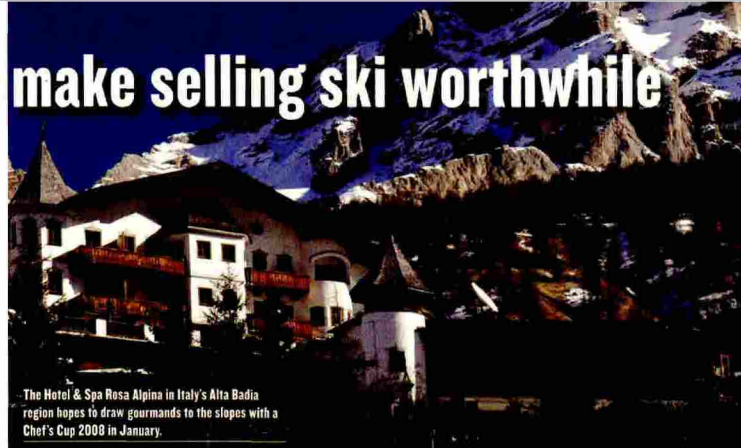


Luxury packages can make selling ski worthwhile



By Felicity Long

There will always be ski fanatics looking for rock-bottom deals on the Internet, but the proliferation of luxury hotels, shops and spas at ski areas makes booking winter sport packages increasingly appealing for agents who specialize in high-end travel.

Not only are off-slope amenities becoming de rigueur for the upscale market, but expensive packages bundling accommodations with gourmet meals and spa treatments can boost commissions or, at the very least, extend the length of the stay.

The Hotel & Spa Rosa Alpina, a Relais & Chateaux property in Italy's Alta Badia region, takes gourmet dining very seriously. It will run a Chef's Cup 2008 event from Jan. 20 to 22 that is expected to draw chefs, wine producers, restaurateurs and hoteliers from around the world.

The three-day event will include a charity dinner prepared by five three-star Michelin chefs, sponsored ski racing and ice driving competitions.

A Chef's Cup Package, priced from about \$2,150 per person, double, includes three nights' accommodations, gala meals and entry to all events.

For more information, visit www.rosalpina.it.

Small Luxury Hotels of the World makes no apologies for the lavish nature of its ski packages, which can include everything from in-room massages to five-course, gourmet meals.

In British Columbia's Whistler Village, the Adara is generating buzz as the resort's first designer boutique hotel. In addition to a design scheme that mixes rustic and urban chic, the property draws guests with such off-slope activities as the Eagle Safari bird-watching excursion.

At the Rusty Parrot Lodge & Spa in Wyoming, guests can ski in Yellowstone National Park and the Grand Teton and Gros Ventre mountain ranges or hop over to Jackson Hole. Packages include heli-skiing, gourmet meals and sports massages.

In Europe, the Kristiania Lech, situated in one of Austria's toniest alpine villages, pampers guests with the services of a ski butler, who helps them plan their day on

and off the slopes. Packages can include meals, a day with a ski guide and a ski pass for the Alberg region.

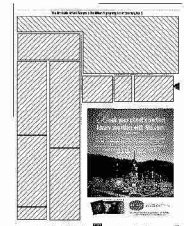
Clients looking for something a little more off the beaten path can try a stay at the La Pleta Hotel & Spa in the Baqueira-Beret Ski Resort in the Spanish Pyrenees. Packages include guided ski excursions as well as spa treatments using wild herbs according to ancient local customs. For more, check out www.slh.com.

At Vail in Colorado, the Arrabelle at Vail Square, a RockResort property, is set to open Jan. 5. The new hotel will be the ski area's first luxury hotel to open in more than 25 years.

The grand opening is timed to coincide with the opening of a slew of retail outlets in Vail Square. The new stores will include Burton at Vail Square, selling limited-edition Burton at Vail Square apparel, outerwear and equipment. There's a snowboarders' lounge with a double-sided video screen.

Aficionados of gelato, chocolate and wine will be able to shop at Rimini this season, a new shop owned by Michael Schneider, publisher of Chocolatier magazine.

Other establishments will include Patagonia for outerwear; Shade, a high-end sunglasses and



ski goggles shop; and Vail Chop-house, a steak and seafood eatery.

For more information, visit www.arrabelle.rockresorts.com.

Luxury residences and destination clubs at top ski resorts, some of which are available to rent, also are on the rise. Solstice, a company specializing in luxury destination clubs, has added a ski-in, ski-out chalet in Verbier, Switzerland, this season.

The four-bedroom Bellaiuva chalet offers contemporary architectural design and such high-end touches as a sauna with Swedish heated planks, an outdoor Jacuzzi with stainless-steel shower and a Brazilian slate steam bath with rain-shower head and star lights on the ceiling in the shape of constellations.

Ritz-Carlton and Cypress Equities are poised to develop and operate luxury, whole-ownership residences at central California's Mammoth Mountain on a seven-acre site on the eastern slopes of

the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

The Ritz-Carlton Residences at Mammoth are scheduled to open in 2010 near the Village Gondola for easy access to dining and shopping. Amenities will include a spa and fitness center, swimming pool, gourmet restaurants and the services of a ski valet.

The presence of the residences

is part of a luxury transformation Mammoth is undergoing, complete with upscale restaurants and shopping venues.

For more information, visit www.ritzcarlton.com.

SKI VACATIONS