

FEEL THE THRILL OF SNOWY MOUNTAINS THIS SKI SEASON  
(AND LEAVE THE ASH AT THE AIRPORT)

*Erna Low*  
The experts to the Alps since 1932





Last season saw some of the finest snow in the Alps for over twenty years - skiers were privileged to be able to revel in deep snow and powder right through to the last few weeks. However, the end of the season was spoilt by volcanic activity and some skiers either missed their last weeks' skiing or simply could not get home.

Erna Low, for 40 years a specialist self-drive ski operator as well as bonded ATOL operator for flights to the Alps, has the answer.



## Worried about the best way to go skiing this season?

“The best way to ensure you reach the slopes this season - and get back home on time - is by travelling overland by motor car or train. Rely on DIY holidays and air travel and you could be in for loads of stress - or you could completely lose your holiday. When you book Eurotunnel with Erna Low, you will not only benefit from great savings on your journey and an automatic upgrade to FlexiPlus allowing you priority boarding and to jump the queues, but you will get even more time on the slopes,” says Joanna Yellowlees-Bound, CEO of Erna Low.

After this spring’s volcanic ash incident, more and more people are re-thinking their travel options, with good reason. No one wants to lose out on their ski holiday, or get stuck waiting for planes to take off, if they can help it. Smart travellers are taking to the road and enjoying its many advantages.

An aerial photograph of a vast, snow-covered mountain slope. The snow is textured with subtle ridges and shadows, suggesting a recent snowfall or wind patterns. The top right corner shows a slight curve, possibly a ridge or the edge of a ski run. The overall scene is serene and wintry.

**The Icelandic volcano, Eyjafjallajökull (Eyja for short) blanketed much of western Europe with ash in April, at the end of the ski season, and brought British airspace to an unprecedented one-week standstill.**

Eyja is not one of Iceland's biggest or most volatile volcanoes, yet the chaos it created cost the airlines over 2.2 billion pounds and brought misery to millions of travellers. Those skiers already in-resort were stranded, and those about to depart lost their holiday. Being end of season – they could not be re-booked as resorts had closed.



## So, will it happen again?

Eyja last erupted in the 1920s when it blew intermittently for 14 months.

So, at best, Eyja could have gone back into deep sleep – **but**, it could just be taking a nap before its next big burp.

## And then there's supersized Katla ....

On each occasion that Eyja has erupted, it has been followed by a major eruption at neighbouring Katla which has a much larger crater and is known for its ferocity. Katla has a pattern of its own; it is recorded as having blown 20 times, on average once every 60 – 80 years. It last exploded in 1918 – so, although there are no rumblings at present, another eruption is possible.

The last eruption of Katla dwarfed what the world witnessed from Eyja, producing about ten times as much molten rock and throwing ash an estimated 60,000 feet into the sky. (“One of the most voluminous eruptions in historical times... originated from the Katla fissure swarm” – Thorderson and Larsen, 2007)





Accreditation: Fotolia

## Was Eyja's eruption simply a rehearsal for worse ash spreads if Katla blows?

"Katla could deliver a denser and more widespread ash blanket," says Joanna Yellowlees-Bound. "What made me sit up was when the President of Iceland himself, Olafur Grimsson, cited new research by Icelandic volcanologists which tells us to expect more intensified volcanic activity for decades to come, and has advised Europeans to "learn to handle them better and learn from experience."

Source: Philip Sherwell, southern Iceland, 24.4.10.

