



**HIT THE SLOPES** Owning an Alpine property, such as Chalet Le Mayen, is a surefire way to guarantee your Christmases are filled with skiing and other winter sports

# Snow Patrol

There's a certain cachet to owning your own ski chalet. **TAMSIN BRADSHAW** finds out from the experts what to look for—and where

**I**T'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN: you can almost hear the whoosh of skis and boards on fresh powder, and the clink of glasses that heralds the start of après-ski fun. For many, hitting the slopes for the ski season is an annual pilgrimage and one that makes you think: why not buy property in a ski resort? That way you wouldn't face the hassle of scrambling to find a chalet at the last minute, or wondering if you'll discover your accommodation is miles from anywhere.

"Alpine properties are secure investments, with the advantage of you being able to use the property over the ski season for personal enjoyment," says François Marchand, general

manager at alpine property specialist Erna Low Property. "[You can] then rent the property when you are not occupying it, generating a great income that could cover your charges—and potentially earn you a nice profit."

Oli Stastny of Aylesford Alpine, who is based in Switzerland's exclusive St Moritz, agrees. "If you invest in a ski chalet in a top resort, you will certainly have a very good investment opportunity to cover running costs with only a few weeks of rental."

Location is key, though. "The choice of resort and the altitude are major factors in securing occupancy," says Marchand of renting out your ski chalet. Stastny warns buyers that

it is "important to try to buy into areas that are high enough to have snow in the future. I consider properties located at anything with a bottom level of 1,700 metres above sea level to be a good future investment." Adds Marchand, "Owning a property in an attractive cosmopolitan area such as the French Alps will also secure you a great capital appreciation in the long term, because these properties are becoming increasingly attractive to international buyers."

Investors should also look to buy outside the city centre, says Chris Lane, sales director of Japan's Niseko Resorts Group, which is responsible for high-end properties such as The Orchards Niseko. "There's so much to see outside of the main tourist attractions," he says. "It's like going to Bali and only staying in Kuta." Additionally, in Japan it's getting harder to buy land close to the slopes. "Anything within a two-kilometre radius of the ski lifts has been bought," he says of Niseko, a resort on Japan's northern-most island of Hokkaido.

Lane notes that most people buying into Niseko are not looking to flip their properties. "It's called a legacy play; most people would like to give the property to their grandkids," he says. "Most people I've supplied homes to over the last 10 years want to use their ski chalets for themselves. They don't even rent them out. They find it so difficult to get a place during Christmas and Chinese New Year—they want to know what to expect."

These buyers tend to prefer houses to condominiums, he says, and are looking to build something from scratch so they can customise it. "In Hong Kong or Singapore, you don't really get to design your own home," says Lane. "It's about what the view's like, where the subway is. I think people like that they can design their home [in Niseko]." When it comes to considering design features—such as home cinemas and your own hot spring baths—he suggests thinking about the purpose of the property. "If you're looking for investment yield, I wouldn't recommend going for the 'sky's the limit' approach."

If you're building a property, it's also important to make sure you work with experts. Given the extreme weather conditions in play in high-altitude mountainous regions, this holds true for ski resorts the world over. "Seek advice from a qualified consultant who knows about construction," says Stastny. "Construction quality in the mountains is of major importance." 🗨️



## HOKKAIDO HIGH LIFE

Niseko is proving itself as the place to be, come winter or summer

In Europe, Les Trois Vallées, Les Portes du Soleil and St Moritz are all popular with buyers. In Asia, however, Niseko is the place to be. "There's a definite buzz around Niseko, as it receives more and more acclaim as a world-class ski resort," says Niseko Resort Group's Chris Lane. "Like a yacht or a sports car, a ski chalet in Niseko is another distinguishing must-have for many high-net-worth individuals around the world," says Lane, adding that the likes of PCCW chairman Richard Li have invested heavily in the

region. "In Niseko, we have seen many major events affect the market adversely—for example, the global financial crisis in 2009 and the Fukushima earthquake in 2011. However, property values held strong during this time. The really noticeable effect was a reduced liquidity during these times, but I'm convinced that had more to do with the yen being so strong over the last five years."

