

# Ski Trip to Bardonecchia, Italy

*by Mr Nicholls, Trip Leader*

## **Travelling to the Resort**

The Bridgnorth Endowed ski trip left for the resort of Bardonecchia in the Italian Alps at the bruising time of 1am on Sunday 24th March. We made a slow start as the driver struggled to load the huge cases many had brought, and proud and anxious parents understandably soon became a little bored and restless. Once muscle power had prevailed, we were gratefully waved off and the drive to Gatwick began. Hopes of a quiet, sleep-filled journey inevitably fell by the wayside as the coach was filled with excited chatter for the entire trip.

The airport experience was uneventful and, after a flight of an hour and a half and a coach transfer of similar length, we drove through a pretty resort to our not so pretty hotel. Built for the 2006 Winter Olympics, the Hotel Villaggio Olimpico was not beautiful, but turned out to be adequately functional and a ten-minute walk from the slopes. Not surprisingly for the time of year, the resort was snow-free and, as I looked up to the ski area, I was a little concerned with how bare the slopes were. We knew we would be able to ski as the resort had snow-making machines, but the quantity and quality remained questionable.

## **Boot Room of Doom**

Day one of such a trip is always hard work. Having moved into rooms, which were nice ensembles with large balconies, we walked to the slopes for the laborious process of equipment fitting at the ski rental shop. Once complete, we moved all skis and boots into what became known as the 'Boot Room of Doom' – a crowded and chaotic underground locker room catering for several ski groups, where, unsurprisingly, helmets, poles and even skis were lost on many occasions. It was the site of the twice-daily tortuous ritual of putting ski boots on. Some never managed this independently, and the knees of my ski saloppettes bear the scars of battling peoples' feet into their boots. The boot room was the scene of blood (after a nosebleed), sweat and even tears. It was also a place of stench when the toilet developed a significant plumbing problem (for which we were not responsible). I suspect that the 'Boot Room of Doom' will be missed by few of the party.

## **First Day on the Slopes**

On the first day of skiing, the weather was hot, the sun was out, and the snow was melting. The excitement of putting new ski gear on was rapidly lost in heat and sweat. The layer system was taken a little far by a couple of people, and I found myself carrying a bundle of ski coats from those who had chosen to wear two coats on Day 1. George B started with an astonishing coat that could have been used on Everest. A couple of students required feeding and watering to keep going, but by the end of the day, groups had been organised into ability. Those who knew how to navigate a ski lift went straight up high. Those who could not, headed for the beginners' slopes. He-who-was-a-little-over-confident went up high, but then came back down – on foot. To be fair, Ollie H did suggest to me that he should not go up but, ever-optimistic, I told him he would be ok. Mrs Smallman walked him down and I suspect she cussed me a bit! Ollie recovered brilliantly as the week progressed, eventually securing the 'proudest moment' award as, by the end of the week, he fluently skied down the very run that defeated him at the start. For the groups that did not go up high, the first two days of skiing were hard graft. Students had to dig deep as they learnt basic technique on the busy beginner slopes, with little rewarding excitement for their endeavours. However, those are the tough yards of learning to ski, where determination and resilience are needed, and for some, these days were fraught with doubt and disillusionment. Nevertheless, everyone soldiered on.

## **Snow Arrives for Day Two**

The second skiing day was transformational for two reasons. First, it snowed overnight and slopes, which had looked desperately thin and brown, now looked beautifully white. Secondly, people started to get good(ish!), so by the end of the day everyone was ready to go up the mountain. The more experienced group were zooming around by now, although not without incident. Passing above them on lifts on several occasions, we saw some great skiing, but the standout moment was perhaps when Solly A failed to turn as he approached the rest of the group at speed, and crashed hard into another member of the party. His instructor memorably shouted 'Solly! Why you not turn? You crazy boy'. Needless to say, Solly was known as 'Crazy Boy' from then on.

