

Beyond Adrenaline

Adventure is no longer just about the rush, as modern-day explorers crave a sense of discovery. Here are the newest lodges and outfitters plotting particularly far-flung escapades that will take you away from the crowds and push you to the limit.

by Jen Murphy



Valdez Heli-Ski Guides offers challenges for advanced skiers in the Chugach Mountains of Alaska

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From top: a high-altitude run across the Canadian mountains is part of CMH's summer itinerary; tented accommodation on a 29029 challenge

IT USED TO BE that scoring first tracks in Aspen or Zermatt would earn you bragging rights. But these days, skiers want to be able to say they carved the *only* tracks. Thanks to a growing crop of high-end ski outfitters, experiencing backcountry by day and luxury by night has never been easier. Danielle Stynes, founder of **SwisSkiSafari** (swisskisafari.com) curates what she describes as a James Bond holiday for powderhounds. To deliver over-the-top experiences, she employs a team of three helicopter pilots, five guides and an avalanche expert who has a doctorate in snow forecasting. Bespoke itineraries are crafted based on details like fitness level and wine preferences. For the ultimate cultural tour of the Alps, Stynes can arrange a week-long ski safari through Switzerland, Italy and France. You might ski tour from the Matterhorn to Mont Blanc one day then lay tracks around the base of Mount Eiger the next. You'll recover each night at five-star stays like the Chedi Andermatt, where you can take advantage a 2,211sq m spa and 6,000-bottle wine cellar.

Italy's South Tyrol region boasts more Michelin stars than any other Italian province and Agustina Lagos Marmol, founder of adventure outfitter **Dolomite Mountains** ([\[mountains.com\]\(http://mountains.com\)\), has spent over a decade scouting the area's top tables for her gourmet ski journeys. Earn your turns and your meals as you explore the Dolomiti Superski, the world's largest ski region, while overnighing in cosy](http://dolomite</p>
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rifugios, or mountain huts, along the way. Routes are customised based on ability level so you can choose if you want to take in the Unesco World Heritage scenery from groomed runs or off piste. Luggage is transferred from





Above: Niehku Mountain Villa offers access to Arctic peaks; below: the Dolomiti Superski area

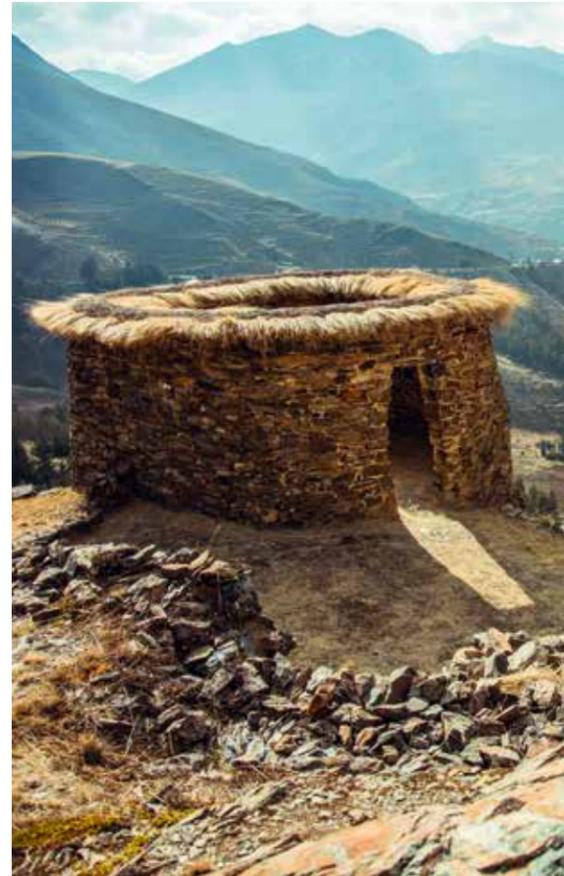
hut to hut, so you'll have everything you need, including a warm fire and hot cocoa, upon arrival. Hard work on the slopes is bookended with pure pampering at Hotel Cristallo Spa in the always au fait ski town of Cortina d'Ampezzo and a final evening in San Cassiano at Hotel Rosa Alpina, home to Michelin three-star restaurant St Hubertus.

