

TODAY'S WEATHER

MON 6°
TUE 4°
WED 5°

sky NEWS HD WEATHER with NAZANEEN GHAFAR

TODAY: Bright and mostly dry across the UK. Eastern England will be sunny most of the time, with just a little patchy cloud.

Wales and the rest of England will be mainly dry with long sunny periods, although north-west England and north Wales will have the slim chance of a light shower.

However, during the afternoon cloud will move in from the west across Northern Ireland, western Wales and south-west England with the chance of one or two showers in Northern Ireland. Scotland will have sunny periods, but also scattered wintry showers, these mainly in the north-west.

TONIGHT: Clear at first and becoming very cold with a sharp frost. However, it will gradually cloud over from the west during the night, followed by patchy rain in western parts by dawn, this falling as snow over northern hills.

TODAY in 1962 gale-force winds reaching 96mph hit Sheffield. Three people were killed and there was damage to hundreds of homes.

EUROPEAN OUTLOOK

WINTER SUN
Maximum temperatures

Tenerife	17°C
Lanzarote	20°C
Gran Canaria	16°C
Gambia	28°C
Goa	30°C
Florida	19°C
Dominican Rep	27°C
Jamaica	27°C
Thailand	33°C

WINTER SNOW
Upper/Pistes/Lower/Pistes

Meribel	165/105cm
Verbier	145/145cm
Val D'Isere	185/110cm
St Anton	125/50cm
Alpe d'Huez	210/30cm
Whistler	178/178cm

Ski report by iglski.com

All aboard for slide of your life

BIG FUN AND BROKEN BONES FOR BEGINNER

LEARNING to snowboard – how hard could it be?

I surf, which I reckoned was a water version of the same thing – standing on a board looking cool. Snowboarding was going to be a doddle, surely.

So I was confused when I came crashing down to reality – landing face-first in a pile of wet snow in the Austrian Alps.

My long weekend in St Johann, Tirol, had got off to a painful start, bruising more than just my ego.

Prior to the trip I'd spent six invaluable hours at The Snow Centre in Hemel Hempstead as part of Snowsport England's Go Ski Go Board programme.

The idea is to nail the basics at home so you build up your confidence – and stamina – before hitting the slopes abroad.

‘You need to imagine you're a cowboy’

It also means less time confined to the nursery slopes on holiday, so you can explore higher terrain and, of course, more après-ski bars.

In what's effectively a gigantic freezer with mountain landscapes on the walls, I learned how to stand on the board, how to slip down a gentle slope on the toe and heel edges and how to turn.

By the final session I could link my turns, albeit with wobbles. I even did a teeny jump over a ski pole.

My UK instructor, Hussein, also made me practise falling safely, with arms tucked into my chest and hands like fists.

He explained: “Whatever you do, try not to land on your hand or you could break your wrist. Relax and take the fall.”

Well, I was pretty confident I wouldn't need that advice.

I left the safety of The Snow Centre for Austria and immediately reaped the rewards of the training. My new instructor, Michael, had been snowboarding for 18 years so I was in expert hands.

After warming up – which included a few seconds of the Austrian folk dance called schuhplattler – he put me through my paces on the nursery slope and decided I was ready to move up the mountain as an intermediate snowboarder.

With its wide, uncrowded slopes and only one black run, St Johann is a good choice for beginners. When real snow is scarce, the resort uses artificial snow machines to make fake flakes from drinkable water – which is great if, like me, you tend to fall head-first, mouth open.

I spent the morning snaking – and tumbling – down blue runs with corrections from Michael.

He told me: “You need to imagine you're a cowboy riding a horse.”

“Spread your knees, go faster – and stop sticking your bum out.”

After my lesson, I thought it only right to experience Austrian après-ski. I headed to Max's Pub, where locals taught me how to perform a proper toast. A group of you bang your beer steins on the table in time, chanting “prost” – German for “cheers” – over and over again. Additional Jägermeister shots are optional.

The next day, something amazing happened. I finally started to get it. There was rhythm and a new smoothness to my turns. It seemed so easy. I was floating down the mountain, thinking: “Look at me! I'm finally snowboarding!” Then disaster struck. Stupidly, I went on the wrong edge of the board at speed. It was like putting your car into reverse on the motorway. I fell – spectacularly – on to my wrist. Snap.

An hour later I was lying on a hospital bed with my arm suspended in the air.

But it wasn't all bad – the doctor who informed me my radial bone was “kaput” was rather attractive.

And it hasn't put me off snowboarding. I'll be back – with high-impact shorts and wrist guards.

And next time, I won't go thinking it will be a doddle.

