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Erna Low – First UK Ski Tour Operator

Erna Low – an Austrian shot-putter Olympian, was the UK’s first ski tour operator – specializing in France and Austria. Rumours of Erna being embraced and hugged by Hitler (Yuk) for winning the Gold at the 1936 Olympics have never been proved!

DOING IT.. THE INNER WAY



By Alasdair Riley of The Sun

The Englishman's reputation for eccentricity, even on the slopes, is so well known that it requires a variation on the theme to muster comment these days.

The French, who rarely understand us, even appear to expect us to kit out in rubber cycling capes and old golfing trousers or even plus-fours for a day's mogul-bashing.

So scarcely a local bothered to look last season as half a dozen beginner Brits picked their way down the French Alps in the oddest way. Instead of obeying an instructor, they were pretending to be motorbikes, gunning imaginary accelerators and making appropriate whooping sound effects.

Half an hour later they passed by again, this time imitating animals, beating their chests gorilla-like and howling like wolves.

"Les Anglais", said a Frenchman tapping the side of his head.

"Le ski psychologique", said another knowledgeably, tapping his nose and returning to his pastis.

The second Frenchman was much closer the truth than he realised. Had he cast more than a cursory glance at his crazy Common Market colleagues, he would have noticed a remarkable thing.

In seven days they were skiing better than most beginners would in a month.

And not once were they told what to do.

The gorillas and motorbikes were taking part in a course of Inner Skiing, a revolutionary American method of learning which started with tennis and coaching and has moved into golf, squash and skiing.

So what exactly is Inner Skiing?

It is a way of eliminating the psychological barriers which inhibit progress, rather than the teaching of pure technique.

Self-discovery and distraction are two important principles. The body is left to look after itself, and does, thus a novice learns to ski naturally like a child learning to walk. Ski beginners get a series of lessons in which they are gently helped to discover their natural skiing ability. An example of distraction is the human slalom. Members of a class form a race course and take turns skiing past each other, shouting out their names or what they are wearing. The learning skier is so busy concentrating on people's names he gets down the hill automatically and as naturally as his body allows. It works!

Inner Skiing has courses from beginner up to instructor level. They are run in conjunction with Snowball, a tour operator which provides bargain packages to Puy-St-Vincent in the French Alps. Information from: Ski Snowball (01 352 1514)

THE FRENCH WAY

Cont.

Courchevel is for the sophisticates who like the ultra-gentle, quarter-mile wide runs that lead straight to the smart boutiques and chic cafes where the skiing is done on the barstool.

Certainly Trois Vallois is one of the ultimate ski areas, a place you save for best until after you have done all the others.

All over this region you are constantly buzzed by light aircraft ferrying in the wealthy and their girlfriends, some to ski, others merely to have lunch in the sun before nipping off to Paris at night. So I had expected a paradise for the gourmet, but not so. Maybe the chefs were saving their gastronomic skills for the French holidays, or was I simply too enthralled with the skiing to care for everything else?



★ The Scandinavian way. A Swedish skier has his lunchtime a shot of snuff. Photo: John Hill



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