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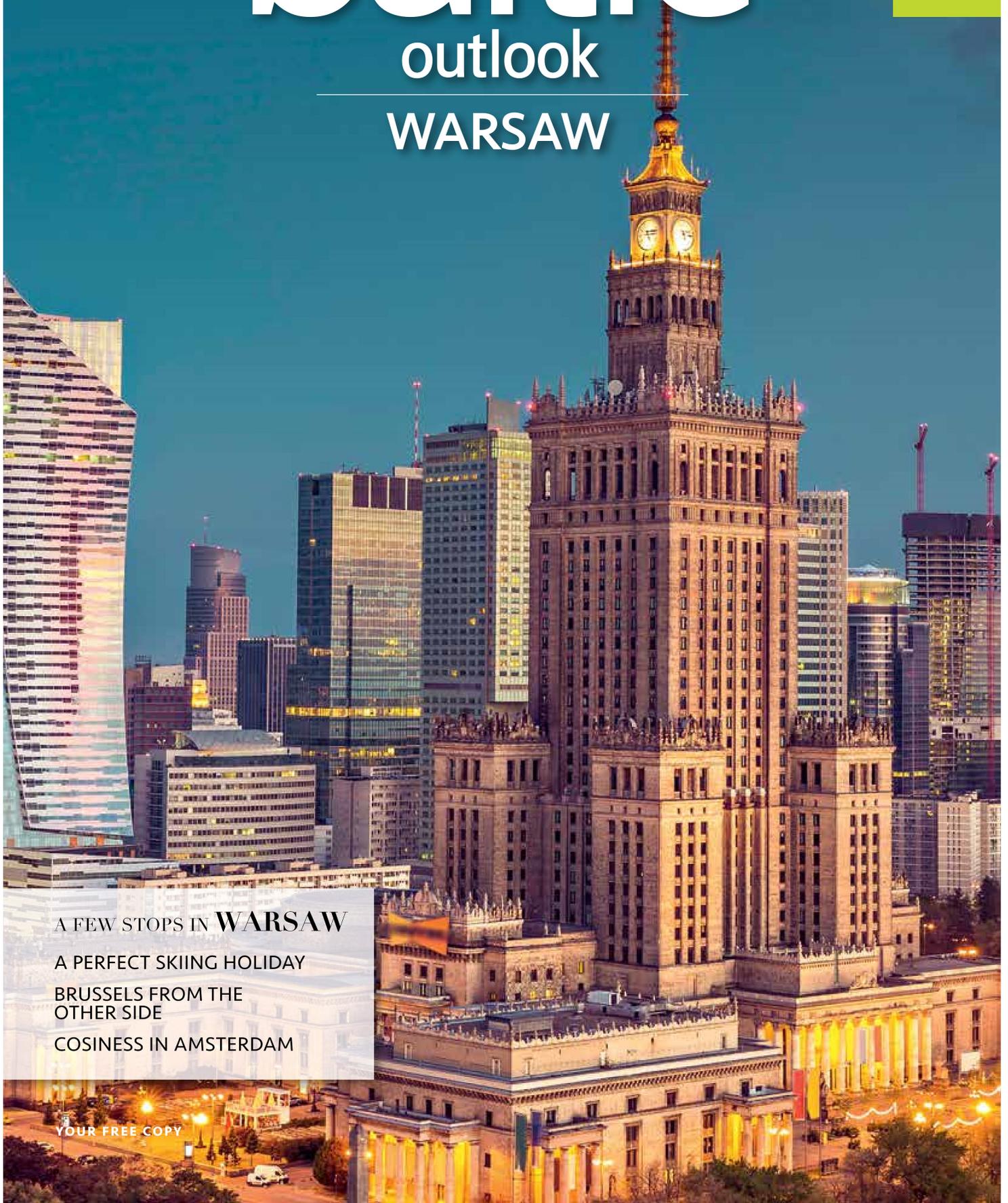
A FEW STOPS IN **WARSAW**

A PERFECT SKIING HOLIDAY

BRUSSELS FROM THE
OTHER SIDE

COSINESS IN AMSTERDAM

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Kitzbühel is a true skier's paradise.



THE BEST RESORTS IN EUROPE

A PERFECT SKIING HOLIDAY

The resort options are almost endless, and it can be quite hard to choose where to spend your holiday. Luckily, we've chosen what we think are the best resorts this winter for four different types of travellers, so read on to find your perfect skiing destination.

