

# King's Park Secondary Ski Trip - Italy 2020



In January 2020, we were lucky enough to take 19 pupils and 3 staff members to Courmayeur - a Ski resort in the Aosta Valley, Italy. For many on the trip, this would be their first experience of skiing and the European Alps. We set off in the early morning on Saturday 4th January. The bus was massive, a large and comfortable bus with USB charging points, TVs and a toilet. King's Park were given the front half of the bus, which meant we had control of the Telly and DVD player.

The journey takes a while, but we had regular breaks at service stations and the ferry to France was good fun. We all got to know each other well on the bus and filled up on snacks and sweets at the service stations. We had a few rubix cubes to keep us busy and I'm sure someone was knitting a scarf on the bus! Thankfully we managed to avoid Mr Jack's choice in films and due to a popular vote we got to watch what we wanted.



Once the bus arrived in France late at night, we closed the curtains, turned the lights off, put our electronic devices away and all went to sleep for the night. Thankfully no one was snoring. We woke up the following morning at service station in the South of France for our free breakfast, a classic French pastry, jam and orange juice. Only a few hours to go now.



We soon arrived at the Mont Blanc tunnel in Chamonix. The tunnel joins France and Italy and goes through (yes, I said "through"), Mont Blanc, the highest mountain in Europe. When we arrived at the other side in Italy the scenery had totally changed and we were in a Winter Wonderland. The mountains were huge and covered in snow; the snow was right down to the side of the road with all the buildings topped in a thick layer of fluffy snow. At this point we started to get really excited, we were almost there. We watched the mountains closely to see if we could see the ski lifts. They looked so huge and steep from the bus.

We went straight to the slope and onto the gondola. The gondola took us half way up the mountain to the equipment locker room. Some pupils were a little scared but enjoyed it all the same. We even had a group sing songs to distract them from the height of the gondola. This was the main access to the slopes, so we'd be on the gondola every day. The views while going up were amazing and thankfully managed to distract everyone who was a little scared.



When we arrived on the mountain we had to walk a short distance over snow to the ski hire office. The first time experiencing the Italian snowy mountains was an exciting experience for all. Only a few snowballs were thrown. We were greeted with an outstanding view down the valley, one we'd see every single morning. Once in the ski office, we met our ski rep for the week, Alice, and we were all fitted with our boots, skis and poles. We were all given our own locker number where we could store our equipment overnight.



Once we had been fitted for our equipment we went off the mountain and back onto the bus, straight to our hotel where we checked into Hotel Telecabine. Most rooms slept 3 people, some rooms could sleep 4. All rooms had their own bathrooms and the view out the window was amazing. We were on the ground floor, which was great as the hotel has a Fussball table. Each room had a TV, although we didn't quite understand what they were saying. We arranged our rooms with Mr Jack before we left for the trip; we were all in a room with our friends. Once we had organised our luggage and sorted our rooms we went downstairs for our dinner.

The food in the hotel is excellent and they have been catering for school groups for years. Pupils can continually ask for seconds to ensure that they have the energy they need for a great day on the mountain. Dinner was at 6pm every night and there was always lots of food. A starter, a pasta course, a meat course and a desert. Vegetarian options were also on offer, they looked great. The staff were always keen to fill our plates. Some of the pupils were a little nervous sitting around a big table of people for dinner, but after a while we all got used to it. We all went to bed early to catch up on sleep before our first day of skiing.



In the morning the pupils were excited and nervous at the same time. After breakfast we met in the hotel lobby where the teachers checked that we had all the appropriate clothing and that we all had sun screen on. We were all issued with our lift passes and told to keep them with us at all times. All pupils were also issued with a lunch voucher, we would use these on the mountain to get a hot lunch. Some pupils had brought a small backpack so they could carry their own water and snacks. Our hotel was really close to the slope, so there was no need to get a bus there. We all walked as a group through the town and to the main gondola. Once we were on the mountain we picked up our equipment from the locker room and met our instructors just before 10 am.

We were put in our groups and everyone then went on the chairlift for the first time, carrying our skis so we could go to the beginners slope. The views were outstanding and the chairlift was great fun. We were very high up and we were so close to Mont Blanc. The slope was perfect for learning on and it had a great café right next to it. Our instructors were great and before the end of the day most of the pupils could control their speed while going down a gentle slope.



The lunch options every day on the mountain were excellent. The options depended on which café your instructor had taken you to that day. Some of the options available were Pizza, Hot Dogs, Burgers, Pasta, Cheese & Ham Toasties, Chips and all options came with a drink. The weather was so good we would often have our lunch outside in the sun. Although the snow itself was cold, it was so sunny that many of us were really hot during the day - especially when we were skiing all day.



Our lessons finished at 3pm and once we had packed away our equipment, we would meet in a cafe before returning to the hotel to freshen up for dinner.