If you're looking for Europe's next ski frontier, consider the Arctic. Newly opened **Niehku Mountain Villa** (niehku.com) sits 241 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle on the Swedish-Norwegian border. From its doorstep, helicopters can access more than 60 skiable peaks with terrain that rivals the Alps or the Himalayas. And come May and June, the ability to ski under

the midnight sun means it's possible to collect more than 8,000 vertical metres in a day. Built into a train line roundhouse from the 1900s, the 14-room hotel is fast becoming a dining destination thanks to its tundra-to-table restaurant and a 500-wines cellar stocked with some 60 bottles of Domaine de la Romanée-Conti.

For a big mountain experience, no place rivals Alaska's Chugach Mountains. Founded by world extreme ski champions, **Valdez Heli-Ski Guides** (valdezbeliskiguides.com) caters to advanced skiers seeking to improve their skills on seriously steep terrain. The outfitter's base, Tsaina Lodge, is only a two-minute flight from epic runs like Mont Dimond. Top-of-the-line Eurocopter A-Star B2

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Mountain Lodges of Peru promises a Machu Picchu experience away from the crowded tourist trails



helicopters drop groups of four atop quad-burning runs that average 900 to 1,500 vertical metres. Most guests après-ski in the lodge's hot tub to prep their legs for the next day.

To truly test your mountain mettle, try spending a day with a ski legend in Wyoming. **Caldera House** (calderahouse.com), an exclusive eight-room lodge steps from Jackson Hole Mountain Resort's iconic red tram, pairs guests with pro skiers like Griffin Post. New for this season, the hotel will offer a guided day of skiing with Olympic gold medallist and two-time overall Alpine World Cup Champion Bode Miller. Priced at \$25,000 for five people, the Bode Miller ski experience begins with

morning coaching over breakfast, followed by a day on the slopes with demo Bomber skis and ends with après-ski cocktails in Caldera House's Members Lounge.

Newly launched **Somerton Sporting Club** (somertonsc.com) offers its members unprecedented opportunities to train and play with elite athletes. Each member is assigned a dedicated sports planner to advise them on specific fitness and nutrition goals. In addition, the club's community of 300-plus world-class athletes and elite trainers can be booked for one-off experiences ranging from skiing with freestyle icon Candide Thovex in his hometown of La Clusaz in the French Alps to

climbing in Yosemite with Free Solo celebrity climber Alex Honnold. **The Explorer's Passage** (explorerspassage.com), meanwhile, gives travellers the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of real-life explorers on expeditions in Antarctica and Africa. Next February, conservationist and renowned polar explorer Barney Swan will lead guests to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's tallest peak.

The growing popularity of ultra-endurance events has inspired many weekend warriors to ditch road racing for high-altitude mountain runs. To capitalise on the trend **Canadian Mountain Holidays** (cmbbeli.com), pioneer of the first commercial heliski operation, is launching its first

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heli-running camps next summer at its lodge in British Columbia's Bugaboos. Three-day programmes include workshops on stretching and stride technique and heli-drops to empty ridgeline trails spanning up to 25 kilometres with up to 1,000 metres of elevation gain.

Billionaire entrepreneur Jesse Itzler is behind the hot new high-endurance event series **29029** (29029everesting.com). With crowds of climbers becoming increasingly problematic on Mount Everest, Itzler has dreamt up an alternative for adventure junkies. He rents a mountain in places like Utah and Vermont, builds a base camp and challenges 250 attendees to scale the peak enough times to equal the summit of Mt Everest (8,848m or 29,029ft) in a weekend. Lavish tipis, live music, food and lectures give the event a Burning Man-meets-Tough Mudder vibe. Tickets include custom daily training programmes and access to elite endurance coaches as well as meals and accommodations.

It might seem impossible to escape the crowds that flock to Machu Picchu each year, but **Mountain Lodges of Peru** (mountainlodgesofperu.com) bypasses the highly trafficked Inca Trail and instead takes trekkers via the remote Lares region of the Sacred Valley. Five- and seven-night trips traverse seldom-visited Inca archaeological sites and local villages, so you're likely to see more llamas than tourists on the trails. At night, guests settle into comfy mountain lodges run in partnership with Andean communities. To ensure a special experience when travellers reach Machu Picchu, the operator always aims to purchase the Huayna Picchu hike permit which removes guests from the congested main site, while offering a dramatic view of the citadel.



Valdez Heli-Ski Guides on the Alaskan slopes; trekking Kilimanjaro with The Explorer's Passage