



Best of both worlds

Flying the flag for the year-round appeal of the Alps, **Glynis Shaw** shares how you can market your holiday let to maximise its potential during the summer months

Why have a ski property that lies empty outside the winter sports season? Whether you already own or are looking to buy a place for letting in a ski area, be sure to consider its year-round potential for holidays.

Some people only equate the French mountains with skiing, but when most of the snow has melted, this landscape is wonderful for a holiday without the crowds. Since Victorian times, visitors have appreciated the delights of a spring or summer break in such a location. The air is clean, with a pleasant, cooling breeze, and the stunning views of mountains, lakes and rivers refresh the soul.

If you pick the right location, such as a smaller resort or village that has retained its character and traditions, you can enjoy the added delights of local culture, delicious regional food and drink and a whole range of activities that are not available during the snowy season.

Holidaymakers to France are increasingly searching for fresh experiences and unusual things to do – so if you want to increase

business during the summer and ‘shoulder’ seasons, then market your property as an opportunity to explore something new.

Outside the ski season, mountain areas offer walking, trekking and climbing opportunities, mountain biking, paragliding, pony riding, karting, golf and other outdoor activities. Lakes and rivers provide boating, white-water rafting and swimming, such as in Chamonix and Combloux.

In general, do your homework on every type of attraction. Is there a local spa with pampering treatments on offer, a local cheesemaker for the ‘Heidi’ experience, or a local hide for keen twitchers, for example?

In most ski regions, transport and communications are good, so opportunities for day trips are exciting. From the Alps, visitors could take an outing to Italy or Switzerland and from the Pyrénées they could cross into Spain to explore. Tell them about this extra dimension to their potential holiday with you.

Those who like the great outdoors would enjoy this type of

holiday, so add to your green credentials by emphasising rail travel. Most resorts have a railway station with links through Paris.

Others who might like your region are people with asthma or other health considerations who want clean air, and those who need a relaxing health boost and want to sit and enjoy the views or take a gentle stroll. Others might enjoy the inspiring environment for yoga, tai chi and meditation.

Not just for winter

I would also suggest that you create a separate summer listing to accompany your ski property online details, with links between the two listings. Use it to show plenty of stunning photographs of the property, views and resort in spring, summer and autumn and to elaborate on all the activities and attractions. You could also put a printout of this information inside your property during the skiing season in a folder entitled ‘Why not come back in summer?’

Your main income is in winter, so to build up your summer trade you might start by setting keen prices or making special offers that

will make your property stand out. Think in terms of your potential overall annual return.

Finally, consider your property’s advantages and extra needs for the summer market. You might need to add extra outdoor furniture and a barbecue for the balcony or garden, and perhaps decorate with plants in pots or window boxes. Also consider providing binoculars, bikes, picnic gear or other outdoor equipment for your guests to use.

Ski accommodation is usually equipped to a high standard so capitalise on such features as a dishwasher, DVD player, computer or games console. If you’re in a ski village, then point out proximity to restaurants, bars and other facilities. Put yourself in the place of your summer visitors, make the effort to go that extra mile in the service you offer and soon your property could be providing a year-round income. ■

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The mountains provide plenty of summertime entertainment, from walking and climbing to cycling and golf, and emphasising these activities in your marketing material will boost your property’s rental appeal outside of the ski season



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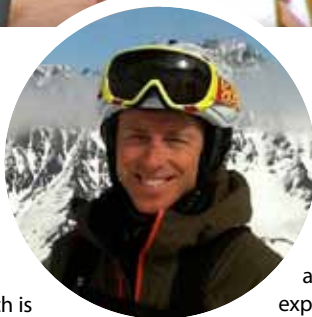
The chalet is equipped for both winter and summer use, ensuring that it has year-round appeal



Case study

Summer in the Alps

"While the French Alps is one of the most popular niche areas for summer holidays, the many attractions are still rarely publicised," says Jon Wyatt



(pictured right). His property, which is split into a four-bedroom chalet and two-bedroom apartment, forms a picture-perfect idyll built in traditional Savoyard style with stone and timber in the unspoilt ski resort of Ste-Foy. The village sits on the edge of a plateau overlooking the spectacular Tarentaise valley with stunning views of the mountains.

"Before deciding to buy here, I had found that the skiing was good and liked the feel of this small resort with a natural appearance and plenty of village life," he says. "Chalet Morion was purchased new, direct from the developer, and is part of a small collection of chalets where development is controlled. I chose this plot for its easily accessible yet secluded position and its amazing views, and these are still strong selling points to visitors.

"From the start I intended to let the property for holidays all year round, and now both the chalet and the apartment are nearly as busy in the summer as in the winter season. Unlike in some ski resorts, the pistes above the village of Ste-Foy revert back to green pasture in the

summer, making this a tranquil and beautiful place to relax and enjoy the spectacular scenery. Plus, we are surrounded by the Vanoise national park.

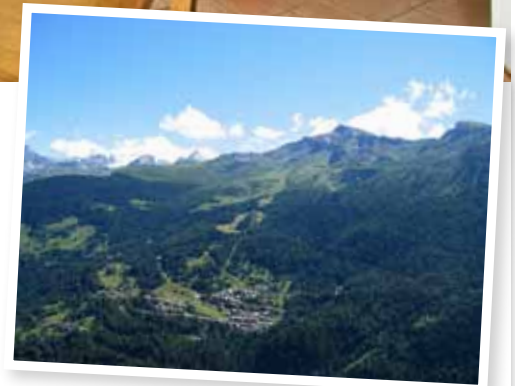
"I provide outdoor seating and a parasol for summer visitors and explain that if they get bored of the stunning mountain views from the chalet

balcony, they can walk just one minute in any direction and find numerous tracks through peaceful larch forests with waterfalls, mountain lakes and stunning vistas, watching out for ibex, chamois, marmots and eagles.

"In summer, the ski locker becomes a bike locker. There are many famous road biking climbs within easy reach, and mapped walking trails and mountain bike routes, with both easy and challenging options straight from the chalet door. A seasonal shuttle service runs from mid-July to the end of August, ferrying bikers up to a height of 2,100m to access miles of mountain biking pistes, a downhill mountain bike course and bike skills minipark."

Jon used to run self-catering holiday lets at Chalet Morion all year round, but now has contracted November to April to a catered ski chalet company, which gives guaranteed income and reduced administration.

His own online advertising focuses on self-catering holidays from May to October and,



as he is also a professional photographer, features beautiful images to entice holidaymakers and show what's on offer. In high summer, the days can be hot; there are Alpine flowers to enjoy in May to June and while September is a quieter month, there is likely to be late sunshine and refreshingly cool nights. The views are emphasised in his marketing, along with detailed information on the village, where to eat and what to do.

Travel is also explained, as the chalet is convenient to get to from the transport hub of Bourg-St-Maurice, with its easy access by Eurostar via Paris. There are three or four airports that are also accessible, with year-round flights and this too is explained, to emphasise to holidaymakers that they really can enjoy a memorable spring, summer or autumn holiday in a region known best for its winter sports.

Chalet and apartment sleep 16
ID 3322 at frenchconnections.co.uk