

# Why I gave booze the heave-snow

**Abi Butcher** on the hangover that led to her first alcohol-free skiing holiday

**T**HIS January, I spent four days skiing in Val d'Isère. For three of those we had terrible snow and visibility, so boredom inevitably led to Sam finishes in Dick's Tea Bar.

On my last day, although trembling from the effects of alcohol and with only a few hours' sleep, I found myself on the mountain in a blizzard. I headed for the trees in Le Fornet but after crashing three times, I called it a day and missed the best powder of the trip.

Sound familiar? This scenario has happened too often for me, so I've decided to rein in the traditional vin chaud. Not only am I tired of wasting great skiing, a hangover at 3,000m is a (potentially dangerous) waste of the self-healing experience that skiing offers. Nowhere makes me feel more insignificant than standing in a vast snowfield working out my line. And nowhere makes me feel more full of hope.

It's not just me seeking a new kind

of ski trip. Tarantaise's Chalet Rosière (chaletrosiere.fr) pitches itself as the 'world's first wellbeing chalet', while former UK freeride pro Jamie Strachan's Hip Chalets (hipchalets.com) has launched a trip that includes yoga and qigong.

If you're not quite ready to commit to a week of holistic health, head to St Moritz where you can get bendy on the world's first yoga mountain, home to designated spots for downward dogging.

As for me, back on the slopes after my January revelation, I dive right in with Element Concepts (weekends from £244, elementconcept.com) in Verbier, a new women's camp that combines ski tuition with life coaching, nutritional talks, yoga and massages.

I am joined by a bunch of equally confident women who want their skiing to be as seamless as their professional lives. Over a long weekend we are guided into a more



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**Hale and hearty: How skiing feels with a clear head**  
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mindful way of skiing and it works – particularly if you don't hit the booze.

Rather than arriving late for lessons, I bounce up early, enjoying every lungful of the mountain air. I apply my whole concentration on improving my technique and new positive mood.

I do, however, find restaurants difficult – when I'm cold and hungry, I fancy chips, cheese and hot chocolate, but I stick to the plan and opt for tuna and avocado burgers and, at breakfast in Hotel Cordée des Alpes, I skip the croissant for a carrot, ginger and apple juice.

Dinner at renowned après-ski destination Le Rouge tests me – I order fish and vegetables but waver at the sight of a champagne and apricot liqueur cocktail. But this doesn't snowball and I stick to a civilised drink.

At the start of the trip, life coach Elaine France had asked me to write a postcard to myself. Having returned home fit and refreshed, not exhausted and in need of another holiday, I receive it some weeks later.

With its mantra that 2017 is the year for change and mindfulness, it serves as a sharp reminder of my time in the Swiss mountains grappling with self-improvement both on skis and off.

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