

Ski Hot Spots

By Mikael Honkaniemi

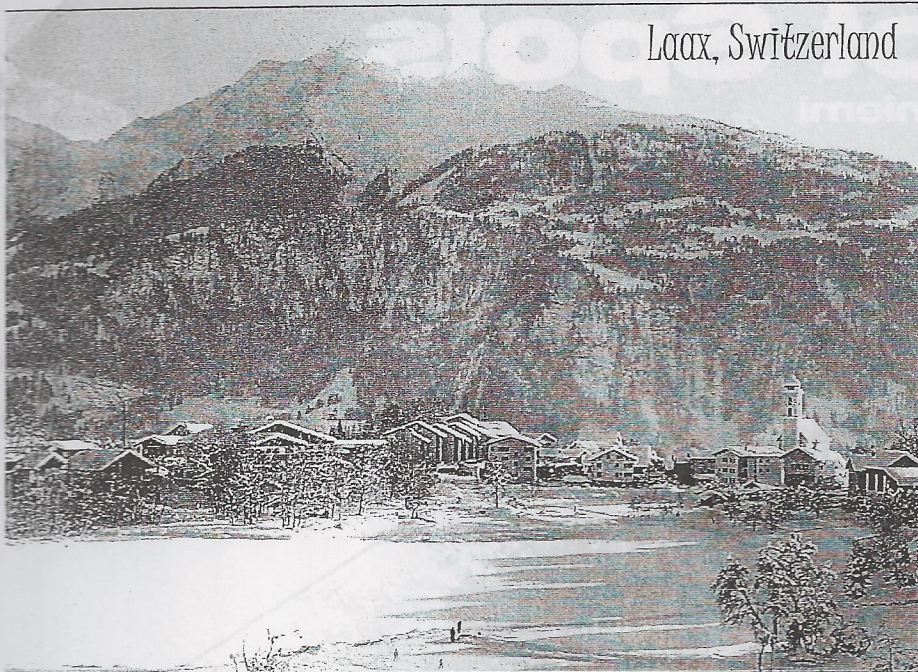


Jackson Hole, WY

Skiing, the fantastic sport of enjoying the winter and mountain. But you might be wondering: What are the best places to go? This is the right article if this question is floating around in your head. The powder is just sitting there, waiting for you in the greatest locations. Everyone has different styles of skiing: backcountry, moguls, free style, or among others. The ideal ski place is where all these styles are tended and included. The paramount ski resorts are places that feel that they were designed for you, the skier.

Many places have great backcountry skiing. A lot of it is done in North America. Backcountry is skiing on trails that have not been groomed. Some places have exceptional groomed slopes all season round, usually varying in difficulty. A difficult form of groomed slopes are moguls. Moguls are bumps in the trail that require skillful turning to go around them efficiently. But all in all, the most important aspect of skiing is the overall feeling of going down the mountain without any troubles or difficulties on your mind. Many ski resorts do not give this experience, though the best places give the exact definition of this feeling.

Laax, Switzerland



Laax, Switzerland

"Modern, friendly ambience, and diversity on the slopes." These are words of my father, Kari Honkaniemi. Kari has been going to Laax for the past nine years, and has not had any doubts or regrets. The terrain varies: there are 140 miles of groomed slopes for everyone's level; in addition, there is great off-piste/backcountry when the lifts are open.

Each month has advantages to it. Every time I have gone skiing in Laax with my father, we have stayed at an amazing three star hotel called Hotel Waldeck. The food in Laax is fantastic, a mix of French, Swiss German, and Italian cuisine. Besides, the hot springs are amazing for skiers after a long day on the slopes. (www.myswitzerland.com)

Chamonix, France

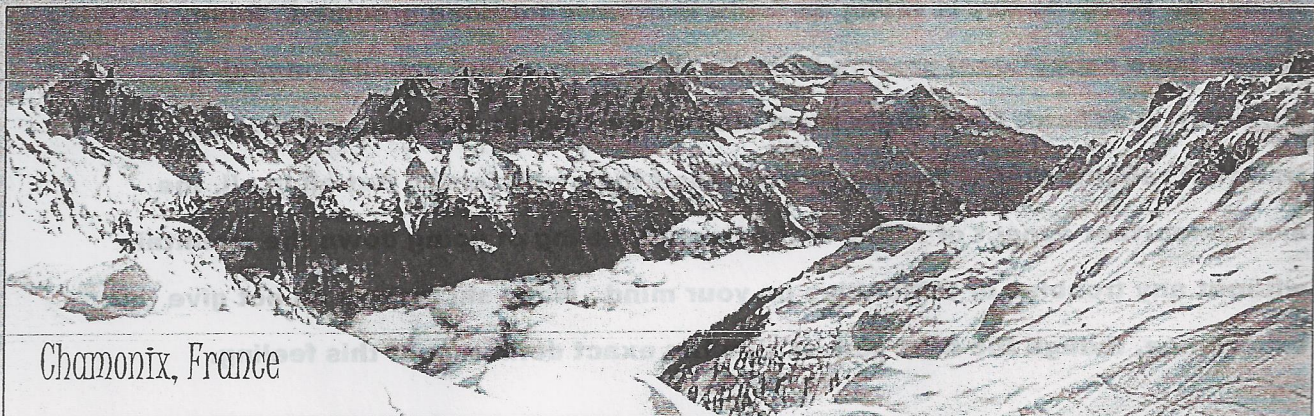
Enjoy some of the greatest skiing on one of the highest peaks in the Alps. Chamonix is in the northwestern part of the Alps and 62 miles from Geneva. Shred through 30,000 acres of skiable terrain in 3 skiing areas (the Argentière glacier, Lognan and the Pendant). There is something for everyone: long slopes, skiing through the trees, freeride, off-piste, and beginners' slopes. Ski on something new every time, with 106 miles of trails that are easy to get to with the great ski pass system. For après-ski, there are multi-cultural restaurants. The four star Hotel Morgane is just footsteps from the cable car. (www.ski-europe.com)

