

# the **Saturday** TRAVEL

[thescottishsun.co.uk/travel](http://thescottishsun.co.uk/travel)
**COLD SPOT**

**ON a budget? A week skiing in PAS DE LA CASA, Andorra, self-catering at the 2★ Crest Apartments, is £179pp. Flights depart from Manchester or Gatwick tomorrow. See [directski.com](http://directski.com) for details.**

## SOFTENING THE STING

CHALET specialists Inghams have opened a flagship 4★ property in Val d'Isere, below.

The Chalet Hotel du Montet is exclusive to Inghams guests, sleeps 24 and has been converted from a traditional stone farmhouse.

It's in the Le Fornet area, the most picturesque part of Val d'Isere, and just a short walk to the cable-car.

Guests can also ski right up to the hotel's front door.

Seven nights' chalet board with breakfast, afternoon tea and a five-course dinner with unlimited wines is from £899 per person, saving £180 per person, departing on Feb 9.

Price includes return flights from Gatwick and resort transfers. For details visit



[inghams.co.uk](http://inghams.co.uk) or call 01483 791 114.

●WHEN you've shelled out a fortune for your ski holiday, the price of lift passes can be a real sting in the tail.

But Powder White are offering two lift passes for the price of one for bookings made by January 31 to go to Europe's top resorts of Courchevel, Val d'Isere, Meribel, Verbier and St Anton. The buy one, get one free local area lift pass offer could save you up to £235 per couple.

It is valid February 23 or 24, all weeks in March and on April 6 or 7.

People travelling alone can get half-price lift passes.

Seven nights at the Chalet Napoli in Verbier, arriving on February 23, costs £699 per person.

The six-person chalet is just a short ski from the Medran lift.

Prices include fully catered chalet board, unlimited house wine and a number of dinner wines.

To find out more, and to book, see [powderwhite.com/](http://powderwhite.com/) offers or call 0208 877 8888.

**COLD SPOT**

**ONE week chalet board at family friendly Chalet Hotel Christina in LA PLAGNE, France, is from £665 per adult and £304 per child. Call 0844 273 6769 for details or see [markwarner.co.uk](http://markwarner.co.uk).**

# Val's going up in world

## THORENS CATCHING CHIC NEIGHBOURS



**HIGH TIME . . . beginners line up at Val Thorens; Altipura features cool bedrooms and bars, plus internet access, below**

**IT'S minus 14°C and I'm in a bikini. This wasn't what I had in mind when I packed for a three-day ski trip.**

Still, swimming in a heated outdoor pool while catching snowflakes on my tongue is the kind of luxurious lifestyle I'm sure I could get used to.

Open for its second season, Altipura is the first five-star hotel in Val Thorens, France, one of Europe's highest resorts.

For years, Val Thorens has been the poorer cousin of its chicer, richer neighbours Meribel and Courcheval in the massive Three Valleys ski domain.

No more. The arrival of Altipura was the start of a quiet revolution that has seen the young and beautiful head here for more than just guaranteed snow.

Altipura is an impossibly cool Nordic-chic pad, with beautiful touches such as fluffy white rocking chairs, wooden chandeliers and a roaring fire in the centre of the bar.

Flat-screen TVs, iPod stations, internet access and remote key-boards are standard in the 88 rooms, which all have large windows with mountain views.

My bathroom featured a smart stone double basin – and that all-important tub for post-ski soaks. Splashing out on a suite will buy you the best views and separate living areas.

With the sun setting behind the mountains, I began to forge a plan of attack for the next day on the slopes. One of

the key selling points of Val Thorens – or “VT” as people in the know call it – is its altitude.

At 2,300 metres up, the resort guarantees good snow so there were few slushy or icy runs to put me off. And with the slopes right on my doorstep, I could simply snap on my skis and be away.

The rest of my group were already gliding over to our guide, Patrick, as I struggled to keep up.

