

**Luxx**



**Saturday, March 2, 2024**

# High on life

THREE OF THE MOST SPOILING NEW SKI CHALETs TO TAKE OVER IN THE ALPS



## CHALET SCHUSS, VAL D'ISÈRE

From its plum ski-in, ski-out location at the foot of the slopes to its bountiful (and salopette-straining) dessert buffets, the 41-room Airelles Val d'Isère is a place of elegant abundance. It offers five-star service with a playful flourish: staff wear Alpine-style uniforms, mariachi bands serenade the stylish crowds on the sunny terrace, colourful velvets surround diners in Loulou, one of the hotel's four restaurants. And this season its fairytale-like offering has been topped by the opening of the cosy, four-bedroom Chalet Schuss, which combines full hotel service with standalone privacy. Built in 1932 – it's one of the oldest properties in Val d'Isère – the tastefully renovated space has quirky art and antiques, sunken bathtubs and showers that double as hammams. It makes the most of its prime location next to the hotel, with vast picture windows and a wraparound terrace overlooking the slopes. Chalet guests, attended to by a private chef, a butler and a housekeeping team, have access to the hotel's vast Guerlain spa with its 20m pool, kids' club and cinema. There are two glaciers and 300km of piste starting seconds from the door and the slopes – a healthy mix of blues and greens as well as blacks – don't feel crowded, even on a perfect bluebird Saturday. Back in the boot-room-cum-boutique, stocked with ski suits fit for a Bond girl, a young staff member called Enzo removes my boots, slips a pair of warm slippers on to my feet and hands me a hot chocolate and a waffle – and I realise I am ruined for any other sort of ski holiday, for ever. *From €10,000 a night for up to eight guests, full-board, with ski hire, passes and guide, airelles.com* Jane Mulkerrins

## ÉTOILE DU NORD BY HAUTE MONTAGNE, VAL D'ISÈRE

Describing this luxury chalet as a "superyacht in the snow" doesn't do it justice. It may tower over the other chalets of Val d'Isère's Petit Alaska – and have taken ten years and £40 million to construct – but Éttoile du Nord represents bold architecture at its most understated. The abstract art, vintage posters and modern sculptures are the antithesis of splashy bling, and the conspicuous absence of pine is a blessed relief; no risk of splinters here as you run your fingers down the opulently smooth brushed-oak walls. It takes a whole mountain to fill the triple-height windows in the living space, drawing the eye 7m heavenwards. Separating the east and west wings is a sliding soundproof wall that opens to create one enormous chalet sleeping 28 over five floors, plus two jaunty bunk-bed rooms. A cinema den and party space takes up the bulk of the east wing's first floor, but most entertaining is the large Perspex window that gives an underwater view into the pool outside. Guests can watch their chalet-mates glide past before ambling to the spa's three hot tubs, two pools, steam rooms, massage rooms, hammam and sauna. The principal suites have huge panoramic windows and bedrooms throughout come with dressing rooms and marble bathrooms filled with Aesop goodies. Skiing hard all day justifies the hearty breakfasts, cake-laden afternoon teas and elegant dinners, while polished staff including a manager, concierge, chauffeur, housemaids and a chef are all on hand to offer an expertly mixed cocktail – or just slippers. *From €110,000 a week self-catered, or €129,500 full-board, hautemontagne.com* Jane Wright



## CHALET HARMONY, MÉRIBEL

Some like to take it easy on a ski holiday. Others, like me, hit the pistes until their legs turn to jelly. What a treat, then, to find a chauffeur waiting at the foot of Méribel's main slopes to zip me home to a tea of charcuterie, cheesecake and Taittinger, before a dip in the hot tub, a swim, a stretch in the sauna and more fizz, this time with oysters. This is the après-ski routine at Chalet Harmony, newly built on a hillside opposite Méribel's town centre and a short hop from the La Chaudanne lift area. Everything here feels easy, from the arrival of ski-hire guys to fit my boots to how my kit was laid out on my freshly made bed while I was polishing off pastries at breakfast. The efficient chalet team secure us a last-minute table at Méribel's coveted lunch spot in the trees, Le Clos Bernard, and book me an exhilarating paragliding flight and off-piste lesson with the ski school Parallel Lines – and then a massage to recover. The vibe here is chic and serene: all pale pine, slate and neutrals with felt-and-wool sofas by the cool Belgian company Passe-Partout and beanbags by the Spanish designer Gan. It's also high tech, with a Sonos sound system, a state-of-the-art cinema room, a beautifully lit wellness area and a walk-in wine cellar. Above the six bedrooms, each with a balcony, there's a penthouse. But the best spot is the huge communal space on the third floor where we lounge while the Michelin-trained chef David Leon creates exquisite meals: celery root vichyssoise; cured salmon with hollandaise and shitake; beef with foie gras and red wine sauce; orange crème brûlée. Lucky I did all that skiing. *From €41,955 a week for up to 14 guests, full-board, purpleski.com* Bridget Harrison