

The HIP parade

Why Verbier has become the serious skier's resort of choice for laid-back glamour and good times

BY LYDIA BELL

Though undeniably the natural territory of the wealthy and glamorous, the chocolate-box-pretty Swiss village of Verbier is no St Moritz or Gstaad, or even Courchevel: you won't find jewel-encrusted oligarchs' wives here. It really is *the* resort for serious seasonaires, show-offs and ski bums, who come for the variety of the skiing, and the top-notch off-piste – including Tortin, the biggest mogul field in the Alps. Verbier has come a long way since the freewheeling 1980s, when it was colonised by ex-chalet girl Fergie and her pals; today's brand of hedonism is more sophisticated and international, dominated by the financial community, Swiss or otherwise. There's a 'behind closed doors' kind of glamour here; and in the bars, restaurants and clubs, there is a sense of light-hearted, boisterous fun.

PHOTOGRAPHS: SLIM AARONS/GETTY IMAGES, GRAHAM WALSER. SEE STOCKISTS FOR DETAILS



SNOW SCENE
 Skiers photographed
 in Verbier in 1964
 by Slim Aarons



£510,
 Moncler



£85, Peak
 Performance



£130,
 Adidas

**BAZAAR
 LOVES...**



£700,
 Kjus

BEST-KEPT SECRETS

Be sure to try the absolutely classic raclette at Le Caveau (+41 27 771 2226), as well as dawn pain au chocolat at the midnight bakery behind Place Centrale.



NIGHT CLASS
 Coco Club, Verbier

CLUB STYLE

The party palace of the moment is the super-chic Coco Club (+41 27 771 6666), where Krug is quaffed like water and the waitresses are as cute as cover girls. The Farm-Club (+41 27 771 6121) is an institution; it does a line in knowing kitsch, with wild prices and retro tracks.

DON'T BE SEEN WITHOUT...

sporty brands such as Peak Performance or Kjus – anything that lends the impression of serious skiing; Gucci goggles won't cut the mustard in Verbier. A rucksack with a beeper and snow shovel poking out the back won't go amiss.

ESCAPE

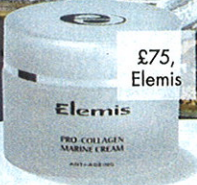
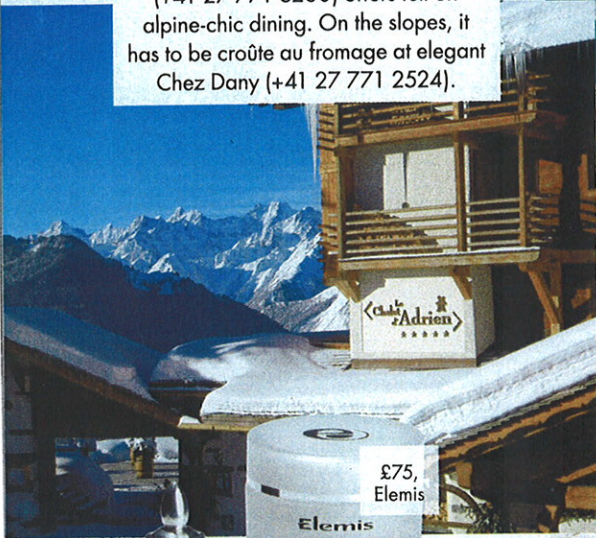
FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD

Le Rouge (+41 27 771 8000) has great food in an informal atmosphere. La Table d'Adrien at Chalet d'Adrien (+41 27 771 6200) offers full-on alpine-chic dining. On the slopes, it has to be *croûte au fromage* at elegant Chez Dany (+41 27 771 2524).



RITES OF PASSAGE

Don't miss skiing down from Chez Dany after a three-hour lunch; staying up to hear 'New York, New York' at the Farm-Club; skidooning up the mountain for dinner; and sledging home.



SPA QUALITY

Nevai (www.nevai.ch) is the only serious day-spa in town, with its hammam, dipping pool and Elemis treatment products. The spa opens out to a terrace where guests, wrapped in warm blankets, can lounge on comfy chairs and order from the bar.

CHALET CHIC

Chalet Kernow. Clockwise from below: the pool at Chalet L Raphael. The Lodge Bella Coola. Chalet d'Adrien. Verbier photographed by Slim Aarons in 1964



WHERE TO STAY

There's no shortage of luxurious accommodation here: Richard Branson's the Lodge (www.thelodge.virgin.com) is spectacular, and the newest mega-luxe chalet in town is Chalet L Raphael (www.bestchaletintheworld.com), which has its own L Raphael Spa. If you want to choose from the best range of exquisite lodges, though, the only option is to contact chalet company CK Verbier. Apart from the brilliant service and serious attitude towards food and drink, the USP of these chalets is their exquisite interiors. Every detail is just right, but not cloyingly so; these places have a lived-in feel and more heart and soul than any super-chalet. From lavish Bella Coola, with its Grecian-style indoor pool, to gorgeous Chalet Kernow, which melds Alpine cosiness and lavish, large-scale home comforts, these are interiors to fall in love with. CK Verbier chalets (+41 794 280 172; www.ckverbier.com); seven nights, from about £6,260 full board, including wine, service and exclusive use of facilities. □

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