

EXPERIENCE THE UNIQUE BROCKHURST & MARLSTON SKI TRIP

From the point of view of a parent (who is also a veteran attendee of several years) here are a few answers to some FAQ's:

1. Can parents join the party?

Many other schools do not allow parents to join the party. The fact that parents are also welcome truly sets this trip apart from other school ski trips. In my opinion, the B&M ski trip presents a fairly unique opportunity for parents to experience a school ski party.

A Form 1 parent said that his only regret was not discovering the ski-trip sooner. He had thoroughly enjoyed the last two seasons and was sad that, with his child now leaving the school, this would be his last year.

2. Should one, both or neither parent join the party?

It's up to you. There has always been a good balance between unaccompanied children and those accompanied by either one or both parents. The big point here is that you should view this as a *group holiday* (and not as a *family holiday* attached to the B&M group). So, if one or both of you come and you take your kids out in the afternoon for a hot chocolate or an ice-cream, it is kind to take a couple of their mates with you and to buy them one too. The odd family sized bag of sweets passed around the aeroplane or bus will also win you many new friends.

3. Do I have to get involved?

Stuart & Bronwyn work extremely hard for everyone (adults included) and each year they have made it very clear to the parents that we can get involved as much or as little as we want. It is our holiday too.

Helping to carry luggage, fit / do up ski boots, take kids free-skiing and being the butt of the Talent Show jokes has been my forte; but none of this has been a chore. Quite the contrary, I have really enjoyed being allowed to help out.

In short, you are neither required nor obliged to do anything if you do not want to - but if you do muck in, that's great.

4. What do you like about the trip?

Although it is not school, it is the closest that most of us will get to seeing our children in their natural habitat. I am constantly amazed by how kind they are to one another, the absolute lack of cynicism over their differing abilities (both on and off piste) and the encouragement that they each give to one another. The children do credit to their parents and to the school and it is a privilege to be able to witness that.

The laughter of children is the best tonic in the world and, with this in mind, anyone who has not witnessed the B&M ski trip Talent Show should put it on their bucket list immediately. In my 4 years of attendance, the Talent Show has been the absolute highlight. I have been covered in water, custard pied and fed disgusting flavoured sweets - all for the amusement of the collective. Oh, and did I mention that one year I

laughed so hard that I thought I might die watching four very small Form 6 children vying to be the first to eat a Snickers bar whole.

On piste, it is rare that one skis for very long without bumping into a party of B&M kids (not literally) or being hailed by them from a Chairlift and there is generally an infectious babble of laughter that follows each group around the mountain.

There is also a wonderfully relaxed and friendly atmosphere off piste in the hotel.

5. Do I need to be a good skier?

No. The adults are divided into two groups according to experience and have a morning lesson only with ESF. You are on your own in the afternoon.

The Advanced group tends to use the instructor as a mountain guide. The intermediate group tends to have a more formal lesson.

Overall, the range of ability amongst the adults does vary from the very inexperienced to very the experienced. On average, I would say that most adults would be considered to be intermediate level skiers - most achieve the class 2 or 3 award from the ESF at the end of the week (class 1 = Novice & Class 4 = Expert).

If you are an absolute beginner, I should not let this discourage you, but I would recommend trying to book some extra tuition (either through the group tour operator or independently).

6. Is it good value for money?

The cost of this trip peppers the £1,100 per person mark each year.

That's transfers (to and from school / airports and resort), flights, accommodation (full board with wine for the adults) ski hire, lift pass & ski lessons. Although I have not tried it, it should be possible to avoid spending a single extra Euro during the entire week.

With the overall cost in mind, it should be obvious that this is a "no frills" holiday. Room service, mini-bars, TV's, Swimming Pools, Spas etc. are non-existent. You should not, however, let that put you off. The holiday is truly excellent value for money.

Each year I try to do the mental maths and work out who is able to turn a profit from their share of the £1,100 cost. I haven't yet been able to work it out.

7. Would you recommend it?

Absolutely (and without hesitation).