The threat of volcanic activity in an agitated area decays with time, but with regard to Katla, the following was recently published in a referred academic journal:

*"The high level of seismicity associated with inflation of (Katla) ... suggests that a new eruption or intrusion event may be initiated if magma flow towards shallow levels resumes. New material has been added to the shallow magma chamber, rather small volumes in this case, but this can thermally lubricate the pathways for deeper seated magma and give a fast track for the material to reach the surface. With the volcano in an agitated state, an eruption can take place without prolonged precursory signals."*

*(Developments in Quaternary Sciences, volume 1, 2010).*



Accreditation: Fotolia

## Volcanic ash detectors?

Last season's eruption sent shock waves through the travel industry. Airlines lost more than a billion dollars, other businesses perhaps twice as much. Airlines are so concerned about a re-occurrence of the problem that easyJet, for example, is spending more than a million pounds to develop and test a tail-mounted, infrared ash-detection system that will be able to identify ash at altitudes of between 5,000 and 50,000 feet. See following news release by Paul MacNamara (April 2010):

<http://www.networkworld.com/community/blog/british-budget-airline-test-volcanic-ash-rada>

This is an excellent initiative of easyJet but this system will not of course stop ash formations and aircraft will still not be able to fly through them, nor will it prevent airports beneath the ash umbrella from closing.

So, if it works, it will be a great safety device and will be very useful for monitoring and measuring the spread, but it will not address our worries about getting our clients to their resorts and back again on the dates of their choice.



Accreditation: Fotolia

## What would happen if I flew to the Alps this winter and the ash returns?

If you are already on the slopes, your return flight may have to be delayed. This will cause disruption in your lives, especially if you have children of school age. And then there is the additional expense of extra hotels and other expenses, that may not be covered by your insurance.

If it occurs before you depart, then you could be re-booked, but many families are pinned to school holidays and do not have this option.

If the ash returned at the end of the season (as happened last time), then you will probably lose your holiday because the resorts are about to close.

If you book with a reputable fully-bonded ski company, you will be given a full refund or the operator will book you on another holiday at a later date for the same value.

But, if your holiday is pegged to a fixed time, or if you are an end-of-season skier, it is likely that you will have to go without your ski holiday.

## Why Erna Low can give you peace of mind this ski season

Erna Low is the UK's original ski holiday specialist to the Alps. Established in 1932, Erna Low offers one of the widest ranges of self-catering accommodation in over 80 resorts worldwide – with a special focus in the French Alps as well as select resorts in Austria, Switzerland, Italy and North America. A self-drive specialist, we offer excellent rates and upgrades on Eurotunnel but our holidays are also available as accommodation-only packages for those making their own travel arrangements. With such a large range of flexible travel and accommodation options, Erna Low is regarded as **THE** ski holiday specialist for the independent traveller.



We boast a loyal client base with over 70% of clients returning to Erna Low each season. In view of the recent air travel disruption - not only due to the volcanic ash cloud but also due to the ongoing air strikes - it is clear that the only way to ensure a skier reaches their holiday destination is by land travel.

Erna Low is **THE self-drive specialist** for mountain holidays and our clients encounter minimal travel disruption as a result of opting for the flexibility of self-drive.

So why choose to drive to your ski/snowboard holiday? Here are the major reasons why skiers should travel with Erna Low this winter.

**“We are having a record-breaking summer as Brits rediscover the joys of self-drive. A good omen for the ski season,” states Jo Willacy, Commercial Director, Eurotunnel. “And in the event of any further volcanic ash incidents we would of course seek to protect and prioritise all pre-booked crossings.”**





## **Guaranteed getaway - and jump the queues!**

Driving is the best way to overcome air travel disruption and possibly having to cancel your holiday altogether. And if you book Eurotunnel with Erna Low, you will benefit from the automatic upgrade to FlexiPlus which allows you to beat the queues and gives you the privilege of priority boarding. You can have the stress-free advantage of booking ANY crossing on the booked date of travel, plus you can freshen up and collect your free lunch box and newspapers in the comprehensive FlexiPlus lounge before you start your journey.

