



INDY/GO

SKIING WITH CHAMPIONS: HIT THE

SLOPES OF SAINTE FOY WITH PRO

SKIERS CHEMMY ALCOTT AND BELLA

SEEL



What better way to tighten your technique and perfect your off-piste than in the company of an Olympian?

CHLOË HAMILTON

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THE INDEPENDENT TRAVEL

“Are you Chemmy Alcott?” a man on the slope behind me asks. My ski companion turns and offers up a broad grin. “Yep,” she laughs. The chap beckons his friends over and the four of them crowd around the Olympic downhill skier, utterly in awe. I hang back on the edge of the piste, unsure what to do next.

Chemmy’s gloved hand appears from the multi-coloured cluster of ski jackets and grabs my ski pole. “This is my friend, Chloë,” she tells the gawping boys. “Let’s show them what we can do.”

And, just like that, we’re off, carving down the slope at high speed, spraying powder in bystanders’ faces. I hear the lads whooping and cheering behind me as I follow Chemmy’s tracks. This, I think, is the best ski trip ever.



Chemmy Alcott in action at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi (Getty)

Legend Holidays & Events specialises in setting up holidays with sporting legends. The company was founded by former England rugby players (and friends) Austin Healey and Will Greenwood. The premise is simple: professional sports people host luxury trips and share their pearls of wisdom along the way. The company currently run rugby, cricket, netball and skiing breaks, and I'm lucky enough to join their inaugural ski trip, hosted by former British World Cup alpine ski racer Chemmy Alcott, and professional free rider Bella Seel.

I meet some of the team, including Bella (Chemmy is meeting us at the chalet) at Geneva airport and we clamber aboard the mini-bus which will take us up to Sainte Foy-Tarentaise, a small resort near bustling Val-d'Isère in France. On the journey, Bella wows us with tales of her skiing escapades. She specialises in off-piste skiing, and promises to show us how to ski across powder (or "pow pow" as she calls it) before the holiday is out.



PROMOTED STORIES



We pull up to The Peak, our luxury catered chalet in Sainte Foy, and it's a far cry from my usual ski trip digs (a bunk-bed in a cramped ski apartment). The four-storey building comes with wood-clad walls, cosy rugs, and roaring fireplaces, as well as a hot tub on the snow-custed balcony and a sauna and spa hidden in its depths. Staff are on hand to cater to your every whim. Even better: the accommodation is ski-in, ski-out – a blessing for anyone who has ever lugged skis to and from the slopes.

Chemmy is there when we arrive and, after a swift but delicious lunch laid on by the chalet staff, we all leap into our ski suits and are out on the slopes within the hour.



The group is made up of a mixture of abilities, something which can prove a struggle on a skiing holiday with friends. With the professionals, though, it's different. Everyone, of course, wants to impress Chemmy and Bella. I find myself concentrating extra hard as I sashay down the first few pistes; skis together, turning elaborately on my poles. I'm not the only one; I notice others in the party – particularly the two young lads, I have to say – are also competing for attention.

We're all desperate to keep up with the two girls as they fly at breakneck speed down the hill. Chemmy, incidentally, broke her neck in a skiing accident when she was 12. She recovered with two of her vertebrae fused together. This is one of the many stories she tells us over après vin chauds.



This is how the rest of the trip goes. Up early, hearty breakfast, and out on the mountain by the first lift. Every now and again, the professional pair call the party to a halt on the side of the slopes, holding up their poles as they gather us around like school children. They instruct us and offer advice, giving us little tasks to do to improve our technique.

Chemmy cheerfully suggests I lean forward more, using the weight of my boobs to hang over my ski boots. I try it out and, although I don't have much in the boob department, I find the tip very helpful. I certainly feel more in control.

Instruction is offered with a smile, and – although occasionally we split off into smaller splinter groups – equal attention is paid to all skiers, regardless of their ability. The duo also stay with us in the chalet for the duration of the holiday so we get to know them on and off the piste.



Chemmy and Bella aren't the only pros in our party. We're also joined by Julien and Matti, ski guides who know the slopes of Sainte Foy like the backs of their hands. Over the course of the trip they lead us down runs I wouldn't dare have attempted alone. With them, though, anything seems possible – and quite an achievement considering some of the snow we tackle. I feel safe at all times – even when they pack me a rucksack full of avalanche kit, just in case.

The trip comes with all the trimmings. A visit to the La Folie Douce restaurant in the nearby resort of Val-d'Isère where we dance on tables until closing time; a mountain dinner of raclette and wine at the top of the slopes, followed by a night-time ski home carrying burning torches; and, best of all, a heli-ski escapade on the final day, where we venture so far off-piste the only way back is by helicopter. I've never felt more like James Bond.



Exciting extras aside, however, this trip is really all about the pros. Chemmy and Bella know their stuff and their passion for powder is infectious. Learning at the skis of legends is, well, legendary.

Travel essentials

Getting there

Legend Holidays & Events (020 3696 5745; ourlegend.com) offers three- or four-night ski breaks that include coaching from ski legends, from £2,750pp. The price includes flights to Geneva, transfers, a helicopter off-piste pick-up, ski hire, ski pass, ski guiding, Legend ski jacket, torchlight night ski and all-inclusive accommodation at The Peak chalet in Sainte Foy. Departures take place between 15 January and 5 February 2017.

More information

saintefoy-tarentaise.com ●

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