

SEASON GUIDE

# The Ski Season *Jobs* Guide

The most popular seasonal work in the world, and the most competitive to get right. Roles, markets, timelines, money and the kit, from the people who list the jobs.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- The twelve roles, honestly described
- Alps, Rockies, Japan, Southern Hemisphere: compared
- Who can work where: the visa routes
- The timeline: August to arrival
- What a season costs and clears
- Kit list, and leaving well

## What a ski season actually is

A ski season is a 16 to 22 week job in a resort town, usually with staff housing, a lift pass and a wage that looks small until you notice how little you spend. It is hard work in cold weather at high altitude with people you did not choose, and most people who do one do another. The ones who regret it are almost always the ones who applied in November.

Ski roles are the largest single block of seasonal listings on EnRoute; France alone accounts for 28 of the 100 active seasonal roles because Alpine tour operators post early and in volume. Every listing states dates, housing and hours, and every one was read by a person before it went live.

### THE THREE DATES

**Apply:** August to early October for a northern winter.

**Arrive:** late November to mid December, one to two weeks before the lifts open.

**Leave:** mid to late April, with the next season's application already sent.

| ROLE                             | THE JOB                                                                                 | NEEDS                                                                  | REALITY                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chalet host                      | Cook breakfast and dinner for 8–16 guests, clean, changeover day. Tour-operator staple. | Cooking to a standard; food hygiene certificate; driving licence often | Split shifts, early starts, most afternoons free to ski. Tips can be significant.                 |
| Chalet or lodge cook / chef      | Menu cooking for guests, sometimes for staff too.                                       | Real cooking experience; a qualification helps                         | Better paid than host; the kitchen is small and the guests are demanding.                         |
| Lift operator                    | Run and monitor lifts, help guests load, dig out the queue lines.                       | Fitness, cold tolerance, safety mindset                                | Outdoors all day in all weather. The most social job on the mountain and the coldest.             |
| Ski or snowboard instructor      | Teach group and private lessons.                                                        | A recognised qualification at the level the school accepts; languages  | Pay depends on hours booked; the good weeks are in school holidays. Certification is a real gate. |
| Rental technician                | Fit boots, set bindings, tune and wax.                                                  | Training given; attention to detail                                    | Peak-hour chaos, quiet afternoons. Binding certification is often paid for.                       |
| Bar and restaurant               | Front of house in resort or on-mountain venues.                                         | Experience; the local language helps a lot                             | Late nights, high tips in the right venue. On-mountain restaurants finish early.                  |
| Hotel housekeeping and reception | Rooms, laundry, front desk.                                                             | Reception: languages, systems                                          | Reliable, indoor, sometimes the best housing.                                                     |
| Childcare / nanny                | Resort creches, tour-operator childcare, private families.                              | Qualifications and background checks, always                           | Strong demand every season; often the best-paid entry role for the qualified.                     |
| Resort or transfer driver        | Airport transfers, minibus runs, deliveries.                                            | Clean licence, often a higher category; winter driving                 | Long transfer days on changeover; free skiing midweek.                                            |
| Resort rep                       | Tour-operator guest liaison: arrivals, problems, ski-hire, après.                       | People skills, a second language, calm                                 | Everything that goes wrong for a guest goes through you. Housing and pass included.               |
| Snowmaking and grooming          | Overnight snow production, piste grooming machines.                                     | Mechanical aptitude; groomers need training                            | Night shifts; skilled; well paid; hard to get without experience.                                 |
| Retail and ski-hire shop         | Sales, rentals, stock.                                                                  | Retail experience, languages                                           | Indoor, regular hours, modest pay, easy to combine with lessons.                                  |

## 02

# The four markets

Same job, different deal.

|              | ALPS (FR, AT, CH, IT)                                                                                      | NORTH AMERICA (US, CANADA)                                                           | JAPAN                                                                    | SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE (AU, NZ, CHILE, ARGENTINA)             |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Season       | Early Dec to mid/late Apr                                                                                  | Late Nov to mid Apr                                                                  | Mid Dec to late Mar                                                      | Late Jun to early Oct                                      |
| Hires        | Aug to Oct; tour operators earliest                                                                        | Jul to Oct; big resorts run job fairs in Sep–Oct                                     | Aug to Oct, often through agencies                                       | Mar to May                                                 |
| Pay shape    | Monthly salary, often modest, with housing, food and pass; tips in chalet roles                            | Hourly at or above local minimum, tips in F&B; pass included; housing often deducted | Monthly, modest; housing and meals common; pass included                 | Hourly; housing scarce in AU/NZ, provided in South America |
| Housing      | Usually provided by operators; independents vary                                                           | Employee housing exists but is short; lotteries and waitlists                        | Usually provided                                                         | AU/NZ: mostly not; expect to find your own early           |
| Who can work | EU citizens freely; UK and others need an operator to sponsor a seasonal permit or a working-holiday route | Citizens; J-1 via agencies for some resorts; IEC working holiday for Canada          | Working-holiday visa holders (many nationalities), citizens              | Working-holiday visa holders; citizens                     |
| Language     | French or German helps a lot in guest-facing roles                                                         | English                                                                              | Japanese helpful; English resorts (Niseko, Hakuba) hire English speakers | English / Spanish                                          |
| Best for     | First-timers with an operator; skiers who want the biggest terrain                                         | Earners in F&B; long seasons                                                         | Powder; culture; a second winter in one year                             | The other half of a double-winter year                     |

