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EVOLUTION OF MOUNTAIN HOLIDAYS - A PANORAMIC VIEW

This report is prepared by Club Med Southern Africa.

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Welcome to the 2019 Club Med Southern Africa French Mountain Holiday Report.

The report will touch on:

- The current socio-economic landscape and impact on South African travel habits
- Local booking trends for the period 2019/2020
- Insights into the wellness travel industry
- The mountain biking/cycling community and its influence on the mountain travel season
- Key tips when embarking on your first ski holiday
- France as a diverse, culturally-rich and easily accessible destination
- The role of technology in the holiday experience
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References

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/global-economic-prospects> ¹

https://www.ilm.com/RXUK/RXUK_ILTM/2019/Reports/LuxCon_Report.pdf ²

<https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/industry-research/2018-global-wellness-economy-monitor/> ³

Socio-Economic climate South Africa

It's well-documented that the global economy is currently experiencing sluggish growth, with data from the 'World Bank Economic Outlook' report backing this assertion up, with rising debt, a shifting geo-political landscape and the possibility of escalating trade tensions all playing a part in this "softened" growth outlook.

Yet, despite this relatively bleak economic environment, Club Med has enjoyed a good year, reporting a 7% increase in sales and servicing 1.44 million customers, with that number representing the highest recorded by Club Med since the year 2000.

Drilling down a bit further, the World Bank report goes on to state that growth in emerging and developing economies has also been constrained by subdued investment, with South Africa a good example of this.

It may be one of the world's notable emerging market economies, but it has been negatively impacted on multiple fronts in 2019, largely due to the political uncertainty experienced during the first quarter and the Eskom crisis of the final quarter. Both have resulted in persistent economic weakness, the prospect of a possible credit rating downgrade by ratings agency Moody's, and a volatile currency. The resulting increased cost of living and weakened Rand have not only given rise to restricted household spending on both necessities and luxuries, but already price-conscious South African consumers have found themselves

shelling out more for international holidays.

Yet, despite these economic constraints, South Africans are still travelling abroad and continuing to holiday at Club Med's various All-Inclusive sun and snow resorts.

What has been notable, however, is how booking patterns have changed, with South African travellers now focusing even more on obtaining value for their financial investment in a holiday. This has resulted in a greater appreciation of discounts associated with advanced bookings, whilst this segment is also pushing for a wider variety of experiences at their holiday destinations.

With such a focus on price and the economic sensitivities of the current climate, it's no surprise to see operators exploring ways in which they can deliver 'risk-free' holidays for their customers.

Club Med, for example, packages holiday deals that allow the customer to pay up front and, effectively, 'lock in' the exchange rate, which then protects the customer from any potential future currency fluctuations. This has proved attractive to South African travellers, who are able to manage their budgets and avoid the anxiety caused by an unpredictable currency, such as the Rand.

Interestingly, another by-product of the Rand's volatility that Club Med has witnessed has been the greater uptake of full-board holidays and the All-Inclusive model that covers food, accommodation and ski essentials.

These sentiments are echoed by former Miss South Africa Jo-Ann Strauss, who recently holidayed in the Alps and noted, "I would definitely recommend the Club Med ski holidays to France to any family. My husband is from Munich and grew up on the slopes.



// Disconnect to Reconnect.

He knows ski resorts and was blown away by the ease of the trip. And the All-Inclusive aspect makes such sense for South Africans who are rather sensitive to currency fluctuations."

In this area, Club Med has conducted research that has shown that 57% of its customer base finds All-Inclusive ski holidays a "more appealing option."

MD of Club Med Southern Africa, Olivier Hannaert noted, "As customers hedge against the potential currency fluctuations of a weak Rand, paying upfront and in Rand for a holiday is a strong consideration but ASATA figures show that the overall market share of All-Inclusive

packages is up and is only expected to continue to perform well as consumers look to closely manage their holiday expenses with no risk of unexpected costs."

