

Ski Innsbruck: Austria's Secret Snow Zone

Innsbruck, capital of the Tyrol region has a rich skiing pedigree, having twice hosted the winter Olympics in 1964 and 1976. Innsbruck itself is not a ski resort; it's a city sat in the mountains that is surrounded by eight smallish ski areas, most of which are less than an hour's drive away.

The closest ski area to Innsbruck is Seegrube Nordkette, the slopes and lifts of which can be seen from the city centre. The area offers some steep terrain (it claims to have one of the steepest pisted runs in Europe) and the large cable car will quickly whisk you up from 575m to 2255m in just a few minutes.

Axamer Lizum is one of the most renowned in the area, approximately a 45 minute drive from Innsbruck. Though small, the terrain is steep and offers plenty of backcountry opportunities for the adventurous. Especially ideal for freestyle skiers and snowboarders there is a terrain park with rails and a half pipe. In terms of après ski, there's not a lot going on in Axamer Lizum aside from a couple of small on-slope restaurants where a hearty platter of Wiener schnitzel can be devoured. There is also a small tepee at the base of the slope serving steaming mugs of gluwain - an ideal way to round off a day on the slopes. Those looking for a night on the tiles should either head to the nearby village of Axams, or back to base in Innsbruck.

Though they are not linked together via a single lift system, taken collectively, the Innsbruck area offers over 200 trails covering over 300 miles of terrain, most of which take less than an hour to reach from Innsbruck. It is possible to use public transport to reach the ski areas, but as [car hire in Austria](#) is reasonably priced, you're better off getting your own wheels, which enables you to be much more flexible about when and where you go.

The small, local nature of the ski areas means there is a real rustic charm and a friendly hospitable environment to the skiing here - something which has been lost in the bigger and more famous mountain resorts of the world. Most of the ski areas are close to small alpine villages, dotted with timber chalets, which represent the traditional Alpine lifestyle that has changed very little over centuries.

If you're looking for a ski-in, ski-out snow holiday, don't bother with Innsbruck. But if you want a ski trip that offers the excitement and services of a city, with the variety and choice and authenticity of a number of small, local ski areas, then a road trip around the Innsbruck area is an ideal winter holiday.

About the Author

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Source: <http://www.tntarticles.com>