## ALPS PAY, HONESTLY

Alpine tour-operator packages often quote a monthly figure well below what the same hours would earn in a city. The package is the housing (which in a resort would cost more than the wage), the food, the lift pass (several hundred euros), the insurance and the transport. Value it the way the Work Exchange Starter Kit values an exchange: hours at local minimum wage against what is provided. It usually comes out fair, and the tips in chalet roles tip it further.

## 03

## Who can work where

The visa route decides the market before anything else does.

| PASSPORT       | ALPS                                                                                                                   | NORTH AMERICA                                                                                       | JAPAN / SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE                                                    |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| EU / EEA       | Anywhere in the EU freely; Switzerland with a permit the employer arranges                                             | Canada IEC working holiday (many EU nationalities, to 30 or 35); US only via J-1 sponsor programmes | Working-holiday agreements with Japan, Australia, NZ for most EU nationalities |
| UK             | Post-2021: an operator with a seasonal-permit route, or French "détachement" arrangements; independents rarely sponsor | Canada IEC (to 35); US via J-1 for camps, limited for resorts                                       | Working-holiday: Japan, Australia, NZ                                          |
| US             | Very limited: EU seasonal permits are hard for US citizens; some operators have routes                                 | Home market; Canada IEC not available to US citizens                                                | Working-holiday: Australia (to 30), NZ; Japan has no US agreement              |
| Australia / NZ | Working-holiday agreements with several EU countries; Switzerland via employer                                         | Canada IEC; US J-1                                                                                  | Japan working-holiday; each other freely                                       |
| Canada         | Working-holiday agreements with many EU countries; France in particular                                                | Home; US via J-1 or TN in narrow cases                                                              | Japan, Australia, NZ working-holiday                                           |
| Others         | Check whether your country has a working-holiday agreement; otherwise an operator sponsor                              | J-1 through a designated sponsor                                                                    | Depends on bilateral agreements; Japan has many                                |

Working-holiday visas typically require age 18 to 30 or 35, a clean record and proof of funds. Rules change; check the official page for your passport before you apply for a job. The Route Planner at [enroutejobs.com/tools/route-planner](https://enroutejobs.com/tools/route-planner) covers the countries in EnRoute's database.

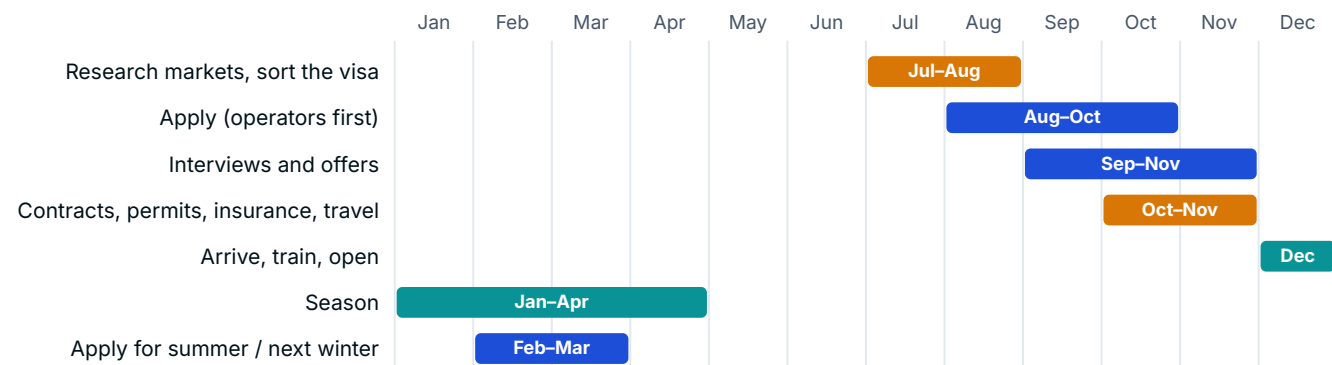
# 04

## The timeline

For a northern winter. Shift everything six months for the south.

