

THE AGE OF THE SKI TRAIN

After decades of discussion – and rising numbers flying from the UK to the Alps – there’s now a concerted push to get skiers travelling by train. Four key factors are driving this shift. First, there’s a growing range of rail services to the Alps, with several new options launching this winter. Some are revived routes inexplicably dropped despite climate concerns; others are brand new. Second, UK tour operators and travel agencies are now actively promoting rail. After years of expanding options, many now see shifting customers from air to rail as the only viable path to meeting their 2030 emissions targets. “There has never been a better time

to visit the slopes by train,” says John Mansell, Managing Director at Inghams, citing the extended Snow Train timetable as a game-changer. Third, ski resorts – especially in France – are encouraging rail arrivals. With domestic flights there banned by law if there’s a rail alternative, resorts like La Plagne are urging UK visitors to choose rail over air. The fourth factor is subtler: rail’s traditional drawbacks (cost, time, limited booking windows) haven’t vanished, but air travel has worsened. Peak-time airport congestion, inflated fees and shrinking baggage allowances make rail – where extras are often included – more appealing. We have detailed news stories on our website about the new services this winter (search

“rail”), and there are great sites with staff ready to provide expert advice like the long-established snowcarbon.co.uk, but here’s a brief list of some of what’s new this year.

RAIL SERVICES

The **Eurostar Snow Train (eurostar.com)** returns for winter 2025/26 with expanded weekend service from London St Pancras to the French Alps via Lille. Departing every Saturday, it reaches Bourg-Saint-Maurice, Moûtiers and Aime-la-Plagne in under eight hours, with return options now available on both Saturdays and Sundays. Free ski carriage and onboard amenities make it a smooth, low-carbon way to reach Les Arcs, Tignes, La Plagne and Val d’Isère.

Independent skiers can book train-only tickets through **RailEurope (raileurope.com)**, accessing the Snow Train and wider European rail networks. Routes from London, Brussels, Amsterdam and Paris to the Alps are now on sale, with return fares starting at around £224. RailEurope offers multilingual support and streamlined booking for those planning bespoke itineraries or avoiding flights. It’s a scenic, reliable and sustainable way to travel.

SKI TOUR OPERATORS & TRAVEL AGENCIES

IGLU Ski (igluski.com) offers rail-inclusive packages combining Eurostar travel, accommodation, transfers and lift passes to

resorts like Les Arcs and Val d’Isère. Their site compares train vs air and simplifies booking for first-time rail travellers.

SNO (sno.co.uk) promotes low-emission ski holidays with Eurostar and TGV routes to Val Thorens, Tignes and more. Packages often include lift passes and gear hire, with smart filters for resort and sustainability.

Inghams (ingham.co.uk) has expanded its rail footprint with trips to France, Austria, Italy and Switzerland. Packages include accommodation, transfers and ABTA protection.

Peak Retreats (peakretreats.co.uk) offers boutique rail escapes to quieter French

resorts like Peisey-Vallandry and La Rosière, with self-catered stays and tailored support.

Crystal Ski Holidays (crystalski.co.uk) now includes Eurostar travel in packages to Sainte-Foy, Tignes and more, with transfers, lift passes and extras.

Travelski Express (uk.travelski.com) runs direct weekend trains from London to the Alps, with packages including accommodation, transfers and lift passes. A revived Paris–Alps sleeper this winter will offer 660 berths with 14 return trips from 19 December to 20 March, with trains carrying a restaurant car, private cabins, and dedicated female-only accommodation. UK bookings are focused on the London–Lille route.