## Flexibility

This is one of the major reasons for opting to drive to your resort:

- Fill the car with as much as you want - home comforts, toys for the kids, ski and board equipment – and don't forget to leave room for some cases of wine on the return
- Choose between the scenic ferry or speedy Eurotunnel to cross the Channel – both available to book with Erna Low with your accommodation





- Take advantage of the Erna Low automatic upgrade to FlexiPlus on the Eurotunnel crossings. Jump the queues and be the first one off the train at Folkestone and Calais terminals with priority boarding. FlexiPlus passengers can also travel on ANY crossing on their booked date of travel. Take advantage of the comprehensive lounge facilities at both terminals to refresh and pick up your lunch box for the journey
- The majority of featured accommodation is self-catering residences which offer further flexibility as well as helping the budget. An excellent option for families wishing to relax and unwind at the end of a day on the slopes and cook for themselves. Stock up on groceries at the valley supermarket – much cheaper than in resort and much easier to do with a car!
- Ski and board as much as you want! Erna Low offers a selection of short breaks, 6 and 8 night stays as well as the usual 7 and 14 nights stays
- Include as much as you like! Erna Low is a one-stop-shop for all aspects of your holiday. Book as much or as little as you wish: accommodation + tunnel/ferry + ski school + lift passes + equipment hire – all available through Erna Low for separate or combined bookings.





## We cannot be beaten on price

No same holiday can be found cheaper with the **BEST PRICE GUARANTEE** on all Erna Low holidays.

Holidays this winter season start from only **£54** per person per week – based on 6 people sharing a two bedroom self-catering apartment for 7 nights at Les Chalets des Ecourts in St Jean d’Arves - and includes return Eurotunnel crossings with FlexiPlus upgrade.

The Erna Low **BEST PRICE GUARANTEE** also extends to a direct booking made with the residence on accommodation-only bookings, and clients actually save more booking in £sterling with Erna Low rather than conquering the ever fluctuating exchange rate.



## Financial protection = confidence

If the worst was to happen and you are unable to travel, Erna Low is fully bonded and offers full financial protection on your holiday – not necessarily granted when booking direct. ATOL 4179; ABTOT 5319 bonded.

## Great choice of accommodation

Erna Low provides one of the most comprehensive collections of accommodation. Specialising mainly in self-catering residences, Erna Low also offers a range of hotels too. Choosing to self-cater means more time in your apartment and Erna Low offer a great choice of premium residences with excellent facilities for those seeking extra comfort. We know that self-catering is the ideal way to save on costs and get the slopes for less so we also feature a range of 'value' residences. All residences are priced **FOR THE APARTMENT** and not per person - so fill it up to share costs even further!



## Great choice of resorts

Unlike other ski holiday specialists, Erna Low offers one of the largest choices of resorts. Our holidays are available in over 80 resorts worldwide, including almost EVERY resort in the French Alps. From secluded, traditional mountain villages to the big and buzzing purpose-built resorts, Erna Low offers something to suit every taste and budget.

## Accommodation only holidays

All accommodation in the Erna Low portfolio can be booked independently of travel as an 'accommodation only' holiday. With the **BEST PRICE GUARANTEE**, Erna Low will match any price - including the price available when booking **DIRECT**.

## Booking discounts

Take advantage of Erna Low's early season discounts offering up to 20% off the accommodation price when booked 5 months in advance of departure.

## New [www.ernalow.co.uk](http://www.ernalow.co.uk) and brochure launch 1 September 2010

Highlights of the 10/11 programme include a brand new streamlined brochure and a completely redesigned website with stronger search functions (ski or snowboard, après-ski or quiet retreat, beginner or advanced) and includes the entire Erna Low collection across France, Italy, Switzerland, Austria and North America/Canada.

## Enjoy the drive!

Average time to drive from Calais to the Tarentaise Valley (Three Valleys, Les Arcs, La Plagne, Val d'Isere and Tignes) is on average 10 hours. Petrol and tolls average £250 per vehicle for a return journey to the Alps from Calais.

Save on airline ski carriage and equipment hire costs and load your car up with as many pairs of skis and snowboards as can fit (use a roof box/rack if you need to!). Driving also presents one of the easiest ways to take young children skiing.

Add more to your ski/snowboard holiday with a stop off or detour en route. Consult the driving information pages of the Erna Low website for:

- recommended routes
- tips for loading the car
- shopping for a self-catering holiday
- places to see/things to do en route
- finally...the location of the French hypermarkets at Calais to stock up on fine French produce before you return home.



