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# Condé Nast Traveler

TRUTH IN TRAVEL

JANUARY 2010

## GOLD LIST

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### 681 WORLD'S BEST PLACES TO STAY

**TOP HOTELS,  
RESORTS,  
CRUISE LINES**



**CRUISE SPECIAL: 10 RULES FOR PERFECT PORTS OF CALL**

**BURN, BABY, BURN** Snow reflects as much as 80 percent of the sun's ultraviolet radiation, which is why skiers need to slather on the SPF and don their shades.



# Ski Smarts

What happens if a tumble puts you and your ski holiday on ice? Dr. Richard Dawood advises that when it comes to non-life-threatening medical care, sometimes there's no place like home

**M**ONICAMOEZINA knows how to navigate the most difficult of slopes, but when she injured her knee far from her London home on a ski trip in the Austrian Alps, she found herself in uncharted territory. Unable to walk, Monica was referred to a sports clinic, which, after giving her an MRI scan, recommended immediate surgery. In pain and distress, she faced a dilemma that many skiers encounter

forgo surgery altogether. A year later, she was skiing again.

Not long after Monica's accident, a doctor colleague of mine broke her elbow skiing at another Austrian resort and was taken to a nearby clinic. She knew that an operation would be needed to pin her fractured elbow, so she consented to having the surgery. What she didn't anticipate was how hard it would be to find a surgeon to take on her follow-up care once she returned home (many have liability concerns over procedures performed

in a foreign language. If you agree to surgery, you may have a tough time finding a doctor who will offer you follow-up care once you're home—a real concern with injuries that can take months to heal. Sometimes, of course, there's no other option: The death of actress Natasha Richardson last year from an epidural hematoma after a fall at a Quebec ski resort is a reminder that, especially when it comes to head injuries, it's best to accept the treatment of first responders. But for most orthopedic injuries, I'm not alone in believing that the best medical care is found at home. "If you're in doubt about what to do," says New York travel medicine specialist Dr. Bradley Connor, "remember that there are few situations in which it is impossible to stabilize an injury and send someone safely home to receive specialist care." □

**DOCTORS IN SOME CULTURES ARE MUCH MORE AGGRESSIVE WITH SURGERY**



Medical care after a ski injury can present many dilemmas.

when injured abroad: consent to surgery in an unfamiliar place or return home to seek treatment.

Monica was confident in the care she would receive. She was at the state-of-the-art Sanatorium Dr. Schenk, a sports clinic that serves resorts including Davos, Klosters, and St. Anton. Even so, she wisely phoned an orthopedic surgeon back home, who advised that a short delay to consider a more conservative approach would do no harm. She flew home, where her doctor decided to

by other doctors). Eventually she did, but the process only added to her stress over the accident.

Undergoing surgery in a distant setting can be an alluring option, particularly when you're in pain and a good specialist is available. But as these two examples show, it's not always the best option. For starters, doctors in some cultures are much more aggressive with surgery than those in others, and it's difficult to make an informed decision when you're in pain and communicating

## Doctor's Orders



### Be Prepared

• Always purchase travel medical insurance that includes emergency evacuation (see [insuremytrip.com](http://insuremytrip.com)), and make sure you understand what it covers. Some policies exclude sports, including skiing; others won't cover you if you go off-piste. Look for insurance that offers a help line you can call in an emergen-

cy, and always disclose any preexisting medical conditions that might invalidate coverage.

### In Case You're Injured

• Going home for surgery is an option only if you are medically stable. Never refuse emergency care.  
• Have your doctor at home speak directly with the surgeon to assess the situation and give further recommendations or advice.  
• Ask the surgeon if there are any con-

servative alternatives to an operation; whether you could be put into a more stable condition for the return trip home; and whether a short delay of the surgery—long enough



to get you home—would have adverse consequences.  
• If you need time to weigh the pros and cons of an operation, say so. Don't be pressured into a hasty decision.