

cold PLAY



MOUNTAINTOP BUTLERS, PRIVATE ICE RINKS, BONKERS BOARDING FESTIVALS, SUPER-COOL CHALETS — SKIING IN THE ALPS THIS SEASON IS GOING TO BE MORE FUN THAN EVER, REPORTS **FLEUR BRITTEN**

It's like Christmas come early. Following a premature, and very generous, dumping of snow this season, there's a big buzz around the Alps. With a growing number of quaint old cow sheds, hay lofts and monasteries being converted into beautiful boutique hotels and flashy chalets (complete with WiFi, home cinemas and private ice rinks), the living out there is getting more and more glorious, offset by heaps of eco-concern, of course. In fact, with so much choice in the Alps right now, some snow queens are putting the very idea of skiing on ice to soak in roof-top hot tubs, shop in Prada, Chanel and Louis Vuitton and party in the super-cool restaurants, bars and clubs.

1 SNOWKITING

Bored with black runs? Eco-conscience forbids heli-skiing? For extreme-sports junkies and foolhardy fun-atics, there is snowkiting — like kitesurfing, but with a soft landing. The first French Snowkiting Championships take place on January 25-27 at La Rosière, and the instructors at the local Fly Mountains Snowkite School assure us that after a few lessons, entering the competition wouldn't be so embarrassingly disastrous. What's the French for *schadenfreude*? Lessons from £36; 00 33 6 74 74 37 78, www.flymountainsnowkite.com

2 HIP CHALETS, FRANCE

In Chamonix (or "Cham" to the locals, who prefer the resort's sense of adventure over the pose-spot of Courchevel and chichi Megève) are five luxury (and, inevitably, hip) chalets, with the requisite no-request-too-small-or-large concierge, fresh fruit and flowers, hot tubs with mountain backdrops, full-time cleaner and driver, and sushi chef, if so desired. 00 33 4 50 53 48 86, www.hipchalets.com

3 SATSKI

"I skied 15 black runs today! Five vertical miles in a morning!" No more fibbing over dinner about your mountain prowess — Satski is, as ▶



Above Furry hat, £35, by Peak Performance. Sunglasses, £165, by Linda Farrow Vintage, from Harrods. Below Snuggle up in cosy luxury at Hip Chalets