## Taking the Eco route

Travel is one of the largest sources of carbon dioxide (CO<sup>2</sup>) emissions and a growing contributor to climate change. Erna Low offer clients the chance to offset the CO<sup>2</sup> emitted during the travel element of their holiday by supporting projects which will lead to significant CO<sup>2</sup> reductions across the globe, through the **Tourism Industry Carbon Offset Service (TICOS)**.

TICOS is an industry wide programme supported by international agencies such as **UNESCO** and tourism industry bodies to stimulate collective action by tour operators and travel agents selling holidays which include travel. Revenue raised from the service will fund projects where there is a real additional and measurable carbon saving and wider social benefits which favour the environment.  
[www.ticos.co.uk](http://www.ticos.co.uk)





Rail 0.010 p per passenger km*	CO2 generated (tonnes)	Cost per person for return journey
London / Bourg St Maurice	0.02	£0.30
Car		Cost per car for return journey
London / Tarentaise Valley etc		
Petrol 32 mpg	0.43	£3.23
Diesel 45 mpg	0.30	£2.70
Flight		Cost per person for return journey
London / Geneva	0.16	£1.20
London / Lyon	0.16	£1.20

With 4-5 people sharing a car, the total carbon emissions for driving to the Alps is significantly less than flying, and heavily reduces your carbon footprint.

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My “ski career” consists of university ski trips and seasons, so I was very excited at Easter when I flew for the first time to go skiing! No more 24 hour bus journeys! After an awesome week in Morzine, we headed to Geneva airport on Thursday 15th April for our flight at 12.05 and were greeted with news of the ash cloud. Our flight wasn’t among those already cancelled so we checked in, went through security and headed to the gate. As we watched our luggage being loaded, we earwigged a woman next to us saying that UK airspace was going to be closed from 12 GMT – and we saw our luggage come off the plane. An easyJet representative came out and explained the magnitude of the situation. Our plane was one of the last flights to be cancelled.

He explained our options: all flights into the UK were cancelled and flights for the next three weeks were fully booked; French rail staff were

on strike so rail services were affected. easyJet would refund any mode of transport used to get home unless it was flying with another company. But we had to get home. All trains to Paris were fully booked; all trains to the North generally were fully booked. We looked at hiring a car but this would have cost us nearly 700 euros, money we were not sure would be reimbursed. The airport was chaotic with passengers desperate to get home for work commitments, family commitments, school and even funerals. No-one (staff and passengers alike) had a clue what was going on.

We decided the only option would be to return to Morzine and sit it out although there were no transfer options resorting in metro and two public buses taking four hours in total (it is normally a one hour transfer time to Morzine. After many false starts we finally left on the Sunday morning at 6am and reached Gatwick at about midnight.

Laura McGregor

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We woke up for our last days skiing to discover the ash cloud had halted all flights over European airspace. My boyfriend's dad got straight on the case of working out a route home; I on the other hand was more than happy to be stuck in Courchevel. It was agreed to get a lift down the mountain, hire a car in Moutiers and drive to the ferry port in Caen which meant we would forfeit our last days' skiing which was a great shame. So off we went in a large minibus with all our stuff, only to cram it into a not so large car, resulting in me squeezing into the middle seat with some skis

resting on my shoulder. Eight painful hours later we arrived in Caen, along with many other people trying to get home, some of which had been on a flight from Egypt and dumped in Paris wearing only their summer clothes in the freezing cold. We had to wait a few hours for the ferry but we were on the home straight! The ferry crossing was smooth and before long we were in Portsmouth and picking up yet another hire car. After a couple more hours of driving we finally made it home, 2000 euros out of pocket but ready for work on Monday.”

