

Travel

The finest family skiing

13th December 2014 0

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With a husband who could ski before he could walk (or something like that) nervous skier Rowena Carr-Allinson has had to get with the pistes program, and test the various options available from catered chalet, to self catering condos or the good old fashioned hotel.

THE CATERED CHALET: SUMMIT VIEW CHALET, LA PLAGNE, FRANCE

Best for Travelling with Tiny Ones

It is possible to go skiing with a baby or a toddler... the trick is to book a place where you are 100% looked after, and have someone lovely looking after the tiny one while you hit the slopes. The ski nanny will change your life!

Having planned a 'tag team' ski experience, minding the tiny one in shifts, we were saved by the chalet's lovely in-house nanny, Sarah. Far from being upset at being 'left', our son was delighted to have a new friend and definitely had more fun that week than his frazzled parents could provide. Sarah and Caitlin took the kids off on multiple excursions, by bus, gondola or pony, or stayed in playing with the buckets of toys they brought along, dabbling in baking too. With flexible hours, they were also on hand to babysit evenings if required to.

With the chalet being right in La Plagne center, we had great views and easy access to the shops, and the internal maze of corridors which link up underground as well as the ESF ski school just a short walk away. Although the resort isn't the prettiest of the French Alps its layout and (toasty) underground tunnels make it very user-friendly for families.

Our contemporary yet cosy chalet came with all the bits and bobs one needs, including a widescreen TV (with UK Freeview), swish bathrooms and fabulous chalet boys Charles and Chris who provided free flowing wine, good banter, and gourmet three course meals, cooked breakfast and cakes aplenty.

Even better, cutting down the baggage size dramatically, the VIP team provided us with a high chair, potty, cot, baby-phones and plenty of toys including sledges that were put to good use outdoors by two delighted toddlers!

THE FACTS

Find out more about La Plagne and events visit www.la-plagne.com

For more information www.vip-chalets.com, Tel: 0844 557 3119

VIP SKI has 7 suites in La Plagne in the Summit View development. Prices start at £729 per person based on two sharing and include VIP SKI's chalet catering, return flights from Gatwick and resort transfers.

THE FAMILY FRIENDLY HOTEL: HOTEL GOLDENERBERG, OBERLECH, AUSTRIA

Best for the Little Ones

With a snow season that lasts from mid-December to late April, 260km of slopes served by 88 ski lifts, 15km cross country skiing and 180km of deep snow runs, as well as a fun park for snowboarders, not to mention delicious Gluhwein aplenty,

Lech in the Austrian Alps has it all. Hardly surprising it has the royal seal of approval. Regulars include the Dutch royal family, the Rainiers from Monaco and even the Jordanian royal family. Definitely Princess territory, both Caroline de Monaco and Diana chose Lech to take their precious kids for their first snow ploughs. It's so pretty, it's easy to see why Renee Zellwegger and Colin Firth filmed the snowy scenes in Bridget Jones here too!

For a real family treat, the Goldener Berg in Oberlech, high above Lech village, sits right on the slopes and is only accessible by gondola. Traffic free and picturesque, it's the ultimate ski in ski out experience.

One of Di's favourites, it's got fabulously chic family suites, gorgeous traditional chalet restaurants and an al fresco lunchtime barbecue where you can kick back and enjoy the unbeatable views cosily ensconced in a sheepskin rug. The kids club keeps the younger guests busy with activities like building snowmen, snow tubing and tobogganing, while those over three can take classes at the local ski school, a teeny tiny 100m walk away.

There's also a heated pool, sauna, whirlpool and 'rock cave'. And, if spas are your thing, make time to visit the sleek futuristic designer spa at the Gasthof Post, in the valley below, for some pampering care of CellCosmet, Alpinee or Chanel.

Prefer more action? Dads can satisfy their James Bond complex with a Mercedes Benz 'off road' experience, paragliding or icefall climbing. There's even a chance to try golf on snow. Definitely something for everyone!

THE FACTS

Find out more about Lech at <http://www.lech-zuers.at> or call +43 (5583) 2161 - 0

Stay at GoldenerBerg from £2258 for 7 nights for 2 adults and 2 children in a family suite. www.goldenerberg.co.uk, Tel: +43 (0) 5583 22 0 50.

THE SELF CATERING CONDO FLAT: THE GANT, ASPEN, COLORADO, USA

Best for Pre-Teens and beyond...

Once you've recovered from the journey to get there and adjusted to the time difference, Aspen is without a doubt one of the world's finest skiing destinations. The charming mountain town in Colorado is famous for its Aspen trees, wide open spaces, perfect powder and celebrity fans.

Spread over four mountains, Aspen Snowmass, as it's now known, is a real outdoor lovers playground, with a huge range of slopes to ski on, as well as cross-country skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing or hiking.

And, if, like me, carrying your skis home in those uncomfy boots is your worst nightmare, fear not, the ski valet is the key! A brilliant concept, someone else drops off skis for you at the end of the day, and you can slip into your warm Uggs to walk or take the shuttle back into town.

Not feeling athletic? Not to worry, Aspen is heaving with things to do, from the Aspen Art museum and its many galleries to shopping at Prada or Gucci, Helly Hansen, North Face or Moncler. Lie back and relax at the spa or make the most of the amazing nightlife and celeb-spotting in hotspots like Nobu. But, what most people don't know, is that Aspen's kid-friendly facilities are fantastic.

Set out of town, a short bus ride away, Snowmass is the biggest ski area with a host of restaurants and bars on site, but the real gem is the Kids' Adventure Center Tree House. Designed for kids of all ages, each age group has its own quaintly-named space like Beaver Lodge and Fox Den Room and heaps of activities. It's home to the Ski & Snowboard School, as well as indoor and outdoor play areas and an impressive 700-square-foot climbing wall!

Bigger kids will enjoy the ARC recreational center with its own NHL-size ice skating rink, pools, two-story water slide and lazy river, while hard core thrill-seekers will love the X-Games Terrain Park and Pipe.

For a little independence, book a 'condo' or self-catering flat. There are plenty of options, such as the centrally located, rather glamorous, The Gant which is halfway between a condo and a hotel, with all your necessary creature comforts and then some and all the services you've ever dreamt of. Prefer a hotel? The hipper should head to the very slick Viceroy, the traditionalists to Little Nell and, if money is no object, there's always the five star St Regis resort.

THE FACTS

Find out more about Aspen Snowmass

www.aspensnowmass.com, Tel: 970 925 1220

Stay at the Gant from : £310 per night + taxes and resort fees.

for a two bedroom,two bathroom condominium.

www.GantAspen.com, Tel: 1-800-549-0530

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ABOUT AUTHOR

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