

Gear test: 21 race skis • Real lift-ticket bargains

SKIING

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Accessible ADVENTURES

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GO OUT AND DO
SOMETHING CRAZY.

THERE ARE PEOPLE OUT

there who haven't been on a ski vacation in over five years. Disturbing, no? Actually, it's not so bad. If you're one of these underskied folks, your next trip to the mountains is going to be incredible. One blue-square cruiser and you'll be saying things like, "Yeeaaahhaarrhooo!!"

For the rest of us, the year's first ski trip will be a smoother, less earthshaking affair. It'll be fun, sure, but it will also feel relatively familiar and comfortable—a vacation, not necessarily an adventure.

But wouldn't it be a blast to feel that first-trip-in-years tingle again? Of course. And it's easier than you

think. When considering your next ski trip, just do a little creative researching. You could take a ride in a snowcat or helicopter. Work up a sweat on a pair of snowshoes. Follow a guide into the backcountry to gain a new understanding of how to ski a mountain. Curious? On the following pages are some of the best nontraditional winter-vacation options on the continent, from easy-yet-interesting evening diversions to multiday instructional clinics geared to turn you into a neophyte Grizzly Adams. Start with these, and then keep looking. There's a hell of a lot to do out there.

Prices listed are per person unless otherwise noted.

Backcountry trips get you away from the crowds. Of course, they also get you away from motorized uphill transportation.

Hiker: Reid Sabin

Location: Swan Mountains, Montana

SCOTT SPIKER