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The legacy of Erna Low – a biography of the entrepreneurial Austrian woman, who pioneered the concept of ski and specialist package holidays in Britain.

A biography of the innovative Erna Low, 'Aiming High: The Life of Ski and Travel Pioneer Erna Low' by author and ski writer Mark Frary is to be published on 1 January 2013.

The book examines the life of this remarkable woman, born in Vienna in 1909, who was also an Austrian javelin champion and footballer. Through interviews and anecdotes from colleagues and close friends, Erna Low is revealed to be an indefatigable individual, triumphing in a male dominated era growing a successful business that was instrumental in beginning what continues today as a multi-million pound industry.

In 1932, as a way of returning to see family at Christmas, Erna Low placed an advertisement in the 'Morning Post', "Austria, fortnight, £15 only, including rail and hotel, arranged by young Viennese graduelle for young people leaving Christmas." The popularity of the trip led on to arranging country house parties, and a thriving business was spawned.

Following the war years, including a stint at the BBC Monitoring Service, Erna Low capitalised on improving standards of living, expanding her business to take tens of thousands of people on holiday each year. A consummate networker, Erna Low mingled with the great and the good, teaching actors, politicians and royalty to ski. By the 1960s, the eponymous company, had become a leading travel company, pioneering many new holiday destinations and concepts to the British market; the legacy of which continues today.

Author Mark Frary comments, "Erna came to Britain at a time when National Socialism was casting its shadow over Europe and the world. Despite retaining her strong Austrian accent, she became a naturalised British citizen in 1940, deploying her linguistic abilities to aid the Allied war. Her early trips to ski resorts like Sölden, Gargellen and Saas Fee and country house parties in Cornwall helped democratise the annual holiday. Her personalised touch was to remain a constant throughout her life and explains why the company which bears her name today thrived in an era of bland, mass tourism."

Joanna Yellowlees-Bound the present day owner and CEO of Erna Low says, "In this the 80th anniversary year of the company, which happily coincides with 30 years of my working for Erna Low, I am conscious of my responsibility to continue Erna's unique legacy. This past year, helping Mark to sift through thousands of photos, letters and albums, has reminded me yet again what an extraordinary life Erna had and what a privilege it has been to carry this brand into the modern technological age, whilst continuing to give the same personal touch to our clients. I am proud to see this book put on record the achievements of an extraordinary 20th century lady."

To pre-order a copy of 'Aiming High: The Life of Ski and Travel Pioneer Erna Low', please visit www.ernalow.co.uk/80.

View a video containing previously unseen archive footage of Erna Low, together with another film where former Olympic skier Graham Bell and journalist Peter Hardy celebrate Erna Low's 80th anniversary by skiing in Cervinia on original vintage wooden skis. Both videos are available at www.ernalow.co.uk/archive-videos.

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About Erna Low - Erna Low is the oldest ski tour operator in the UK, sending clients on winter holidays since 1932. Specialising in self-catering holidays for the independent traveller, Erna Low offers ski holidays to suit every need and budget to over 80 top resorts around the world. In addition to the price match guarantee and great ski offers, Erna Low offers highly competitive rates on accommodation-only with the possibility of combining special rates for self drivers on the Eurotunnel. www.ernalow.co.uk.

Social Media - Please use the hashtag #ernalowis80 in Tweets, tagging @ernalow if possible. All videos will be live on our YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/ernalow) shortly after the event, and you are welcome to embed them in any coverage. On Facebook, you are welcome to tag us and our page address is www.facebook.com/ernalowski.

Erna Low Property – The property arm of this long-standing ski holiday specialist company was set up in 2003. The company offers an extensive portfolio of ski properties for sale across the world, with a strong focus on France, where a variety of ski apartments and chalets are available across top resorts such as the Three Valleys, Val d'Isère, Arc 1950, La Plagne & Morzine. Additionally, the company has expanded its portfolio to include an array of property across the South of France as part of the 'Erna Low Sun Collection'. Erna Low Property offers expert advice and guidance on purchasing property from off-plan apartments to freehold villas. www.ernalowproperty.co.uk.

About the author - Mark Fray has written about skiing for many publications, including The Times and Ski & Board magazines and has skied in resorts all over the world. He was formerly a nuclear physicist at the CERN laboratory in Geneva but was distracted from smashing particles together by the skiing in the nearby Alps and gave up science to become a writer. He is the author of seven books, including The Origins of the Universe for Dummies and Freaky Science.