That being said, tour operators should be mindful of the socio-economic climate in South Africa and put this front and centre of their thinking when packaging holidays for expectant customers who want value for money and a variety of experiences.

Booking trends 2020

Club Med South Africa is seeing an increase in the overall number of visitors to its All-Inclusive resorts in France, and looking at bookings for 2020, there is solid 11% growth in French mountain destination travel, across both winter and summer.

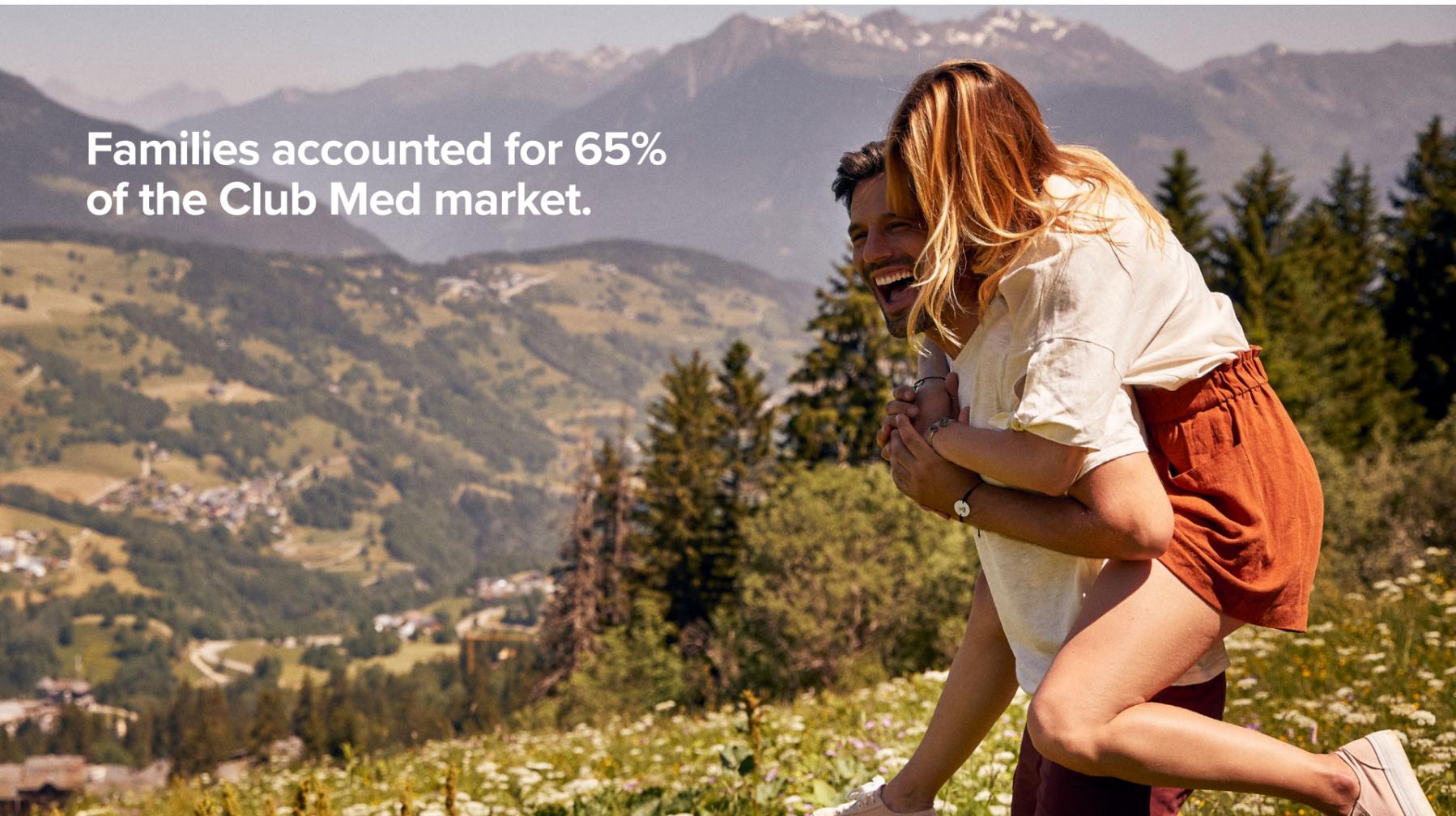
To date, of those travelling to France with Club Med, a high 77% are heading to the French mountains. One of the most notable shifts is in the number of first-time visitors to the Alps, who now make up 56% of Club Med's snow customer base.