That night our teachers took us for a walk about the Old Town sightseeing. Here we seen some of the many gift shops, cafes and restaurants. It was so pretty. There was even a supermarket that we could use to buy snacks and drinks for our hotel rooms.





The next few days followed a similar routine; Up early so we could have breakfast at 8 am, leaving the hotel for 9 am and arriving on the slope with our equipment to meet our instructors at 10 am. As our lessons progressed our groups were adjusted and the more advanced groups were allowed to visit different parts of the mountain. The ski area was huge and it was really exciting going down all the different routes and runs. All the routes were clearly marked by large poles along the side. The routes are graded by difficulty; Green being the easiest, then Blue, Red and Black. We were mostly on Green and Blue but by the end of the week some of us were allowed to attempt a Red run.

We got in a great habit of meeting in a cafe every day after our ski lessons had finished at 3 pm. This was a opportunity to stay on the mountain that little bit longer, order a hot chocolate, sit on the balcony, enjoy the views and relax and talk about all the amazing things we did that day. The cafe was right next to our ski locker room, so it was perfect to meet up with everyone at the end of the day. We often stayed so late that we had to get a different lift down to the Old Town as the gondola we got onto the mountain had stopped running. The gondola we used every morning to access the mountain could fit around 6 people, but the telecabin that we got down to the Old Town could easy store 100 people. They filled it every time. We always had good fun coming off the mountain together and enjoying the views.



Every evening after skiing/dinner we had a different activity to participate in. One evening the ski rep, Alice, organised a quiz for us, which got competitive very quickly. It wasn't just a quiz with questions, we were playing silly games and wrapping up chairs. Don't ask. We still argue about who actually won the quiz.



We also went to a pizza restaurant a night. We all used this as an excuse to dress up a little. The waiters just kept bringing us more and more food and the pizza was excellent. It was the real deal, we walked past the wood fired oven as we came into the restaurant. Lewis tried to challenge Mr Jack to see who could have the most slices, I think Mr Jack won that one.

We also had an evening of Ice Skating. We had the whole rink to ourselves - which is a good thing as some of the pupils were bouncing all over the place. Some of the pupils had never skated before, but gave it their best shot. We all moaned about Mr Jack making us wear our helmets onto the ice, but after seeing some of the pupils bounce around like a ball in a pinball machine it kinda made sense. One of our pupils regularly skates and was able to help us all get the hang of it.



Another evening we visited an ice cream parlour. Lots of amazing flavours to chose from. Our teachers allowed us some free time in town to shop and buy our families some gifts to thank them for allowing us to attend the trip.....although many used it as an excuse to revisit the ice cream parlour. The town still had all it's Christmas decorations and lights up. The tree was huge.





The last night was our prize giving, this is when our instructors all come to the hotel and have dinner with us. After dinner, they stand up in front of everyone and talk about how well we did throughout the week while presenting us with our certificates and badges. The pressure was on to ski well on Friday during the day as we knew we were being assessed. Our prize giving went well, even though Mr Jack embarrassed himself when he tried to talk to everyone. All the other guests at the hotel came to watch us receive our awards.



- One pupil managed to achieve a Level 3 with distinction,
- Six level 3 with merits,
- Four level 3s,
- Three level 2s,
- Two level 1 with distinction,
- Two level 1s with merits and
- One level 1.

On the last day the pressure was off. We had already received our levels and we had one last day of enjoying the slopes and practicing everything we had learned throughout the week. We met with our instructors at 10am, and this time it wasn't about tuition.....it was about exploring and having as much fun as possible. Many of us got to follow our instructors around the mountain, going to places we had never been before. It was great to think that many of us couldn't ski at the beginning of the week and here we are going around the whole mountain. It was much more relaxed and our teachers even joined us for a few of the runs. Ms Shearer was totally showing off. Our skiing finished at 3pm and we all came off the mountain together for the last time. Throughout the week we managed to get 6 good days of skiing. The weather was perfect for us throughout the week. It was a quick visit to the hotel to finalise our packing and freshen up before going back on the bus after dinner.

## Testimonials



"I could not ski before but now I am glad that I know the basics to skiing. It was so much fun learning new skills, and seeing places that we might not have had the opportunity to see. Even though it was a long trip on a bus to Italy, we made new friendships along the way"

- Jane Tartaglia

"After Italy I learned loads of different skills, from learning to ski and how to build a good friendship with people I didn't know that much. I came back from Italy with a lot of confidence and new friends. I learned so much about how Italian people lived. Italy was such a good experience spending time with different people and also picking up stuff about another country. It would be so amazing for the trip to go ahead again soon as it would let us continue to learn a new sport and help us achieve more and for others to pick up some new skills like we all did."

– Rebecca Potter



"The skiing trip what amazing we learned a lot of things and the mountains were beautiful. We had so much fun. If I got the opportunity to go again I would 100% go. I gained so much confidence from that trip I went from a beginner skier to one of the best ones in my class. The people who taught me where so nice and if you fell they would help you up"

- Erin Tummon

