

# TOUCHSCREEN TRAVELS

Smartphones have revolutionised hiking and biking for many of us, but what about skiing and snowboarding? Being able to call and text to find your friends on the slopes certainly make phones invaluable, but what about the apps?

In this issue **Christian Williams** has a look at what's out there for iPhones (with links to Android where available) and if they are really any good.



image: Dave Silver

## Get psyched

With the Church of the Open Sky being only quarterly, you may need other publications too: UK ski & snowboard magazine In the Snow (free; Apple <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/inthesnow/id329974601?mt=8>) produces a good app – full of features, deals and news – that's of particular interest to UK readers, though it's still worth a look for others.

Freeskiier (free; Apple <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/freeskiier/id516022756?mt=8>) is similar and also good, with many gear reviews, though my phone had technical difficulties with much of its content.

## Limber Up

If you're like me, then the first couple of days on the slopes each season get a little more painful each year. Then things improve – but you can short-circuit this process to not lose valuable slope-time with a bit of physical prep.

This is where **Skiing Fit** (free; Apple <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/skiing-fit/id377684671?mt=8>) comes in. The app's layout and delivery are a bit dry but all the most useful exercises are in here. Squats are the most effective exercise for me, so I'd recommend a dedicated squats app like Squats 0-100 (£1.49; Apple

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/squats-0-100-legs-butt-workout/id612920406?mt=8>).

## Zero In

For help with planning your ski holiday, you can pretty much forget the app world, though the slick **Skiresortinfo** (free; Apple <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/skiresort.info-ski-app-ski/id493907552?mt=8>; Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=de.appaffairs.skiresort>) comes close with all its tick-box-style info and trail maps for hundreds of resorts.

Liftoptia (free; Apple <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/liftoptia-ski-reports-snow/id485587348?mt=8>) also deserves a mention for its clean interface, short write ups and useful lift-ticket 'deals' feature.

These deals are probably only of interest if you're lucky enough to have several resorts an easy day- or weekend-trip away though. If you are, weather and snow report apps are invaluable. My pick is the clean and attractive All Snow (free; Apple <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/allsnow-ski-reports-snow-forecasts/id417601403?mt=8>), with its at-a-glance convenience and handy browseable map.



image: Dave Silver

Ski and Snow Report (free; Apple <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/ski-and-snow-report/id299120437?mt=8>; Android <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.zumobi.snowreport>) is also good, but its look is fussier.

**Ski & Snow Report** (free; Apple <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/ski-snow-report/id300412347?mt=8>; Android <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.skireport>) lacked at-a-glance info for my chosen resorts, but provided a quick overview of snowfall over the last five days: a useful feature the others don't have.

Stats are all well and good, but sometimes you just want to eyeball the place – enter handy and quick **Ski Webcams** (free; Apple <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/ski-webcams-free/id454175434?mt=8>), though its resort list is far from comprehensive. And you can lose the app's ads for £0.69.

You'll also find webcam links at the **Ski Club Snow Reports** (free; Apple <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/ski-club-snow-reports/id350781416?mt=8>), the app of the of the Ski Club of Great Britain which also features international snow reports, so should have it all, but it feels a bit too clunky for my liking.

## Snow Support

A few apps aim to help once you're on the snow.

The simple and free **Skiing Fit** (above) carries quite a few technique tips; but you'll have to be good at visualizing body actions based on text. Meanwhile at the other end of the all-singing-and-dancing scale is **Ski Tips 1** (Apple <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/skitips1/id351635939?mt=8>; Android <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.conjure.skitips>); the first of a trilogy of technique apps (each £2.99) whose video tutorials make it one of the best smartphone instructors out there. Of course it can't flag bad habits that may be holding you back; but it does provide a no-pressure self-guided learning environment – which is ideal for some – and it'll save the cost of a few lessons for most others. A 'lite' version of the app (free; Apple <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/skitips-lite/id477034411?mt=8>) provides a taster.

If your mind and body are well beyond the need for lessons and have started to wander off-piste, then check out **Mammut Safety** (free; Apple <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/mammut-safety/id316156014?mt=8>). It offers guidance and tools that help with the avalanche risk assessment process – but only in the hands of those who already have a



image: Dave Silver

clear idea of the dangers and procedures.

Far more universally useful is **iTrailmap** (free; Apple <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/itrailmap-ski-snowboard-trail/id299785387?mt=8>; Android <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.bigairsoftware.iTrailMap>), a neat little app which simply allows you to download resort maps to your phone. Basic, yes, but appealing to anyone who's ever struggled with a torn, damp paper version in fading light.

## Track it

Tracking where, how far and fast your activities were has become a big part of the smartphone's usefulness in many sports. For skiers and boarders **Ski Tracks** (£0.69; Apple <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/ski-tracks-gps-track-recorder/id365724094?mt=8>; Android <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.corecoders.skitracks>) is the market leader in these things and the yardstick for all the others.

A slightly lesser, but free, alternative is **iSki Tracker** (free; Apple <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/iski-tracker-for-real-skiers/id476298379?mt=8>), which also offers something slightly different in its quest to be a sort of skiers' Facebook. If it's just the basics, you want then the activity tracker within the All Snow (above) may be enough.

## Off the snow

It's hard to believe the world needs as many racing games as are offered to virtual skiers and snowboarders. My pick of the bunch for stunts is **Fresh Tracks Snowboarding** (free; Apple <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/fresh-tracks-snowboarding/id490129379?mt=8>) which is intuitive enough, though mastering the moves sometimes becomes a finger version of twister. But since I can grind, ollie and grab far better here than in reality, I probably shouldn't complain.

For straightforward racing there's **Touch Ski 3D** (£1.99; Apple <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/touch-ski-3d/id309936844?mt=8>), where you control your skis tips with your finger tips. It's an interesting way of doing things, but you may end up obscuring much of the screen in the excitement of it all so this is probably best saved for the iPad. A free version (Apple <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/touch-ski-3d-presented-by/id312291745?mt=8>) allows you to try a few courses before committing.

### Does it stay or does it go?

Once this article is done I'll be keeping **In the Snow**, **Ski Tracks**, **Squats 0-100**, **iTrailmap**, **Ski Webcams** and the **All Snow** apps. And if I was being minimalist about it then only **All Snow** would stay.



image: Dave Silver