Top 3 Club Med Winter (November-April) Mountain Destinations:

<p>01</p> <p>Val Thorens Sensations</p> 	<p>02</p> <p>Grand Massif Samoëns Morillon</p> 	<p>03</p> <p>Alpe d'Huez</p> 
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Top 3 Club Med Summer (June-October) Mountain Destinations:

- 01**
Alpe d'Huez
- 02**
Les Arcs Panorama
- 03**
Valmorel



Families accounted for 65% of the Club Med market.

Families account for 65% of the Club Med market and, as already cited, there appears to be a rise in popularity of the All-Inclusive holiday, particularly among young families. Another apparent booking trend is that of South Africans opting to take their holidays during the festive weeks of December and January, as opposed to other times of the year, and they seem to prefer booking these holidays up to a year in advance.

If one looks at bookings for March 2020, volume appeared to be at its peak a full 12 months in advance, confirming that South African customers buying holidays predominantly like to take advantage of the benefits of booking early, which include bonuses and associated discounts that come with advanced bookings on flights and the top picks of rooms and dates.

That being said, Club Med has also seen an increase in last-minute bookings, courtesy of more spontaneous travellers, who, for example, may prefer to book their March holiday in January.

Both segments and booking patterns point to a more financially-savvy market, whether it's searching for a last-minute 'deal' or being able to reap the benefits of booking well in advance and securing the best price.

Club Med is also seeing an increased number of new skiers booking holidays, making it imperative that more attention is given to ensuring information about ski destinations and their offerings are readily available to the market. In this regard, the simplified Club Med ski package, with its ease and convenience, complemented by the Club Med Ski hub offering a wealth of information for skiers of all levels, is already finding traction with the market and proving successful in attracting a wider audience of skiers.



Uptake of wellness travel

Following on from the booking trends that Club Med is seeing, is a shift in the types of holidays that customers are favouring. One of the areas proving increasingly popular is the segment that focuses on holidays that have health, wellness, activity and fitness as key elements.

According to the Reuter: Intelligence/ILTM report, 'MindStyle: The New Generation of Health & Wellness Travel'², health and wellness is not a niche category, but a "key aspect of the lives of the affluent, luxury consumer demographic – attracting those already well-versed in a healthy mindset and for whom health and wellness are top of mind in the diverse areas of their daily life." All this is stimulated by a growing global rejection of 'over-tourism' and a rising middle class with an increased desire for a holistic wellness lifestyle.

According to the '2018 Global Wellness Economy Monitor'³ report, the global wellness industry economy grew 12.8% over a three-year period, with the report also stating that wellness travel grew by 6.5% in the same period. That growth exceeded that of global tourism, which grew by 3.2% in those three years. The wellness travel sector is projected to enjoy annual growth of 7.5% up to 2020.

According to the above report, wellness trips account for 6.6% of all travel, but represent 16.8% of total tourism expenditure, making it a potentially lucrative sector. Europe remains the region with the highest number of wellness trips, but in the past five years Asia has made the most gains, both in the number of wellness trips and associated expenditure.



Wellness Tourism Trips and Expenditures by Region, 2015 and 2017



The '2018 Global Wellness Economy Monitor' report goes on to say that secondary wellness travellers (those who maintain and participate in wellness experiences while travelling, but wellness is not their primary motivation for the trip) accounted for 89% of wellness tourism trips and 86% of wellness tourism expenditure in 2017. Secondary wellness tourism also continues to grow at a faster rate than primary wellness tourism, as seen by the figures that state that secondary wellness tourism trips grew by 10% annually, while primary trips grew by 8% annually between 2015 and 2017.

