

ESTC resort based overseas trip

Champoluc, Italy, 19th - 26th January 2015

Four of us (Chris, Clare, Sheena and Dougie) went on a resort based holiday with Ski2 to Hotel Petit Abri in Champoluc. Our aim was to enjoy a mixture of piste and off-piste skiing with perhaps a little touring and our aims were met in full!



Champoluc Centre and the bottom of the Crest piste

Champoluc (1600m) is a very pretty medium-sized resort which gives access to the whole Monterosa ski area (3 valleys) with stunning scenery and excellent piste and off-piste skiing. It is the western-most of the 3 valley resorts, the others being Gressonney and Alagna. Champoluc has the most extensive network of pistes, while the best off-piste routes are accessible from the highest lift (3200m) in between Gressonney and Alagna. The whole area is just over the border from Zermatt and so has great views of the Matterhorn, Breithorn, Monte Rosa etc.

Ski2 came highly recommended by David Cuthill (thanks!) and did not disappoint. They are a British holiday company specialising only in ski holidays to Champoluc, so have it down to a fine art! Our cost of £814 included minibus airport transfers, lift passes, lunch vouchers for selected mountain restaurants, ski store near lift, minibus taxi service to lifts! We had half board accommodation in Hotel Petit Abri, a modest but comfortable family run hotel in a quiet area and serving cooked breakfasts and 5 course dinners! Chris was in his element! It was about a 20 minute walk to the main lift, but the taxi service was used on occasion! Ski2 were flexible on dates so we travelled on Mondays for lower flight costs (Easyjet Edinburgh to Milan Malpensa – circa £180 including skis). It was about a 2 hour transfer.

We were lucky with cold weather throughout. There was powder snow on the branches when we arrived – still there when we left! Days 2 and 3 were a bit snowy but otherwise the weather was fine.

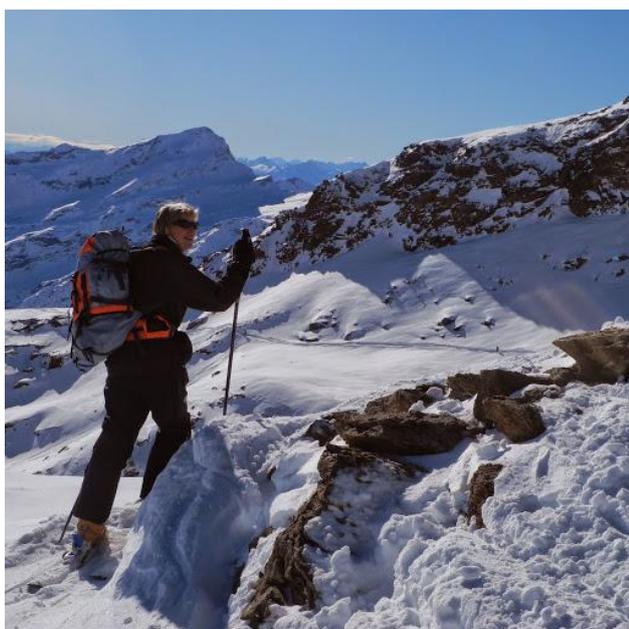
On the first 3 days we did mainly piste skiing, exploring the extensive resort. There are some lovely long runs, such as the descent all the way to Alagna (1200m) However there were also plenty of opportunities to find fresh snow at the side of the pistes and these areas were not tracked out as there were very few people on weekdays.

On day 4, the weather cleared and we managed two excellent off-piste routes from the highest lift, Punta Indren (3200m). (this lift has no pisted descent, avalanche gear required). The first was a marked itinerary passing the Orestes Hutte and back down to the Gabiet lift.

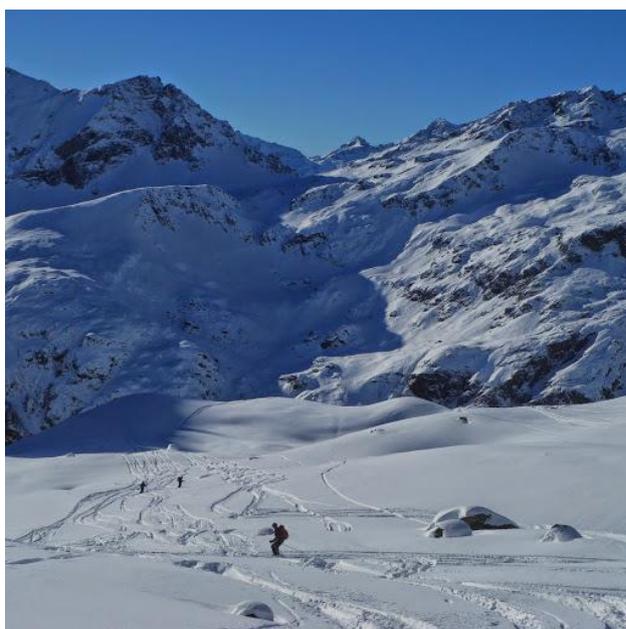


Clare on the marked itinerary from Punta Indren to Orestes Hut

The second involved a very long traverse to reach Colle Salza (2882m) and a superb descent with fresh tracks down the Val de Salza to Staffal(1843m). The only trouble was that we did not take the optimum route back down through the trees at the bottom and ended up flogging down through a rough wood, carrying our skis! In doing these two routes we were re-tracing the steps of the guided Monterosa ski safari in 2014, which Dougie had been on. This gave us the confidence to tackle the routes without a guide.



Sheena on the traverse



Fresh tracks down Val di Salza

On day 5 (Saturday) the resort was much busier with weekenders and the off-piste became more tracked out and the pistes scraped in places. So on our final day, we decided to tour. We were not minded to incur the expense of a guide, so we picked a route based on a very good map we got in the tourist office for 2 euros! From the top of the Crest lift (1980m) we followed skinning tracks up a beautiful valley in a SE direction (Comba di Cuneaz) and then zig-zagged up a steepish slope to the south to Colle Perrin (2649m). It was a cold but stunning day and we had superb views to the Matterhorn. We met only 2 other groups of tourers. The descent was steep enough to be fun without being an avalanche risk and we made fresh tracks down through lovely soft snow. Four hours up – twenty minutes down, a fantastic way to end the holiday.



Skinning up to Colle Perrin



Chris brooks no nonsense!



Views of the Matterhorn from Colle Perrin

We would thoroughly recommend this resort for a future trip. The skiing is extensive and there would be far more off-piste opportunities with the benefit of a guide. There are numerous high mountain huts above the resorts which can be visited. Prices are very reasonable – 1 euro for a coffee and the ambience very pleasant and relaxed. Not a particularly jumping apres ski scene – which suited us just fine!

