

on your feet:

Ski Skool

Head to the European ski resorts for an exhilarating break this winter says **Jonica Love**.

Equal to our British summer-time of lacklustre sunshine, the last time we enjoyed a white Christmas seems long ago. So if it is the white stuff you are in search of then why not jet across to the continent, to the home of real winters. Whether you are just starting out or are a fully fledged Eddy the Eagle here is a selection of resorts where you would be kept busy this winter.

Val d' Isère, France

Parisian Jaques Mouffliers decided in 1929 that Val d' Isère would be an ideal spot for copying early Austrian ski villages, and this action packed village which is Val d' Isère, boasts a lively day and night life. Known for being geared towards intermediate to advanced skiers, the 1,850 m high resort, one of the biggest and highest in the world, is a challenge and a paradise to those unafraid of the slopes. There are however free lifts and nursery slopes in the town centre for beginners. Although expensive for families there is good catering for kids in the form of a 'children's village'.

With regular snow from November to May, the resort is always a favourite. The night life kicks off when the last lift stops, with happy hours, Michelin rated French restaurants

ready to entertain you and a host of other sports to keep you occupied, such as a swimming and fitness centres to train in. If the skiing is not enough, then there is an Olympic ice skating rink, a cinema, paragliding, quad biking, horse riding and husky mushing.

www.valdisere.com

Lech & Zurs, Austria

Austria's most trendy skiing zones are Lech and Zurs, they lie 5 km apart in a valley, through which more advanced skiers can enjoy 'the white circuit' connecting the two villages. The 700-year-old village only saw skiing become a major part of the area in 1925 when the first ski school was set up. Since the middle of the 1940s, expansion of this resort has been phenomenal. Here, both beginners and intermediates are well catered for with open and kept pistes.

Oberlech is a small hamlet literally situated 'over' Lech and it is a car-free, charming place. Because the village is carless it has a tunnel system connecting the hotels. Luggage is checked in at a cable car station and sent to the ski-in ski-out hotels. Lech is criticised for being expensive and at times soulless especially in low season; however there are rare and beautiful alpine meadows and it is no

pricier than surrounding areas in Austria. And for an added incentive, European Royalty often frequent this choice resort. How about that for a recommendation?

Alternative activities to keep you occupied are the snowboarding fun park and 15 km of walking trails, not forgetting a toboggan run and horse drawn sleighs.

www.lech.at

Kloster, Switzerland

This true alpine village offers an all round ski experience from novice upwards, although mainly geared towards the intermediate standard.

At 1,200 m above sea level Klosters is set in a valley of beautiful mountains, and is filled with local farming people who extend a welcome to its holidaymakers.

Davos resort is 10 km away, which is a city type resort with mountains to die for but lacks the charm of Klosters. Between them these resorts offer over 300 km of slopes to speed along (or gently saunter if that is more your style).

There are also, horse drawn sleigh rides, snowboarding, curling, ice hockey, ice skating, paragliding, an 8.5 km sledding route and top class restaurants to keep you entertained.

www.klosters.ch