

# New Jersey Digest



TRAVEL

## Winter Travel Destinations to Watch This Season

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JANUARY 7, 2026

You can forget about Aspen with Hunter Scangarelo. Winter travel doesn't look the way it used to. For years, it was predictable: big-name ski resorts, obvious beach towns, the same places over and over again. This season feels different. People are still traveling, but they're spreading out more, choosing places that don't announce themselves as "winter destinations" at first glance.

What's driving it isn't just weather or price. It's flexibility. It's space. It's the idea that a winter trip doesn't have to revolve around one single activity to be worth taking.

That shift is clear when you look at where interest is building right now.

## Italy Is Having a Very Real Winter Moment

Italy is always thought of alongside Rome, the Amalfi Coast, and so on. Travelers often opt for summer trips to said regions. However, the country has become one of the most searched winter destinations this season, with northern regions drawing the most attention. Trentino-South Tyrol, Lombardy, and Veneto — all tied to the upcoming Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics—are seeing especially strong momentum. Lombardy, in particular, is standing out with sharp year-over-year growth.

The interest isn't coming from one place. Germany, Canada, Switzerland, the United States, and Italian travelers themselves are all part of the surge. That mix matters. It suggests this isn't just Olympic curiosity—it's people rediscovering how much northern Italy has to offer in winter.

"Northern Italy is one of Europe's most magical winter destinations where dramatic alpine scenery meets world-class culture," said Steve Perillo, third-generation owner of [Perillo Tours](#). "Whether you're skiing in the Dolomites of South Tyrol, exploring the festive charm of Milan's Christmas markets, or relaxing in the cozy mountain villages of Lombardy, the region blends adventure, gastronomy, and tradition in a way few places can."

What draws people in isn't only skiing, even though the Dolomites and Italian Alps are central to the appeal. It's the way winter reshapes the region. Cities like Milan, Verona, and Bergamo slow down slightly. Mountain towns feel lived-in rather than seasonal. Christmas markets in places like Bolzano, Trento, and Merano aren't side attractions—they're the center of town life.

Add in serious food culture, from Michelin-starred dining to regional wines and mulled wine stands, and winter stops feeling like an off-season altogether.

## Cities With Nature at the Doorstep Are Standing Out

Italy fits into a broader pattern playing out globally. Travelers are gravitating toward places that don't force a choice between city and nature. They want both, and they want them close together.

That's why destinations like Australia's Capital Territory are gaining traction. You can spend the morning hiking through bushland and the evening in Canberra, without treating either as an excursion. The same logic applies in Chile's Santiago Metropolitan Region, where urban neighborhoods sit within easy reach of the Andes.



In Europe, smaller historic cities are benefiting from this shift. Goslar, in Germany's Harz Mountains, offers medieval streets and winter scenery without the scale or crowds of major resort towns. Elsewhere, quieter coastal regions are drawing attention—places like Prachuap Khiri Khan in Thailand or Goiás in Brazil, where beaches, parks, and towns coexist without much fanfare.

These destinations don't demand an itinerary. They leave room for one.



# In the U.S., Winter Travel Is Splitting in Two

Domestic winter travel in the U.S. is heading in opposite directions at the same time.

Some travelers are leaning into winter fully, but they're skipping the most famous ski hubs. Smaller towns like Brighton, Utah, are picking up interest from people who want snow without the crowds or the production.

Others are doing the opposite. They're heading for warmth, but not necessarily the loudest beach towns. Cultural, arts-driven waterfront communities are seeing steady demand, especially among older travelers. For those 60 and over, Florida continues to dominate winter plans, with places like The Villages, Fort Myers Beach, and Venice leading the way.

What's notable isn't just where they're going—it's how long they're staying. Longer winter stays are becoming more common, especially for couples who want to settle in rather than hop around.

## Families Are Redefining the Winter Getaway

Families are shaping winter travel in quieter, more practical ways. A large share are choosing suburban and rural destinations, often within driving distance, and often tied to visiting relatives or friends.

Scenic small towns are outperforming major cities for these trips. The appeal is straightforward: space, flexibility, and fewer logistics. Longer stays—a week or more—are becoming standard, especially for multi-generational travel.

That shift shows up in where families stay, too. Larger homes with four or more bedrooms are seeing increased demand, making it easier for everyone to be under one roof without feeling crowded. Activities tend to be simple: winter walks, snow days, local events, time spent together rather than planned attractions.

## What This Winter Says About Travel Right Now

Taken together, these shifts point to something larger than seasonal trends. Travelers aren't chasing the same definitions of winter vacation they once did. They're choosing places that allow them to slow down without giving things up—culture, food, access, comfort. In line with that same manner of thinking, for New Jersey travelers, locals are also opting for that slower-paced [winter getaway close to home](#).

Whether that's northern Italy ahead of the Olympics, a low-key mountain town, or a rural escape built around family time, winter travel is becoming less about spectacle and more about fit.

That change feels like it's here to stay.

<https://thedigestonline.com/travel/winter-travel-destinations-2025/>