

Chilly Willies: It's all down hill for **ADRIAN GILLAN** in QX's seasonal gay ski round-up.

ON THE PISTE

USA

ASPEN GAY SKI WEEK
(15th – 22nd JANUARY 2006)
www.gayskiweek.com

FOR almost three decades - as the world's first official gay snow fest - Aspen Gay Ski Week has built up a strong reputation for hosting some of North America's most exclusive and explosive winter fun. Top DJs, indoor and outdoor pool parties and other debauchery will take you nightly through into the wee small hours, just in time to hit those virgin slopes!

Depending on whether you fly direct to Denver from London Heathrow or indirect from London Gatwick - and which hotel you stay at - core flights-plus-6-nights-accommodation-plus-drive-hire packages start at about £829 per person sharing. A 6 day, four-mountain ski pass costs another £195. Naturally any ski lessons and equipment hire needed would cost extra.

FRANCE

HAPPYGAYSKIWEEK
(18th – 25th MARCH 2006)
www.happygayholidays.com

After a successful debut at La Plagne last year, HappyGaySkiWeek will encore at Les Arcs.

An extravaganza of queer skiing, surfing and meeting people is promised in one of



the biggest skiable resorts on earth – boasting well over 200km of slopes at a dizzy altitude of 1200m-3326m. All accommodation is close to lifts and slopes and lots of exclusive and 'unavoidable' après-ski activities will be laid on. Ski and snowboard groups are organised according to levels of competence, with beginners able to attend lessons with the Ecole de Ski des Arcs.

The week-long package includes a 6 day ski pass; welcome champagne cocktail; and access to après-ski and special event soirées. The package does not include flights and transfers; skiing lessons; ski equipment hire; meals or insurance. Prices start from 520euros (approx £360) per person.



SWITZERLAND

ENGELBERG GAY WINTERWEEK
(22nd – 28th JANUARY 2006)
www.engelberg.ch

100% snow-secure with its Titlis glacier 10,000 feet-up, Engelberg is located in the giddy heart of Switzerland - a mere 90 minutes dramatic train ride from Zurich airport. This year you can polish your skills at a complimentary ski school before tackling those slopes down to the picturesque village itself. Also, experience Nordic Walking, the newest outdoor trend; and make a Snow Shoe tour in the glittering wilderness around Engelberg.

After a big Welcome Party at the Spindle Nightclub this well-organised week-long package includes: 6 nights accommodation including breakfast buffet; a welcome drink; a 5-day ski pass (Monday to Friday); daily Ski School lessons (or Guided Skiing for more advanced skiers); Nordic Walking (equipment included); and a nocturnal torch-lit Snow Shoe hike (equipment included) culminating in a cosy hut evening. Special ski rental rates are also on offer. You will also get the chance to visit the nearby lake-side town of Lucerne with its shops, gay bars and steaming saunas.

Prices start from just 640euros (approx £425) per person sharing in a double room. Flights extra.



HappyGay
Holidays
presents



At the **Arcs 1800**
from the **18th** to the **25th March**
2006

Les Arcs

2nd HappyGay SkiWeek

An
unforgettable European
GAY ski week

From **£380**

Accommodation available at 3 or 4 stars
Ski package includes access to 200km of slopes
After Ski events and parties included

 Information and reservations :
www.happygayholidays.com



CANADA

ALTITUDE

(4th – 13th FEBRUARY 2006)

www.outontheslopes.com

UP famous Mount Whistler in British Columbia, Altitude is Canada's premier queer wintry party on the white stuff! Expect over 4,000 gays, world-class skiing and snowboarding on perfect powder snow, luxurious hotel accommodation and a week tightly ice-packed with over 24 events, parties and other fun activities. Details and prices are still being finalised.

AUSTRIA

GAY SNOW HAPPENING

(1st – 8th APRIL 2006)

www.soelden.at/gaysnowhappening

SÖLDEN 7th gay ski week is your chance to bid farewell to winter and romp about in the Austrian snow amidst splendid April-sun and top-notch entertainment.

At well over a whopping 3,000m, great skiing is guaranteed on 'The Big Three' – Gaislachkogel (3,058m), Tiefenbachkogel (3,309m) and Schwarze Schneid (3,340m). Each offers three unique panoramic views and the chance to forget the cares and woes of everyday life, down below and far away.

7 nights accommodation per person sharing starts at just 248euros (approx £165). An additional Gay Snow Happening Party Pass costs 210euros (approx £140) per person, including a 6 day ski pass, all event entrance fees, free-Schnapps-coupons for lunch and après-ski, plus other goodies. Flights, any lessons and equipment hire are extra.



