

# square mile

SQUAREMILE.COM

SQUARE MILE ISSUE 116 ISSN 1752-9956 £24  
9 771752 995029 08

## MICHAEL B. JORDAN

**EXCLUSIVE** DEALER IN THE WIRE. ROCKY'S PROTÉGÉ IN CREED.  
SO WHERE DOES HOLLYWOOD'S NEXT BIG THING GO NOW?



THE WATCH ISSUE  
2016

A CENTURY  
OF SUPERCARS  
EUROPEAN  
SKI SPECIAL  
PATRICK  
GRANT





SKI VERBIER

# VISIT THE PEAK OF PERFECTION

While Verbier's pristine mountain ranges and superlative slopes completely dazzle **EVIE PRICHARD**, she's not at all ashamed to admit that she's equally enchanted by the bubbly depths of her chalet's hot-tub

**IS THERE ANYTHING** more undermining than complaining about your aching ski-muscles to a man who – you realise a few seconds too late – was the youngest person ever to ski to the South Pole, and has a teammate who keeps his frostbitten-off toes in a Ziploc bag?

Tom Avery, explorer, author and co-director of Ski Verbier, has the sort of CV which makes my mild-to-moderate terror of mogul-fields even more pathetic by comparison. Using only methods available to the 1909 explorer Robert Peary, he and his team made the fastest-ever overland journey to the North Pole, clearing

Peary's name of a 100-year-old charge of fraud in the process. He is also one of fewer than ten people ever to reach both poles and to cross Greenland's icecap. Suffice to say, when Tom tells you where to ski, you listen.

For someone with more experience of icy conditions than most Wildlings, Tom is still touchingly enraptured by them. When I ask him why he always chooses such snowy adventures, his answer is simple: "It's solid, but it falls from the sky! It's unbelievable!"

The story of Tom's travels is told to us, with accompanying slideshow, in the private bar

of Chalet Chouqui. As we listen to his tales of frostbite, arctic ice and whether or not he's eaten dead husky dogs, we are rounding off a seven-course tasting menu with little treasure chests full of gold-coated chocolates. The contrast is extremely gratifying.

A day at the chalet runs roughly as follows: rising from a bed which could comfortably accommodate a family of four, plus assorted pets, you throw open your curtains to a snowy mountain view which is dazzling in both senses of the word. That the walk to breakfast can feel like a marathon is testimony to the ►





► huge expanse of the chalet, which contains 900sq-m of prime Verbier floorspace.

Breakfast is more than worth the effort. The dining room's wall of windows provides views across the whole of Verbier to the dawn-lit mountains beyond, and yet it's still a struggle to lift your face from the pile of freshly prepared eggs royale on your plate for long enough to appreciate them.

Soon it will be time to work off the brick of deliciousness in your belly, but not yet; for instead of taking the three flights of stairs down to the boot room, it's easier just to hop in the chalet's very own lift. A lift, by the way, which amusingly enough is made by a company called Schindler. Schindler's lift!

Apparently (and perhaps unsurprisingly), the chalet staff have heard this gag before.

The boot room is an experience in itself. On your first day you will have been fitted for your top-of-the-line skis and equipment here, and now – however haphazardly you may have left them – they will be disconcertingly neat and dry and hanging in your personal locker. In many ways Chalet Chouqui is like the castle in *Beauty and the Beast*. Things have a tendency to appear out of nowhere at just the right moment, or to tidy themselves away when you aren't looking. The trick is just to put it all down to the magic of a £2,000-per-night price tag and carry on as normal.

Does anything speak of plenty and excess as eloquently as baskets full of free tubes of sunscreen and miniature Toblerones? Certainly

**Blindingly crisp, sun-drenched mountains; skies so blue you want to go swimming in them**

nothing that I've ever experienced. The boot room's bounty overfloweth, and if you're quick you'll just have time to surreptitiously stuff your trousers with booty (ahem) before it's time for the chauffeur-driven ride to the gondola. You can use the time that you'd usually spend struggling to get your skis into the car. At Chouqui, there are people to take care of that sort of thing for you.

