



MAIN: Jan rips it snowtubing!

# CARVING IT UP

## *with the family*

**Stefan Lepkowski thought he couldn't imagine anything worse than family skiing.**

**I** have never had any aspirations to teach people how to ski. I simply don't have the patience. Why would I spend a week with four children, stuck on a ski slope, restricted to the piste. You know the deal. You end up carrying skis and poles. Picking up hats and gloves. Skiing down pistes in reverse – on pistes that bore you. Restaurant queues that are longer than the slopes. And you need a second mortgage to pay for it all.

I couldn't have been more wrong... our holiday was one of the best experiences I've ever had. And, I've had some. I've lived in the Alps. I've skied, climbed and paraglided the Alps for nearly two decades. I've been excruciatingly selfish. How could a family trip, where my offspring would have to come first, ever compare?

But it did. Thanks to a dry ski slope at home – here in the UK.

Ninety meters of upturned brush

meant Helena (10), Tadek (8) and Jan (5) were able to grasp the fundamentals before we left for Nendaz in Switzerland. And for me the fundamentals went beyond snow ploughing, turning and being able to stop – they included my children having the basic understanding that I can't carry everything. That faffing around with their bindings and dropping gloves and hats can be very cold on the fingers and they would have to be independent.



Photo: Izabela going around the bend!



SWITZERLAND



Jan, Helena & Tadek: Day one on the slopes!  
Ski instructor Aaron from Neige Adventure has 'em all ears.

Six Saturday mornings at Silksworth Dry Ski Slope proved to be a very, very worthwhile investment. My youngest, two year old Izabela, was a different concern. She was too young to ski.

We were to self-cater in my friends lovely eight bed chalet – Chalet-Lisa. As a ski-in, ski-out chalet, it could not be bettered for access to the slopes. It is the kind of place that is normally reserved for the lucky few... a cosy, traditional Swiss style chalet, perched high on the mountainside, with views to die for. Views all the way down to Sion, a vertical kilometre below.

Izabela had the option of being looked after in our chalet by any one of 30 babysitters (list available from [www.nendaz.ch](http://www.nendaz.ch)) or staying in the crèche du P'tit Bec down in Nendaz. We opted for the latter and I'm glad we did because she loved it. P'tit Bec is a beautiful purpose built chalet style building with floor to ceiling high glass windows. It would make

a luxury chalet in its own right, but it was the welcoming environment inside that made it so special. Special too, because it meant we could go skiing without any pangs of guilt at leaving our little one behind.

And, the skiing in Nendaz is fantastic. Our closest bubble car was Nendaz to Tracouet - the lift we could ski directly to – and, 800 meters up is a large gently sloping plateau area full of blue runs, snow parks and fun things for kids to do. The Tracouet plateau acts as a kind of easy to ski hub, with more challenging red runs - like the tentacles of a jelly fish – below, and all around. It was in fact such a good base, that we chose to take Izabela up with us on several occasions. She loved the snow tubes (like an inflated tractor tyre inner tube) where an 'auto-hitch and release' tow kept her sliding, up and down – all day!

**Continued overleaf...**



Inset above: Izabela loved the Bunny  
at the top of Tracouet.

Inset below: Kids in bed... time to ourselves!



Below: (L) Left to right: Izabela, Helena, Tadek & Jan: A messy breakfast kids style!,  
(M) Room for two... and, the kids?, (R) Monopoly before bed!







Inset above: Energy Pain au Choc style. We had pastries here every morning before taking the lift up Tracouet.



Neige Adventure Ski instructor Aaron, collected Helena, Tadek and Jan each morning. He was brilliant, engaging with our kids in the way kids love (I still don't know what the skiing 'cowguin' is all about!) and he had them confidently going down red runs – top to bottom – by the third day. I was so proud. My children could ski!

Ania my wife opted for private lessons, leaving me free to carve my way through treelined slopes and to burn off excess energy every morning – despite my worst fears, I was definitely getting my skiing in!

But, the thing I enjoyed the most was the sharing. From taking the

cable car up to Mont Fort (3,300m), to skiing over to Verbier (Nendaz is one of the connected Four Valley resorts). Following my little ones on their off-piste adventures (bumpy excursions at the side of the runs!), to witnessing their distaste of fondue – it was all such great fun.

Time, age, or is it circumstance, changes you. Twenty years ago I was horrified when my best friend said he enjoyed skiing with his children (rather than dropping into couloirs, which is what we used to do) and that one day, I'd love it too. I didn't believe him. Two decades later and I'm following in his ski tracks.



## INFO

- **Nendaz:** [www.nendaz.ch](http://www.nendaz.ch)
- **Crèche du P'tit Bec:** [www.nendaz.org/commune/creche](http://www.nendaz.org/commune/creche)
- **Chalet Lisa:** [www.chalet-lisa.com](http://www.chalet-lisa.com)
- **Ski Hire and School Neige Adventure:** [www.onthemountain.ch](http://www.onthemountain.ch)