ITALY

SKI 2006

(12th – 19th MARCH 2006)

www.alternative-holidays.com

DUE to the small matter of a diary clash with the Winter Olympics near Turin next year, Alternative Holidays are not hosting their famed European Gay Ski Week in 2006. However, they are offering a 'ski reunion' mid-March at Marilleva in the mighty Italian Dolomites. It's not an exclusive Alternative event but - as they've had so many requests for people wishing to hook up from last year - it will doubtless provide a fab opportunity for the odd re-enactment plus some amazing skiing. Prices start from £588 per person sharing a double room. This includes all meals (with wine) plus ski passes for the seven days. Flights are not included, but low-cost carriers serve Milan and other nearby airports in northern Italy.

TAKING THE PISTE? QX'S TOP SKI TIPS...

- > **If you are a beginner or rusty, then before you go:**
- **Improve your fitness in a gym** (ask an instructor to focus on the most ski-related muscles)
- **Take lessons on a dry-ski slope** (Xscape Milton Keynes, just north of London, offers group, fast-track or learn-in-a-day options: www.xscape.co.uk)
- **Avoid booking resorts with loads of advanced runs** (or you could be paying for facilities you can't use)
- **Pre-book ski school** (and ensure teachers speak English)
- > **Take out winter sports insurance** to give peace of mind.
- > **Keep costs down** – flights, accommodation, equipment hire, ski pass, lessons or guides, meals, insurance and après-ski entertainment, can all add up! Avoid peak season; book a late deal; and rent or borrow gear, or get it second-hand!
- > **Pack the right gear** - Looking good is one thing, but you'll be a pretty sad stunner unless you're safe, warm and dry. Needed: ski suit (all-in-one romper or jacket and trousers); hat (soft 'n warm); goggles for bad weather, shades for good; polo neck; thermal underwear (avoid second hand); ski socks; ski gloves. Note: you can hire ski boots; and helmets are just for pussies or down-hill freaks!
- > **Try/hire before you buy** ski equipment (skis/sticks/boots etc) - if buying at all, that is, since beginners should hire every time.
- > **Move out of the way to buckle up** when you get off the lift.
- > **Stretch** before you slide!
- > **Ski or board with a partner or group** - stay within shouting distance of each other.
- > **Stick within marked runs** – only stray off-piste if advanced or with an experienced guide.
- > **Learn how to read the terrain** - minimise risks by knowing where to ride and where to dodge.
- > **Be aware of your surroundings** - watch out for piste preparation machines and other obstacles.
- > **Always give priority to those down-slope.**
- > **Focus on where you want to go** - especially when passing through dense forest. If you look at the trees, you are more likely to hit them!
- > **Respect Mama Nature** - don't drop litter or ski in areas with young trees or wildlife.
- > **Remember: being able to ski doesn't mean you can board!**
- > **Skiers and boarders:** give each other a break - ski v board is so passé.
- > **Drink lots of water** - exercise, dehydration and altitude, combined, can cause serious nausea and sickness. Moreover, stay off the booze 'til evenings; and avoid skiing whilst still hung-over.



GRAN CANARIA WINTER SUN



LIMITED SPECIAL OFFERS

INCLUDING FLIGHTS FROM GATWICK OR MANCHESTER

Sensations Holidays are delighted to offer the following special offers at the renowned Club Tucanes Playa, Club Tucanes Beach Boys and El Hidalgo resorts in Gran Canaria. This means great value, unbeatable locations, and superb service on this hot island. You'll need to book quickly because the offers are limited and won't last.

OFFER ONE*

**Two people for the price for one –
Three people for the price of two.**

Pay for just one person when two of you are together in one unit or for only two when you are all sharing a triple.

OFFER TWO*

Stay two weeks – Pay for one

Travel on or between any of our special offer dates and you qualify for a great two week holiday for the price of just one week.

OFFER THREE*

No Single Supplement

Travelling on your own? We know this normally leads to extra cost – however, on our special offer dates this doesn't apply, meaning great value and great savings.

What's included - Return flights on GB Airways, return airport transfers, accommodation as required at any of your chosen resorts.

Can't go on the dates shown – no worry, all winter holidays are now on sale, at some great prices. Call for details or check out our site.

BOOK NOW For full information and to book these limited offers call (0)20 8902 7177 or visit www.sensationsholidays.com

Offer Conditions

- * Offers include flights on specified GB Airways flights from Gatwick or Manchester. You must travel on and between the following dates: 19NOV-23DEC05 or 07JAN-04FEB06 & 15APR-08MAY06.
- * Offers are limited and subject to availability at the time of booking, and can be withdrawn at any time.
- * Must be paid for in full at the time of booking. Terms and conditions apply.
- * No two offers can be combined nor be used with any other offer.
- * Free persons must pay £6.50 per person per day for compulsory breakfast (Club Tucanes Playa only). Free clients must also pay for airport taxes and charges.

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