GO: SNOW

THE Go Ski Go Board programme includes six hours of instruction, ideally over six weeks, with courses available from beginners upwards. Run by Snowsport England, it is on offer at more than 30 UK centres.

Prices start from around £135 for a six-hour course. For details see goskigoboard.org.uk.

CHILLS & THRILLS ... boarding on the Tirol slopes. **Below**, Snow Centre in Hemel Hempstead

HIGH TIMES ... Left and above, medallist Jenny Jones at Sochi. Below, Ellie's adventures in Tirol

Hols for under...

£100: COSY up in the South B&B in Low Newton, near Windermere, from £75 per night. Includes port, cakes and breakfast. See ellenborohouse.co.uk or call 01539 530 393.

OR take a spring break in Devon – four nights mid-week at Woolacombe Bay Holiday Parks is from £99 for up to four people in March, including accommodation in a centrally-heated Bronze apartment with free use of indoor pools, sauna, steam room and cinema. Call 0843 2080 368 or visit woolacombe.co.uk/bp.

£250: SOAK up the sun in Tunisia half-board at the 3★ Golf Residence Hotel in Port El Kantaoui is from £199 per person including Manchester flights on March 9. See thomascocook.com, call 0844 412 5970.

OR get some Cypriot sun with seven nights' self-catering at the 5★ So White Boutique Suites from £414 per person including Liverpool flights on March 8. Visit easyJet.com/holidays, call 0843 104 1000.

£500: HEAD to the Red Sea. A week all-inclusive at the 5★ Luna Sharm Hotel in Naama Bay, Sharm el Sheikh, is from £464 per person including Birmingham flights on February 27. Go to onthebeach.co.uk or call 0871 474 3000.

OR marvel at magical Malta – seven nights' all-inclusive at the 4★ Qawra Palace Hotel, Salina Bay, is from £489 per person, including Manchester flights on March 3, transfers and an attraction entrance. Go to maltadirect.com or call 0845 604 0035.

£750: DABBLE in Abu Dhabi – three nights' B&B at the 5★ Intercontinental is from £639 per person, including Manchester flights on selected departures up to March 31. Book by February 17. Visit ba.com or call 0844 493 0758.

OR go totally tropical with a week all-inclusive at the 4★ Riu Bachata in the Dominican Republic from £731 per person, saving up to £298 per person. Flights from Manchester on March 25. Go to holidayhypermarket.co.uk or call 0800 916 5149.

£1,000: MOOCH around in Mauritius' half-board at the 3★ Coin De Mire is from £939 per person including flights on selected dates in March. Book by February 17. Visit ba.com or call 0844 493 0758.

OR discover Brazil before the World Cup crowds send prices sky-high. Six nights' B&B at the 3★ Astoria Copacabana Hotel is from £999 per person or upgrade to the 4★ Astoria Palace Hotel from £50 more per person. Both deals include return overnight flights with TAM Airlines from Heathrow and transfers. Call Worldwide Holidays on 01202 606 160.

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APP of the WEEK

JET2HOLIDAYS

(Free on iOS and Android)

NOW you can choose AND book your holidays with a single app, thanks to Jet2 Holidays.

The app gives instant access to thousands of package deals to the Canaries, Mediterranean and top European cities.

It also allows you to save your preferred departure airport and room occupancy to speed up future searches, while you can filter your search by board, star rating and more.

Details at jet2holidays.com.

GADGET of the WEEK

SHIN SHIELDS

(£15.99, shinshields.com)

If you're doing as your ski instructor says and leaning forward in your boots, then you're probably ahead of everyone else on the mountain. But using the right technique can leave you with sore shins.

The solution? A pad between skin and sock. It's not exactly rocket science but these shin shields, made of a new soft and breathable material called Poron XRD, absorb bumps and cut down on bruising or more serious injury. They also stopped our socks itching – a win in itself.



NEWS

WET 'N' WILD'S latest Brit spends 56 minutes a day racers against each other in an overlapping mass of high-speed tubes.

Opening this summer, it will be six storeys high and promises to be their fastest slide yet. See wetwildorlando.com.

● IF you have ever been stung for hotel wi-fi, rest assured you're not alone. We spent **£123MILLION** last year surfing the net – and that is just on short breaks at home. According to Thistle Hotels, the average Brit spends 56 minutes a day online. Apparently wi-fi is now more important to their guests than a swimming pool – so they are calling on UK hoteliers to ditch the sky-high wi-fi charges.

We would have to agree but we wonder where the costs would be made up – minibars are already too expensive and people gave up on hotel phones years ago.

Maybe a Ryanair-style charge on having the beds made?