

## Postcard from ... Klosters Inside tracks in the snow

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If you've skied, you will almost certainly have heard of Klosters. It's a small, chocolate-box pretty Swiss village surrounded by breathtaking mountains and, through its links with the neighbouring ski areas at Parsenn and Davos, boasts 320km of piste. But it's also one of those celebrated resorts that comes trailing a glamorous history. Over the years it has played host to Hollywood stars, royalty and writers, such as Pieter Vierterl, who married actress Deborah Kerr in the resort. From the village, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle set out on a pioneering ski tour across the hills and valleys to Arosa.

What gives Klosters much of its charm, though, is that like all the best Swiss villages, there is an almost tangible sense of connection with a still vivid past. Some of the buildings may be modern, older ones may have been freshened up, the gondolas and lifts sport state of the art gadgetry, but the people who make it all happen, who embody the spirit of the village, mostly come from families whose ancestors lie buried in the little churchyard, and their own stories are deeply entwined

with the history of the resort.

Once the snow comes, the hotels, apartments and chalets fill up with the annual migratory arrivals. Many, but not all, are British, some have been coming for generations and almost everybody knows everybody else. While all this is a potent part of its charm, it's also why first-time visitors could feel just a little lost. Which is where PT Ski come in.

This company, which launched last winter, is the brainchild of James Palmer-Tomkinson and his wife Sos, who are the ultimate Klosters insiders. James's family has been coming to Klosters since before the war and, in more recent years, frequently in the company of Prince Charles and his sons. He is the elder brother of socialite Tara and novelist Santa Montefiore; their father skied for Great Britain, as did their uncles. And their grandfather, Jimmy, was an Olympic skier who died when only 36 while on a training run for the British skiing championships.

James himself used to work in the City of London as a fund manager but he tired of corporate life. So he hit upon the idea of creating a travel company to help

clients get the best out of Klosters. For an all-in fee (something between £1,500 and £1,700 a week, which includes half-board), PT Ski sorts everything except the flight. It books the hotels, meets you in Zurich, drives you to the village, fixes the ski passes, gives you advice on where and when to ski, and books the guides, the masseurs, the restaurants.

For hotels, the company mostly uses the Chesa Grischuna, a Klosters institution and traditional chalet-style hotel close to the Gotschna/Parsenn cable car. It has a mere three stars but is somehow where everybody

### Skiing down the Totalp run in Klosters



wants to stay and where, eventually, you meet anybody who is in town. There's also the Silvretta, which is brilliant for children, or the slightly more modern Alpina.

For powder fans, PT Ski offers off-piste long weekends (one for seriously competent skiers and one for the more hesitant). You leave late on Wednesday night, get four days skiing and fly back late on the Sunday. Having four children of their own, Sos and James know what's needed. They organise classes, races, off-piste skiing classes for the experienced ones, pick up and deliver the kids, and plan picnics, bowling evenings and all sorts of other fun.

On the three days we spent with him, James was on hand to point out which runs were best given the weather conditions and where the best place was to eat (the *geschmetzeltes* and *rösti* at the Gotschna in Sernus is one of life's great experiences). On our last day, James took a small group of us – together with a qualified guide – round the back of the Madrisa mountain. We skied down unpisted snow all morning, just our little group, until we ended up in the little village

of St Antonien for lunch.

Getting to the best slopes takes insider knowledge and chances are you would be able to find off-piste skiing every day of the week if that was your fancy. There are few pleasures that beat whooshing over gently undulating meadows that in summer feed the cows and through trees laden with sparkly snow, passing the odd farmhouse as you go, with hardly another group in sight.

### Lucia van der Post

*Lucia van der Post was a guest of PT Ski (tel: +44 (0)20 7736 5557; www.ptski.com). It costs from £1,439 to stay half-board for seven nights at the Hotel Chesa Grischuna, including transfers and PT Ski service. PT Ski's off-piste long weekends start from £1,220 per person and include a guide, PT Ski service, airport transfers and half-board accommodation at the four-star Silvretta Parkhotel; they take place January 30-February 3, February 27-March 3 and March 14-18. Swiss (www.swiss.com) operates daily flights from London, Birmingham and Manchester to Zurich.*