

# 10 HOT-A-LIST SKI CHALETs!

*This season, it's not enough just to channel the latest in on- and off-piste style—where you stay has to be in style, too. Cue a host of new super-luxe lodges that are bringing a whole new meaning to après-ski*



The perfect breakfast: Jane Bruton at Aspen Lodge with family and friends



## 1 YOU COULD STAY IN A FLASH HOTEL, BUT THE COOLER OPTION IS A FLASH CHALET

Hands up—skiing isn't cheap. There's the lift pass, ski lessons, cheese fondues... Who knew melted cheese and cubes of bread could cost 10 times more than a wheel of Daivylea! But with a ski holiday comes the glamour (I wore a gold lamé Puffa jacket and actually blended in), exhilaration and an all-round feeling of well-being that you'll never get from a beach holiday, no matter how exotic the location. Out on the piste there's no space in your brain for those tiggly 'oooh did I send that email?' stresses. It's all about the fun in hand, the breathtaking views and, yes, those cheese fondues. But where to go? Well, if you want to crack out your patent Snowjoggers in style on (virtually) guaranteed snow and sip vin chaud with the jet-set, then there is only one place—Val d'Isère, France. Val (like all 'supers', it's on first-name terms only) has it all. From powder pistes to Prada, you can

**Before you go:** Book your VIP nanny early—they get snapped up fast. **While you're there:** Go for private lessons—you'll learn faster. Ken Smith of Progression has brilliant tips and great Victoria Beckham gossip ([www.progression.sk.com](http://www.progression.sk.com)), while the clinics at The Development Centre will have you whizzing down slopes you'd never have dreamed of tackling before ([www.tdcski.com](http://www.tdcski.com)). **Before you leave:** Visit Misty Fly for the coolest selection of ski and snowboard brands. Tip: this winter, early '90s neon is back!

spend your days brushing up on your technique with world-class English-speaking instructors (Gitanes-smoking Frenchies are sexy, yes, but can you understand a word they say? Hell no!) and your evenings shopping in boutiques to rival Bond Street. As for the nightlife, St Tropez's got nothing on this. Start your après-slope at the crackling La Folie Douce, probably the most atmospheric outdoor bar in Europe, head down the mountain to more live music at the chic Caffe Face, then choose between tinkly pianos in a boutique hotel bar or moshing in Saloon or Morris Bar. While you could stay in a flash hotel, the cooler option is to pick a flash chalet. For credit-crunching value without compromising on luxury, VIP Chalets offer well thought out service and style. The Aspen Lodges, where I stayed, are slap bang in the heart of town, a snowball's throw from the slopes and shops. There's a concierge service in the lobby like a hotel, but unlike a hotel you have the space and luxury in your beautiful apartment to really relax (Sky TV, tick! Pamper Off Piste mobile beauty therapists, tick!). Plus there's your very own chalet host to see to your every desire. Our host Andy was full of surprises. Firstly because he was a boy with a first in biochemistry and not the blonde-haired, buxom lovely my husband had been hoping for and, secondly, because he could actually cook. From perfect poached eggs and bacon for breakfast, brilliant early

dinners for the kids to delicious sautéed pork in sage and garlic with roasted apples for the (nearly) grown-ups, there was no way we'd go hungry (or sober—wine was unlimited!). On top of that he left a home-baked cake for us every day for afternoon tea—just what you want after a hard day's ski.

From the moment we stepped into the chalet it felt like a home from home, albeit a miraculously self-cleaning/tidying home. The unassuming stealth service was so good we didn't once feel our privacy was compromised. VIP's nanny Nicola was the same. She won the kids over in an instant with her warm smile and giant toy box and me with her calm control. I knew the kids were in safe hands, probably having more fun making snow angels and their own pizzas than they ever do at home. Val has everything you want from a ski resort, from cruisey blues to mind-boggling off-piste slopes, beautiful mountain restaurants and a buzzing town of shops and bars. If Val was a woolly hat, the Aspen Lodge was the gorgeous bobble that finished it off, with so many lovely touches—from 'Little Me' organic baby products to a goodie bag of sandwiches and chocolate for the journey home—that it took every care and worry out of the week. Which meant that for once I could concentrate on really enjoying myself, finally overcoming my fear of red runs, not thinking about work once and, of course, of not looking and feeling fabulous in gold lamé. And if you can pull that off, well, that's a holiday. **Jane Bruton** Seven nights at Aspen Lodge cost from £809 pp on a catered basis inc return flights and transfers. 0844 557 3119; [www.vip-chalets.com](http://www.vip-chalets.com). Book before 31 Oct and save £100pp for the weeks of 4, 11 and 18 Jan and 8 March 2009

### THE LODGE, VERBIER, SWITZERLAND

It's a bit of a jet-set hotspot, Verbier regulars include Richard Branson, Hugh Grant and assorted young royals), and after a recent wave of cool chalet and club openings, it's set to be one of the hottest places in the Alps. The Lodge, Branson's ultra-luxe chalet, comes complete with gym, swimming pool, mini ice rink and much more. It opened in January and proved such a hit, you'll have to be quick to bag a week for this season.

