

# A place in the snow

**Dreaming of a place in the snow? Andrew Maude, Managing Director of Alpine Specialist, discusses the trends and offers some tips for finding and buying your ideal winter home.**

A holiday home in the mountains is every skier's dream and a must-have for many British skiers. But purchasing a property in a ski resort is a time-consuming and costly exercise for UK-based purchasers. Simply deciding where to buy can be a difficult first decision with so many mountain resorts to choose between.

Most wintersports enthusiasts know of the popular French and Swiss ski resorts, such as Val d'Isère and Verbier, where property prices are extremely high. According to Andrew Maude price is only one of the several key factors that buyers consider. "Buyers come to us with their ideal wish-list. They may have only skied in one or two resorts and want to find out which other resorts offer the kind of property they are looking for."

Drawing up a shortlist of suitable resorts is one way in which Alpine Specialist's 15 years experience in the ski sector and intimate knowledge of ski resorts helps buyers to join the dots between their wishes and their budgets. Their bespoke property finding service takes it a step further. "Only a small number of ski properties are actively marketed to foreign buyers and these are typically new large-scale developments. Our experience shows that most buyers are looking for something more personal and specific. Our pro-active search service helps them to find it."

So what are the current purchase trends? Interest in Switzerland is increasing despite the hurdles to buying in the non-EU country. Switzerland has a reputation for doing things differently to the rest of the Europe and the Swiss property market is no exception with different rules in each canton. Sales of ski property to foreign buyers have been concentrated in French-speaking Switzerland historically and prices there are well above the Swiss average. Recent measures in the Valais canton aimed at capping demand also have the effect of limiting sales to foreigners. Andrew believes that the Valais restrictions "will stay in place for a while meaning foreign buyers will face greater obstacles in buying ski property there, though it is not impossible. The restrictions are location specific and there are other excellent opportunities elsewhere in the area."

In France, the recent changes introduced by French President Nicholas Sarkozy are likely to increase the appeal of ski property. "Since the changes to the French inheritance tax limits, we are seeing growing numbers of enquiries for French resorts".

Alpine Specialist's clients have a range of objectives for their property purchase. Some intend to use it solely as a second home; others are looking either for a decent capital return or reliable rental income. "Our philosophy is to adapt to the client rather than to the property and we work with clients to identify the considerations relevant to their particular goal. It's not always simply a question of location. Aspects of the property market differ widely between resorts. For example, only a handful of resorts are genuinely year-round tourist

## Expert advice adds value to buying a place in the Alps

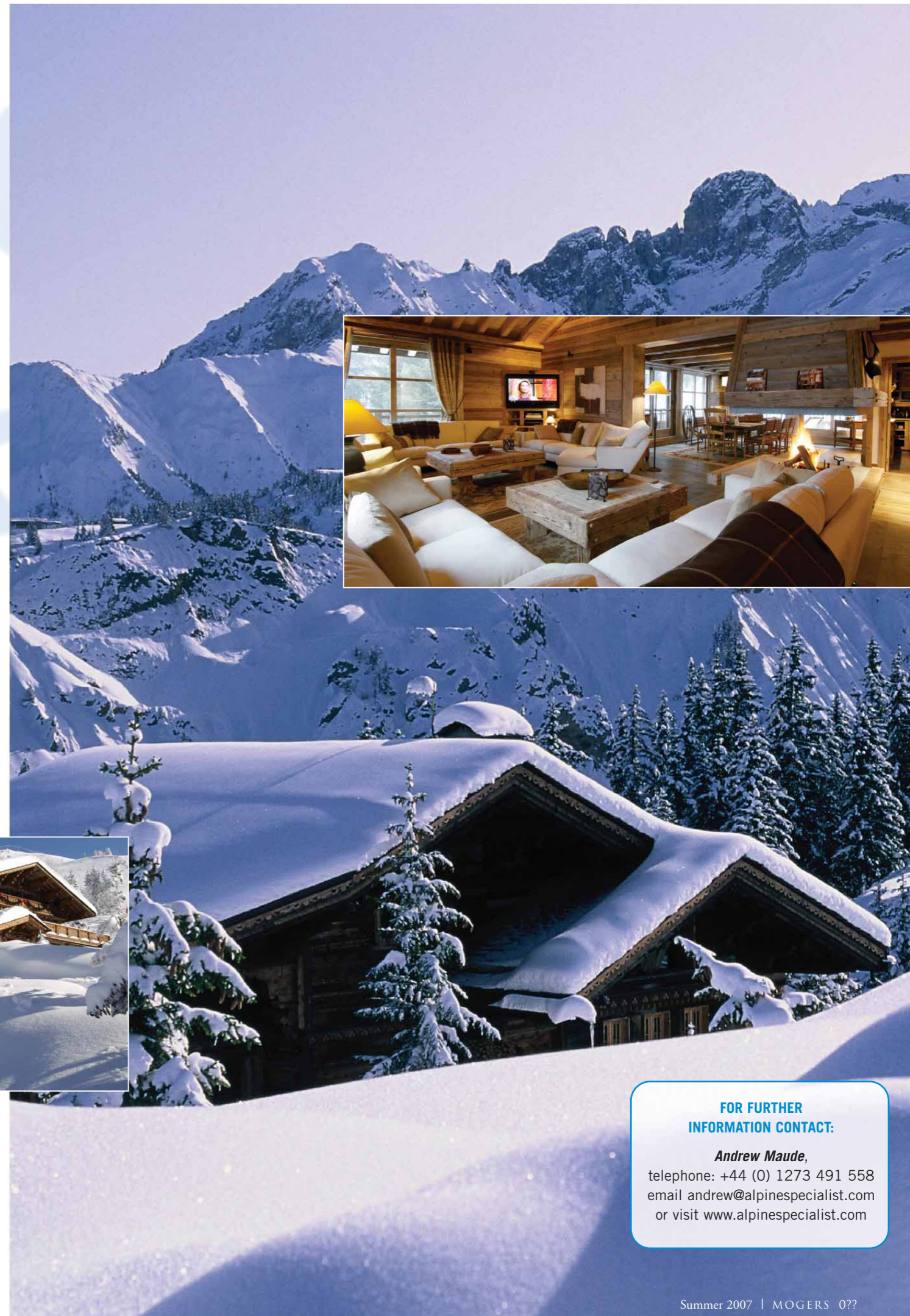
destinations, which would be an absolute necessity for a client looking for a good level of rental income."

Getting somebody else to do the legwork is an excellent way to reduce the frustration and expense of wasted trips to the Alps to view unsuitable properties. However, Andrew warns that finding the property is only "half the battle." Buyers also have to deal with the complexities of foreign tax and legal systems. It is crucial to get expert advice at every stage of the purchase process. "Using a company like ours puts you in contact with the relevant advisors."

Pat Jennings, a client of Alpine Specialist, praised the comprehensive service offered by the company. "I was frustrated with trying to find the right property. Alpine Specialist advised me on the best location, found me a



property in Verbier that suited my requirements and used their market knowledge to maximise the value of my property both from a rental and personal perspective. Their hands-on approach at every stage took away the stress and saved me time as well as money."



**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

**Andrew Maude,**

telephone: +44 (0) 1273 491 558  
email [andrew@alpinespecialist.com](mailto:andrew@alpinespecialist.com)  
or visit [www.alpinespecialist.com](http://www.alpinespecialist.com)