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Number Ten

By Melissa Kite

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The *REAL* interview



Johnny Depp photographed by François-Marie Banier

Johnny Depp

'There is great potential for weirdness'

**The world's coolest actor
on fame, fortune and firearms***

By Robert Chalmers

(*As Hunter S Thompson's biggest fan, what did you expect?)



GO Travel

The best places on earth and how to get there in style

Edited by **Bill Prince**

THIS MONTH: Dynamite Dolomite skiing and the Mauritian weekender



Height of style:
The 'Gothic cathedral'-shaped mountains in the Trentino-Alto Adige region of Italy's Dolomites



Hold everything!

Luxury travel firm Kuoni has teamed up with Van Astyn to produce a line of travel accessories, kicking off with the perfect leather holdall, Kuoni No.1. **£1,650. At Colette. colette.fr. At Kuoni Concierge 0041 587 026 555.**

Altitude slickness

Chiselled peaks, chilled Prosecco and white-knuckle black runs – the Italian Dolomites are the James Bond of ski resorts



Active agents: The Dolomites are an adventure skier's paradise with options to (clockwise from top left) paraglide, ski trek, enter the Gardenissima race or skijor

This is what pioneering mountaineer (and father of novelist Virginia Woolf) Sir Leslie Stephen wrote on his first sight of *il Dolomiti*. "Shapes more like dreams than sober realities... They remind one of Gothic cathedrals... The Dolomites are strange adventurous experiments that one can scarcely believe to be formed of ordinary rock. They would have been a fit background for the garden of Kubla Khan."

What Sir Leslie was saying, essentially, is that the Italian Dolomites are more considerably formed, more architecturally impressive than the French Aiguilles or Swiss Alps. As with its cars, clothes, food and lovemaking, it appears that Italy's mountains are somehow more stylish.

Yes, it is wrong to make aesthetic comparisons between various God-created

stuff like trees, flora and rock formations but the fact is, the Dolomites are different from other Alps.

Their fantastical towers and pinnacles, "like masts of sunken ships standing out of a sea of cloud", are hewn from a particular form of limestone more susceptible to erosion than elsewhere in the Alpine range, which furnishes the peaks with the topological equivalent of a sort of *bella figura*.

The Italians, never ones to shy away from sexualising anything, have even gone so far as to pronounce the Marmolada, the highest mountain in the region, as female. Lady Marmolada, if you will.

I am acutely aware of this preposterous but very evident notion of chiselled *bellezza* as I sit on the sun terrace at Utia de Bioch enjoying mouthfuls of fine, valley-reared ☺



⊕ brisquet prepared by chef Goffredo Valentini, washed down with a chilled glass of *apenrosa* (Prosecco, Aperol, fizzy water and orange – its hue is as lurid as alcopops, but don't let that put you off), rendered speechless by the soaring simplicity of the catering and the spectacle of the vast, mountainous amphitheatre, set against the flawlessly *azzurri* sky beyond.

We are in Alta Badia, part of the famous Sella Ronda in the Val Gardena area of the Dolomites and, if you want the opinion of someone who has done Verbier, St Moritz, Val D'Isere, Aspen, Chamonix, Megeve et al, this is skiing at its most modish, tree-lined, immaculate and quietly sophisticated.

Everything in Alta Badia, from the Audi saloons that act as minicabs around the town of San Cassiano to the Marc Newson chairs in the mountain coffee stops and the ambitious plans for a Ross Lovegrove-designed, Anish Kapoor-ish pod at Piz La Ila to the fully liveried teams of *Polizei* who patrol the slopes, tells you that this smart skiers' Xanadu is no place for Mary Jane-ing snowboarders.

It's already been quite a day. First there was the thrillingly Bond-ish helicopter ride (helicopter transfers from Pralongia in Alta Badia to the Marmolada glacier are £96 per

Ice moves: High living at the snow park in Alta Badia (above) and the 'enrosadira' sunset effect on the cliffs (inset)



person with a minimum of six passengers), 3,265 metres up to Punta Rocca on the Marmolada colossus, scenery Cinzano-ad spectacular, spindrifts penitentiary-high as we landed on top. Then, with clear, blue skies but wind chill-factor life-affirmingly Siberian, we begin the exhilarating, 7.5 mile-long, off-piste clatter down on the Via Lida snowfields.

Next, we grabbed an inter-piste beer at Piz Seteur and watched the alfresco go-go dancers do their stuff on the bar (only in Italy!) before heading for some passes of the super-fast, super-steep Gran Risa World Cup slope, with its astonishing Wii-ski high sides and a 53 per cent gradient (a white-knuckle black run challenged only by a clattering run down "la forcella" nearby, just south of Sass Pordoi) followed by lunch at the Rifugio Emilio Comici, a mountainside fish restaurant where Michael Schumacher and Fernando Alonso like to come for the *frutti di mare* during F1's close season.

In the evening, we relaxed at the Rosa Alpina spa hotel that is a canny mix of trad, cuckoo-clock chalet and Scandinavian modernity; think Alvar Aalto does Heidi and you'll get the idea.

"Prost!" as we *apenrosa* drinkers say. Simon Mills GO

Hit the slopes the GO way



The gear BBR skis by Salomon

Taking its inspiration from surfboard

shaping, Salomon's new V-shaped, narrow-waisted, pin-tailed BBR ski (named after its designer Bertrand Krafft – nicknamed "Beber") is designed to float in powder, grip harder snow and carve at will. Innovative, exciting and fun, this design is the future of skiing. From £500. salomon.com



The villa Chalet Madeleine, Klosters, Switzerland

Not only does this recently refurbished top-of-the-range

Alpine gem boast a small gym, massage room, outdoor Jacuzzi and top service (such as a driver to transfer you to the ski lifts), but Chalet Madeleine sleeps eight and includes breakfast, afternoon tea and dinner five nights a week. *SJ Villas* is offering a week's stay from £2,481pp based on eight people sharing. sjvillas.co.uk



The lounge British Airways, Geneva airport

As compact and covetable as a Swiss timepiece, the BA lounge at Geneva

airport was exclusive even by the airline's own standards – only those flying BA could gain access (rather than Executive Club cardholders using other airlines). Now it is even more desirable following a major face-lift. BA flies to Geneva from London Heathrow and flights operate seven times daily. From £54 one-way. ba.com.

GO INFO Simon Mills was a guest of the Alta Badia and Val Gardena tourist boards (altabadia.org and valgardena.it) and Peak Experience (01292 477771, peak-experience.com). Rates from £1,670pp for three nights at **Rosa Alpina** (B&B, deluxe double room) and from £1,570pp for three nights at **Ciassa Salares** (half board, junior suite) both in **Alta Badia**, and £2,300pp for seven nights at **Alpenroyal** (half board, park junior suite) in **Val Gardena**. Prices are based on two people sharing a room and include flights, transfers and a ski ambassador for two days. Ski passes (Dolomiti Superski covers the region) from £72pp for two days. Ski equipment hire is £65pp for two days.