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Boarding school;Sun World;Travel;France;Cha
CP

SNOWBOARD LESSONS ARE A TON OF FUN

THINGS haven't got off to a good start. I've only been snowboard for five minutes and already the instructor is telling me I'm goofy. Apparently it's a technical term meaning I lead with my right foot but I suspect he's also using the word in the Disney sense because I'm not a natural snowboarder.

I imagine the lolloping cartoon character of the same name strapping a snowboard and you'll get the idea.

My heart was in it but the rest of my body just didn't seem to be getting the message. To be honest, I lead with whichever foot slips out from under me first and if that doesn't work I lead with any other part of my body that's facing downhill.

One week on the piste in Chamonix in the French Alps has taught that learning to snowboard will take time.

And thank goodness for that -it gives me an excuse to get back on there as soon as I can.

Because no matter how many times you cartwheel into oblivion, slip up on your face with a mouth full of snow or just fall on your bum learning to snowboard is tons of fun.

Hooked

Maybe it's the spectacular alpine scenery and clear mountain air that's got me hooked or maybe it's the hope that the next trip up the lift will be the one where it all clicks.

One thing's for sure though, next time I'm in Chamonix I'll be booking myself straight back into High Mountain Lodge.

One of three properties run by a company called **Freshtraxxx**, the lodge proves that budget does not necessarily mean basic.

The basics are all there - comfortable rooms, plenty of hot running water and lots of food. But they're supplemented by some pretty impressive luxuries, such as a fully trained chef.

Forget the usual holiday guilt associated with eating too much and lying around in the sun.

When you've spent the whole day throwing yourself down a mountain you deserve to eat enough to feed a small army -and you will.

Snacks like gooey chocolate brownies greet the returning hordes the afternoon, followed by a three-course meal a few hours later. There's also transport to the pistes in the morning and an arranged afternoon pick up.

The value of this transfer service hit me on the first afternoon when we sailed past a shivering group of people mournfully examining a bus timetable.

The holiday would not be complete without plenty of apres-snowboarding and Chamonix has more bars than you can shake a ski pole at.

Most of the town's pubs are on The Rue des Moulins and the **Freshtraxxx** team will be happy to suggest a good night out.

Bar'Dup churns out cheesy tunes and there's a pool table for any whose arm muscles are still up to it. This is also the place to be when the pubs shut it has its own chippie for those in need of a late snack.

Anyone staying at High Mountain Lodge will have little reason to stay out in the evening except when the chef takes his night off -then I recommend Goophys for a great meal at a reasonable price.

A main course with two free side orders costs around Pounds 10 and the food is fantastic.

If you've never been on a winter sports holiday before, Chamonix is a great place to begin.

There's loads of snow already this season and the promise of more to come, so if you're thinking of learning to snowboard, grab some gear and go.

After all, lots of snow means lots of cushioning!CP

Destination: CHAMONIX

GETTING/STAYING THERE:A week at High Mountain Lodge costs

Pounds 435 per person including breakfast, tea and dinner with airport transfers, transport to the piste, a six-day lift pass and two days' mountain guiding. **Freshtraxx** can also arrange boot and board hire and snowboarding lessons. For details call 07000 794 or visit www.freshtraxx.com

EasyJet flights to Geneva from Luton, Gatwick, Liverpool and East Midlands airports start at Pounds 50 return including tax. Call 08 600 0000 or visit www.easyjet.com

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