

First-ever SA Snow Holiday Report released

Club Med has seen an increase in international snow holiday bookings by South Africans in recent years, taking into consideration its Winter 2017 season, which achieved a 29% growth compared to 2016. Releasing its first-ever [South African Snow Holiday Report](#), Club Med has gathered statistics to evaluate behaviours and trends of South Africans opting for snow holidays.



Image Supplied

Olivier Hannaert, MD of Club Med Southern Africa, notes that the goal of this report is to educate more South Africans on snow holidays, debunk any myths related to snow holidays, and ultimately get more South Africans booking snow holidays, ensuring that this number continues to increase year on year.

“This report provides information that’s specifically relevant to South Africans and is something we’re extremely excited to launch. We hope you’ll find the content and insights interesting and – most importantly – that it inspires you to take a snow holiday in the near future,” says Hannaert.

South Africans and snow holidays

When it comes to South Africans picking holidays or destinations for a trip, more often than not a sun or beach destination will come out on top, as these are “familiar” options. Mauritius is a firm favourite for South Africans, considering its great weather for most of the year and the convenient four-hour flight to get there, with many other sun destinations following hot on its heels.

Snow holidays are foreign to a large portion of the South African market. There are many possible reasons for this, including the fact that South Africans do not see snow unless in the Lesotho/Drakensberg region, which means a snow holiday is not top-of-mind.

There are misconceptions surrounding the cost of snow holidays. Many South Africans look at the do-it-yourself snow holiday option – in putting their trip together themselves - which can become costly very quickly, and they are perhaps not aware of the fact that an all-inclusive package is a more cost-effective option.

Afriski Mountain Resort in Lesotho is one snow destination close to home that South Africans visit either to try their hand at skiing, snowboarding or other snow sports or simply to see and experience snow.

Afriski in numbers

- **11,000-day visitors during the 2016 winter season (June, July and August 2016), of which about 60% actually skied or took part in some form of snow activity**
- **24,000 bed nights sold during that season (7 600 guests who stayed for three or four nights)**
- **2015-2016 saw a 10% increase of guests staying at Afriski which is a testament to more South Africans entertaining the idea of a snow holiday.**

Factors that drive South Africans to choose snow holidays, include:

- They are interested in trying something new and exciting
- They want to see snow for the first time
- They are snowboarding or skiing enthusiasts and are interested to get back on their board or skis
- They are interested in an alternative honeymoon option
- They are looking for an outdoor holiday
- They want an “alternative” and exciting new option for a group holiday (with family, colleagues or friends)

Google search statistics based on keywords

The six most searched for snow holiday-related words on Google are:

- Tiffindell ski resort
 - Afriski packages
 - Ski Italy
 - Ski holidays
 - Livigno ski
 - Club Med ski
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- May, June and July are the times of year where we see the highest amount of snow holiday-related Google searches (by South Africans)
 - Gauteng, Western Cape, Northern Cape and KZN are where the most snow holiday-related Google searches come from
 - About 61% of this research is done via phone and 38.6% is done via desktop

The growing trend of snow holiday experiences

While snow holidays are typically assumed to be for snow sport enthusiasts, they are becoming popular as a holiday option for those looking for a wellness, health and relaxation retreat.

“That may sound surprising, but there is so much to do at a snow-filled destination than just ski or snowboard. Whether it's shopping, indulging in the resort's spa treatments, hopping on and off chair lifts to discover the best

views of the region for the perfect Instagram picture, tobogganing, snow-shoe walking, enjoying the Jacuzzi in the snow, or simply sitting at the fireplace with a good book with majestic mountains spread out in front of you – there’s so much to offer everyone,” adds Hannaert.

More South African families are opting resorts that cater to the whole family. Club Med offers daily ski or snowboarding lessons with professional instructors every day and a variety of in-resort and out-of-resort activities, allowing the whole family to enjoy the snow and slopes.

Club Med has also seen a growing trend where sales teams, CEO’s and business owners are trading boardrooms for snowboards and spa days for skis to shift their conferencing and incentive trips to progress with the ever-changing times and the world of opportunities available to them.

Whether it’s a corporate group or a big bunch of friends, a snow holiday offers something different, and its magic is enhanced when experienced in a group. Groups also enjoy better discounts when it comes to snow holiday bookings, particularly when booked at least six to 12 months in advance.

Globally, there is high demand for snow holidays, which means snow holiday resorts are also in need. Club Med has made a concerted effort to try and make snow holidays more accessible to a larger part of the population, and with over 20 all-inclusive Club Med snow resorts around the world, and one new snow resort opening each year, Club Med is answering this demand and providing a wider variety for the South African traveller who is interested to try something new, somewhere new.

Rankings of where South Africans are booking to go on snow holidays with Club Med is as follows:

- French Alps
- Italian Alps
- Swiss Alps
- Japan
- China

Popular Club Med snow resorts during Winter 2017 and Winter 2018 seasons are:

- Val Thorens Sensations – French Alps
- Grand Massive Samoëns – French Alps
- Val d’Isere – French Alps
- Cervinia – Italian Alps
- Tignes – French Alps
- Peisey Vallandry – French Alps
- Valmorel – French Alps
- Pragelato Vialattea – Italian Alps

Factors to consider when choosing a snow holiday destination

These are some of the factors that South Africans look out for when they go on a snow holiday:

- **The quality of snow**

Higher altitude resorts are proving more popular as there is more snow in these areas. The snow at these altitudes is also better for skiing, snowboarding or general snow sport activities.

- **Short distance to the slopes**

South African snow holidaymakers are looking for resorts close to the slopes, with major preference for ski-in ski-out resorts – no need to waste time and energy shuttling to the slopes with heavy equipment.

- **The number of slopes**

Apart from location, a big deciding factor when it comes down to picking a snow holiday is the number of slopes (also known as ski trails or ski runs) within an area. The bigger the ski domain, the more ski runs of varying difficulty – from green to black – it's likely to have. One of the biggest and most popular is Les Trois Vallées, in the French Alps).

- **Authentic experience**

Snow holidays provide a truly authentic experience with a cultural exchange like no other. While they are generally linked to snow sport enthusiasts, there's a lot more they have to offer the average Joe who may not be interested in strapping on a pair of skis, but rather, who may just be looking for a new experience-of-a-lifetime.

South Africans opt for all-inclusive snow holidays

When it comes to snow holidays there is a fair amount of planning that would need to be done. It is for this reason that more South Africans are opting for snow holidays that are all-inclusive, letting the experts take care of it. All-inclusive is also the more affordable and hassle-free way to experience a snow holiday.

Everything is taken care of

What better way to enjoy a snow holiday than having everything covered and paid for in advance before you leave SA?

“This is a big element that sets Club Med apart from other travel brands, particularly when it comes to snow holidays. We know everything there is to know about the perfect snow holiday; we take care of everything. That carefree feeling ahead of an exhilarating holiday is something money can't buy,” notes Hannaert.

Exchange rate-proof holidays

With the unpredictability of the rand, more South Africans are looking for travel packages that don't come with any surprises or hidden costs, including foreign exchange surprises. If booking an all-inclusive Club Med snow holiday, once you have booked and paid your deposit, the price is locked in and won't be affected negatively should the rand take a dive.

A snow holiday is really one of the most magical and memorable holidays South Africans are likely to experience. With more snow holiday destinations easily accessible now more than ever before, South Africans are spoilt for choice when it comes to satisfying their desire to try new things and experiences.