“Remember, you’re the boss of your skis,” he said, looking with sympathy as I lagged behind. “If you lean back, your skis are the boss of you.”

### Beautiful

It was good advice, as I found out moments later when I accidentally flailed backwards and found myself lying in a heap.

But falling didn't matter – I felt challenged but safe and there is something for skiers of all abilities here . . . no matter how bad you are.

After a couple of warm-up runs, we headed up the mountain on the resort's newly-refurbished cable car.

There are enough pistes to keep you skiing all day in Val Thorens – from cruisey greens and blues to trickier reds and advanced blacks.

But if you do want to venture further afield, it's easy enough to pop over to Courcheval and Meribel.

## GO: VAL THORENS

**GETTING/STAYING THERE:** Flexiski offer three nights' B&B at Altipura from £626, five nights from £958. Includes Edinburgh to Geneva flights. Transfers, passes, equipment and tuition can be arranged. Call 020 8939 0864 or visit [flexiski.com](http://flexiski.com).

And if skiing isn't your thing, there's always ice-driving or snowmobiling.

After a day regaining our ski legs, we were ready to head back to the hotel, but not before passing La Folie Douce, the restaurant/bar whose name translates as “sheer madness”. It's an ultra-cool, beautifully designed bar where the après-ski booze-ups start at about 3pm.

When we arrived a couple of hours later, the party was in full swing. Skiers and snowboarders were dancing on the tables of the terrace in beautiful bright sunshine with foaming pints of beer in hand as the DJ spun tunes from his rooftop perch. It was impossible not to join in as the sun slipped behind the mountains.

An hour or so and several beers later, my skiing skills had miraculously improved and we swooshed straight back to the hotel and headed to the spa.

The pool calling, I squeezed in a sauna and a massage to ease away the day's aches before taking the lift down for a champagne cocktail in the bar.

As well as the main restaurant offering a gourmet buffet at dinner, there was the added treat of both a fondue restaurant, La Laiterie, and a fine-dining restaurant, Les Enfants Terribles.

Tucking into gooey cheese one night and succulent steaks the next, all washed down with good red wine, I felt utterly spoilt and set up for the next day's skiing.

With everything under one roof, it's tempting not to leave the hotel at all.

*If it wasn't for the skiing, I don't think I would have.*

**ELLIE ROSS**

●BOOK a guided tour of New Zealand with Austravel and get the flight for a companion free – a saving of £1,300.

The 17-day New Zealand Wonderland tour takes in some of the highlights on both the North and South Islands.

It starts in Auckland and finishes in Christchurch, and costs from £3,775 per person. Along the way you will also visit Mt Cook National

Park, cruise around Milford Sound, see the Franz Josef Glacier, ride the TranzAlpine Train, eat Maori food in Rotorua and take a dolphin cruise around the Bay of Islands.

There are 28 meals included, and you have the services of a tour director.

If you book the tour for two people with Austravel you get one free international flight. For more

information visit [austravel.com](http://austravel.com) or call 0800 988 4834.

●THE Singapore Airlines January sale is in full swing.

Book for travel from January 14 until December 5 and get bargain return flights from Heathrow to Singapore from £625, to Brunei from £635, to Malaysia from £645, to Cambodia from £650, to Adelaide, Australia from £790, to Melbourne

from £830 and to Christchurch, New Zealand, from £860. See [singaporeair.com](http://singaporeair.com) or visit your local travel agent.

●THE good old tea bag is the most well-travelled food item ever, according to a survey from The Co-operative Travel.

A third of air passengers admit they can't be without their favourite brew while they are abroad on holiday. Traditional tea-making

travel items like the travel kettle have now fallen out of favour – being replaced by gadgets including hair straighteners, Kindles, iPads and mobiles.

The survey reveals that an adaptor is the most important travel companion with 71 per cent taking one on hol, while one in 10 charitable Brits forgo space in their suitcase for clothes to pack gifts to give local people in their resort.

**AIR NEWS**