

Hi-tech for peak performance

Enhance your ski satisfaction and safety with revolutionary new equipment and apps, says **Gabriella Le Breton**

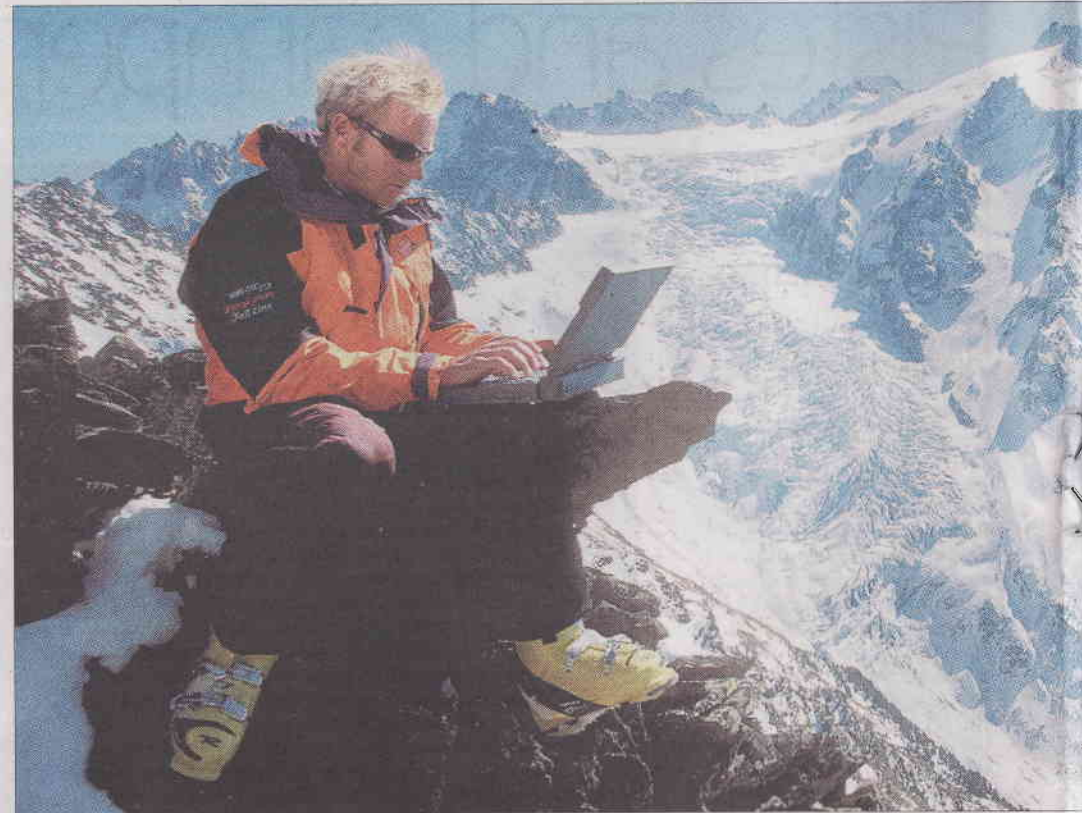
While we all appreciate the integral role of technology at work and in our homes, its function in the mountains is not immediately apparent. But the ski industry has embraced technology in an unprecedented way in recent years, making the mountains easier, safer and more fun to navigate.

Safety-conscious parents first welcomed the introduction of Magnestick

technology in 2008, which launched in the Three Valleys in France, and has been adopted across the Alps and the US.

Children are equipped with back-protecting vests containing a metallic disc, which lock on to electromagnets located on chairlifts, attaching them to the lift until the magnet is deactivated at the end of the ride. Europeans also pioneered

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)-activated lift passes, which enable skiers to pass through automated scanners rather than fumble for paper tickets. Although surprisingly slow to catch on to RFID technology, North American resorts, such as those in Colorado, have developed it further: for example, buy an Aspen/Snowmass smart pass and you can load your credit card information on to it to



THOUSANDS OF FREE HOLIDAYS FOR CHILDREN!

ESPRIT





pay for ski or board rental and food on the mountain. And in Vail, innovative EpicMix technology tracks the vertical distance (in feet) and terrain covered and uploads it to a “dashboard”, where you can share your achievements via social media, download free on-mountain photographs and compare your race times against four-times World Cup alpine ski racer Lindsey Vonn.

Closer to home, an online journey-planning tool is set to change the way we travel to the Alps. The new Snowcarbon Journey Planner shows and compares recommended train travel itineraries to ski resorts across Europe up to a year in advance. Powered in conjunction with leading rail companies, tour operators and travel agents, Snowcarbon also supplies details of station facilities, resort reviews and links to recommended hotels.

But it is the introduction of mobile apps that is really revolutionising how we

Apps appeal



Watch Freeskier videos



SnoWhere can track you down



Shape up with Snow Fitness



Mammut tells you what to pack



Play games with Touch Ski 3D



SnowTriX has tips on technique

operate in the mountains. Before you even reach the slopes, you can use an app to get in shape (Snow Fitness), decide what to pack (Mammut Packing List), read about the latest equipment and watch up-to-date videos to get you in the mood (Freeskier).

Seizing on the public's voracious appetite for apps, many resorts now offer them free, providing users with interactive piste maps, local weather forecasts, real-time information on lift openings, piste-grooming schedules and details of restaurants. Should a resort not have its own app, iTrailMap3D (try Sat Ski for Android devices) enables you to download 3D piste maps from 650 worldwide ski resorts across the globe and use the built-in GPS to find your way around the slopes, negating the need to grapple with paper maps on windy chairlifts.

Equally invaluable is the Ski Club of Great Britain's app (free), which provides detailed snow reports, weather forecasts and live



An SOS button sends your location to local emergency services

webcams for more than 250 resorts across the world. And, handy for mountain geeks, Point de Vue synthesises the landscape when you point your phone at it and identifies the names and altitudes of surrounding peaks.

For off-piste skiers and riders, the free Mammut Safety app is a must. Not only does the software provide avalanche bulletins, a compass, clinometer and altimeter, but it also features an SOS button that can transmit the coordinates of your location by text to the local emergency services. SnoWhere, a similar but less complicated app, emits a

tracker signal that is picked up by other SnoWhere users in the area.

While these apps should by no means be treated as alternatives to avalanche transceiver beacons, they are useful additions to the safety equipment of those venturing off-piste.

Apps can also inject more enjoyment and skill into your winter sports. You can learn to pull a 360 on your snowboard by following the step-by-step guides on SnowTrix, or improve your carving technique by using the Ski School app's split-screen video analysis tool.

For time off the slopes there's the ski game app Touch Ski 3D, or you can pore over your vital statistics: Ski Tracks enables you to monitor the distance and vertical feet you travel in a day, as well as your top speeds. SnowEdge further tracks acceleration, G-force and air time, allowing you to compare your stats with friends to determine who really has the bragging rights.

Your pass to majestic skiing regions.

We don't have royals in Switzerland, but we do have mountains that attract them. So why not start your ski holiday with the hospitality we're famous for? We'll bring you to the Alps in style. And skis and snowboards travel free. Now that's what we call the royal treatment.