

34 METRO Tuesday, December 18, 2012

## Life & Style travel

# The height of indulgence

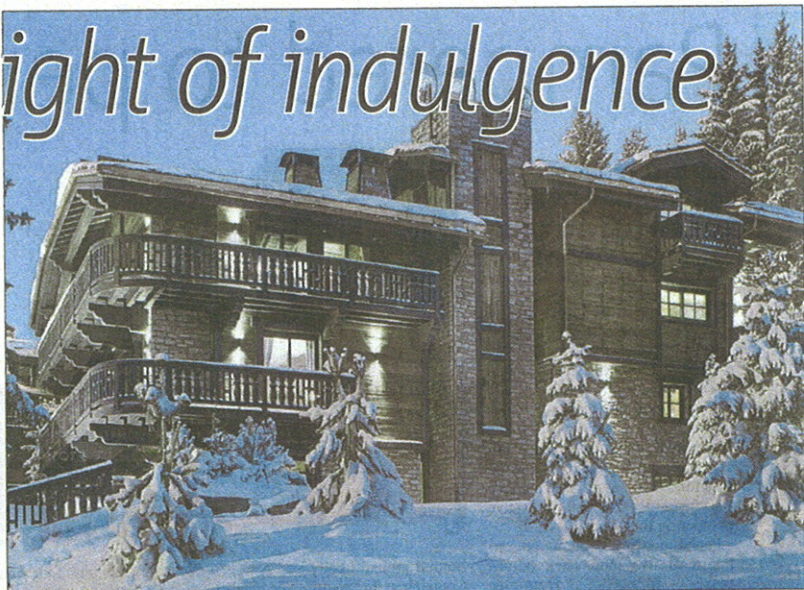
Chalet Edelweiss has been hailed as the most luxurious chalet in the Alps. Jonathan Thompson swings by for a look

**'A**LL fur coat and no knickers' is a favourite phrase of my grandmother's. It refers, of course, to somebody – or something – that glitters but, on closer inspection, is far from gold.

Every regular skier has experienced chalets like this. Sure, they look deluxe and welcoming on the internet. But when you arrive, the bedrooms are cupboards and the toilet is a thimble. Usually a dirty one.

Chalet Edelweiss in Courchevel, south-east France, which opened for business last week, almost single-handedly rights this balance. As you might expect from an £85million property in France's glitziest resort, its fur coat is immaculate. But its 'underwear' is pure gold, too.

'I should have worn a ballgown rather than my sweaty ski jacket,' says an awestruck member of my



Home, sweet home: Chalet Edelweiss in France's glitzy Courchevel 1850 resort offers luxury beyond compare

group as we're shown around the voluptuous seven-storey property, which the British owners claim is the largest and most luxurious rental chalet in the entire Alps. I believe them.

If the heated swimming pool, sauna, steam room and hot tub were not enough, Chalet Edelweiss has

its own cinema room and nightclub. Two on-site chefs, two butlers, a full housekeeping team, a chauffeur and a massage therapist ensure you'll want for absolutely nothing during your stay. This is where James Bond would check in during a trip to the Alps (once he'd shaken off any murderous local biathletes or airborne henchman, of course). One of the butlers would even fold and repack his Union flag parachute for him.

Pieces of art by Damien Hirst, Anish Kapoor, Salvador Dalí and Roy Lichtenstein adorn the walls and hallways, all centred around a massive spiral staircase. Even the private nightclub has been given a five-star treatment, in conjunction with one of Mayfair's nightspots, Morton's 2 & 8 Club. On request, DJs such as Zeb Wayne will be flown in for 'pop-up' nights.

As you might expect, Edelweiss's location is pretty much perfect, too. Situated in Courchevel 1850 – the highest of the four village clus-

ters that make up the resort – it's within immediate reach of the piste, and from there you can access the vast 600km of sumptuous runs that make up the greater Three Valleys area.

The bad news, of course, is that the 16-bedroom chalet would bankrupt the vast majority of skiers. Prices start at £9,950 each per week, with an avalanche of optional add-ons to increase that fee further.

But this is Courchevel, which has no fewer than ten Michelin stars to its name and is the destination of choice for skiing's celebrity elite. Regular visitors to what is fast becoming the Hollywood of the French hills include Posh and Becks, the Sarkozys and the Abramovichs. Even William and Kate are rumoured to have enquired about the chalet earlier this year.

Chalet Edelweiss genuinely is the height of luxury. But for the rest of us, a fur coat is better than nothing, particularly when you're up a mountain.



Rich pickings: The sumptuous interior of Chalet Edelweiss has priceless art adorning the walls



Chalet Edelweiss is part of Courchevel Prestige Chalets ([www.courchevelprestigechalets.com](http://www.courchevelprestigechalets.com)). A week's stay with Summit Retreats costs from £9,950 per person ([www.summitretreats.com](http://www.summitretreats.com)). easyJet has daily flights from Gatwick and Southend to Geneva from £50 ([www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)). From here, it is a two-hour transfer to Courchevel ([www.courchevel.com](http://www.courchevel.com)). For more information on Morton's 2 & 8 Club, visit [www.mortonsclub.com](http://www.mortonsclub.com)