Text by **James Taylor**
Publicity photos



© Orelil B

THE FAMILY BREAK

Avoriaz, France

For a family-friendly ski holiday, look no further than the ski resort of Avoriaz located in the French Alps. The resort has a great location on the Portes du Soleil ski circuit, which spans the borders of France and Switzerland and is the world's oldest cross-border skiing destination and the largest lift-connected skiing region in the world. All of the slopes offer stunning panoramic views of the surrounding summits, and the slopes immediately surrounding Avoriaz are some of the most snow-sure on the whole Portes du Soleil – there's guaranteed snow cover here from December to April, so there's no chance of the kids being disappointed by poor conditions.

Portes du Soleil has over 650 kilometres of connected pistes that are all covered by the one ski pass, which means you're spoilt for choice when it comes to different runs. More slopes in Châtel (France) and Champéry (Switzerland) are easily accessible from Avoriaz, but don't let that tempt you away from Avoriaz for too long – ski lifts fan out in every direction from the village and offer something for all levels of skiers, from the gentle blue and green

slopes for beginners, to the intermediate red slopes, and all the way to the tantalising black runs complete with all of the expected twists and turns, challenging even the most expert skier.

A purpose-built ski resort from the 1960s, Avoriaz is set atop a sheer granite cliff and famous for its dark, wooden-clad apartment buildings. The village is expertly designed, laid out with the accommodation of families in mind. It's completely free of motorised traffic, and no residence in the village is more than 500 metres away from the main shops, restaurants, and bars. Getting around the village is a breeze, either by foot, ski, or sled – the pedestrian streets are ski runs themselves, meaning that the kids can go sledding right in the heart of the village in complete safety. In the centre of the resort, and no more than 300 metres from any residence, is the famous Village des Enfants childcare centre. With excellent facilities and amazing ski instructors, it's a great place to leave the kids for the day while you go off and enjoy the sunny slopes. With a wide variety of kid-friendly activities to choose from as well as easy-going, child-friendly slopes, you can rest easy knowing that your children will be entertained and having a great holiday themselves.



© Pascal Combert



© Pascal Combert

Fly to Geneva with airBaltic from €? one way 

Fly to: Geneva, Switzerland
Elevation: 1100 m
Great for: Family escapes, extensive access to various levels of runs
Ski pass: High season 3-day pass – EUR 139 (adults), EUR 104 (children)



© bandion.it

THE LUXURY HONEYMOONERS

Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy

For a luxurious honeymoon like no other, head to one of the most fashionable and elegant ski resorts in Italy, Cortina d'Ampezzo. Cortina is perhaps the most stylish ski resort in all of Italy, a place where long lunches, afternoon wine tastings, and evening strolls down the main street are taken much more seriously than skiing. And while you'll be able to treat yourselves to the usual assortment of four- and five-star hotels, luxurious ski lodges, and palatial chalets, the real luxury here is the location. The Dolomites take centre stage, and you'll constantly find your eyes drawn to their lofty peaks dusted with snow and towering over the Italian ski resort. Made of limestone, the mountains are especially beautiful if they catch the sunrise or sunset – tinged with soft hues of pink and red, the mountains really come alive and lend an air of romantic fantasy to the village.

But don't let that view distract you from the rest of the valley, because there's beauty on all sides of Cortina. The entire region is impossibly pretty, with long, forested valleys sloping upwards to the surrounding mountains, making for some of the most scenic skiing in the world. 120 kilometres of pistes

are spread across four separate areas easily accessed from the resort, with a shuttle bus transporting you to two of them and the other two accessed via lifts. All have different elevations and terrains, so there's a remarkably diverse array of pistes and something for all levels of skiers.

For the true Cortina experience, though, head to the heart of the town and the romantic Corso Italia, a cobbled street lined with boutique shops, restaurants, and wine bars. The impressive church tower sits in the middle of it all, looking down and watching over the crowds stylishly gliding along the Corso, disappearing inside cosy bars to sip on various wines, or ducking into the shops to buy luxurious jewellery and furs. Fit in with the chic village locals by dressing to the nines and hitting the Corso on an early evening stroll, known as the *passeggiata*. It's during this time that you'll notice just how many locals there actually are here. Italians love Cortina, but not for its skiing – 70 percent of these domestic tourists don't even go near the ski slopes. Instead, they visit for the magical atmosphere here. Of course, this also means that the slopes are never too busy, making for some relaxing and altogether pleasant skiing in what is an idyllic honeymoon destination.

Fly to Verona with airBaltic from €? one way 



© bandion.it



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Fly to: Verona, Italy
Elevation: 1224 m
Great for: A luxurious getaway in a truly Italian town, amazing scenery, and uncrowded skiing areas
Ski pass: High season 3-day pass – EUR 155 (adults), EUR 109 (children)

© Christof Sonderegger



THE GIRL'S HOLIDAY

St. Moritz, Switzerland

150 years ago, a wager took place between Johannes Badrutt, the original owner of the *Kulm Hotel*, and a group of English visitors who were staying with him during the summer. He urged them to consider St. Moritz also as a winter holiday destination, painting them a picture of the snow-dusted mountain peaks bathed in sunshine, the white snow contrasting with the bright, blue skies. Badrutt even promised them that if they didn't enjoy their vacation, he would pay for all of their travel costs. If they did enjoy themselves, then they were free to stay at the hotel for as long as they liked. This clinched the deal, and, come Christmas, the English tourists packed their bags and headed for St. Moritz.

