

**WALKING IN TUSCANY & LIGURIA**  
DEPARTS  
MAY 9, SEP 12 & 19 2017

**8 DAYS FROM £859 PP**

**A week under the Tuscan sun in Marina di Pietrasanta, with walks in the beautiful Gulf of Poets, the Serchio Valley in the Apuan Alps, and at Torre del Lago Puccini.**

Your base in Marina di Pietrasanta, on the Tuscan coast, is quieter than some of its neighbours but just as attractive. Your holiday includes three contrasting walking excursions: to the stunningly beautiful 'Gulf of Poets', just across the border in Liguria, haunt of, among others, Byron and Shelley; along the river to Lucca; and in the Serchio valley in the Apuan Alps – the 'Marble Mountains', whose stone is so prevalent in the cathedrals and baptisteries of the major Tuscan cities.



INCLUDES A RAIL TRIP IN THE APUAN ALPS

**PRICE INCLUDES**

- Return flights from Edinburgh, Newcastle & other airports
- 7 nights HB hotel accommodation in Marina di Pietrasanta
- 3 guided walks
- Rail trip in the Apuan Alps
- Services of a tour representative

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**Portes du Soleil attracts winters sports enthusiasts of all abilities from all over the world**



**The peaks of skiing perfection in the high Alps**

By Graham Mckendry

**T**HE seven gnarly peaks of the Dents du Midi dominate much of the sky above the Portes du Soleil ski area.

Less famous perhaps than the Matterhorn or the Eiger, their ragged edges slicing into the brilliant blue alpine sky are equally impressive.

Dents du Midi translates from French as "the teeth of noon", and their higgledy-piggledy arrangement is reminiscent of the gnashers of a grizzly front row rugby forward.

For my skiing trip to the Swiss French Alps, I spent much of my time meandering down the pistes of Avoriaz, Chatel and Morzine.

But these three resorts are only a small portion of the Portes du Soleil area, which comprises 196 ski lifts, a further nine connected resorts and 287 marked runs.

A lift pass for the entire

area gets a lot of bang for your Swiss Franc or Euro.

Little wonder that, over my seven-night stay, I came across a smorgasbord of nationalities.

I chatted with a Dutch couple on a chairlift, drank a beer with some Aussies, shared a chalet with Israelis, heard English and Polish accents, and fell into the amiable company of a trio of Irish.

From across Europe and further afield, experienced skiers, snowboarders, climbers, and first-timers all flocked to the Portes du Soleil in search of an Alpine adventure.

Like many Alpine resorts, Geneva Airport is the bridging point to get to Morzine Avoriaz, so you can expect it to be bustling at the seams during the high season.

Depending on traffic, the

transfer along the motorway to the French border and then up to the mountains via a few hairpin bends takes around 75 minutes.

Chilly Powder's chalet hotel Au Coin du Feu ("By The Fireside") was my final destination, a favourite with families visiting the area.

Run by husband and wife team Paul and Francesca Eyre, it combines the winning formula of luxury accommodation, great food, a crèche with fully-qualified nannies, and a kids club, allowing parents to have a holiday, too.

There's one drawback though, a lot of skiing is required to work off the calorie intake from a five-course meal every night!

The Chilly Powder staff are enthusiastic and seemingly have the remarkable ability to know the answer to your questions, before you've fully worked out what you're going to ask.

The chalet is located in the

hamlet of Les Prodains in the shadow of the cable car that takes you up to Avoriaz, from where you can attack the slopes.

A 20-minute bus journey down the hill will take you to the bustling town of Morzine and access to the snow there via the ski lift known as the Pleney Bubble.

One of the main attractions of the Portes du Soleil is the abundance of intermediate and beginners slopes in close proximity,

allowing groups of mixed abilities to combine their time on the slopes effectively.

For the experienced skier, (or the plain crazy), there is also La Chavanette or the Swiss Wall.

If you think that sounds challenging, you'd be correct. Considered one of the hardest pistes in the world, the terrifyingly-steep descent is littered with bumpy moguls that instil fear into even the most accomplished of skiers.

It's no secret skiing can be expensive, especially when eating and drinking on the mountain, with a pint of beer and a pizza likely to set you back just shy of £30.

But, there are cheaper options in Avoriaz. You can ski through the middle of the town and more or less to the door of a supermarket or take the picnic option.

For those looking to treat themselves, there's Chez BaBeth in Chatel, the sort of place you'll never forget.

The compact interior is packed with fur drapes, fairy lights and teddy bears, with

the gloriously eccentric BaBeth herself running the show.

With more than 1000 ski resorts across Europe vying for customers, diversification is key to success.

During the summer months the Portes du Soleil rolls out a variety of mountain activities, including climbing, walking, mountain biking, and even golf.

Road cyclists flock to the area, with Morzine playing host to the penultimate stage of last year's Tour de France.

So whatever time of year you go, there's plenty to get your teeth into.

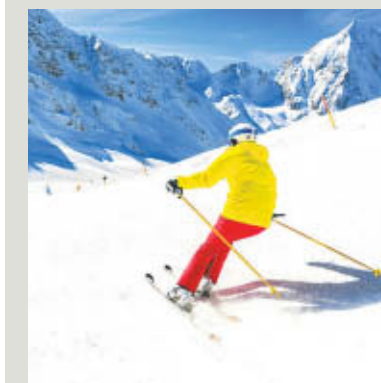


**FACT BOX**

Chilly Powder's winter prices start from £865 per week based on two adults sharing a standard bedroom or £2,400 per week based for two adults and two children sharing a standard family bedroom. Prices include half-board, with wine in evening meals. Child care facilities are also available, with prices starting at £265 per week and ski school for £230 per week. Call **0207 289 6958** or visit [chillypowder.com](http://chillypowder.com)



**10 Alpine ideas**



**1 BOOK A SKI LESSON**

Make the most of your time on the slopes and have the British Alpine Ski School give your technique the once over.

**2 TAKE IN AN ICE HOCKEY MATCH**

A night at the rink for this high speed sport is well worth a look. Many resorts have a team, with Chamonix-Morzine splitting these fixtures between both towns.

**3 SAMPLE TRADITIONAL ALPINE FARE**

Where better to try tasty classics like fondue or raclette?

**4 DON'T FORGET SUNCREAM**

It may well be cold, but lather up to protect yourself from the sun's harmful rays at altitude.

**5 GET PROPERLY INSURED**

Alpine sports can be dangerous, so make sure you've got cover should the worst happen.

**6 VISIT IN THE SUMMER**

The Alps offer just as many opportunities for adventure when the snow has melted. From gentle walks in tree-lined meadows, to paragliding, there's something for everyone.

**7 HAVE A RECOVERY SPA**

The rough and tumble of a hard day on the slopes can take it's toll on the body. Sign up for massage or take a dip in a hot tub to heal your aching bones.

**8 ENJOY THE APRES SKI**

No trip to the Alps is complete without indulging after coming off the slopes. La Kinkerne and Le Tremplin are two of the most popular in Morzine Avoriaz.

**9 BE PREPARED FOR A WAIT**

As the main hub for much of the Alps, Geneva Airport is very busy during the high season with long check-in desk queues. Make sure you have plenty of time for your flight.

**10 ROCK THE PISTES**

A five-day free music festival at the end of March in the Portes du Soleil with music for everyone.