

Ski Touring in Austria

Still going downhill or already going uphill? Ski touring keeps trending, with more and more winter sports enthusiasts swapping their regular skiing for touring gear, including from the UK. But why would anyone walk up the slopes when it's so much easier to just hop on a lift or gondola? Those who've jumped on the trend rave about the feeling of achievement when reaching the top of the mountain on their own muscle power, the chance to venture into quieter, more isolated areas in popular resorts, and the beauty of the landscapes they get to enjoy along the way. The mix of slower pace and the connection with nature also make ski touring a great mindfulness activity.

So, what exactly is ski touring all about? And what are the best spots in Austria for beginners, experts and tourers looking to head out after sunset?

Disclaimer: Please note that safe gear, gadgets, knowledge about the area and - especially for beginners - a professional guide are essential to ensure safety when heading out on a ski tour.

Downhill skiing vs. ski touring

The key difference between downhill skiing and ski touring is that you are walking (or "skinning") up the slope rather than taking the lift. Unsurprisingly, a different sport calls for a different equipment to ensure safety and best possible comfort, so don't attempt to head off with your downhill gear: Unlike downhill skis, touring skis are clipped to the toe of your binding, to aid with movement. You're also wearing "skins" (long thin pieces of fabric that fit the base of the skis) to stop the skis from sliding back when walking up.

It can't be that difficult to walk up a mountain, right? Well, yes and no. Beginners should have a good level of fitness and sign up for a ski touring course before heading out. That way they will learn how to "read" the mountain and the weather, spot potential dangers, and how to use the avalanche transceiver.

The most common newbie mistake is to lift the skis off the ground when on the ascent. However, it's way more efficient to keep contact with the snow throughout. The poles – usually with a bigger basket at the base than the classic version – are used to support the legs as you push into your strides.

Si touring equipment can be hired in most resorts, so no need to buy and carry around skis, boots, and poles.

Ski touring regions for beginners

[Ischgl](#) is a go-to place for ski touring, with roughly 15 routes and schools and guides available throughout the region. Beginners can make use of the [Piz Val Grondabahn](#) (on the border of Austria and Switzerland) and get right up the starting point without having to skin all the way up. The actual tour begins on the piste down to the Col Val Gronda (2,752 m) and includes both descends and easy ascents. It is about 3.4 km long and usually only takes 90 minutes – perfect for a first experience.

Equally popular is [Grossarl](#) in SalzburgerLand. The valley's most famous ski mountain is the Kreuzkogel, while the surrounding mountains are significantly quieter and more peaceful. This includes the "Kreuzeck" in Hüttschlag, a great option for newbies to ski touring. Local association Berg-Gesund ("mountain health") offers [beginner taster sessions](#) with certified guides as well as week-long packages.

[Serfaus-Fiss-Ladis](#) in Tirol awaits with tasting sessions, teaching beginners all the basics before heading on a small adventure with a local pro. Another popular option is the so-called "Smuggler's Tour to Switzerland", where the touring group crosses the border and skins up two short ascents before gliding down on powder snow. Stunning scenery and – in the latter case – return by cab included.

The Schatzberg mountain in [Ski Juwel Alpbach Wildschönau](#) is another popular choice for those new to the sports. Newbies can master their skinning skills starting at Inneralpbach and walking all the way up to the top. This ski tour is possible even in winters with little snowfall. The route is also suitable for snowboarders using a split board.

Regions for experienced touring skiers

The [Achensee region](#) offers breathtaking panoramic views and challenging routes for those who have some experience under their belt. A popular destination is [Rofanspitze mountain](#) (1,259 m) with its Wiesing ascent, one of the most spectacular runs in the Eastern Alps. Those who'd like to further improve their skills can also book one or two-day ski touring camps.

Austria's most westernmost province [Vorarlberg](#) is another ski touring favourite. One of the most challenging tours runs up the highest summit of the Rätikon massif, the Schesaplana (2,965 m). Starting at Brand, a picturesque mountain village, it takes about five hours to complete and rewards tourers with stunning summit views and a long descent.

Multi-day ski touring adventures

One day simply isn't enough? We totally get you! The four-day ski tour in the [Kitzbühel Alps](#) is a must-do for tourers looking for a longer adventure. It starts in Kelchsau and ends in

Aschau, and by the end tourers will have walked roughly 60 km, with the lowest point at 790 m and the highest at 2,447 m. Accommodation can be booked along the way. Please note this route is highly challenging and suitable for experienced tourers only!

The [Silvretta Montafon region](#) is another favourite. Those taking the whole tour around the region (5-7 days) start and end in either Ischgl or Galtür. Cosy huts are available along the way, with Heidelberger Hütte, Jamtalhütte and Wiesbadener Hütte among the most popular options. Bonus point in this area: The route can be adapted according to time, skills, and fitness level.

Ski touring at night

Who says you can only go ski touring when the sun is out? Evening adventures on flood-lit slopes are often even more magical. To ensure safety, tourers are advised to stay on the dedicated pistes and respect the official opening hours.

[Innsbruck](#) has several night ski touring options, with [Mutteralm](#) an especially popular one: Start in the village of Mutters and skin all the way up to Pfriesesköpf (1,801 m), then head to the restaurant at the top of the Mutteralm. Every Wednesday until 10 PM. [Patscherkofel](#) offers several routes for different fitness and skill levels, with some ending at the Patscherkofel Schutzhaus Restaurant. The Olympic downhill run is open for ski tourers every Thursday until 10 PM. Looking for an extra challenge? The steep route up [Bergeralm](#) might be just your cup of tea - it's open on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday from 6:30 to 9:30 PM.

When heading to [Ski Juwel Alpbach Wildschönau](#), get ready to spend your Tuesday night skinning up the Reither Kogel mountain (1,110 m). There are no lifts in operation, and the family descent (piste number 71) is reserved for ski tourers from 6:30 to 9:30 PM.

Holidaymakers in the [Seefeld](#) region can walk up to the [Rauthütte](#) mountain hut at 1,600 m every night. The hut is open until 10 PM from Monday to Saturday and until 7 PM on Sunday. Friday is Burger Day – we recommend booking a table in advance!

More ski touring tips here: [Tirol](#), [SalzburgerLand](#) and [Carinthia](#).