

TRAVEL

YOU'VE JETTED OFF TO A RESORT THAT PROMISES CRISP SNOW, EXHILARATING RUNS AND GREAT APRÈS SKI. WHAT COULD GO WRONG? PLENTY, AS PATRICK THORNE REVEALS IN HIS GUIDE TO THE SKI RESORTS FROM HELL

Mangled limbs and over-priced baguettes apart, what's your idea of ski holiday hell? No snow is probably a good start, no working lifts could set matters back a bit, and perpetually sub-zero temperatures wouldn't be much fun. On another level there's the danger of finding yourself in a remote chalet with the entire staff of a large estate agency, or a quorum of Kensington-based advertising sales execs.

Of course, you can find holidays like that in any of the mainstream brochures – just pick a cheap pre-Christmas week at some idyllic but low-lying Alpine village and you'll be mountain biking your stay away. But what about real destitution? The sort of horrors that even the most ardent 'extreme skier' or silly-clothing-clad snowboarder might, at least blink twice at before signing up? Here's a selection (from worst to best):

MARILLEVA 900 (ITALY)

Driving up the Vale di Sole in torrential rain, peering through steamy windows in the rental Fiat trying to spot my resort, I pulled off the road at what appeared to be a mini Watford Gap services to ask directions. It was a surprise to find the place full of British school kids fighting over the pool table. It was a greater surprise still to find I had inadvertently reached my destination, apparently designed to resemble a prefabricated concrete 1960s motorway service station, without the petrol pumps.

The low altitude makes snow cover unlikely here, and what I had taken to be power lines on arrival turned out to be an, ahem, unusual lift to the ski area above. This involves hopping into a sort of upturned dalek as it whizzes past and then waving to motorists as you rise over their heads (hold your breath as you cross the exhaust trails). It's not as easy as it sounds if you've got your ski boots on and are humping a pair

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PISTE OFF

