

Pretty much all ski this week, apart from some expensive hotels and the odd exclusive bolt hole!

6th December edition:

Telegraph/Sunday Telegraph
Times/Sunday Times
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Daily Mail/Mail on Sunday
Guardian/Observer
Express/Sunday Express
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THE TIMES THE SUNDAY TIMES

Daily Telegraph

Ski prices plummet as booking fall

Peter Hardy reveals that Tour Operators are slashing prices for the festive period which is proving a challenge to sell due to Christmas falling on a Saturday and consumers not wishing to travel on Boxing Day. The financial climate makes it difficult too and discounts can be found for self-drive, self-catering in Les Menuires at £191 - www.skicollection.com or £124 in Les Deux Alpes - www.peakretreats.co.uk for budget conscious or best value mid range in Val d'Isere at £669 for chalet board and flights with www.leski.com. New Year available too.

Party at the top 10 street carnivals

Natalie Paris picks out the best including the Nice carnival that runs February 18 to March 8. There are daily parades with papier mache heads of celebrities and politicians plus over 1,000 musicians and dancers. Next years theme is the Mediterranean

Ten Top Christmas Ski deals

Self-catering: Puy St Vincent from £74 self-drive with www.ernalow.co.uk for eight night based on eight sharing. Half Board: Vaujany from £699pp with www.skipeak.net. Chalet Board: Val d'Isere from £999 with Vip Chalets, Courchevel 1650 from £559 with www.leski.com and Les Arcs from £549 with Alpine Elements. Prices for seven nights and based on two sharing unless stated. Savings are up to 35%.

Hotel watch

Caroline Shearing visits the former charity hospital built in the 15th century that has been transformed into the Hermitage Gantois luxury hotel in Lille. There's a mix of décor with stained-glass windows, tapestries and pop art with a gastronomic restaurant and brasserie to choose from. Railbookers offer one night B&B packages from £169 with travel via www.eurostar.com

Ask Gill – Family skiing with childcare

Gill Charlton helps a family looking for Ski Resort with childcare for a two year old. She either suggests looking at Peter Hardy's website www.welove2ski.com under Families or try operators such as www.espritski.com or Mark Warner.

Sunday Telegraph

Pistes for the Pint-Sized

Clover Stroud takes her two young children to the quiet family ski resort of Puy St Vincent, set in the 92,000 acres of Quiet's largest park. There's a range of skiing on offer (up to Re) but if you're looking for nightlife you won't find much here. Why not hire a skidoo, go on a husky ride or make the most of the free ice rink. Packages are bookable with www.skicollection.com from £178pp self drive based on five sharing for 7 nights. Ski hire available too. Shopping is expensive but food more reasonably priced. A PSV six-day ski pass £124 adult/ £102 child (under fives free) gives you access to other resorts such as Serre Chevalier, Les Deux Alpes and Alpes d'Huez amongst others.

The Times

It's cold out-Yeah!

Tom Chessyre highlights a whole range of winter activities including ice climbing, husky driving, ice diving, ski jeering, snow kiting (in Chamonix), snow shoeing in the Pyrenees and Ski Joering. The latter is one of the oldest forms of Alpine transport and involves you being towed on skis by a suitable trained horse (an equine adaptation of water skiing) and you can give it a try in Vallorcine. For a nearby apartment, www.peakretreats.co.uk get a mention (L'Ours Bleu apartment for £256pp incl return www.eurotunnel.com)

The world's priciest hotel rooms

Caroline Hendrie suggests six hotel suites for anyone not overly affected by the financial downturn. The Bernstein Suite (named after the composer who always stayed there when in Paris) at Hotel Le Crillon has a grand piano, fantastic views and an enviable location on Place de la Concorde. All for just £5600 a night (and that is just half the cost of the Royal Suite in the Mandarin Oriental in London and less than a third of the cost of the Penthouse at the Four Seasons Beverly Wilshire in Los Angeles)!

Sunday Times

Penny Pincher

The column that checks the bill. This week **Chris Haslam** looks at skiing and ways to save money getting onto the slopes. Firstly he suggests looking at going for one of the new offerings from www.crystalski.co.uk with prices from £419 including flights, ski hire, tuition and self catering accommodation or www.neilson.co.uk with similar deals from £389. He also suggests taking the self catering and self drive route. Low cost flights may seem attractive initially but he suggests taking a ferry and driving from Calais to Les Deux Alpes should cost in the region of £275 (half term week). If you have flights with Ryanair to Grenoble for the same period it will cost £720 and then there is the cost of the transfer... His next tip is staying in a less well known resort eg St Martin de Belleville rather than Les Menuires. Same skiing, less cost. Other tips include booking ski rental in advance, taking a packed lunch with you and booking a last minute deal (which is OK, if you don't mind where you go—or if you go at all)

Bargain of the week

Alpine Elements are offering 7 nights half board in Chamonix for £695pp inc flights from Gatwick or Bristol, lift pass and ski hire (dep Dec19)

The Independent

My Life in Travel

Author **Iain Banks** enjoys train travel through France and plans a visit back to Paris next. His favourite hotel and best meal abroad are at Le Petit Nice Passedat in Marseille which he actually describes as a restaurant with rooms.