Ever since those first winter tourists in the Alps, St. Moritz has been and will remain the most famous ski resort in the entire world and one of the best when it comes to winter sports in general. Sitting in the Engadin Valley, the resort is located in the Alps of southern Switzerland, close to the Italian border. Its location in the valley means that not only does it see 300 days of sunshine a year, but the high elevation ensures that there's great snow reliability

during the season, making for some top-notch skiing and snowboarding on over 350 kilometres of pistes. St. Moritz has even hosted the Winter Olympics twice.

This spectacular alpine paradise is frequented by celebrities, royals, and wealthy people from around the world, and there's definitely no shortage of glitz and glamour in St. Moritz. Made up of three gorgeous towns, it's dotted with an assortment of four- and five-star hotels and a rich choice of shopping, restaurants, and nightlife action. And the beauty doesn't end there, because the surroundings are equally as glamorous. Set around a glimmering lake and bordered by whimsical forests, you'll soon feel as if St. Moritz exists in its own little elegant and charming world.

Thanks to its popularity with the rich and famous, all of the big-name fashion boutiques have opened up stores on the main street in town. Join the designer fur-clad masses along the Via Serlas and explore this dazzling array of famous outlets, or delve into the side streets to find the smaller and more affordable boutiques. If shopping takes it out of you, why not relax in style at one of the many spas in the villages? After all, you are on holiday.

Fly to Zurich with airBaltic from €? one way



© Romano Salis



© Daniel Martinek

Fly to: Zurich, Switzerland
Elevation: 1822 m
Great for: Fun all-rounder holiday with shopping, skiing in beautiful surroundings, and good après-ski
Ski pass: High season 3-day pass – EUR 192 (adults), EUR 64 (children)



© Michael Wertberger

THE POWDER HOUNDS

Kitzbühel, Austria

An off-piste paradise coupled with one of the best après-ski scenes in the world – it must be Kitzbühel in Austria. In 1893, Franz Reisch successfully made the descent from the Kitzbühel Horn and thus completed the first-ever alpine ski run in Austria. The rest is history. Kitzbühel has been attracting adventurous skiers for more than a century now, and some of the best skiers in the world have launched their careers on these slopes. 179 kilometres of pistes are painstakingly groomed for the winter season, but one of the best things about the resort is the easily accessed 200 square kilometres of glorious off-piste runs. One ski pass links the resort to a number of other smaller ski resorts, including Jochberg, Kirchberg, and Pass Thurn, and exploring these regions through their off-piste routes is exciting, adventurous, and incredibly scenic.

A picturesque medieval town, Kitzbühel is constantly voted the most beautiful ski town in Europe. A pedestrianised old town sits behind tall walls, all set against the towering and jagged Wilder Kaiser Mountains. But don't let the cute façade of this city fool you; when it comes to après-ski, Kitzbühel turns into a completely different beast. Start off slowly

by browsing the shops in the old town, drink some tea and relax at a few spas, or kick back with some culture and watch a traditional dance performance. Before long you'll be doing a bit of dancing yourself – on the tabletops. Ski down the valley towards Kirchberg and stop in at the many bars along the way, or try your luck with a spot of gambling at the *Casino Kitzbühel*. DJs kick off in the early afternoon and continue into the evening, when you'll eventually find yourself in one of the many bars and clubs in town. This is where things really kick off in Kitzbühel, with music blaring well into the wee hours of the morning.

One other factor will come into play when considering Kitzbühel as your skiing holiday resort of choice: the Hahnenkamm. Taking place every January, this is the most thrilling and by far the most demanding downhill race on the entire World Cup circuit. Sit back and watch as the best skiers from around the world take part, and enjoy the intense atmosphere that comes with such a challenging race. The inundation of skiers and spectators to Kitzbühel during the race means that it's even busier than usual, and that also means that the parties after the race (and all weekend long) are truly events to remember. Or not. **BO**



© Michael Wertberger



© Bernhard Spoettl

Fly to Salzburg with airBaltic from €? one way 

Fly to: Salzburg, Austria
Elevation: 762 m
Great for: Serious off-piste, après-ski, and the Hahnenkamm downhill race
Ski pass: High season 3-day pass – EUR 152 (adults), and EUR 76 (children)