

China's snow tourism booms

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Dhaka: Once a niche activity for the elite, skiing in China is now surging in popularity. Backed by substantial investments, strong government support, and a growing middle class, the country is rapidly emerging as a key player in global snow tourism.

According to the China Ski Industry White Paper 2024-2025, the sector has expanded significantly. The 2024-25 season saw 26.05 million ski days — up 12.9% year-on-year — and 13.55 million skiers, a 5.86% increase. With 748 operational ski resorts, including 66 indoor facilities, skiing is becoming more mainstream and accessible.

Indoor Ski Resorts Drive Year-Round Growth

Indoor ski centers are central to the boom. In the latest season, these venues attracted over 5.6 million visits, accounting for more than one-fifth of total national ski activity. China now hosts seven of the world's

ten largest indoor ski resorts, enabling year-round skiing even in cities like Shanghai and Beijing.

These modern complexes have expanded the sport's reach beyond traditional mountain regions, drawing in urban families and beginners.

Olympic Legacy Spurs Momentum

The Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics marked a turning point. As part of its "300 million people into winter sports" campaign, the Chinese government invested heavily in snow tourism infrastructure, ski education in schools, and cultural tourism packages. This Olympic legacy continues to boost participation and interest across demographics.

From Regional Niche to National Trend

China's ski industry has grown from just a handful of resorts in the 1990s to over 800 today. Once concentrated in the colder northeast, resorts are now widespread — thanks to snowmaking technologies that allow operations even in warmer regions. This national expansion has turned skiing into a popular recreational activity for families and individuals alike.

Middle Class Demand Fuels Expansion

China's rising middle class is a major driver of this trend. With more disposable income, many now view skiing as both a lifestyle choice and a status symbol. Resorts cater to this demand with a mix of beginner-friendly slopes, luxury amenities, and cultural experiences — from local cuisine to winter festivals.

Global Aspirations and Remaining Challenges

China aims to become the world's leading snow tourism destination. While it has the infrastructure and momentum, challenges remain. Ensuring consistent service quality, attracting international tourists, and competing with established markets like the Alps or the Rockies will require strategic efforts.

Nevertheless, with ongoing investment, year-round accessibility, and rising domestic enthusiasm, China is well-positioned to reshape the global snow tourism landscape.

