



The future of family ski

Ski breaks for families are having a makeover – from an increase in off-the-slopes activities and to healthier après-ski dining, **MARK HODSON** explains why it's all change

For the past 30 years, family ski holidays have changed very little. Typically, Brits will spend a week in a fully-catered chalet, put the kids in ski school all day, send them to bed full of spaghetti bolognese then collapse over a carafe or three of house red.

But change is afoot. The chalet holiday is in sharp decline with big-spending families opting instead for luxury modern apartments, giving them more flexibility and privacy. Rather than wolfing down canapés and a three-course dinner they are getting healthy locally-sourced meals delivered to the door, drinking less alcohol and spending more quality time with their children.

Many of the changes are being driven by demographics and technology, says Xavier Schouller, director of Peak Retreats. 'High-tech skis, wide pistes and comfortable lifts mean that we are seeing more people skiing into their seventies and eighties. Those older skiers are bringing their children and grandchildren – and often paying for the whole holiday. The whole extended family will stay in one large apartment.

'In the past, people would ski all day, but that's changing, too. Grandparents want to enjoy the mountain climate and

scenery, and resorts are investing huge amounts of money providing exciting non-ski activities for children, such as luge rides, sledging, ice rinks and indoor aqua centres.'

Ceri Tinley, managing director of Consensio Chalets, says her high-spending clients are demanding high-spec apartments, often with a bar, sauna, hot tub and cinema. 'We are seeing lots of new builds, and some hotels being converted into apartments.'

'Older skiers are bringing their grandchildren'

The choice of resort is often driven by teenagers who have seen images online. 'We are starting to do marketing on Instagram,' says Tinley. 'Teens are seeing images of après-ski parties at the new Folie Douce in Avoriaz and the parents agree to go there.'

Esprit Ski, the market leader in catered family ski holidays, says flexibility will be key. 'In the future not everyone will want to travel Saturday to Saturday. There will be shorter-term options,' says marketing manager Sara Acworth. 'There will be more single

parents and intergenerational families, so there will be fewer double rooms and twins, and more family suites and connecting rooms.'

Simon Gill, founder of the Luxury Chalet Book, says clients no longer want a Victoria sponge in the afternoon and lamb shank for dinner. 'They tend to eat a big lunch on the slopes then eat healthily in the evening and maybe get croissants delivered in the morning.' Tinley says: 'Holidays aren't a time for indulgence anymore, they are a continuation of a healthy lifestyle.'

In the future we may not even be using ski lifts. Schouller says French resorts such as Corrençon and Villard-de-Lans are offering biathlon courses for families, a week of cross-country skiing and shooting with laser rifles. 'It's an environmentally-friendly activity that's great fun, gets you fit and puts you closer to nature.'

Many resorts are aiming to become carbon-neutral, aware that both parents and children are demanding action on environmental issues. And some may abandon skiing altogether. 'Resorts below 800m may be forced by climate change to focus instead on mountain biking in spring, summer and autumn,' says Schouller. ↗

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