	Number of trips (Millions)		Expenditures (US\$ billions)	
	2015	2017	2015	2017
North America	186.5	20.41	\$215.7	\$241.7
Europe	249.9	291.8	\$193.4	\$210.8
Asia-Pacific	193.9	257.6	\$111.2	\$241.7
Latin America-Caribbean	46.8	59.1	\$30.4	\$34.8
Middle East-North Africa	8.5	11.0	\$8.3	\$10.7
Africa	5.4	6.5	\$4.2	\$4.8
Total Wellness Tourism Industry	691.0	830.0	\$563.2	\$639.4

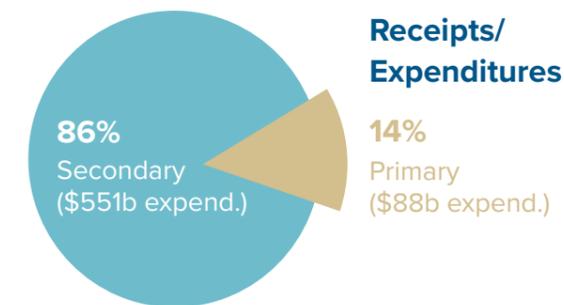
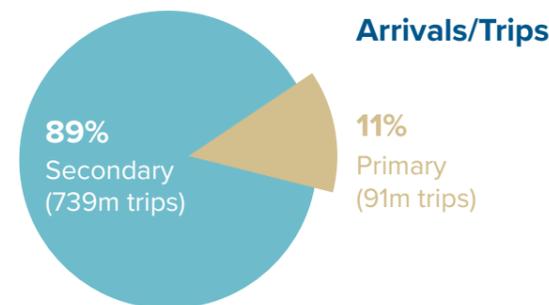
Note: These figures combine both international/inbound and domestic wellness tourism spending, and also include both primary and secondary wellness trips. Figures may not sum to total due to rounding.

Source: Estimates by the Global Wellness Institute, based on tourism data industry data from Euromonitor International.

Secondary wellness travel leads in trips and expenditures



Wellness travellers spend more per trip than the average tourist and this holds true for both domestic and international travellers. In 2017, international wellness tourists on average spent \$1,528 per trip, 53% more than the typical international tourist. This is because wellness travellers are typically more affluent, educated and well-travelled, and they tend to be early adopters who are willing to try new and novel experiences.

