

Ski 2 Freedom really is making the mountains accessible to all!!

Voted 2nd Best Ski Tour Operator 2012 by ATOUT France

“Ask an Expert” for Ski Club GB – disability and special needs skiing

A winter holiday in the Alps and Pyrenées does not have to be all about skiing: Adding extra excitement and awakening the senses - gastronomic food, snow-shoe walking and many other sporting and leisure activities with our personal tailor-made itineraries. As many of our clients may not be on the piste the whole week or, have a disability and are accompanying skiers, we want to share all the possibilities available to make a great winter holiday in the mountains. Ideas range from those who are driving to take in a night or two en-route staying somewhere special; flying and hiring a car and then perhaps exploring several ski resorts..... The French food experience is very much a feature of our new plans.

The Southern Alps: Auron and Molines/St Veran – newly added to the Ski 2 Freedom Information Directory Providing information relevant to disabled and special needs skiers and their families is the key of Ski 2 Freedom’s success in France and we have just returned from making assessments on Auron and resorts in the spectacular Queyras region which includes Molines/St Veran and Abriès. All are particularly suited to all disabilities and the ESF in all resorts provide excellent adaptive skiing and equipment. Catherine has been invited back to ski with the ESF and to attend one of the European Cup events for Disabled Skiing which takes place in Auron in March 2012. *“It has been a pleasure to welcome you here and we are very grateful to Ski 2 Freedom in helping to promote our ski station and look forward to a long and happy collaboration.”* Guy Leroux Directeur ESF Auron. Similar comments were made by the Tourist Office and ESF Molines/St Veran.

Vercors: This stunning plateau offers fabulous skiing both downhill and cross-country. Easy reach of Lyon, Grenoble and Geneva airport – small villages with warm hospitality including a wonderful 1* Michelin restaurant hotel in Corrençon. Having made several visits to the area we will be returning in the winter to ski the area just to ensure we have all the information needed. But, in the meantime, the villages of Corrençon, Autrans, Lans en Vercors and Villard en Lans are a perfect place to ski, walk, sleep, relax and enjoy the most beautiful views – it really is a secret place and one that is great for all ages in particular those with young children. Mile upon mile of tracks to either cross-country ski or hitch up the sledge and take a walk with the kids.

Pyrenées – unique and full of adventure: The Haute Pyrenées offers amazing handiski but and a wonderful selection of places to stay. What is unique about this area is that the label given (by the Regional Tourist Office) to any ski resort, hotel, restaurant, place of interest means a disabled visitor can be guaranteed all their needs and requirements will be met. Catherine Cosby undertook a five day tour as a guest of the Tourist Office and ideas for a winter holiday and opportunities such as spending a night up in the Observatory of the Pic du Midi, enjoying the robust but divine food of the region gives everyone the chance to enjoy a great ski break.

ESF Montgenevre – again provided exceptional ski instruction for a group of students with severe learning difficulties to gain self-esteem and social skills on what has become, and we hope will continue, an annual ski trip for Hazel Oak School Solihull due to a donation to support the ski instruction.

Ski 2 Freedom is working with SSAFA to ensure that siblings of injured service personnel can enjoy a winter ski holiday. If the pilot project proves successful this will then be expanded to other holidays – siblings with their injured service family member; siblings of those killed in action; and disabled and siblings of disabled children of members of the Armed Forces.

This could only have been achieved by the special relationship that Ski 2 Freedom has built up with ski schools in France and tourist offices.

Ski 2 Freedom’s Director and Founder, Catherine Cosby, will receive the Freedom of the City of London on 16th September. This has been given in recognition of the work that the Foundation is doing.

Ski 2 Freedom Foundation

It is an independent and International non-profit organisation – the aim is to enable people with a disability or special need to have full access to snow-sport and mountain activities.

Acting as a portal, we provide a resource of comprehensive information on all the elements associated with the mountains in winter, which meets the specific needs and requirements of people with a disability, special need or illness. The spectrum of disabilities includes: Physical, learning/intellectual, severe learning difficulties, blind or visually impaired, deaf or hearing impaired, chronic long-term illness, post-transplant, trauma victims, cancer or non-malignant illness, diabetes, arthritis, Alzheimer, motor neuron, MS, autism, hemiplegia, Downs Syndrome, mental health, Amputees The Foundation’s beneficiaries come from all over the world including the UK.

Catherine’s own experiences of having a severely disabled daughter and a love of mountains have given her a passionate understanding about using snow-sports and the mountains as a catalyst which can help children, young people and adults who have been affected by a physical, sensory or mental disability to regain self-confidence, become physically pro-active leading to a general sense of inclusion both within a family, local community and wider society environment and the possibility of equal employment opportunities. She understands the many complex needs and requirements of an individual with a disability or special need and why matching those needs with a ski school or instructor and resort is so vital to the overall outcome of a holiday.