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Ski hosting in France can now only be done in the company of a qualified instructor

THE FIGHT GOES ON

The ski hosting struggle between UK tour operators and the French authorities is heading all the way to the supreme court in Paris

Ski hosting or social skiing – when an employee from a tour operator takes guests out on the pistes for free to show them around, point out good lunch spots and give inside tips on the ski area – was ruled illegal in France by an Albertville court in February last year.

The court said the service breaks French law, which states that leaders of organised groups on the slopes must be suitably qualified. The ruling forced operators to cancel ski hosting programmes in France for 2013/14.

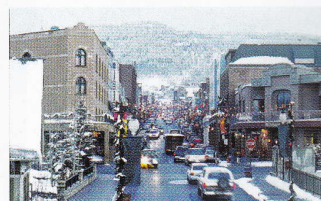
Huddersfield-based tour operator Le Ski, which is at the centre of the row, appealed the decision, backed by a number of other British operators including Crystal Ski, Inghams and Mark Warner. Since then, a number of hearings between Le Ski and the French authorities, backed by the Ecole du Ski Français (ESF), have taken place, with a decision on the appeal delayed a number of times.

Most recently, in September, a court in Chambéry rejected the appeal, which means that

as it stands ski hosting will be cancelled this season as well.

The verdict left Le Ski and its supporters with the choice of accepting defeat or appealing to a higher court – Le Ski chose the latter, submitting an appeal to the Court of Cassation in Paris. Nick Morgan, managing director of Le Ski, says, “This is only possible with the continuing support of our fellow tour operators.”

Earlier in the dispute, Morgan promised to take the fight all the way to the European Court of Human Rights if necessary.



Vail snaps up Park City

Concerns that Park City Mountain Resort in America might not open this season, after a lengthy legal battle over the lease, can be put to bed. Vail Resorts has bought it, paying \$182.5 million for the resort and its 3,300 acres of slopes. In the same breath, Vail added Niseko in Japan to its global multi-resort Epic lift pass.



Club Med launches in VT

The luxurification of French resort Val Thorens continues this season, with the opening of a plush Club Med all-inclusive resort. The new ski-in/ski-out accommodation is the tour operator's flagship ski offering and boasts four tridents, Club Med's equivalent of stars. It was designed with help from the public on Facebook and is open for bookings now at clubmed.co.uk.

> WHERE'S HOT?

ISCHGL Austria

Another new lift for one of the Alps' best systems

Ischgl in Austria's Tirol region offers an unusual combination. Extensive intermediate slopes at altitudes higher than the Austrian norm – which means reliable snow – are set off by a traditional-style valley village with lively après. It also has one of the Alps' best lift systems, with lots of fast chairs and powerful gondolas.

The system will get even better this season, when the



old four-seat Pardatschgrat lift – one of three gondolas out of the village – is replaced by a 28-seat one (pictured above), increasing capacity by over 1,000 passengers per hour and cutting peak-time queues.

The gondola complements last season's new 150-person cable-car to Piz Val Gronda at 2,810m, which accesses a large area of off piste, including a big open bowl, as well as a 3km red run, also new last season.



More wild, wild weeks

If après is as important to you as skiing or snowboarding, then The Ski Week might be for you. Launched last season, it saw 400 people from 30 countries descend on Obertauern in Austria for, essentially, a giant party packed with activities. This season it's also visiting Aspen and Powder Mountain in America. For more info visit theskiweek.com.