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Could you ever justify spending £40,000 on a ski holiday?

A new villa for the super-rich in one of the glitziest resorts in the Alps offers champagne on tap, a glass-walled sauna and a private chef

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Unlimited Veuve Clicquot. It sounds like the stuff of dreams. Especially if you are a fan of the life-affirming effects of champagne. But how would you respond to such an offer? Maybe I am getting old, but I actually found my own reaction surprisingly reassuring. Sure, maybe I drank a tiny touch more than I would have done if paying for each glass, but

I was quite impressed by the way that a sort of natural self-restraint kicked in, at least after the first night.

This trial by temptation was staged when I spent a couple of days in Purple Ski's Chalet Inoko – the latest addition to its portfolio of top-end properties in [Val d'Isère](#). And, to be honest, I felt a little uncomfortable when I learnt that the cost of renting the place for the whole of that week was €45,420 (£40,126). And though the champagne – and other drinks – were all on tap, that price didn't even include the flights, transfers, lift pass and kit hire.

For most of us, it's an impossibly large sum to be spending on a holiday, even in one of the world's best and most expensive ski resorts. And, as the effects of the Veuve Clicquot wore off and my natural sense of frugality took over, I began to wonder if there was any way of justifying the expense. I'll come to the maths in a minute, but first – what do you actually get for your money?



There are six double bedrooms in the property, all of which are pretty compact

There's no doubt that it's a lovely place to stay. The newly built timber chalet is at the top of a steep track which leads up to the woods at the edge of the village, a short walk from the main drag. There is one big living room on the top floor, with a long dining table, the fridge containing the champagne and expansive sofas in front of an open fire.

The aesthetic is certainly stylish, but quite hard to pin down. There is an extravagant array of fluffy lampshades, some well-stocked bookshelves and the main artwork is a life-sized

still from a slightly-edgy [Vivienne Westwood](#) photoshoot. The heads of four mountain goats mounted high on either side gaze down impassively.

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Huge picture windows overlook the valley and the mountains opposite and the view improves even further if you move out onto the balcony and slip into the hot tub. All in all it's an excellent space for a house party for a dozen or so guests.

So far, so good then. The six double bedrooms – which are all pretty compact – are on the two floors below, and you can squeeze the numbers up to 14, with a couple of children's bunk beds in an alcove next to one of the rooms.



'The aesthetic is certainly stylish, but quite hard to pin down'

In the basement there's an indoor pool (long and narrow), a treatment room (you can call in visiting therapists at extra cost) and a glass-walled sauna. There is also a cinema room – presumably aimed mostly at entertaining fractious kids.

All in all then, in terms of space and facilities, the chalet is on a par with a mini five-star hotel. I'd say the cooking was up to scratch too. This season Inoko has an excellent young chef – Hugo – who serves breakfast and cooks up a four course menu six nights a week – all included in the rental charge. We had, on one night, for example, home-cured gravlax trout followed by aged fillet of beef – accompanied by very good Bordeaux and Burgundy, also all part of the deal.

Luxury chalet vs hotel

How do the costs compare in the world's leading resorts?

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Of course, you don't get the bars and full-sized facilities of a five-star hotel. But you do get a lot of attention – from the two staff who run the chalet itself, to a team of drivers who

will load up your skis and ferry you to the lifts each morning, and also offer transfers to and from restaurants and nightspots during the evenings.

Perhaps most importantly what you get over a hotel is privacy. You can use the chalet as a party house or a discreet retreat. You can assemble your friends, celebrate an anniversary, gather your family, treat your workforce. And once you have forked out for the cost up front, you won't have to worry about how much champagne they drink.



Val d'Isère is considered one of the world's best and most expensive ski resorts | CREDIT: Val d'Isère Tourisme

So – if you are in the market for a top-end break – how do those costs work out in comparison with a posh hotel? Of course, you may be so rich that you don't worry about such things, but the key to making the chalet pay its way is to fill all the bedrooms, so you are dividing the cost most efficiently. Inoko sleeps 14 (including two children in the bunk beds), so for my week it would have worked out at £2,865 (€3,244) per person, sharing a room for seven nights.

When it comes to five-star hotels, Val d'Isère has a choice and they vary surprisingly in how much they charge. Hotel Christiana in the middle of the resort is the resort's longest-established and most traditional five star. Staying here is likely to work out considerably cheaper than Inoko at £1,793 (€2,030) per person for seven nights on the same January week I was in Inoko. Though, while that includes half board, as for all the hotels, you obviously have to pay extra for your drinks.

By comparison, Le Refuge de Solaise – a stylish conversion of a former lift station right up on the pistes at 2,500m – costs £2,417 (€2,737 half board). Add in drinks and wine each evening and you are pretty close to the overall price of the chalet.



The indoor pool at Le Refuge de Solaise – a stylish conversion of a former lift station right up on the pistes | CREDIT: Val d'Isère Tourisme

Finally though, all these rates pale into insignificance against the cost of staying in Val d'Isère's newest and swankiest five-star, the Airelles, which costs from £3,710 (€4,200) half-board for a January week – £845 (€956) more than Inoko. And though that price does not cover drinks, it does include “a unique Alpine experience” such as a ski lesson, an ice climbing, paragliding, snowshoeing or dog sledding session.

Obviously, such equations won't trouble most of us, but if you are in that market, it's worth doing the sums. And you might also be interested to know that though most such top-end chalets sell out months before the season starts, there are often late deals on unsold weeks. Inoko is available for two weeks in March, for example, with 25 per cent discounts on offer. You don't tend to get quite such big reductions in a hotel.

Need to know

A seven-night stay at Chalet Inoko, Val d'Isère starts from €45,420 including meals and drinks. Flights and transfers are extra. Spa treatments can be booked – best reserved in advance – and equipment hire equipment can be delivered to and fitted in the chalet.

[Purple Ski](#) (01885 488799) also offers two more chalets in Val d'Isère and six in Méribel and Courchevel.

Nick Trend was a guest of Purple Ski.

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