

KT – Parenting October 2006

A ski resort is generally imagined as an overpriced, pretentious town, populated by braying rich kids whittling away at their inheritance, hitting the slopes hard and the après-ski even harder. For most families, it is not the first choice of break, many preferring the easier option of a week in Torremolinos. But the ski-world has opened up considerably to accommodate all ages, interests and price ranges, and the resort of Morzine is a prime example.

Highlife has several luxury chalets on offer in Morzine that, surprisingly, won't break the bank, and offer families, or indeed couples or groups, an affordable taste of luxury. Morzine has speedily become popular with Irish ski-

lovers, with flights direct from Dublin to Geneva, and a one-hour transfer into Morzine making it much more accessible than some of the more remote resorts. Highlife collected us by minibus, along with our fellow guests, and the quick journey gave us just enough time to make the acquaintance of our new neighbours for the next week.

On arrival at the chalets, we were pleasantly surprised by the sheer luxury of the location. We had been placed with another family, which was ideal, as we had practically the same interests, requirements and bedtimes! The chalets have everything to keep bored kids and their parents amused without even sampling the après-ski, from a luxury Jacuzzi, to

pool room, reading room and of course, a huge roaring fire in the lounge. We found that the split-level design of the chalet managed to create the perfect balance of privacy, with separate rooms and bathrooms, and company in the communal areas. A chalet like this is like the most exclusive hotel in the world, with all the luxury and none of the formality.

Staff at the chalet were exceptionally friendly and helpful, and did everything in their power to tailor the routine to suit our family. Menus for the day were posted each morning, and a member of staff would go through each item with us to ensure nothing was too unusual for any fussy eaters. Another family had a younger child staying with them, and they

found this service indispensable to avoid spicy or exotic dishes. The portions were, dare I say, too large, and the food was fantastic, with lots of rich local fare such as cheeses and salamis on the menu.

Once we dragged ourselves from the chalet, it was time to hit the slopes. Jack is an avid skier, and Alex and Stephen have skied before, but we took advantage of the classes provided by Highlife to accustom ourselves to the slopes. Morzine is at about 1000m, with plenty of north-facing slopes and well sheltered, so it is ideal for all levels. It was fantastic for all the family to get out together on the slopes rather than wasting days lying on a beach, and we were all happy to bundle into the lounge and jostle for a position

in front of the fire before enjoying another hearty meal.

The town of Morzine itself has ample attractions to offer a family, or indeed any other type of visitor. The bars and restaurants are typically excellent, again offering fantastic food with portions that would satisfy any post-ski appetite. When we finally tired of skiing, we all went to see an ice-hockey match in the town, followed by an enjoyable jaunt around the quaint shops in the area. The charcuterie shops are not to be missed, including one little cheese shop where the cheese is made in-house, so you can watch it being prepared before you sample it. Any amount of fascinating curios can be found in the shops, from artwork, jewellery, antiques and

woodwork, to unusual and individual finds for superb souvenirs or gifts.

Morzine has the added appeal in that it does not seem as cut-off as some other resort. The local tourist office in the town is extremely helpful, and offers details of what to see in the town and surrounding areas. The bus service is excellent, and great for a day trip if you tire of the resort. A week on a sun holiday can sometimes feel like an eternity, but a week in Morzine flew past, and it was with some regret that we boarded the minibus to take us to the airport. Exhausted but happy we took off over the snow-capped mountains resplendent in the knowledge that this would be a family holiday we would always look back on.

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