter Park you can get an Early Ups lift ticket add-on, allowing a limited quantity of intermediate and advanced riders to have 30 minutes to ski your bottoms off before the lifts open to the public. Where: See above. winterparkresort.com

Ski Santa Fe, New Mexico
Skiing in New Mexico? Won't I hit a cactus? Yes, New Mexico is in the desert, but it also has huge mountains, including the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, home to Ski Santa Fe. As the name suggests, it's right next to one of the nation's most historic and cultured cities. As well as the stunning adobe architecture and fascinating 400-year history in Santa Fe, you'll

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