### Ski season, from first application to last day

Months of the year. Blue: applying. Amber: paperwork and travel. Teal: the season.



- July to August: decide the market.**  
 Pick by passport first, then by role. Read last season's listings on EnRoute to see what the operators actually ask for.
- August to early October: apply.**  
 Tour operators and large resorts first; their housing goes first. Independents hire later and faster. Ten targeted applications beat forty generic ones; the Remote Job Search Tracker works for seasons too.
- September to November: interview.**  
 Often by video, sometimes at recruitment days. Have your certificates scanned, your availability dates fixed, and a straight answer on cooking, driving and languages.
- October to November: paperwork.**  
 Contract, permit or visa, insurance that covers skiing and work, a medical if required, bank details for the payroll country.
- Late November to mid December: arrive.**  
 Training week, housing, uniform, pass. Do not book a return flight before the contract end date; seasons overrun.
- February: apply for what comes next.**  
 The summer season's hiring window opens while you are still on the mountain. The Seasonal Jobs Hiring Calendar has every window.

## 05

# What a season costs and clears

Fill it in for the offer in front of you.

| LINE                                                                 | TYPICAL                              | MINE |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------|
| <b>Before</b>                                                        |                                      |      |
| Visa / permit / agency fees                                          | \$0–\$800                            |      |
| Insurance for the season (skiing and work covered)                   | \$150–\$400                          |      |
| Flights and transfers to resort                                      | \$100–\$1,200                        |      |
| Kit not already owned (section 6)                                    | \$200–\$1,500                        |      |
| Certificates (food hygiene, first aid, instructor levels)            | \$0–\$600                            |      |
| <b>During (per month)</b>                                            |                                      |      |
| Housing deduction, if any                                            | \$0–\$600                            |      |
| Food beyond what is provided                                         | \$100–\$400                          |      |
| Going out                                                            | the variable that decides everything |      |
| Phone, laundry, sundries                                             | \$50–\$100                           |      |
| <b>Income (per month)</b>                                            |                                      |      |
| Wage after tax                                                       |                                      |      |
| Tips                                                                 |                                      |      |
| <b>Season net</b> = (income – monthly costs) × months – before-costs |                                      |      |

## THE PEOPLE WHO SAVE ARE THE ONES WITH A NUMBER

Decide before you arrive what the season needs to clear, and what that means per week. A season with housing, food and a pass has almost no fixed costs; everything you spend is a choice, and the choices are mostly made in the bar.

## 06 Kit list, and leaving well

### Kit

- ☐ Ski or board gear, or a plan to rent at staff rates
- ☐ Real waterproof outer layers; the job is outdoors more than you think
- ☐ Base layers and mid layers for a week without laundry
- ☐ Boots for snow, and something for indoors
- ☐ Helmet, goggles (two lenses), gloves (two pairs)
- ☐ Sun cream and lip balm; altitude burns
- ☐ A small first-aid kit and any prescriptions for the season
- ☐ Documents: passport, visa, contract, insurance, certificates, bank details, all scanned
- ☐ A power bank and an adapter for the country
- ☐ Something to do on the day the lifts close

### Leaving well

- ☐ Ask for a written reference in the last two weeks, while the manager remembers
- ☐ Ask about next season, and get a name and a date
- ☐ Get the housing deposit back with photos of the empty room
- ☐ Reclaim tax where the country allows (keep every payslip)
- ☐ Log the season in your resume: dates, role, numbers (guests, covers, lifts, lessons)
- ☐ Add the manager as a reference in your EnRoute Signal Profile
- ☐ Leave a review of the employer; the next person is reading it
- ☐ Have the next season's application already sent

| RESORT / EMPLOYER | ROLE | APPLIED | HOUSING? | DATES | PAY / PACKAGE | STATUS |
|-------------------|------|---------|----------|-------|---------------|--------|
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## EnRoute Jobs

# The work is out there. So is the world.

Remote roles, visa-sponsored positions, seasonal contracts and work exchange, every listing read by a person before it goes live. Free for job seekers.

BROWSE JOBS

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### MORE FROM THE LIBRARY

- The Seasonal Jobs Hiring Calendar
- The Summer Season Jobs Guide
- The Income Stacking Worksheet
- The Work Exchange Starter Kit
- The Remote Job Search Tracker

All at [enroutejobs.com/publications](https://enroutejobs.com/publications)

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