Oh the skiing. The skiing. How to describe the skiing? Blindingly crisp, sun-drenched mountains whose afterimages flash behind your lids when you close your eyes in disbelief. Skies so blue you want to go swimming in them. Pistes drenched in fresh snow, even when the day feels almost spring-like, and all there is to sustain the snowfall is Verbier's highly sophisticated infrastructure of snow machines. Off-piste areas which make you think of skiing across clouds (although, in my case, paired with the entirely logical terror of careening straight off the cloud and back down to earth with a splat).

Luckily, you won't have to face the fear alone. Jon West, who runs Altitude Verbier, has such an air of benevolent competence and sanity that you can't help but feel reassured by him. A former City worker who visited Verbier for a brief holiday and never went home, he will whip even the most reckless skier into shape. For a man who must have suffered several small heart attacks as I pointed myself down the mountain and hoped, he dealt with the stress with an amazing amount of humour. Humour which was only heightened when ►







► we bumped into him celebrating his birthday late on the Saturday night, cavorting with a brightly-coloured wig and a gang of skiing acolytes in tow.

And now for a subtle segue into the après ski activities on offer. Verbier has a very rich offering of rather poor-making bars and restaurants, alongside a somewhat more grungy scene for the seasonaires (who seem to be the ones having most of the fun). It's tempting to spend all night dancing, drinking and sweating, safe in the knowledge that the freezing and slippery odyssey back to the chalet is for people without a 24-hour chauffeur service. But really, going out would be a waste of resources when you can head straight home to a private massage, a 15ft indoor pool and a cinema-room complete with little stars in the ceiling.

Have you ever looked into the eyes of someone you love, and realised that this is where you belong? That you could live within their embrace forever, and never grow tired of the touch of their skin against yours? This

**Chalet Chouqui's hot tub was – and will always now remain – my spiritual home**

is the bond that Chalet Chouqui's hot tub and I share. Submerged in its nurturing depths, one finally understands why a foetus seems so unwilling to be born. The world outside may be hostile, cold and full of telephone bills, but in here nothing can touch you. Imagine the womb, but with an unlimited supply of champagne and a view of golden light across the mountains. Oh, and an easily accessible pile of snow for throwing at unimpressed acquaintances. That tub was – and will always now remain – my spiritual home.

Arriving back at Heathrow, I had nothing to declare but my lingering sense of dissatisfaction with the real world, a thumb injury that would make opening crisp packets a challenge for the next six months, and a carry-on bag full of miniature tubes of sunscreen. I had absolutely no regrets. ■

Prices for Chouqui for 2017 start from £2,961 per person based on 18 people sharing. The price includes daily breakfast, afternoon tea, pre-dinner drinks and canapés and a four-course dinner six nights a week with a wide selection of champagne, wine, beer and spirits. The price also includes 24-hour in-resort chauffeur service and in-chalet ski equipment fitting with [MOUNTAINAIRVERBIER.COM](http://MOUNTAINAIRVERBIER.COM). Ski Verbier Exclusive can also organise private guiding and tuition with [PERFORMANCEVERBIER.COM](http://PERFORMANCEVERBIER.COM). For more information visit [SKIVERBIEREXCLUSIVE.COM](http://SKIVERBIEREXCLUSIVE.COM) or call 01608 674 011. For more information on Switzerland visit [MYSWITZERLAND.COM](http://MYSWITZERLAND.COM). SWISS operates flights to Switzerland from £55 one-way. For more info, see 0345 990 9161; [SWISS.COM](http://SWISS.COM)

## THE TELEGRAPH SKI & SNOWBOARD SHOW

BATTERSEA PARK, 27-30 OCTOBER

Back for its second season at Battersea Park, The Telegraph Ski & Snowboard Show brings the mountains to the city, in an immersive experience for the whole family – including pro-rider stunt demos on the show's 'Mount Battersea'.



### APRÈS SKI

The Eis Haus Experience has to be the coolest place in town – around minus-five degrees Celsius, to be exact. Enjoy Signature Shots from the Ice Bar\*, served in real ice shot glasses, then take in some of the epic ice sculptures.



### FAMILY FUN

The show has magic shows, face painting, and an ice rink for all levels to skate on free. Also discover all the latest gear, get fitted for the perfect ski or snowboard boots, and plan your ideal winter holiday with one of the many tour operators.



[SKIANDSNOWBOARD.CO.UK](http://SKIANDSNOWBOARD.CO.UK)