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## Chalet design has come a long way



(Sunday Times)

Ferme de Moudon by Nicky Dobree in Les Gets

Katrina Burroughs

The last time I strapped on ski boots was on a 1980s school trip. Saggy navy salopettes and matching anoraks were the hot trend, and accommodation was about as stylish. True, there was the odd patch of pine panelling to remind us we were in chalet territory, but otherwise the apartments were designed with the charm of municipal multistorey car parks.

Just as we have progressed on the fashion front, so there has been a revolution in architecture and interior design. An avalanche of additions to traditional resorts, from pitched-roof chalets to contemporary glass-box creations, has transformed the built backdrop to the European ski holiday. And decoration has become as competitive as the Winter Olympics.

“Gone are the days of cookie-cutter sauna chalets,” says Nicky Dobree, an interior designer who has been working in the Alps for more than a decade. Her own project, a 300-year-old French farmhouse in Les Gets, used a recipe that has been copied ever since she completed it in 2003: keeping character, but maximising mountain vistas. “I opened up the living room and put in this huge window. At the time, it was the largest single pane of glass to be installed in a residential chalet interior in the Alps.”

There are some identifiable local trends: in more traditional resorts in Austria, such as Kitzbühel, there is a taste for wood panelling, stuffed stag heads and antique skis. At the top of the Swiss market, Poggenpohl kitchens, spas and cinema rooms are the norm.

Increasingly, owners find that their Alpine retreat is a place to perfect their personal style. Gul Coskun, an art dealer, describes working on her chalet in Verbier as “a love story”. It has a timber-clad exterior, an open fire, oak floors and fake furs draped over custom-made Christian Liagre furniture. The finishing touch is “a spa snow park. In the hammam, I have Christmas lights in a glass ceiling, and you can look up and see the snow. It is magical”.

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