

# The Escapist

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Testcenter, a sleek place to test the latest gear. At super-swish Cervo Mountain Resort, a seventh lodge has opened along with the Mountain Ashram Spa and a third restaurant. For a classy alternative to après ski, try the boat-shaped Snowboat Bar beside the River Vispa in the centre of town, where gorgeous sushi is served with a huge selection of cocktails.

● **Matterhorn Chalets** has seven nights' self-catering at two-bedroom Casa d'Amore from £2,557 (matterhornchalets.com)

## Les Arcs, France

**Best for:** Families, powder hounds... just about everyone

**Party place:** Red Hot Saloon in Arc 1800 – live music and late-night partying.

**You'll spot:** Gal Gadot, Clemence Poesy. What Les Arcs lacks in glamour it more than makes up for in incredibly varied terrain – think fun slopes, steep blacks, air-thinning peaks and sheltered woodland runs. Arc 1950 is the most attractive of the villages, and this winter is being enhanced by VIP Ski's new Bear Resort right by the ski lifts, with 30 hotel rooms, 12 apartments and a spa. Extend your lift pass to include La Plagne and take advantage of the new high-speed chairlift to Champagny-en-Vanoise. Expect chairlift chat about epic near misses and a good moan – or gloat – about the conditions.

● **VIP Ski** has four nights at Bear Lodge from £754pp, including breakfast, dinner and transfers (vip-chalets.com)

## Courchevel, France

**Best for:** Glitzy celeb-spotters.

**Party place:** Funky Fox in Courchevel 1650 – the place to see and be seen.

**You'll spot:** Prince William, the Beckhams.

Don't let Courchevel's bling blind you to the superlative skiing in this starry corner of the Trois Vallées. This winter, expert skiers can tackle a new black run, Eclipse, which plunges into Le Praz at a drop of 970m and a 30 per cent gradi-



**Ice ice, baby:** Arnold Schwarzenegger, a fan of Kitzbühel, with fellow Hollywood legend Clint Eastwood. Inset, Naomi Campbell can be spotted in the Dolomites

ent. Not for the faint hearted. For something more sedate, check out the new luxurious Ultima Courchevel Belvédère resort and its 13 ski-in-ski-out chalets. With four or five bedrooms in each, they're perfect for an upscale party. Avoid petty spats over food and drink by going fully-catered.

● **Ski Collection** has seven nights' self-catering in a two-bedroom apartment in Coeur Courchevel 1850 from £4,412 including Eurotunnel crossing (skicollection.co.uk)

## Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy

**Best for:** Old-school glamour. **Party place:** Janbo in the town centre – for late-night good times.

**You'll spot:** Naomi Campbell, George Clooney.

The classy queen of the Dolomites rivals anything in the Alps for its jaw-droppingly beautiful granite mountains. And now those pink-tinged peaks will be easier to reach with the new gondola linking Tofane with Cinque Torri's fab-

ulous Super 8 circuit – and, ultimately, the Sella Ronda circuit. Also new this winter is Hotel de LEN in the town centre and its rooftop spa. The relaxation lounge, with its floor-length windows, is a heavenly lesson in Zen design.

● **Inghams** has seven nights' B&B at the Hotel Montana from £679pp including flights (ingham.co.uk)

## Verbier, Switzerland

**Best for:** Off-piste heaven.

**Party place:** Hotel Farinet in the town centre – look out for flame throwers and bar dancing.

**You'll spot:** Leonardo DiCaprio and Jude Law.

Perennial favourite among British skiers, Verbier offers an exhilarating taste of the high life – its off-piste is among the best in the world. The new high-speed Médran gondola between Verbier and Les Ruinettes will make life so much easier. This winter's new Mont 4 Zipline, the highest in Europe, starts at 3,300m and whooshes you at 100km/h

until your head spins. In the town centre is completely renovated Hotel de Verbier, with new Swedish owners who have put a swanky Scandinavian stamp on it.

● **Scott Dunn** has seven nights' half-board at Cordeé des Alpes from £1,500pp including flights (scottdunn.com)

## Kitzbühel, Austria

**Best for:** Medieval beauty and World Cup racing.

**Party place:** The Londoner – an English party pub, not for the faint-hearted.

**You'll spot:** Prince Albert of Monaco, Arnold Schwarzenegger, the Swarovski clan.

Every January, crowds descend on Kitzbühel to watch the World Cup's most thrilling downhill race on the Hahnenkamm course. But there's so much more, including an enchanting medieval centre and 233km of varied slopes. Mileage-hungry skiers can test the new circuit between SkiWelt and KitzSki, the longest in the world.

