

Chrissy and John soak up the mountain air

VIP Verbier

Discover how this celeb-filled ski resort becomes an affordable paradise off-season

#72

Think Verbier and you may imagine skiing, crowded bars filled with twinkling lights, and lots and lots of snow. Over the years, it's gained a bit of a rep for being a royal hideaway, with the likes of Princesses Beatrice and Eugenie or poshos from *Made In Chelsea* heading out to get piste (sorry), sitting in hot tubs while clinking Champagne glasses, and engaging in snowball fights.

But, for a few months from spring into summer, it can be the ultimate active holiday without the need to freeze to death, because you've brought cute, but ultimately inappropriate, clothes. Verbier becomes a hotbed of mountaineering, with cloudless skies and Swiss chalets filled to the brim with cheese, wine and gorgeous sunshine. *heat* took a two-hour flight to nearby Geneva, then an adorable train from the

airport to the mountains, where we arrived in a town of hot mountain bikers, friendly faces and excellent places to stay.

The trip

If you like mountains and being outdoors, Verbier couldn't be more perfect. We did everything from searching for our own food to make lunch – thanks to the lovely Cherries' guided wild foraging (Cherrieswalks.com) – to making our own cheese (which we even got to take home with us!) with an expert cheesemaker at La Laiterie de Verbier.

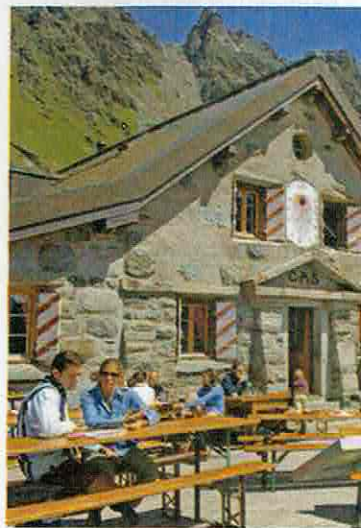
Of course, being outside was the most fun part, renting electric bikes and heading up the mountains. We even did an outdoor yoga session just after the sun came up, which made us feel like some kind of mountain-living Gwyneth Paltrow. Although, we were probably slightly more

hungover on the excellent local wine than she would normally be.

If you're feeling extra Bear Grylls, get up at dawn and make your way to Mont Fort via bus and two cable cars from Verbier, and watch the sunrise. The 4am alarm call is absolutely worth it. We would also advise you invest in a good pair of walking boots (we wore Hi-Tec Ravine Waterproofs, £100, Hi-tec.co.uk), because you'll need to be prepared for all types of terrain and weather.

Stay

There are all kinds of places to stay, depending on your budget. One of the most stunning has to be the Cabane du Mont-Fort (Cabanemontfort.ch), a gorgeous cabin in the mountains, where a bed in a dorm room costs £62 a night. You probably won't find Jamic Laing or Spencer Matthews up there, but there is a really fun



Gwyneth and Apple go when it's expensive

Great spot to practise your yodelling



Chalet chic



Hôtel La Cordée des Alpes: très bon



Sophie Turner and Priyanka Chopra: girls in the very upscale hood

The hills are alive with the sound of dining at Cabane du Mont-Fort



atmosphere, with everyone talking in the restaurant and hanging out, watching the sunset. Cabane Brunet (*Cabanebrunet.ch*), a similar set up, also costs £62 a night, and offers sweeping views over the town below.

Hôtel La Cordée des Alpes (*Kvhotels.com*) is a gorgeous hotel in the centre of town with a spa suitable for any royal visitor. It's £175 per night for a superior room, but with its backdrop of mountains and green slopes, you won't regret it.

Eat

Without a doubt, you have to try Cherries' guided wild foraging. Under the watchful eye of Swiss-American mountain guide Cherries, you'll search for everything from wild strawberries to edible weeds that taste amazing. It's also worth investigating the Brunch On A Mountain trip – for

which you can get money off with the VIP Pass – where a local man and his wife provide you with regional cheese, bread and potatoes after a short guided tour. We were lucky enough to see some alpine cows, which put us off eating beef for good...

Drink

There are plenty of bars in town, but be warned: it can be pricey. However, you can always grab a reasonably priced bottle of wine from the local supermarket and enjoy a few glasses as you look over the mountains from the balcony of your hotel. If you're feeling flash, the Vie Montagne (*Viemontagne.com*) is an incredible bar with an on-site microbrewery, offering fine dining and beer. Master brewer Derek Orford uses his skills to create a unique range of drinks using alpine water. Delicious!

NEED TO KNOW

SWISS operates up to 180 weekly flights to Switzerland from London Heathrow, London City, Manchester, Birmingham, Edinburgh (seasonal during summer) and Dublin from as little as £52 one way. (Economy Light fare only includes hand luggage). Go to Swiss.com.

TRANSFERS BY TRAIN

The Swiss Transfer Ticket covers a round trip between the airport/Swiss border and destination. Prices are £112 in second class and £182 in first class.

VERBIER INFINITE PLAYGROUND (VIP) PASS

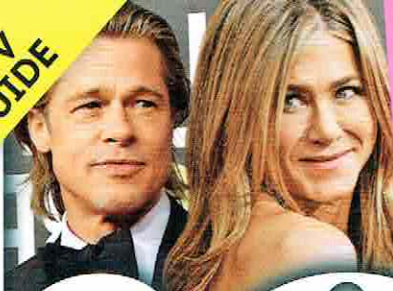
The VIP pass allows free entry or discounts on many of the local activities, including free admission to mountain lifts, as well as more than 45 activities for free, or at a reduced rate.



The restaurant at La Cordée des Alpes

whoosh! That's me!

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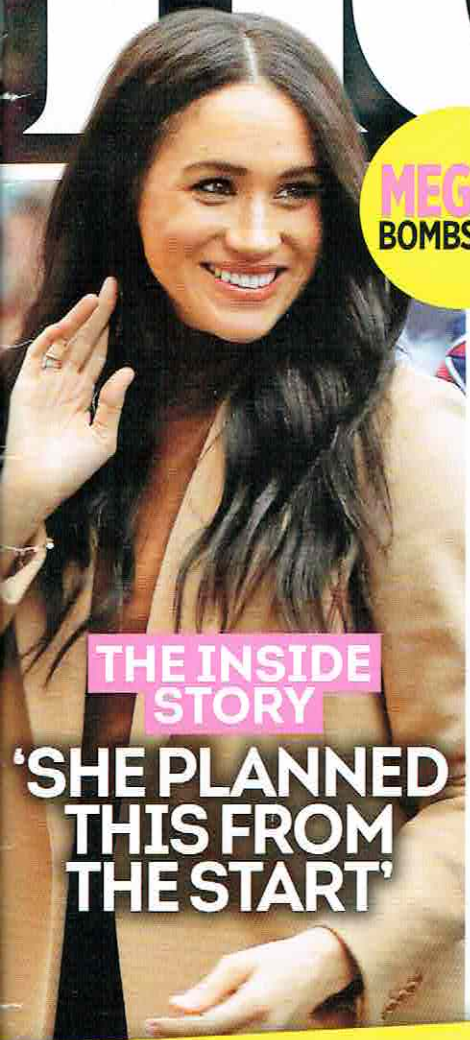


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THIS FROM
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SHE'S USING DONOR SPERM
BUT WILL SHE CARRY THE BABY?

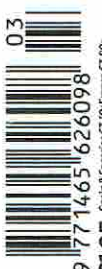
INSIDE!
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MINIMAG



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IN STYLE

WIN!
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