

When it comes to being sure you're going to find snow late in the season, it's always a bit of a gamble choosing

where to book. Of course, some years, as last winter, the best of the snow arrives late, and it's still dumping down in late April when most resorts have closed for the season. Some ski resorts have made a selling point of their high-altitude, snow-sure terrain. In France, Tignes offers skiing into May, in part thanks to its Grand Motte glacier, but also having resort bases sitting as high as 2,100m means Tignes can usually offer 1,300m of vertical or more right to the end. For me, the end of the season was also a great time to organise a family ski trip. Now that my boys are men, one had chosen to race horses over jumps and had found that the national hunt racing season ran parallel with the ski season, so no skiing until it was done. The other was at uni, but the uni year had ended for exam revision, so a quick ski trip wasn't going to hurt.

Of course, one thing to be aware of as you look for ski areas still open in late April and early May is that although the lifts might still be running, a good many of the facilities – shops, restaurants, cafes and indeed hotel and apartment complexes – might be closed or in closing down mode. Oh, and most British tour operators will have finished their seasons, too. The downside is a more limited choice; the upside is you have the resort and slopes largely to yourself and can sniff out end-of-season-closing-down-sale bargains!

Fortunately, I did find that the Telegraph's Best Ski Operator of the year 2023, Peak Retreats, experts in all things French skiing, were sticking with us and organising holidays right into the end of the season. They found us a property that was still open and still ski-in/ski-out: Village Montana in Tignes Le Lac. Hugging the

slope on the edge of the resort, it's a warm and welcoming property that still offers comfortable apartments right to the end of the season.

Many of the rental shops had closed down, but the Sport 2000 Monkey Riders store was still open and had top-notch equipment still available, along with the added attraction of an espresso bar while your bindings were adjusted to your boots. So, to the slopes! Let's be honest here about skiing in May: even at 3,000m, things are warming up and it's more of a summer ski experience with the best of the conditions in the morning and very stodgy after lunch. We were lucky with the fresh stuff, though, as it kept dumping into May. So, when it wasn't blizzard or fog or thawing too fast to enjoy it, we did get some great runs.

It also feels special to be still sliding on snow in the mountains and on snow still when most of the Northern Hemisphere has moved into summer sports mode. You also get the fun of witnessing resort staff relax after months of relentless toil meeting the needs of the world's skiers.

All in all, hitting the slopes in late April or early May is a great way to stretch the season out and remind yourself that whatever time of year it is, you can always ski somewhere! Then once you're home again, you at least know it's less than six months until the next season gets started. Perhaps an early trip in November would be in order when the slopes are nice and quiet again and you're ahead of the crowds...?

Info: Patrick and his family stayed with Peak Retreats at Village Montana in Tignes Le Lac. 7 nights self-catered in a 2-bedroom apartment from £383pp based on 5 sharing. Price includes return on Eurotunnel crossing, with a free FlexiPlus upgrade (except at some school holiday weeks), with Peak Retreats.

TIGNES



STUNNING
SPRING
SKIING

FRANCE	KM OF RUNS	NO. OF LIFTS	RESORT ALTITUDE	TOP LIFT HEIGHT
PEAKRETREATS.CO.UK	300	78	2,100M	3,450M

