



how to spend it

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TRAVEL / SNOW

To Verbier... for an invigorating ski-fitness retreat

Ski-touring, high-altitude HIIT and aerial yoga, with Alpine views



The one- or two-day fitness retreats are held in the stunning peaks of the Pennine Alps



“We are the real deal,” says Emma Bodkin, co-founder of Mountain Beach Fitness Retreats – a **sports** travel agency that offers coastal trail-run excursions in Cornwall and sea-swimming sojourns in Sardinia. Backing up her claim, Bodkin adds that last year she and her business partner, Lottie Pridham, took part in the 73km **Verbier**-St Bernard trail run – a route that covers 4,900m of elevation (more than half the height of Everest). And it’s here in southwestern **Switzerland**’s western Canton of Valais that the duo offer their **Ski** Fit retreat.



High-intensity training at high altitude - with distracting views

Verbier may be the “European capital of après-ski”, but this one- or two-day **Alpine** programme (215SFr per day, about £169) of ski-touring, interval training and aerial **yoga**, has nothing to do with *vin chaud*. At 8.30am our group of three meets at the Arctic Juice & Café in Verbier, where we apply skins to the back of our skis and hike for an hour through shimmering fir trees. When we reach the *piste rouge* Attelas, we slope up seven gentle turns to be rewarded by 360-degree views of the Pennine Alps.



A HIIT class, with reverse sit-ups at 2,200m

Faced with a steep wall of powdery **snow**, Pridham – who is training for the prestigious Patrouille des Glaciers military ski-mountaineering race in April – instructs us to set the skis with heels in the highest position and zig-zag upwards. We finally land on the last stretch of gentle loops that take us to our destination, Les Ruinettes – 3.5 hours, 8.3km and 700m of elevation later.



A hot tub on the balcony at No. 14 Verbier, with views of the Grand and Petit Combin

We have an hour to catch our breath, devour a *galette* at Le Mouton Noir and get ready for a session of **high-intensity interval training**. At 2,200m, this is the most beautiful spot imaginable for a HIIT class. Bodkin makes us skip and stop, run sideways and backwards, do burpees, jump squats, push-ups and jumping jacks. A couple of curious passers-by ask her what she is training us for, to which she answers: “Conquering the world.”

Feeling somewhat sore but hugely invigorated, we ski slowly down Attelas to meet Emma at WholeyCow studio in Verbier for anti-gravity yoga. Grappling with sheets hanging from the ceiling, we are guided through poses that reverse the effect of gravity on the body, explains Bodkin, by decompressing the spine, reducing muscle tension and improving blood circulation. The feeling of relaxation, as we gain confidence and manage to relax hanging upside down, is blissful. “Hanging in inversions,” she adds, “seems the ultimate antidote to modern life.” Perhaps. Although the subsequent dip in the hot tub at the neighbouring hotel No 14 Verbier – their local partner and the height of alpine chic, its dining room-cum-lounge stretching over a decked patio with stunning views of the Grand and Petit Combin – seems to fulfil that role perfectly.