

British Ski and Snowboard Market Continues to Grow

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The British ski and snowboard market has again witnessed growth according to the Ski Club of Great Britain's annual Snowsports Analysis, rising 3.4% year on year. There are now over 1.31 million people taking wintersports holidays from the U.K., the report indicates.

The research report, published now for the seventh straight year, found growth in the tour operator snowsports market of 1.7% year on year - but it was the independent market that grew by over five times as much, rising 9.7% year on year. Despite the growth, British travelers still prefer booking ski and snowboard vacations through tour operators - the tour operator snowsports market now constitutes 1,008,000 travelers, while the independent snowsports market still comprises a relatively few 305,000 vacationers.

As the independent market has risen, the report goes on to state that the number of skiers and boarders going away for a weekend has also risen (by 2%) and now makes up 17% of the overall market. The seven-day holiday continues to dominate the British market, however, with 75% of people skiing or boarding for a week. In line with both these findings is that the number of people booking their holiday over the Internet has risen by 3% as tour operators and transport companies offer more sophisticated on-line booking facilities and people continue to use the Internet as a holiday research tool.

France remains the market's destination leader, where 43% of British travelers ski. Andorra lost market share by 2% and Italy and Austria by 1%. The "other" destination category saw a rise largely attributable to the increase in visitors to Scandinavian areas and a demand for a wider range of winter activities.

"We are not surprised the market has risen again as many people are looking for more from their holiday," acknowledges Caroline Stuart-Taylor, CEO of the Ski Club of Great Britain, "and skiing or boarding fits the bill perfectly. It seems as though people are taking more than one snowsports holiday a year and hitting the slopes for a weekend break as well as skiing for a week. The Internet and no-frills airlines will have helped this, but at the same time the tour operator market continues to perform well. We have already seen snow falling in both Europe and North America this year, so the industry is looking forward to a good snow season."

Seventy-three percent of those taking a snowsports holiday fly to their destination, a 1% increase. The train as a method of transport for U.K. skiers has seen a 1% rise after a fall the previous season, now making up 4% of the market. Motorcoach travel, travel by car and fly/drive combinations make up the rest of the transport figures.

Skiing continues to dominate the market and saw a 1% rise, taking market share from snowboarding, which now makes up only 16% of the British snowsports market. The other 6% are non-skiers or practice other disciplines including telemark, cross-country skiing and snowblading. Female participants grew 1% year-on-year and make up 44% of the U.K. market.

The annual research report also found that the average cost of a snowsports holiday in 2006-07 was £648 and it also provides details on how snowsports holidays are purchased, what accommodation is used on snowsports holidays and the standards of skiers and boarders.

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