

Slope time: 7 underrated ski resorts

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(CNN) -- You've heard of Aspen, Jackson Hole and Whistler, but how about Copper Mountain, Grand Targhee and Revelstoke? These ski resorts may lack the buzz of their more glamorous neighbors, but they make up for it in snowfall, value and fewer crowds.

So hop on a lift before winter winds down.

[Revelstoke Mountain Resort - British Columbia](#)

Opened in 2007, Revelstoke has remained largely off the radar thanks to its relative inaccessibility in British Columbia's Selkirk Mountain range. It's a five-hour drive from Calgary and two hours from the nearest international airport, but it's unlikely to stay that way for long. With some 60 feet of annual snowfall at the highest elevations, 5,620 feet of vertical -- the longest descent of any resort in North America -- and lift, cat-skiing and heli-skiing from one village base.

[Copper Mountain - Colorado](#)

Sandwiched between Breckenridge and Vail, Copper Mountain has long been a local favorite, but a new high-speed quad-lift and ski-in, ski-out lodging put it on par with its big-name neighbors. Naturally divided terrain separates skiers and snowboarders by ability, which gives the entire resort more elbow room. Bonus: Guests get free snow cat access on Tucker Mountain. The "High Four" deal this season packs in four days of skiing or riding for \$234.

[Grand Targhee Resort - Wyoming](#)

Perched on the western slope of the Tetons, Grand Targhee is perfectly positioned to reap the lion's share of powder from eastern-moving storms. "There can be times when Jackson Hole can receive zero snow and the Grand Targhee can get a foot," says Dan Sherman, spokesman for ski.com. Plus, he adds, "The terrain is fantastic." This year, the resort is offering free skiing and snowboarding to lodge guests with a 2012 season pass to any ski resort in the United States or Canada to make up for the lack of snow elsewhere. Lodging typically starts at \$99; adult lift tickets run \$69.

[Mad River Glen - Vermont](#)

Stowe or Killington may be Vermont's most recognizable resorts, but Mad River Glen best reflects the Green Mountain state's independent streak. The cooperative-owned ski area doesn't groom its trails, forbids snowboarding and keeps snowmaking to a minimum. "We prefer it from the heavens not the hoses," says resort spokesman Eric Friedman. Ski magazine has ranked its terrain as the most challenging on the East Coast. The resort's biggest claim to fame is its single-chair lift, the only one in North America. The mountain doesn't own lodging, but there are plenty of classic ski lodges and cozy bed and breakfasts nearby, with rates from \$85. Adult lift tickets start at \$45.

[Schweitzer Mountain Resort - Idaho](#)

High up in Idaho's panhandle nine miles outside of Sandpoint, Schweitzer isn't as accessible as other West Coast resorts. As a result, it's unlikely you'll wait more than five minutes in the lift line. Then there's the 2,900 skiable acres -- more than neighbor Sun Valley. While the mountain is known for its off-trail skiing among the trees, the terrain varies from the bunny hill to steep, double-black pitches. The 6,400-foot summit affords skiers panoramic views of Idaho, Montana, Washington and Canada, as well as Lake Pend Oreille. Slopeside digs start at \$164; adult lift tickets at \$67.

[Tignes, France](#)

With its postcard-perfect Alpine scenery, breathtaking verticals and charming chalets, Val-d'Isère is one of the most beloved ski resorts in Europe. But Tignes, its neighbor in the L'Espace Killy -- a ski area in France's Tarentaise Valley named for famed alpine ski racer and native son Jean-Claude Killy -- offers a similar experience and then some. A slew of off-beat activities like [ice-karting](#), [bungee-trampoline](#) and [ice-diving](#) under a frozen lake appeal to families. Together, the resorts, which are linked by cable cars, tunneled funitels and gondolas, offer nearly 200 miles of runs serviced by 102 lifts.

[Valle Nevado, Chile](#)

Serious skiers know the season doesn't end come summertime. It just shifts south of the equator. Come August, Valle Nevado Ski Resort, 35 miles northeast of Santiago, is blanketed in deep powder. Newer than the storied Chilean resort of Portillo, Valle Nevado has all the bells and whistles of most modern mountains, including the only high-speed quad lift in South America, a brand new gondola and an onsite heli-pad.

[Backcountry skiing: Beauty and fear](#)

At roughly \$200 a shot and up to 4,500 feet of vertical in one run, heli-skiing is a relative bargain here. (Can't wait for that first run? Hitch a chopper ride straight from Santiago. The resort will send your bags ahead). Lodging ranges from the budget Hotel Tres Puntas to the luxe Hotel Valle Nevado. Hotel Tres Puntas runs \$2,266 for seven nights (Friday to Friday) for two people, including lift tickets.

Seven-night packages include two interconnect tickets to neighboring resorts La Parva and El Colorado, opening up 7,400 acres of skiable terrain.