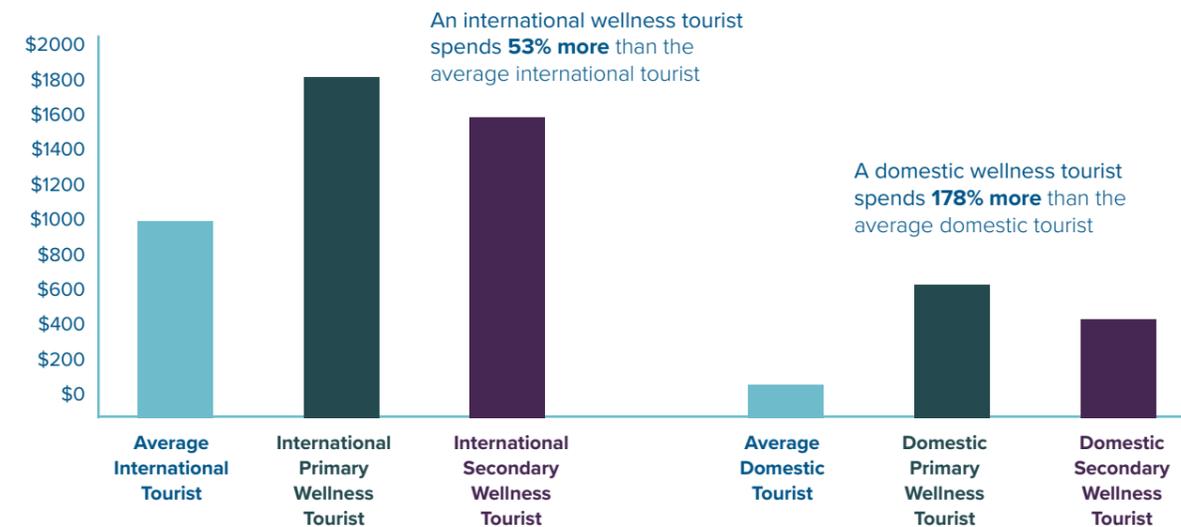


Note: These figures combine both international/inbound and domestic wellness tourism spending. Source: Estimates by the Global Wellness Institute, based upon tourism industry data from Euromonitor International.

Wellness Tourism Spending Premiums, 2017



Further to this, Club Med is also seeing a trend of customers expecting more unique experiences and opportunities to relax, pursue wellness and disconnect from their day-to-day life while on holiday. More than just travelling for one pursuit, they're looking for the entire mountain lifestyle experience with friends, kids and family. They want to visit the spa, swim, tan on a terrace, enjoy world-class dining, discover the village and go to a local cheese factory – rather than focusing exclusively on the sport of skiing or cycling.



Source: Estimates by the Global Wellness Institute, based upon tourism industry data from Euromonitor International.

Source: Global Wellness Economy Monitor
Source: Global Wellness Institute, Global Wellness Tourism Economy, (November 2018).

Today's travellers want nature, fresh air, and the chance to disconnect, as stress levels and working hours are higher and more demanding than ever before. They value time to reconnect with their partner and with their kids. This need ties together perfectly with Club Med's brand mission of "Disconnect to reconnect."

Mountain holidays and the wellness traveller

France as a destination has always been a firm favourite for overseas travel, offering many drawcards for South Africans. Besides being easily accessible, the destination offers different seasons and the possibility of all-year travel. Although France is half the size of South Africa, it is exceptional in its diversity and boasts an incredible array of landscapes and experiences.

For starters, with regards to winter, there are a diversity of offerings, ski resorts of all shapes and sizes, guaranteed snow, ski-in and ski-out options, the biggest ski area in the world with slopes for beginners through to advanced skiers, and party time during and after skiing.

It's quite simply a skier's paradise.

That being said, Club Med is mindful of the fact that there is more to the French Alps than just snow and skiing.

The French summer is just as appealing to the wellness traveller and Club Med has acknowledged this and ensured that it is able to offer a year-long mountain experience by recently launching its Club Med Summer Mountain holiday experience in the French Alps, which offers travellers who aren't avid skiers an active mountain holiday in summer. Complete with hiking and

biking activities, the offering also ticks vital boxes when it comes to All-Inclusive value and getting the most out of an experience for holidaymakers.

The days are longer, and the activities are diverse: walking, trail running, cycling, orienteering, rock-climbing, Via Ferrata (protected climbing), and golf – all activities that ensure an overall sense of well-being in the most beautiful of settings.

For South Africans, the options are numerous and can be enjoyed as an inter-generational family, a group of friends, or as a couple. There are also plenty of activities outside of the wellness segment, including the great French cuisine, exploring the various little villages and cheese factories – all the activities that prove there is more to a French mountain holiday than just wellness and exercise.

Nonetheless, with all indicators showing that wellness and active holidays are on the rise and a potentially huge market worth considering, it makes financial sense for tour operators to do their research, invest in this market, build the right relationships, and put together the types of deals that will allow them to tap into this lucrative market.



It's quite simply
a skier's paradise.



Mountain biking insights

If one drills down into the wellness discussion, Club Med has found that the sport of mountain biking is emerging as an important player in this space and proving a popular pursuit for French Alps summer holiday-makers.