● **Crystal Ski Holidays** has five nights' half-board at Hotel Bruggerhof from £489pp including flights (crystalstiski.co.uk)

## Morzine-Avoriaz, France

**Best for:** Village atmosphere.

**Party place:** Hotel Le Tremplin at the foot of Pléney – the annual closing party is not to be missed.

**You'll spot:** Zara Phillips.

These neighbours in the Portes du Soleil make a perfect couple. You've got pretty Morzine with its traditional Savoyard chalets and can also hop on the cable car to futuristic Avoriaz and its high-altitude slopes. At Morzine they've remodelled the Aigle red piste, giving skiers 2km of joy as they ski down from Nyon, and Eagle Park snow park has been given a makeover. Also check out Le Pas de l'Aigle, a glass-bottomed platform that gives you extraordinary views from Lake Geneva to Mont Blanc – and a 350m drop beneath you.

● **Pierre & Vacances** has apartments in the new L'Amara Premium Residence from €1,447 for seven nights (pierreetvacances.com)



Enjoying the Alpine air: David Beckham with his daughter Harper right, and, above, Verbier, which offers some of the best off-piste skiing in the world

## STARS SHELLEY VON STRUNCKEL

### Aries March 20 – April 18

For ages you been thinking and talking to others about making certain long overdue changes. The problem? These are getting more complex by the day. The solution? Ask others for their ideas and suggestions, if not their actual assistance. They're eager to help, just shy about offering.

0904 470 1141 (65p per minute)\*

### Taurus April 19 – May 19

For ages you've worked hard to get promising plans off the ground. After months of effort, things are finally moving. That's the good news. However, the pace and direction events are going differs considerably from what you'd hoped for. For now, wait and watch. What actions could be an improvement, if in disguise.

0904 470 1142 (65p per minute)\*

### Gemini May 20 – June 20

Although the New Moon was nearly a week ago, you're still benefiting from its influence. Not only did it accent the need to rethink elements of your daily routine that, in turn, has made you realise how restrictive certain habits are. Now that you're reviewing these, you'll realise how timely changes would be.

0904 470 1143 (65p per minute)\*

### Cancer June 21 – July 21

Sooner or later you'll need to have a frank discussion with somebody who's not easy to talk to at the best of times. However, the individual in question is aware the key to progress is talking things over. Ask for their ideas. What they say is likely to surprise and delight you.

0904 470 1144 (65p per minute)\*

### Leo July 22 – August 21

Irritating as the demanding attitude of certain individuals is, you admire them for carefully analysing what they need and want from others, then ensuring they get it. While this is often on your mind, you sometimes allow yourself to be distracted. Try to be aware of this, especially over the next few days.

0904 470 1145 (65p per minute)\*

### Virgo August 22 – September 21

Only days ago, you thought your efforts to explain to others how important their support is, especially in certain matters, were working. Now you're beginning to wonder. Actually, you need to be far more forthright about this than you have been. You have an instinctive understanding of such matters. They don't.

0904 470 1146 (65p per minute)\*

### Libra September 22 – October 22

After discussing ideas for ages, then having worked hard to organise plans that will keep everybody happy, finally things are coming together. Judging by the coming days' planetary activity, changes aren't just inevitable, they'll be in everybody's best interests. Knowing that, ensure you explore every idea and offer that comes your way.

0904 470 1147 (65p per minute)\*

### Scorpio October 23 – November 21

Last week, after a long period in the most reflective portion of your chart, Mercury – the planet of ideas and expression – moved into Scorpio. While you've been aware of many of the insights that have come your way recently, suddenly there'll be a new clarity about them, your priorities and what's next.

0904 470 1148 (65p per minute)\*

### Sagittarius November 22 – December 20

Understandably, you're eager to turn exciting ideas into action. It's worth noting that the powerful Sagittarius eclipsed New Moon takes place in early December. Knowing that, ensure your plans are flexible enough that you're able to take advantage of developments as exciting as they're likely to be unexpected.

0904 470 1149 (65p per minute)\*

### Capricorn December 21 – January 18

As a practical Capricorn and an earth sign, you dislike making plans without being confident about what and who is involved. The current clash between the fiery Mars and your ruler Saturn accents the need for frank exchanges. That being the case, don't hold back. Express your views and demand the answers you need.