The big six – hotels for cinema buffs

Jonny Payne takes a look at the Hotel Seven in the Latin Quarter of Paris which has themed rooms from a psychedelic Alice in Wonderland to a James Bond haven complete with films!

The Independent on Sunday

No Coverage this week

Daily Mail

Snow Patrol

Peter Hardy says that with rumours of some thaw this week if you are planning a Christmas or New Year trip best to stick to the higher resorts with Val d'Isere and Tignes having 28-58cm although not many skiers. Although Courchevel is not yet open it has more snow than Val d'Isere so good news there. Les Deux Alpes has 125cm higher up and Chamonix has between 60-130cm from valley to glacier level.

Mail on Sunday

Le Caribbean at its coolest...

Hunter Davies believes that the tiny French island of St Barts has to be one of the coolest places you could wish to visit – if you can afford it. It is now indulged by the rich and famous with Roman Abramovich having 70 acres here. You won't find it full of bling though and it is very French. Hotels are small and the airport only takes tiny planes. The best villa is available to rent at a mere £21,000 per night in high season. For full details of the article click <http://bit.ly/dQ8W4I>.

Late deals of the week

Best Ski break is £149 in Brides les Bains for a six days skiing and five nights half board plus return coach from London. Book by December 10. Travel January 7 to end of March with www.skiweekends.com. Best ferry is £25 single if you book by Friday with www.seafrance.co.uk

The snow express is back on the rails

Neil English recalls how he loved travelling to the Alps by train and couchette as a teenager and how this method of travel is on the way back. Skiers are becoming increasingly fed up with the cost of extras on low cost flights and the general queuing at airports. However help is at hand. You can get the direct service to the Alps with www.eurostar.com however it is quite expensive. The alternative is to take a Eurostar service from London to Paris and then change stations to Paris Austerlitz where you can get a day train or couchette down to the Alps. This whole concept of train travel has been brought back to the fore by Daniel Elkan and Mark Hodson from www.snowcarbon.co.uk who were fed up with the hassles of flying and wanted to save a bit of CO2. By train its about a seventh of that flying. Plagne 1800 is only 15 minutes from the station and with ski-in, ski-out apartments with www.lagrange-holidays.co.uk you can't go wrong.

The Guardian

House of Windsor

The Landmark Trust has taken on its first property in France. **Charlotte Higgins** visits Le Moulin de la Tuilerie a collection of houses that belonged to the Duke and Duchess of Windsor between 1952 and 1972. Located 35km south west of Paris on the edge of a village called Gif sur Yvette it is sufficiently rural for anyone wanting an escape but only a 45 minute RER ride into Paris. www.eurostar.com get a mention

How Green is your chalet?

Susan Greenwood looks at how certain ski companies are operating in an environmentally aware way. Solar panels, geo thermal heating and 100% natural insulation are increasingly common. Rainwater harvesting for toilets and washing machines as well as simpler innovations such as having a wood burner come bread oven in the centre of a property (to gently the place 24 hours a day) are all finding favour.

The Observer

No coverage

Daily Express

No coverage this week

Sunday Express

Follow in ski tracks of the rich and famous

Nick Boulos picks out the resorts favoured by A-list celebs. In France he selects the Three Valleys and Meribel favoured by the likes of the Beckhams, Natalie Imbruglia and Sophie Ellis-Bextor. He highlights that they come for the great scenery and an beginners will come on in leaps and bounds with the great instructors. Selected celeb package is with www.inghams.co.uk at the four star La Chaudonne Hotel from £1029pp half board in flights and transfers.

Ski news-On track for a hassle free trip

A huge range of rail inclusive ski holidays can now be found on the excellent www.snowcarbon.co.uk. Co founder of the site **Mark Hodson** makes the point that rail travel to the slopes is about quality of experience and convenience. For resorts such as Meribel and Val Thorens the door to door travel time is often about the same.



Daily Mirror

No coverage this week

Sunday Mirror

Deals of the week

£275pp gets you seven nights self catering in Chambéry with return flights from BA (London City Airport) and car hire from BA Holidays.



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