

FRANCE

# That's what they mean by nursery slopes

Being pregnant didn't put **Susie Measure** off trying out the pistes of La Tania, a small yet perfectly formed corner of the Alps

It was as I ignored the "piste fermée" sign for a second time, mid-blizzard, that I began to have qualms. This wasn't quite what I'd envisaged when deliberating over skiing at 16 weeks pregnant. But I still had an hour before the Skipower nanny clocked off, so it seemed a shame to stop, whiteout or no whiteout. And getting stuck into the après-ski was hardly an option.

The piste in question was closed only because the snow cover was patchy over the bumps; not something to worry about given the amount now falling. The red run led back to the village of La Tania, a deliciously understated resort – complete with Michelin-starred restaurant – just down the hill from flashy Courchevel.

Despite being part of Les Trois Vallées, which has the biggest ski area in the world, La Tania has none of the airs and graces of its bigger, better-known neighbours – and far fewer of their brasher guests. That it also has far fewer bars, nightclubs and all the other accoutrements of glitzy ski holidays was only a bonus for me, and surely anyone else mad enough to ski while pregnant.

That said, I would be lying if I claimed my decision to ski with a bump was totally thought out. When the alternative was not skiing at all, I decided to go for it. Especially after my midwife admitted she herself had skied when pregnant. (As a rule, if you ask a medical professional who doesn't ski, they'll say don't; if they do, well, then the choice is yours.) And happily my salopettes had room for a small one.

If I was nervous about my invisible plus one, I was far more worried about my very visible toddler, Louis, who at four months shy of his third birthday was too young to ski but more than old enough to know when he was being short-changed on a so-called family holiday. The beauty of this trip was that he'd been promised his own nanny, although we were lucky it was a quiet week; otherwise he could have been sharing her with up to three other under-fives.

The deal was that Sara would come to our chalet each morning at just after 9am (she had first to catch a bus up from the neighbouring village of Le Praz) and would either play with Louis there or take him to the Skipower crèche, also in Le Praz. The day was then ours until about 4.30pm when the lifts shut – unless we wanted Sara to bring Louis to meet us up the mountain for a hot chocolate.

He was happy enough, even from the first morning: the combination of a new red snowsuit with matching snow boots and the promise of an aeroplane and a pirate ship to play with at the crèche meant he was urging me out of the door. True to form, I found it harder, not least given the small matter of skiing for two.

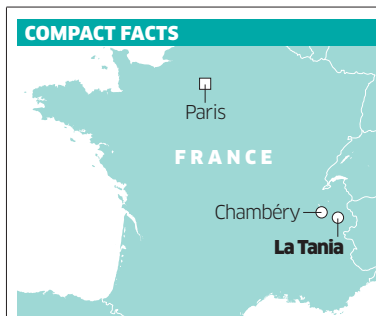
Our chalet, Beauvallon, was pretty



**DOWN TO EARTH WITH A BUMP**

La Tania is small but has access to the huge network of pistes within the Three Valleys, above; near left, the Chalet Beauvallon sleeps 12 and offers breakfast and dinner daily; far left, little Louis was too young to ski but old enough to enjoy the snow

SUSIE MEASURE



**HOW TO GET THERE**

Susie Measure was a guest of Ski Power (01737 306029; skipower.co.uk) at the six-bed Chalet Beauvallon (sleeps 12) in La Tania. A week costs from £445 per person, based on two sharing, including return flights, transfers, and seven nights' catered chalet accommodation.

much bang on the slope, which meant getting to the bubble lift that whisked the La Tania-ites up the mountain, couldn't be easier. Given that La Tania is so small – before it was developed to accommodate the overspill from the 1992 Albertville Winter Olympics it was barely a hamlet – queuing isn't as big a deal as it can be at some of the more popular resorts.

I had opted to dive straight in, so to speak, with a lesson from one of the many British-run ski schools that are springing up across the Alps. This meant I had barely a run or two to find my ski legs before James from New Generation got to work on deconstructing my technique which, as it turned out, was a blessing. I don't know what it was about his tips, but something clicked during those three hours that salvaged the entire trip as

far as my skiing was concerned and meant that, somewhat ironically given the circumstances, for the first time in nearly four months I could forget about being pregnant.

Even my relative lack of fitness wasn't a problem. And it was hard to worry about Louis when I was concentrating on not rushing my turns. Not to mention enjoying the scenery once the blizzard and subsequent fog had finally cleared.

The Three Valleys has some of the most beautiful ski runs in the world: the mountain panorama, which is visible from the red of Jerusalem down to St Martin de Belleville, demands pretty much your full attention; then there's the lunaresque landscape found at Courchevel 1650, which for some reason is normally deserted no matter the month; not forgetting our

very own tree-lined run back to La Tania, which is just about as atmospheric as the Alps can get – even with zero visibility.

As it turned out, ending each day with cuddles from a happy Louis – and cake made by the enthusiastic chalet cook – was après-ski enough, although I also enjoyed our nightly family sledding trips down to the village, though it was hard to abstain from the Nutella crêpes in order to keep some room for the nightly five-course meals.

I did wish I could indulge in the unlimited wine on offer, especially as both the red and white sauvignons were vastly superior to most chalet plonk. But at least I had a clear head each morning, and the energy to duck under the stripy tape on that closed piste for a third time.