



Rooster
Wake up the market

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WHERE THE SMART MONEY IS GOING

LUXURY ACCOMMODATION

It's an upward slope for top-end chalet firms.

By Nick Dalton

I'm standing on the second-floor outside deck of the Chalet Artemis, gazing over the rooftops and twinkling lights of St Anton. Giant candles flicker nearby and, looking back through the windows, a huge fire glows inside as black-clad staff lay a dining table – the wine rack behind them would be the envy of any restaurant.

The Artemis is the flagship of luxury chalet company Scott Dunn. Specially built, it has a spa with a pool, outdoor hot tub, sauna and steam room, and offers massages by a resident English masseuse. The big bedrooms each have their own music systems and there's a subterranean, 12-seat cinema. A Mercedes 4x4 provides a shuttle to and from the slopes all day, every day.

The Artemis, which opened only last season, is testimony to the fact that some companies are defying the downturn. The hotel – along with Scott Dunn's equally new and elegant Le Rocher in Val d'Isère – is doing well, bringing in corporate as well as private groups and showing the resilience at the top end of the market. Carrier Ski specialises in top-of-the-



Cold comfort: the stylish Chalet Artemis in St Anton has a mini cinema, spa and pool as well as an outdoor hot tub

range chalets, lodges and hotels in the Alps as well as the US and Canada. It has seen a slow start for transatlantic bookings for hotels on a B&B basis but says its chalets – which can cost £5,000 per person per week in the high season – are doing well. This is perhaps due to their high-value aspect, which means that its guests don't have to venture out to spend more money at, say, restaurants. And plenty of people are still willing to pay a premium to travel at peak times.

In only four years, Mountain Exposure has established itself as the leading company for top-end chalets and lodges in the smart Swiss resort of Zermatt.

This season, it has added six new properties, with some of the extra demand arising because other operators have cut capacity. And because the British-run company operates in only one resort, it is able to keep a very tight rein on what it offers – which, incidentally, includes tailor-made chalet parties.

Its top property, the Zermatt Lodge, stretches across the second floor of a new chalet and gives views of the Matterhorn. The resort's most luxurious chalet, it costs about £1,380 per person per week, not including flights. Staff will arrange just about anything, including restaurant bookings and gourmet tours. One of the new additions is the Chalet Zer Egga, a penthouse for six. Prices start at around £720 per person per week. Other chalets start from £575.

Bramble Ski specialises in superb chalets in the exclusive Swiss resort of Verbier (it even throws in a ski instructor for two days). Look at its online booking chart and many chalet dates have been snapped up already – a good example of this is the 10-person Coltrane, which has only a few available weeks left and two of them cost around £20,000.

Growing chalet operator Ski Total hasn't let the downturn stop its advance. It launched 11 new properties this season (more than any other company), three of which are purpose-built while another is a flagship chalet-hotel in Verbier. Meanwhile, Méribel luxury chalet specialist Purple Ski has added two properties to its collection.

To suggest that all upmarket companies are doing well would be wrong but there are plenty out there still selling on style rather than special offers.

TRAVEL FACTS

MORE INFORMATION
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