

Byway



Alpine trips without the crowds

Winter 2026

Crunching across virgin snow alongside the winding tracks of alpine wildlife. Pitting your strength in a quest to reach the jagged summit of a frozen peak. Relaxing as the rhythmic motion of a train loops you across a frozen wilderness. Heading to the mountains for a winter adventure doesn't have to mean clocking eye-watering ski speeds along miles of busy downhill pistes. Many winter visitors are looking to soak up the far-reaching views of snow-covered mountains at a different pace.

Europe's leading no-fly holiday company, [Byway](#), has put together this list of alternative alpine activities and off-the-beaten-piste resorts to add a sprinkle of snowy novelty to your next winter break by train. Dip in to find ideas including snowshoeing in Gstaad, cog train railway rides beneath the Matterhorn and cross-country ski routes in Zell am See.



Snowshoeing is the ultimate winter sport for the keen hiker, giving you access to a range of areas that are impossible to reach by foot or ski. [Gstaad](#) is the perfect place to try it out, with a network of marked trails offering spectacular views across the Swiss Alps.



In place of the speed and adrenaline of downhill skiing, “**Nordic**” **cross country skiing** offers tranquil exploration, following trails through remote forests and traditional mountain villages. The Austrian resort of [Zell am See](#) boasts a network of these cross-country ski trails across the Pinzgau region and is reached by the beautiful Transalpin train service, which winds through the Swiss Alps into Austria.

One of the most famous ski resorts in the world, [Zermatt](#) boasts some enviable piste runs, but the staggering views of the Matterhorn and surrounding alpine scenery can also be enjoyed by **riding the cog railway** between Zermatt and Gornergrat to the restaurant at the summit, 10,135ft/3089m above sea level. Back in the car-free town, you’ll find plenty of restaurants specialising in the distinctive regional cuisine and schnapps aplenty beside the iconic mountain view.



Often viewed as the gateway to the Cairngorms National Park, [Aviemore](#) is also a beloved base for fans of **winter mountaineering**, providing access to some of Scotland’s most dramatic winter terrain with snow-covered peaks, steep ridges, icy gullies and challenging weather conditions. A frozen playground at the end of a gentle sleeper train ride from London.

If you're still chasing a good downhill slalom. Here are some of our alternative suggestions for **underrated European ski slopes accessible by rail**.

Pas de la Casa , Andorra, Spain	Exhilarating, snow-sure skiing with access to over 210km of slopes running across a plethora of interconnected ski domaines in the Pyrenees. A firm favourite for its ski-in/ski-out access, vast range of intermediate runs and famed night ski sessions.
Ounasvaara Ski Resort , near Rovaniemi, Finnish Lapland	Perfect for young children and beginners, this resort boasts 11 gentle slopes and 100km of cross country trails in the heart of the Arctic Circle. (Sssh...it's also home to Santa, who you can visit 365 days of the year)
Polana Szymboszkowa , Zakopane, Poland	With a large beginner friendly slope and long intermediate runs, Polana Szymboszkowa is a firm favourite among Polish skiers, with staggering views across the Tatra Mountains to the Giewont Peak.
The Nevis Range , Fort William, Scotland	High altitude skiing across 20km of runs on the slopes of Aonach Mòr, right next to Ben Nevis. This is atmospheric West Highland skiing at its best, a fitting end to the train journey up, which follows the iconic "Harry Potter Train" route across the Glenfinnan viaduct.

Notes to editors

For more ski trip inspiration read our [ski holidays by train guide](#). Image library available [here](#).

About Byway

Byway is on a mission to help more people discover Europe and beyond by travelling through, not flying over. All self-guided itineraries include overland transport and accommodation, package protection, disruption replanning and 24/7 in-trip support from our no-fly travel experts. Whether you design your trip from scratch, travel our favourite routes or enlist personalised planning help from our team, the result is a seamless slow travel adventure through landscapes, cultures and the places in between.

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