0904 470 1150 (65p per minute)\*

### Aquarius January 19 – February 17

Few things annoy you more than pointless rules or regulations. However, judging by the current planetary setup, not only are they unavoidable, you could learn a lot from them. This means being willing to investigate what's behind those problems and how you can remedy them and difficulties of a similar nature.

0904 470 1151 (65p per minute)\*

### Pisces February 18 – March 19

After recent seriously tricky situations, you're probably wondering if you dare feel a sense of relief. While there'll be one or two problems over the coming days, you'll be well aware you can finally relax. Then, by Friday's stunning link between the Sun and your ruler Neptune, everything will fall into place magically.

0904 470 1152 (65p per minute)\*

## IF IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY TOMORROW...

Not only are you discreet, you have a unique ability to appear to be open with others, while keeping crucial facts to yourself. While in the past that's worked, life has changed and so have you. This means revealing more than is your habit. But how? The link between the communication planet Mercury and forthright Mars, actually in Scorpio, on your birthday accents the importance of developing this new frankness. Not only will this bring you closer to others, you'll learn a lot about yourself.



\*Astro line horoscopes are updated every Friday. Calls cost 65p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge and will last approximately five minutes. You must be over 18 and have the bill payer's permission. Service provided by Spoke. Customer service: 0333 202 3390

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**THE SECRET TO FLAWLESS SKIN? DERMAPLANING**  
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**TRAVEL**  
From the A-listers you'll spot on the slopes to your essential apres-ski hotspots, **Mary Novakovich** has your essential guide to snow season

## Do you ski?

**Celebrity white carpet:** George and Amal Clooney are fans of Italy's Cortina d'Ampezzo while Nicole Kidman skis in Zermatt. Right, Gal Gadot enjoys Les Arcs



**D**ID you see images of snow-covered Alps last winter and just whimper? All that lovely powder so close and yet so far. This season, however, Europe's top ski resorts are opening their lifts once more and welcoming back skiers who have been pining to get back on those slopes. The resorts haven't been idle, with new hotels, chalets and cable cars ready to take on all that pent-up demand.

And the old Snow Train has been taken over by Travelski, which exclusively offers direct trains from St Pancras to Moutiers and Bourg St-Maurice as part of packages to Tignes, Val d'Isère, Les Arcs, La Plagne, Méribel and Les Menuires. It's not just the slopes we're desperate to see again. Bright blue



skies, crisp Alpine air, sunny slope-side restaurant terraces with bubbling cheese fondues and chilled bottles of rosé, a well-deserved drink or three after a day's skiing and, of course, the Olympic-worthy sport of people-watching — they all make a holiday in the mountains unbeatable. Get booking now before everything is snaffled.

### Val d'Isère, France

**Best for:** High-altitude style.  
**Party place:** Cocorico at Rond Point —riotous ski-in apres at the bottom of the piste.  
**You'll spot:** Hugh Grant and Harry Styles.

The prices match the altitude, but Val d'Isère — combined with its linked neighbour Tignes — does give you everything you want in a resort, including snow-sure slopes for all levels and lots of breathtaking off-piste. Then there's the buzzing social scene, with lots of live music and (expensive) champagne flowing at La Folie Douce. But, tempting though it is to keep dancing at the end of a ski

day, wearing your ski boots after 6pm is a no-no. The resort's latest five-star hotel, Le K2 Chogori, opened last December, bringing K2 Collection's signature mix of Tibetan and Savoyard style. It joins the resort's other new five-star, Airelles Val d'Isère, which had the misfortune of opening just as the pandemic hit.

● **Ski Solutions** has a week's B&B at relatively new *Le Refuge de Solaise*, which sits at 2,551m, from £1,510pp including flights ([skisolutions.com](http://skisolutions.com)).

### Zermatt, Switzerland

**Best for:** Mountain magic.  
**Party place:** Henuu Stall on the Furi-Zermatt slope — order the metre-long "ski" of shots.

**You'll spot:** Thierry Henry, Nicole Kidman, Angelina Jolie.  
It's hard to take your eyes off the Matterhorn as it looms crookedly over Zermatt and forms one of Switzerland's most gorgeous images. At its foot on Trockener Steg is the new Matterhorn

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