

LET IT SNOW

Even the hardest of skiers will struggle to hit the slopes with a baby in tow. Luckily, Morzine holds the secret to family-friendly fun – both on and off-piste

words by Rowena Carr-Allinson



Skiing and toddlers do not go hand in hand. Climbing the slopes while juggling babies, poles and snow boots is a recipe for disaster – and that's not to mention the inevitable temper tantrum when you reach the top. Even après-ski, arguably the most inclusive of winter activities, is off the cards.

But parents still keen to hit the slopes needn't worry: I've found the solution, and it comes in the form of a plush alpine chalet, where everything is catered for – including the childcare.

Chalet Chambertin, the six bedroom guesthouse that we rent for the week, is ideally located just outside of Morzine, and is perfect for families – it boasts luxurious bedrooms with sleek en-suites (complete with Neal's Yard products) and has a spacious upstairs living room decorated with plush carpets, leather sofas and a roaring fire.

Downstairs it's all sheepskin rugs on wooden chairs, vintage skis, and self-service tea

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and coffee. There's also a daily blackboard menu featuring chef Lucy's amazing four-course extravaganzas.

Meals are served under the black beaded chandeliers, and from day one it's pretty clear that we will all be going home with 'extra luggage'.

The gourmet recipes include everything from spinach and feta filo parcels with Greek salad to pan-seared salmon fillet with curried cauliflower puree and warm citrus quinoa. There is succulent duck breast, enormous lamb shanks, and the finest steak I've had in a long time.

Lucy's sweet treats are out of this world. Over the week the favourites include a salted chocolate tart with hazelnut



ESF's Piou Piou club and is vying to bag his 'Ourson' (bear cub) award by the end of the week.

The feedback is good. It seems my memories of ESF trauma have little to do with the modern day version. The instructors are cool, the kit high quality and the welcome warm. The ESF instructors speak both English and French now so there's a mixed group of little buddies and Lennox fits right in.

The ESF has several formulas ranging from full days to half days with lunch and a kids' club available. The options are all laid out on the website, where you can select the hours and arrangements you like – totally hassle free. I'm impressed.

Just in case Lennox is a secret snow boarder, we also book him a trial session. He is beyond excited. Tammy from Mint is charming, and has Lennox eating out of her hand

within minutes thanks to her easy way, genuine smile and catching enthusiasm. Her mission? Convert him from skier to boarder.

We pop into the rental shop at the foot of the slopes and book a half day's gear for 10 euros. It's quick and painless and within minutes he's up and whizzing down the shallow slope. It seems Tammy might just have herself another mini-shredder.

The ESF is great for learning in groups, socialising and all the top notch facilities, but adding in some one-on-one time also has its benefits. During our stay we catch up with Becci from BASS, who first put our son on skis a few years ago. Her protégée has come a long way since and, with a freshly won 'Ourson', he has more confidence. But, she admits, the real challenge "is to explain to a five-year-old why one might want to slow down".

As part of the Féeerie de Noël, the picturesque town of Morzine comes alive with winter wonderland action, from pyrotechnic shows to nightly parades featuring toy soldiers and angelic stilt walkers.

Working overtime to keep visitors busy off the pistes too, there are free Christmas card workshops, gingerbread-man cookery classes and even ice sculpting sessions.

The good news is that our family skiing experiment has worked. Lennox doesn't want to leave, and is already asking to come back next year, to the "wooden house" where we're all well looked after, well fed and kept very, very busy. ♦



need to know

Mountain Mavericks
Chalet Chambertin, from £650,
mountainmavericks.com

ESF
Group lessons start from age 3. Five half days from €188 (low season), full days (8.45-5pm) from €420, esf-morzine.com

Mint Snowboarding
Mini Shred private lesson from €115 for 1.5 hour, mintsnowboarding.com

BASS
Ski hire from Mathias Sport, mathias.sport2000.fr

Féeries de Noël 2017/18
From 17th – 25th December 1 x child's lift pass (under 12 years) will be given for free with every adult 5-9 day lift pass purchased.
morzine-avoriaz.com



Clockwise from main image: Morzine; Mint Snowboarding; Chalet Chambertin; Morzine