



HEAD TO THE *slopes*

If you thought skiing was too expensive for you to consider, think again. **CLARE O'REILLY** investigated the slopes of Morzine, France and found a surprisingly affordable family holiday...

Rising round bends that seem endless, the drive up into Morzine from Geneva showcases its crisp beauty and elegance perfectly. With the tinkling of cowbells, the azure skies, white snowy peaks and time-warp wooden chalets, it's easy to picture Heidi and her grandfather waving joyously at Peter as all three traipse off to feed their cows in traditional dress.

Morzine is one of the oldest ski resorts in the world, dating back to the 20s. It's 1,000m above sea level and the northernmost of the

French Alpine resorts. It makes up one of the 13 Portes du Soleil resorts, which straddle the Swiss-French border and incorporate 650km of skiing in 283 groomed slopes – 27 black runs, 104 red, 119 blue and 33 green. Not to mention the ten snow parks for stunt skiers and 90 slopeside restaurants.

The area has a thriving après-ski culture but unlike lots of other Alpine resorts, Morzine enjoys a summer season, too, where skis make way for wheels and mountain bikers turn the snowy pistes into their grassed playground

with more than 380km of marked trails.

Jack & Jill's catered chalets, The Ranch, Chalet Aix and Stag Lodge, are run by Jamie and Mary Hustwayte, Brits who have turned their love of the slopes into a full-time thriving business with an excellent reputation. The pair offer a more bespoke chalet visit with carefully designed and selected three-course meals every evening, daily post-skiing cake and breakfasts that give enough energy for a long day on the slopes. Kids are welcome – and no effort is spared ➤





when catering for fussy eaters. Rooms have Wi-Fi, films, books and board games, and the *pièce de résistance* was an outdoor hot tub that became the highlight of our holiday. Mary and Jamie really do think of everything and can recommend excellent vetted childcare and arrange for massages and ski fittings to take place in your own chalet.

While Morzine has 3,000 residents, during ski season the number swells, and last year it was voted the No 1 ski resort in the world by Trivago. The resort was also voted the 15th-most affordable, at £146 a night, compared with Courchevel, its oligarch-frequented neighbour to the south, which came in at £298 a night.

Jamie says families can take to the slopes at even cheaper prices than that if they pick the right time of year to go. "Easter is the perfect time to learn to ski if you're new to it,

or on a budget," he says. "The snow is still plentiful but it's much warmer, you can ski in shirt sleeves, which is perfect for beginners who aren't going fast enough to keep warm. Plus there's plenty of hiking and walking as the snow retreats a little, if someone in the family decides skiing is not for them. More importantly it's half the price it would be in the February half-term."

Having never skied before, our family of five, including Eddie, 13, Sam, 8, and Annie, 6, survived, thrived and ate our body weight in cake. Having learnt to ski in just a week with none of the usual holiday bickering, but plenty of fantastic memories, photographs and funny stories, I find myself converted to the benefits – and joys – of a winter holiday *en famille*. Especially when it doesn't break the bank!





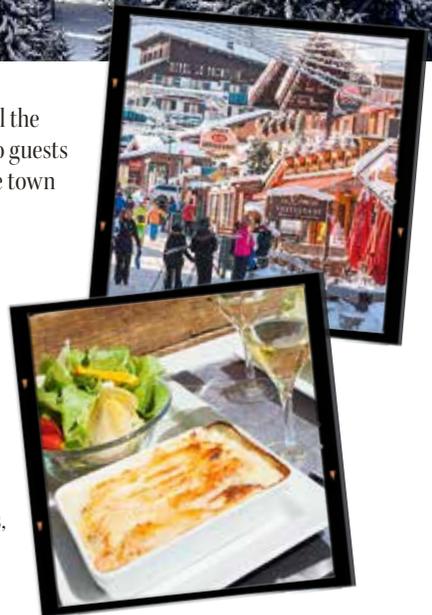
MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR BUDGET

When planning a skiing holiday, make sure you do your research first.

- ✓ Book an April break to make substantial savings over Christmas or February half-term holidays
- ✓ Book budget flights as early as possible
- ✓ Work out ski-hire and lift-pass costs for everyone before you go – pre-booking online may give you a substantial discount
- ✓ Catered chalets do work out cheaper over the week when there are extra mouths to feed

EATING AND DRINKING

Wednesday is a night off for all the chalet workers in the resort, so guests are encouraged to eat out. The town centre has everything from takeaways to fine dining and most people will find something to tempt them around the tourist office. However, the better prices are often found a few minutes' walk away. Local fare centres on cheese and potatoes, and the **TARTIFLETTE**, a potato dish with cream, cheese and bacon, is on most menus. L'Etale is popular with its basement tables, relaxed vibe and great wine list. Try the **RACLETTE**, a semi-hard cow's milk cheese melted and served with local meats, potatoes and pickles. If you're on a budget, try Mamma's, with its pizzas, chips, burgers and Thai dishes. ➤





FACTFILE

CURRENCY: Euro
TIME DIFFERENCE: GMT +1
VISA: Not needed
INSURANCE: Strongly advised, and you will need winter sports cover
CLIMATE: January is the coldest month, with an average temperature of 2°C (36°F), while April hovers around 10°C (50°F). Summer temperatures in June for mountain biking can exceed 21°C (70°F) and being 1,000m up, the sun feels hotter
GETTING AROUND: The Jack & Jill bus dropped us off and picked us up from the slopes every day and the walk into Morzine is about half an hour along the river
MORE INFO: Flights to Geneva from the UK start at £19.99 and can be booked on easyjet.co.uk

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO...

Morzine and neighbouring Les Gets have more British ski schools than most resorts, making it great for beginners. The area is wonderful intermediate territory, ideal for families and those with experience who want to see how many kilometres they can clock up in a day rather than adrenaline junkies wanting black runs.

NURSERY SLOPES: The perfect place to get your ski legs and learn

GREEN: Easy slopes, not too steep, and not too long

BLUE: Moderate, with some more challenging

turns, blue runs are longer than green ones

RED: Intermediate. Longer runs and steeper turns for fast skiers

BLACK: Not to be attempted unless you're a proficient skier with nerves of steel!



Jack & Jill's chalets can be booked on jackandjillholidays.com
 Transfers by powdercab.com Ski hire by doorstepskis.com
 Massage by Kerri McAuley facebook.com/kerrimauleymassageandbeauty

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