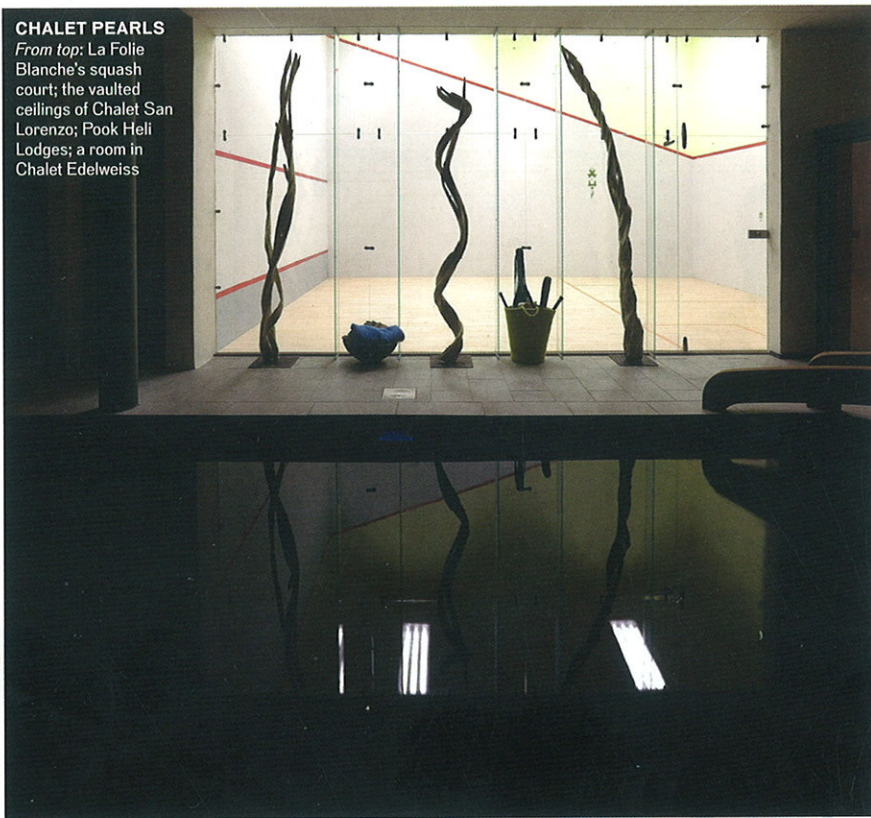




CHALET PEARLS

From top: La Folie Blanche's squash court; the vaulted ceilings of Chalet San Lorenzo; Pook Heli Lodges; a room in Chalet Edelweiss



Room at the top

Most chalets look similar from the outside – but the best have surprises hidden inside. Would you prefer a nightclub, a squash court or a slide to the cellar

Champagne, concierge, chauffeur, canapés, chef – sometimes it's hard to see the good for the 'C's when it comes to choosing a high-end, high-service mountain rental. And with many mainstream operators touting, if you will, 'lacksury' (substituting lumpfish roe for caviar, Espaces for Mercs etc), it's hard to spot a real alpine star. Some of the latest chalets, however, really stand out, with unique features...

Chamois Lodge, St Martin de Belleville

The location of this boutique chalet, run by its owner in the unfashionable but beautiful third of the Trois Vallées, means a price tag that simply wouldn't get you the same space, comfort, service or quality in Méribel or Courchevel. *Sleeps nine; from £5,212 a week; thealpineclub.co.uk*



La Folie Blanche, Courchevel Le Praz

Gleaming white interior, including the most unusual room in the building: a squash court. Also, unusually, the 'Freedom to Choose' option means you're not committed financially or gastrically to a five-course meal every night. *Sleeps eight; from €4,900 a week (excluding food and drink); alpleisure.com*

Pook Heli Lodges, Sainte Foy

The lodges (sleeping six, 14 or 21) are in a small village in the valley between Bourg St Maurice and Val d'Isère-Tignes, and near Sainte Foy and La Rosière, and have a field in front on which choppers can land. So, uniquely, these are Canadian-style heli lodges in France. *Sleep six upwards; from £8970 upwards a week, or £2500pp as a heliski package; valheliski.com*

Grande Corniche, Les Gets

Off-the-beaten track location (in the Portes du Soleil) and off-kilter design (a glass sauna with views of the valley; a dining table that, when you flip a switch, becomes a snooker table; and a slide from bar to wine cellar). *Sleeps 12; from £14,500 a week; consensioholidays.co.uk*

Chalet San Lorenzo, Dolomites

A chalet in Italy (with skiing nearby in the Sella Ronda) is rare enough; one with a helipad and a private 18-hole floodlit golf course that's open all winter is unique. This 16th-century bishop's hunting lodge has been restored by former Escada fashion house CEO Stefano Barbini. *Sleeps 10; from €21,000 a week; sanlorenzomountainlodge.com*

Chalet Marco Polo, Val d'Isère (Consensio)

A resident spa manager runs a pampering centre that spreads across two floors of the chalet, with massage and beauty treatments, hammam, hot tub and sizeable swimming pool more akin to a hotel's. *Sleeps 14; from £22,500 a week; consensioholidays.co.uk*

White Pearl, Zermatt (Oxford Ski)

The first private chalet in the exclusive Swiss resort with its own indoor swimming pool. There's also a cinema, games room and separate bar. *Sleeps 10; from CHF37,000 a week; oxfordski.com*

Chalet Edelweiss, Courchevel 1850

Less of a chalet than a winter palace: designed by Baccarat, with a seven-floor spiral staircase, it has its own nightclub (and the ability to hire big-name DJs). For quieter evenings, there is also a cinema and library. *Sleeps 16; from £159,520 a week; summitretreats.com*