The Lowdown

**Highest Peak-
15,632 ft/4810m
Vertical Drop-
9263ft/ 2807m
Trails-
106 mi/170 km
#of lifts- 49**

The Lowdown

**Highest Peak-9902
ft/3,018m
Vertical Drop-
6457 ft/1968m
Trails-
137 mi/220 km
#of lifts- 28
of Snow Parks- 4**



Chamonix, France

North America

North America, where, if you go to the right places, some of the best powder dwells. The Rocky Mountain region is full of some of the greatest ski places around. Once you go, you may never stop going. Get the all American or Canadian winter experience through the sport of skiing. Whether it is backcountry, moguls, or groomed skiing, it is easily found on this very continent.

Whistler/Blackcomb, British Columbia

Consistently recognized as one of the finest ski resorts in North America, Whistler/Blackcomb, does have some bragging rights with its 8,000 acres of skiable area, six huge powder bowls, notable heli-skiing, and more. Many remember Whistler from hosting the 2010 Winter Olympics; it was there for a rightful reason. There are tons of lifts to get you to the places where you want to go, and the slopes all vary in difficulty. One of the most important aspects of Whistler/Blackcomb is the 30 ft of snowfall a year. Some of the greatest powder skiing in America and Canada is definitely done in Whistler/Blackcomb. (www.britishcolumbia.com)



The Lowdown

Highest Peak-
2,284 m/7,494 ft
Vertical Drop-
1,609 m/5,280 ft
Trails- 200+
#of lifts- 38

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2,284 m/7,494 ft
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Jackson Hole, Wyoming

The five hour drive from Salt Lake City is well worth skiing at this resort. Jackson Hole boasts about its 2,500 acres of in-bound skiable area and the longest continuous vertical rise in any ski area in the US (4,139 ft). With two mountains in the resort (Après Vous and Rendezvous), Jackson Hole is most known for its backcountry, which is made up of more than 3,000 acres of scenic terrain. After the long day of skiing, enjoy the all American style dining in the great warm lodges. (www.jacksonhole.net)

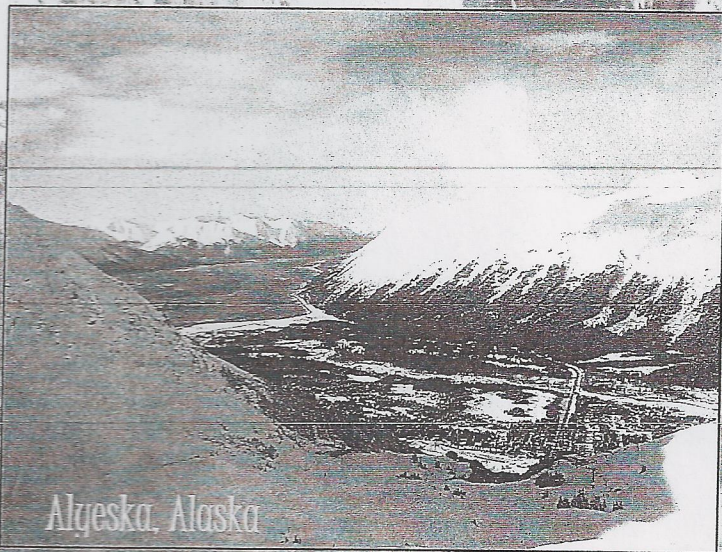
Alyeska, Alaska

Boasting of 55 inches of annual snowfall, you can't go wrong with Mt. Alyeska. With 1,400 acres of skiable terrain, this massive mountain is a sure hit for ski vacations. The backcountry has a major importance to the mountain. After a major snowfall, the skiing is fantastic. When I went there, the recently fallen powder made my trip amazing. Luckily,

Alyeska does not get huge crowds. At the end of the season, be sure to attend the Slush Cup, in which people celebrate the beginning of spring by skiing/snowboarding across a pool of water. When the day is over, eat the mountain's best burgers at Sitzmark. (www.alyeskaresort.com)

The Lowdown

Highest Peak-
1,200m/3939 ft
Vertical Drop-
975 m/3,200 ft
Trails- 73
#of lifts- 9



Alyeska, Alaska

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