

LUXURY

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Double Impact

A pampered chalet holiday in the Alps or a blood-pumping Nordic escape?
Refreshing twists to the conventional ski vacation do exist.

by Larry Olmsted



White Deer San Lorenzo Mountain Lodge is a four-bedroom chalet at Plan de Corones, the largest of several ski resorts in the Italian Dolomites.

dining wine cellars, and focus on regional specialties such as Colorado raised lamb, beef, trout, elk, and bison. Because the ridgetop cabins are all linked to the base-area facilities and Ranch House Restaurant by a lighted, half-mile groomed trail and plowed dirt road, you can even ski, flat-tire bike, or take a sleigh to and from dinner.

Devil's Thumb Ranch is popular because it has so many trails and is very easy to get to, just a 90-minute drive from Denver, but it is not the only such option, and many of the nation's most acclaimed ranch properties feature cross-country as a main winter activity, with large groomed trail networks.

Top choices include Colorado's famous **Home Ranch** (homeranch.com), and Montana's **The Resort at Paws Up** (pawsup.com), **The Ranch at Rock Creek** (theranchatrockcreek.com), and **Lone Mountain Ranch** (lonemountainranch.com). On the East Coast, while not a ranch, the **Trapp Family Lodge** (trappfamily.com) in Stowe, Vermont, is the nation's very first Nordic center, the first to install snowmaking, and offers a full-blown cross-country vacation resort experience with Austrian flavor—you can even ski to the resort's new brewpub for lunch.

"What we're seeing a lot now is a combo where some family or group members do alpine and others go cross-country, or they mix up days of each," says Alpine Adventure's Reichsfeld.

For those who want to try cross-country without committing to an entire vacation or giving up downhill, most major ski resorts and ski towns have Nordic trail systems. The very best places for combining world-class cross-country and downhill skiing with luxury lodging and the full ski vacation experience are Beaver Creek, Colorado; Sun Valley, Idaho; Lake Tahoe, California; Vermont's Stowe; and Whistler Blackcomb, British Columbia, which has both the largest and most popular ski resort in North America and a comprehensive Nordic center built for the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games. Nordic skiing is also hugely popular in Europe. "It's definitely a much bigger thing there than in the United States," notes Scout Ski's Plaskitt, and for a really unique twist on the winter vacation, you can combine the British chalet model with a hybrid alpine/Nordic skiing trip. Especially good choices for this are France's Val D'Isere and Switzerland's Klosters. ♦



Gear Up

The latest high-tech essentials for cross-country skiing.

FISCHER SKIS & BOOTS

Austria's Fischer is one of the world's best and most innovative ski manufacturers, and newcomers skiing groomed trails should consider the Fiber Crown, which comes with binding (\$239), while those who want to go farther off the beaten track will love the S-Bound Collection (\$369). Fischer pioneered this hot new category with fast and easily attached or removed traction skins. These skis pair well with the company's XC Comfort Pro (\$139) and Offtrack OTX 5 (\$150) boots, respectively. fischersports.com

SALOMON RS PRO JACKETS

Nordic skiing often works up a sweat (performed at lower elevations than alpine, it is thus much warmer), so you want gear that is lighter and more athletic. The new RS Pro (\$200) is a light, stretchy softshell that moves and feels great, wicks and dries fast, and is water-resistant and reflective. salomon.com

DÆHLIE WOOL PANTS

DÆHLIE is the number one Nordic apparel brand in Scandinavia (where the sport was born) and growing in popularity in the United States. The warm Wool Pant (\$195) is designed for Nordic skiing with a softshell merino wool inside liner and double wool layer on the backside, plus thoughtfully placed stretch inserts for freedom of movement. dæhlie.com

ICEBREAKER WOOL BASE LAYERS

This iconic New Zealand brand changed the outdoor gear industry forever and launched the shift to performance wool over synthetic underlayers. It's still the leader, utilizing pure merino wool. Crew- and zip-neck long-sleeved tops (from \$90) and bottoms come in multiple weights for men and women. icebreaker.com

SWIX SONIC SUMMIT FOLDABLE CARBON POLES

Quality poles are more important for Nordic than alpine skiing, and Swix makes this great lightweight, carbon-fiber model. It's a multipurpose pole that is ultra-packable since it breaks into thirds, with comfy, all-natural cork handles (\$160). swixsport.com