

# Peak performance

# 3

**Après is so passé. Real mountain sports lovers trade skis for running shoes, yoga mats and gym kit, to round off a day on the piste.**  
Words: Sam Lewis

Physically unable to join in the conversation, I follow silently until the serene beauty of the icy lake silences my companions' words, the hypnotic thud of footfall on the frozen ground helping to regulate my breathing.

Lungs burning, my hands tingle as the sun peeps out from behind the clouds, sending shards of light across the brilliant white surface. The smell of pine fills the air and the boughs of trees heave under the snow, a melting clump startling a dog below. Tail wagging, teeth bared, he rolls and grins in delight — or perhaps he's laughing at me for agreeing to take a trail run uphill in subzero temperatures with a former marine, and my host, Ali, a six-footer with the loping stride of a yeti and the spring of a mountain goat.

One of the many Brits who've settled in Morzine, a pretty village with a convivial atmosphere, even out of season, Ali is understandably well adjusted to the altitude. That's my excuse, but I shouldn't need one; I'm well fuelled, if not altitude adjusted. The morning began with poached eggs on a bed of avocado served in Ali's cosy chalet in front of an open fire and epic mountain views. And I've been promised 'recovery' muffins on my return, made from chia seeds and carrot, plus freshly made smoothies sweetened with dates.

I could do with one now, I think, as a trickle of sweat glides down my forehead, solidifying on the tip of my nose.

With a keen interest in health and fitness, Ali and his wife, Kat, a fellow Brit, operate four chalets, guiding visitors who often want to swap their skis for running or walking shoes. When the weather stops play, there's a 25-metre pool in the centre of town, where there's also Mountain Rehab, a gym and fitness centre with everything from yoga and pilates to sports massage.

And for those keen to be spurred on by others, the British couple run supervised fitness weeks with instructors who really put you through your paces. Mornings start with a gentle stretching session or yoga, followed by hearty breakfast and a 10-minute transfer to the lifts at Morzine or Avoriaz for a spot of skiing. Linked with Les Gets, there's plenty of ground to be covered and if snow is sparse, the snow canons at the highest resort, Avoriaz, run at a frenzy.

Afternoons offer trail runs with Amelia Pearson, a triathlon coach. Post run, it's a dip in the hot tub overlooking the mountains and perhaps an in-room massage, before another meal that strikes the perfect balance between indulgent and healthy.

This isn't a place to count calories or curb cravings; there's afternoon cake (often healthy and fruit-based) and other desserts to die for plus local cheese that make you drool like Ali's dog. There's no choice of courses at mealtimes but they cater for all eaters, including vegetarians and those allergic to gluten or lactose. House wine is served with meals, and there's an honesty bar for those who want to throw caution to the wind and skip that gym session for a pre-dinner cocktail.

Rooms are cosy, not luxurious, while service is top-notch yet down to earth.



**HOW TO DO IT**  
Alikats has a week in Morzine from £480pp, with full-board accommodation (based on two sharing), private transfers around Morzine, and ski pass. [alikats.eu](http://alikats.eu)

IMAGE: GETTY

Couple of snowshoe runners  
**ABOVE:** Long-distance ice skating

FIVE GO MAD ON SKIS



three to try

**WINTER SPORTS BREAKS FOR FITNESS FANATICS**

**SNOWSHOE RUNNING:** Trail run up to 10km a day in Chamonix at the foot of Mont Blanc, occasionally swapping trainers for snowshoes. Short breaks from £299pp. [icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk](http://icicle-mountaineering.ltd.uk)

**FAT BIKING:** Explore the remote Finnish wilderness, cycling from cabin to cabin past frozen lakes and primordial forests, with opportunities to spot the Northern Lights. Eight nights including flights from £1,499pp. [exodus.co.uk](http://exodus.co.uk)

**ICE SKATING:** Skate through Sweden on frozen lakes with a guide, staying at local hostels and covering 25km a day. Four days from £613. [naturetravels.co.uk](http://naturetravels.co.uk)