## **Great Improvement and Perfect Conditions**

From the third to the fifth days of skiing, everything changed. We continued to have more snow, and conditions were great. The experienced group were joined by everyone else, and suddenly skiing made sense to everyone. Ultimately, skiing is about skill, adrenaline, adventure and fun, and once everyone went up the lifts to the top of the mountains, all those elements started to kick in. Progress became exponential as the challenges grew greater. The advanced group were now zooming all over the area, and really benefitting from the varied conditions. Each night it would snow, and the first runs were characterised by a nice layer of perfect powder on the pistes, creating beautiful silent skiing lines. As the days progressed, the snow would be swashed into small lumps and bumps, but in a very skiable way whilst adding a little extra challenge. The second group were also upping their mileage and speed, their techniques having greatly improved. Reagan H was promoted to this group, and, although I frequently met him having crashed and with a ski missing, he soon got the hang of it, and the group were flying down red runs.

The other two groups were combined and were improving equally quickly. When standing still, they looked particularly good due to Dillon M having a red, white and blue jacket that looked like the British Ski Team official kit. The deception did not endure once movement was resumed. It was replaced by much howling and screaming; Lauren M and Leah M being vocal enough to jointly win the award for noisiest skier. I personally enjoyed the sight of Harry O bellowing 'Logan! What are you doing? I'm going to crash! What are you doing?' as Logan T skied perfectly and calmly in front of Harry in the snaking line of skiers, completely unperturbed by the rumpus behind him.

## **Evening Entertainment**

The evenings started quietly with a bit of table tennis and table football on the second night, and then a quiz night on the third. Arguably, the quiz was quite tough, but perhaps the most notable moment of the night was when Liam F came out of his room in full suit looking very 007. It remains unclear as to why, but heads were certainly turned. Thanks to Mr Clayton for being quizmaster, and all staff for supporting the teams. Unfortunately, I came last. I think others cheated a bit, but I refuse to be bitter. It's the taking part I'm told...

Wednesday night saw a foray into town for a well-deserved pizza night in a local restaurant, and on Thursday we had double bill of entertainment with a film and karaoke. To avoid singing, I supervised the film. I chose a motivational ski film, which was attended by six students in the 200-seat theatre. A random family wandered in, and I let them stay as it bolstered the numbers a little. Afterwards, I was told that one of the students, Meryn F, admitted to another member of staff that they 'only stayed because they felt bad for Mr Nicholls.' Thankfully, the film was short, and we all retired to the karaoke which provided some sensational performances. I was not in time to see Ms Taylor perform Adele or Mrs Smallman sing Nirvana, but I am told they were brilliant. I did witness Mr Clayton singing Queen. Well, I think it counted as singing. Martha B and Lucy H won the award for best

performance with a barnstorming rendition of Taylor Swift. The final performance won the 'Sickest Performance' award, as Charlie J 'sung' (in a similar way to Mr C) Gold by Spandau Ballet, which resulted in the entire party singing along with the chorus – a genuinely rousing performance which captured the brilliant atmosphere of the trip.

### **Final Day on the Slopes**

It is fair to say that everyone was pretty exhausted by the final day of skiing. We had maintained a tough schedule, with a 6.30am wake-up call each morning, and bed, in theory, by about ten, but as us staff patrolled the corridors, conversations were heard to roll late into the night. Friday night saw us packing for a 3.30am start, and we eventually rolled into the Innage Lane car park some twelve and a half hours later.

At the start of the trip, I told the group that there were three main aims of the trip: To learn to ski and overcome the challenges associated with that, to get to know and like other members of the group, and to have fun. I am happy that we met all of our objectives in spades. Everyone in the group were amazing, behaviour almost always brilliant, and throughout the whole trip our student were brilliant ambassadors for the school. Full of energy, friendly, fun and with great team spirit, I could not have asked for more. Sometimes simple things shout loudest and, after leaving, our rep, Gloria, texted the simple message: 'Your school was so nice. I couldn't have wished for a better group.' I'll take that.

### **Awards Night Roll of Honour**

Skiing:

- Best skier: Ella Davis
- Most improved skier: Reagan Haden
- Most resilient skier: Harry O'Driscoll
- Proudest ski moment: Ollie Hughes
- Best wipeout: Solly Ashby
- Noisiest skiers: Lauren McCormick and Leah Morris

Trip Life:

- Most supportive to others: Sophie Hill
- Best dressed: Liam Forde
- Slowest mover: George Brown
- Most forgetful: Jackson Cannell
- Best singing performance: Lucy Hill and Martha Bradburn
- 'Sickest' singing performance: Charlie Jeavons