LIZZIE CROSS

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The Erna Low team let nothing come between them and their end of season getaway to the Alps each season – a great way to round up each winter with some team bonding! But sadly, the 2010 weekend in Avoriaz was not meant to be as we watched the ash cloud swoop in and close all UK airspace the day before we were due to fly. There were lots of pitiful faces round the office when we realised that we wouldn't be stretching our ski legs one last time this season and that our carefully packed skis and boards would need to be taken home again! We made some frantic calls to our friends in the Alps who

were supposed to be meeting us in Avoriaz and we now had to forewarn to start making tracks home – all self-drivers, so luckily no one was stranded. Sure, we had been fully refunded but where was our weekend of Erna Low frolics in the snow!? As soon as we dusted ourselves off and got over the disappointment, we started making plans to swap our snowboards for surf boards and organised a staff camping weekend to Croyde Bay in North Devon. A fabulous weekend - which proves that every (ash) cloud does have a silver lining...!

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SAPPHO BARKLA

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‘We suffered badly with long delays at airports twice last season on our ski trips to Alpe d’Huez and Arc 1950. We live near Tenby in Wales so it is already no easy feat to get ourselves to Birmingham airport which usually consists of an overnight stay in a hotel the night before. So when we were delayed both times last year, we decided to get behind the wheel and drive to the slopes without relying on airlines.

In January when we were returning home Alpe d’Huez with friends, all UK-bound flights out of Chambery were delayed due to snowfall across the UK and France. We checked into a hotel in Grenoble and returned to Chambery the

following day. The irony was that our friends were driving back home from the same resort and they beat us back to Tenby by a whole day!

Returning from Arc 1950 in March, we encountered more bad luck as our flight was delayed for nine hours due to a technical problem. We have been skiing for years and our experience of flight delays is that they are becoming more of a regular occurrence so next winter I am planning to drive from Wales to Arc 1950 with our two young boys, and having calculated the costs we are set to save a good sum by driving.’”

MR CHRIS EBSWORTH OF PEMBROKESHIRE



If you still need convincing that a self-drive ski holiday to the Alps is the way to go, read this...

## Would I recommend driving from England to Morzine?

Steve and Caroline Warner, treasured Erna Low clients, loaded up the car and set off to Morzine for a summer holiday in their apartment in L'Aiglon de Morzine.

"We're off on our family holiday to Morzine. We have two children aged 9 and 6. The main reasons for driving are that we are fed up with airport delays, airport queues, lifting a multitude of bags on and off trolleys and can take more toys for the kids in the boot of the car. This is a log of our journey, from my perspective – the mum and passenger.

I got up at 3.30am at our home in Suffolk so I could prepare food for the journey – I really did wonder if this was a good idea after all.

The car looked like a NASA station when we set off at 5am with DVD's, iPods, DS's etc. Stopped at the garage to fill the car and buy two cans of Red Bull for the driver. I'd made two travel mugs of decaf – husband not impressed.

45 minutes into our journey I started to feel chilled, kids were happy watching DVDs and asking for breakfast already. Thinking driving actually might just be the right decision after all as I sit here with plenty of leg room, travel mugs and other creature comforts. Just not sure about the Homer Simpson voice over the sat nav."

Now follow the link to the full Warner blog:  
<http://blog.ernalow.co.uk/2010/07/would-i-recommend-driving-from-england-to-morzine>

and this...

“

Self-drive is great fun, easy, convenient, less hassle, no turbulence, no lost/damaged baggage/skis, easy to book, no supplements/taxes for baggage/check-in allowances, educational (learn more about France as you drive through a wonderful country!).

And finally, you can always get an extra days skiing in by checking out of your apartment on the last day, dumping all the stuff in the car and

skiing for the day (usually Saturday when the pistes are EMPTY) and then driving part way back in the evening, only to relax with a good meal and a cheap hotel and finishing your journey the next day. Why get up at 5am to catch a transfer bus to drive around the resort for two hours and then sit on the autoroute on change-over day, only to arrive at the airport with 2000 other cattle.....and get delayed!

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PETER STRATTON, Commercial Director,  
Snowsport England



*Erna Low*  
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