

Expert Predictions for 2014/15



Erna Low

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Erna Low

Introduction

Erna Low is a dynamic business, focussed on its growing client base and adapting with the times, now offering flights and transfers, self-drive and accommodation-only ski holidays.

Our team of experts in-house are as knowledgeable and enthusiastic about ski holidays as Miss Erna Low was when she founded the business over 80 years ago.

Erna Low

We asked the experts ...

As the new winter season approaches we asked some of our key media partners for their thoughts on some of the issues that are currently facing the snow sports industry.

Many of the media share common threads, but all favour different regions around the world, and most share the worries of how to encourage a younger generation to share our passion for the mountains.

We hope you find their predictions interesting!

Joanna Yellowlees-Bound, CEO Erna Low

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MARKET GROWTH

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Patrick Thorne predicts ...



I hear things are booming in London so hopefully there's pent up demand across the UK, but we're not really seeing much signs of an economic upswing outside of the South East.

My hope would be continuing sustainable growth.

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Henry Druce predicts ...



I expect the market to grow modestly next season.

Easter is earlier (therefore it's a shorter season), but the general pick-up in the economy, and the growing likelihood of interest rate rises further increasing the value of the Pound will both help.

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Peter Hardy predicts ...



Or rather, the lack of it: last winter lift pass sales were down heavily in France in even the major resorts.

***I think the UK overall was down 5%** (some say a lot more). There doesn't seem to be any substantive reason for this except worry about the economy.*

The Tirol mostly had a terrible time with snow cover and that will be reflected forward for the coming winter.

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James Cove predicts ...



I'm afraid I'm not hugely optimistic and believe it will bump along at about the current levels in the short to medium term.

Skiing is simply too expensive for many people and there are a range of alternative holidays and activities on offer.

People have not fallen out of love with skiing and snowboarding but it needs to offer better value and be simpler to do.

Erna Low

Frank Baldwin predicts ...



*Although the Olympics helped raise the profile of wintersports, **I think market growth is going to remain static** while we keep ignoring the fact the schools' market is dying in its ski and snowboard boots.*

We all keep talking about it but despite a couple of initiatives, not enough is being done to combat this problem.

On the plus side, the increasing number of music events is attracting a small number of 'younger' skiers and snowboarders into the market.

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Dave Watts predicts ...



The stronger pound should help. But last year's poor snow news may put some people off.

I would expect the market to be fairly flat or up a tad.

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FAVOURED COUNTRIES/RESORTS

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Patrick Thorne predicts ...



Lapland seems to be regaining lost ground. Pre-crash it peaked with ten resorts offered by big tour ops, but these were almost wiped out after the crash. It will be back up to six or seven next winter as more are re-added.

It's unclear if the days of long haul packages to exotic ski destinations are over – there are some eye-catching new resorts opening in countries like China and Turkey. It will be interesting to see if Sochi gets dropped and South Korea added to brochures.

Erna Low

Henry Druce predicts ...



Expect Austria to continue growing its share of the market at the expense of France.

Brits will rediscover the country's impressive ski areas, efficient lift systems, friendly atmosphere and keen prices.

Erna Low

Peter Hardy predicts ...



France is getting more and more expensive - there must come a point where enough is enough. Prices in Val d'Isere for food - on and off mountain - are actually higher than in Verbier. Italy and Austria are far better value.

If you want to ski in France without breaking the bank head for the Maurienne Valley. North America is becoming too expensive to get to. The best all-round skiing experience I had last year was in Baqueira Beret.

The mass market Swiss chalet holiday is over. *The main tour operators are pulling out just as fast as they can break their current contracts (this may take a financially painful length of time with some of the chalet hotels).*

Erna Low

Sean Newsom predicts



America will make a modest comeback this year, if the pound stays strong.

The cost of flying across the Atlantic is still off-putting, but let's not forget how much fun the best resorts are, and how Brit-friendly, too.

I can see skiers who haven't visited the Rockies since the mid-Noughties considering going back in 2014-15.

Erna Low

James Cove predicts ...



France will always remain strong in the British market and will continue to be the no.1 destination for British skiers.

I see Austria continuing its steady growth and there will be some renewed interest in Andorra and Italy.

The North America market will continue to fall, except perhaps Whistler, caused by the high aviation costs of crossing the Atlantic.

Meanwhile Switzerland has some tough times ahead compounded by a poor exchange rate and next season it will be hit very hard by the exit of many UK companies from the Swiss chalet holiday market.

Look out for niche destinations like Norway doing well.

Erna Low

Frank Baldwin predicts ...



*It's difficult to say. **Will the friction over ski hosting and teaching threaten France's position at the top of the list of skier and boarder visits?** Only time will tell.*

Erna Low

Dave Watts predicts ...



Switzerland will lose out because of their crazy minimum wage applying to chalet staff leading to most tour ops offering affordable (non-super luxury) chalets pulling out.

France, Austria and Italy will be the beneficiaries, not Swiss hoteliers (as the Swiss who pushed the rules through expect).

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EQUIPMENT TRENDS

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Patrick Thorne predicts ...



*I'm expecting ever more use of **computer technology and GPS** in everything!*

Erna Low

Henry Druce predicts ...



*Following Schumacher's accident there was a significant increase in helmet sales last year and **I expect there to be a continuing focus on safety equipment in the 2014/2015 season, specifically helmets and avalanche bags.***

Erna Low

Peter Hardy predicts ...



Personally I like to ski nearly always on fat all terrain skis even on piste (except when ice calls for GS) but there's a growing backlash against this because of knee injuries. These are more likely on fatter skis.

In Austria I found it quite difficult to rent any skis which could vaguely be considered all terrain, in my view. Wherever I can I fly SWISS as I shall be taking my own skis this coming winter.

There is no evidence to show that helmets prevent injury, but the Schumacher effect means that more and more people are wearing them. Good. I wouldn't be seen on a mountain without one.

I also expect a large increase in the number of people wearing ABS. I will be joining the pack this winter.

Erna Low

James Cove predicts ...



There will be no significant advances in skis as they are currently so good.

The graphics and marketing will change and there will no doubt be a degree of technobabble, but the basic ski will remain the same.

Spend your money on lessons rather than new skis.

Erna Low

Frank Baldwin predicts ...



There have been a couple of advances in ski, snowboard and boot manufacture in the last couple of years.

*However, the items that seem to be catching the eye are **mountable cameras for catching those magic moments; lighter and safer helmets; and apps** that record information about your day on the slopes, such as how many runs you made, where you skied and how fast you went.*

Erna Low

Dave Watts predicts ...



A key thing will be more custom-shell boots where the whole boot moulds to your foot.

I have some Salomon Max Custom Shell boots that are fab – the first boots I've had that worked well and were comfortable right from the start. My others have always taken two seasons to get them fitting properly and not giving pain. Fischer and Atomic make similar ones.

Also watch out for a continuing trend to rent rather than buy skis and boards because of the high carriage charges made by airlines and improved quality of rental equipment.

Erna Low

With special thanks to our experts ...

- **PATRICK THORNE** – Editor, In The Snow Magazine
- **HENRY DRUCE** – Editor, Telegraph Ski
- **PETER HARDY** – Co-editor Welove2ski.com, Ski Correspondent Telegraph Ski
- **SEAN NEWSOM** - Editor, Welove2ski.com
- **JAMES COVE** – Editor, Planetski.eu
- **FRANK BALDWIN** – Editor, Skier & Snowboarder Magazine
- **DAVE WATTS** – Editor, Where To Ski And Snowboard

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**To be continued
(at the end of the season)!**

For more details, contact Jane Bolton MD @ Erna Low

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