Buyers are also increasingly seeing Niseko not just as a ski destination, but as a place they can holiday year round. "Niseko is becoming more and more of an all-seasons resort," Lane says. "There's nothing better than being able to [entertain or relax] on your private deck and watch your kids playing in your own garden."



**US\$20 million**

**MONTANA**

**BIG SKY BEAUTY**

**FEATURES** Located in the Gallatin National Forest, Belz Chateau Big Sky is a 17,000-square-foot luxury home set on 1.5 hectares. It has five bedrooms and five bathrooms. **WHAT ELSE?** Belz Chateau has its own cinema, a recreation room complete with championship pool table, a steam room and sauna, a dog bath, heated patios and a hot tub. Quintessentially Estates, [quintessentiallyestates.com](http://quintessentiallyestates.com)



**US\$22 million**

**ST MORITZ**

**LAKESIDE LUXURY**

**FEATURES** This duplex apartment boasts views over Lake St Moritz and the surrounding mountains. With six bedrooms and six bathrooms, the home is situated right at the centre of St Moritz, just 100 metres from Badrutt's Palace Hotel. **WHAT ELSE?** A striking spiral staircase connects the two floors of Chesa Staz, but each floor also has its own entrance. There are two terraces, fireplaces, and a hot tub off the master bedroom. Aylesford International, [aylesford.com](http://aylesford.com)



**Over US\$1 million**

**VERBIER**

**SWISS BLISS**

Chalet Bellevarde, a six-bedroom south-facing property, is perfect for skiers and non-skiers alike, thanks to its convenient location just a few minutes from the centre of Verbier. The home has its own indoor swimming pool, a wine cellar and an electric booster for the solar hot water system to ensure 24-hour hot water. Rimontgó, [rimontgo.com](http://rimontgo.com)



**€9.37 million**

**VERBIER**

**SKI IN, SKI OUT**

Chalet Atka, a four-bedroom property in Verbier's most exclusive district, Les Esserts, offers ski-in, ski-out convenience. Built in 1989 using timber, stone and slate, the home underwent a full renovation in 2004. It boasts a cellar, balconies, terraces and a garden, a staff apartment and four parking spaces. Aylesford International, [aylesford.com](http://aylesford.com)



**US\$2.2 million**

**NENDAZ**

**YEAR-ROUND APPEAL**

In the Swiss Alps' famous Four Valleys area, the 2,000sqft Chalet Le Mayen has five bedrooms. Residents will stay comfortable thanks to the under-floor heating throughout. For the warmer months, there is a wrap-around terrace and garden, and the home is within easy reach of the area's seven world-class golf courses. Alpine Homes, [alpinehomesintl.com](http://alpinehomesintl.com)



**US\$9.94 million**

**VERBIER**

**HEALTHY CHOICE**

Swiss architects Comina designed this beautiful wooden chalet, which features workmanship by local craftsmen as well as traditional stone elements. Spread over five levels, Chalet Hellebore has a gym, a hammam and a sauna, a massage room, a walk-in hot tub, Gaggenau and Miele appliances, and lift access. Alpine Homes, [alpinehomesintl.com](http://alpinehomesintl.com)



**US\$1.86 million**

**ANDERMATT**

**FIVE-STAR STYLE**

The Chedi Andermatt residences are part of the Andermatt Swiss Alps development, which allows non-Swiss to buy and sell property easily. Denniston International, headed by Jean-Michel Gathy, designed the range of condominiums, penthouses and lofts. Each residence enjoys the use of The Chedi Andermatt hotel facilities. Alpine Homes, [alpinehomesintl.com](http://alpinehomesintl.com)



**From US\$1 million**

**NISEKO**

**CUSTOMISED COMFORT**

The Orchards Niseko is a 3ha development within easy reach of ski areas such as Grand Hirafu. Buyers can choose from a range of land sizes, with homes—from 1,700 to 5,000sqft—then tailored to suit their needs by a skilled team of high-end architects and builders. Email [chris@nisekoresortsgroup.com](mailto:chris@nisekoresortsgroup.com), [theorchardsniseko.com](http://theorchardsniseko.com)