*Sleeps 18 (plus up to six kids in a special bunkroom). From £42,300 per week, including most meals, all drinks and 24-hour driver service. Visit [www.cirginlmaialedition.com](http://www.cirginlmaialedition.com).*



### 3 FERME DE MOUDON, LES GETS, FRANCE

You'd expect Mr & Mrs Smith to have some goodies in their ski portfolio – and they don't disappoint. As well as access to the Portes du Soleil ski area, Ferme de Moudon offers five members of staff to look after you and interiors that have featured in *Grand Designs Abroad*. *Sleeps 10. Costs from £11,575 per week, including most meals and drinks, Jo Malone toiletries and chauffeur-driven car. Visit [www.mrandmrs.smith.com](http://www.mrandmrs.smith.com).*



### 7 SUMMIT VIEW, LA PLAGNE, FRANCE

Book yourself into Summit View in La Plagne and you get a choice of seven family-friendly chalet-suites, each with a boutique-hotel vibe. Top of the range is the penthouse Lugano Suite, with original art works, solid oak floors, Bose sound systems and free Wi-Fi. Plus (a bonus for keeping kids entertained) a library of films to suit adults and children alike. *Sleeps 12 (Lugano Suite). Costs from £859pp per week, including flights and transfers. Visit [www.summitone.co.uk](http://www.summitone.co.uk).*



### 4 TIVOLI LODGE, DAVOS, SWITZERLAND

Right up at the Rolls-Royce end of the chalet spectrum is Descent, with a reputation for providing the best in everything from food to childcare. One of their top properties is Tivoli Lodge, which looks traditional on the outside but hides a chic, contemporary interior. With its own cinema room and separate spa building, there's plenty of temptation to skive off the slopes for the odd afternoon... *Sleeps 12 (plus an extra four beds in a bunk room). Costs from £19,320 per week, including most meals and drinks. Visit [www.descent.co.uk](http://www.descent.co.uk).*



### 5 CHALET CHLOE, BRECKENRIDGE, COLORADO

With one of the best snow records in the States, it's not surprising that Breckenridge is popular. Chalet Chloe, with its exposed beams and fireplaces, comes with a hot tub and a chef and host on hand. *Sleeps 12. Costs from £997pp for seven nights, including full-board, flights, transfers and taxes. Visit [www.skidream.com](http://www.skidream.com).*



### 6 CHALET ARLBERG, ST ANTON, AUSTRIA

St Anton is known for hard skiing by day and hard partying by night – so you need somewhere relaxing to stay in-between sessions. Chalet Arlberg, built last year in a secluded, sunny spot, has its own spa to soothe aching limbs/sore heads and a decked roof terrace with fab mountain views. *Sleeps 14. Costs from £5,352 per week (self-catering). Visit [www.interhome.co.uk](http://www.interhome.co.uk).*



### 8 LE ROCHER, VAL D'ISERE, FRANCE

Forget cramped and creaky chalets – Le Rocher has huge living areas, with boutique hotel-style bathrooms and a massive master bedroom that could sleep dozens. There's also an indoor pool, hammam, home cinema and sun terrace. *Sleeps 14. Costs from £26,495 per week, including most meals, wine and champagne. Visit [www.scottdunn.com](http://www.scottdunn.com).*



### 9 CHALET LE MARTI, CHAMONIX, FRANCE

If you're going to call yourself Hip Chalets, you've got to have the right credentials – and this young company does, from its owners (a former British number one freeride skier and a former Swedish rock-climbing champion) to its guests (who include Kylie Minogue and Jonathan Rhys Meyers) and its properties (a few chic chalets in Chamonix). At Le Marti you get groovy grand décor, a games room, sauna and outdoor hot tub, plus a staff of four to cook, clean and pop the champagne. *Sleeps 16. Costs from £12,698 per week, including breakfasts, dinner, drinks, private transport and concierge service.*



### 10 KEMPINSKI HOTEL MALL OF THE EMIRATES, DUBAI

As well as being home to an indoor ski slope, the Mall of the Emirates now has 15 luxe chalets, housed in the Kempinski Hotel. So you can hit the slope, the sun lounger, the shops, all in one day. Only in Dubai... *Sleeps 2-6. From £437 per night, inc breakfast and Dubai airport transfer. Visit [www.kempinski-dubai.com](http://www.kempinski-dubai.com).*