“I am an avid mountain biker, but for some reason I hadn’t connected the dots that Les Arcs Panorama is the ideal place for mountain biking. And you can use e-bikes too, so you get to experience more of the landscape. If you’re a real thrill-seeker, there are some epic endurance trails. This area should really be known as a mountain biking Mecca,” says Amy Hopkins, Managing Editor of Women’s Health South Africa.

In partnership with TREAD Media – one of South Africa’s leading authorities on mountain biking - Club Med South Africa conducted a survey with 601 respondents to gain greater insight into the mountain biking community.

The results were interesting and produced some key takeaways:

Level of mountain biker/road cyclist

Recreational	20%
Very keen	51%
Highly committed	24%
Very social	5%

Frequency of leisure/holiday travel

4 or more times a year	20%
3 times a year	22%
Twice a year	34%
Once a year	24%

Leisure travel pattern

Travel locally in South Africa	50%
Travel internationally only	2%
Travel locally and internationally	48%

Main purpose for leisure travel

Experience new things	24%
Sport	13%
Discover destinations	24%
Family time	31%
Other	8%

Would you travel to Europe to ride (not race) mountain/road bikes?

Yes	72%
No	4%
Maybe	24%

If you go to ride in Europe, would you take your partner or family to also ride or enjoy leisure activities?

Yes	53%
No	12%
Maybe if facilities allow	35%

What type of package suits you best?

All-Inclusive	38%
Half-board	30%
Pay as you go	32%



“When we went to experience the summer mountains, I had a couple of concerns. Did Club Med cater sufficiently for families and did they offer real mountain biking as we know it? Both concerns were quickly allayed once we arrived at Club Med Les Arcs Panorama. The resort has a strong family focus. In fact, it encourages family bookings and has facilities that ensure kids and teens are entertained and cared for, allowing parents opportunities to enjoy activities alone. As for the mountain biking, well, it was incredible!

The fleet of bikes is expansive in terms of sizes and you can choose between a regular mountain bike and an e-bike – plus the mountain bike guides are professional and experienced. It was an incredibly memorable trip that we’ll treasure as a family forever.”

Sean Badenhorst – Co-Founder TREAD Media





In conversation with...

H el ene Bezuidenhoudt
 Director - Atout France South Africa
 (France Tourism Development Agency)



What are some of the highlights in France for South Africans?

Research shows that South Africans enjoy Provence, Normandy, the Alps, Strasbourg, the Loire Ch ateaux, Burgundy and Bordeaux. From barging along the canals and cruising on the rivers to cycling, walking and shopping in big department stores and at the local village market – the list is long and varied.

Discover France

Sea - there is over 3,400km of coastline

Mountains - major ranges: Vosges, Jura, Pyr enes, Massif Central, Alps, Corsica

Nature - more than 30% of France is forest and 50% is in the countryside

Cities – interesting, diverse and historically fascinating

What is Atout France’s strategy in South Africa?

France is a popular destination for South Africans and we acknowledge this in various ways:

- There is an Atout France office in South Africa, which shows the importance the market holds for France.

- The French government has facilitated the visa application process and committed to delivering visas, provided all documentation is in order, within two working days of application in Johannesburg or Cape Town.

- Atout France works closely with the media and trade to increase the public’s knowledge of France as a tourist destination, and to assist in promoting France.

Have you seen any concerted efforts by local travel operators to showcase France?

Because South Africans want to go to France for a myriad of reasons, the country’s tour operators and trade partners that promote outbound travel promote France – and they showcase France as a tourist destination very well. Atout France acknowledges and thanks the trade for their constant support.

What opportunities are there to increase market share?

Most travel to France is leisure-

Top Activities in the French Summer Mountains

56% Hiking

27% Cycling

17% Mountain Climbing

based, but we are seeing an increase in trade show visits, business interaction between the two countries, educational, incentive and team-building groups, tourism during major sports events, visits linked to cruises and barging, plus travel to the mountains in summer and winter. There are many reasons to get clients to France! An additional benefit for a price-conscious market, such as South Africa, are the low-season rates, as they can travel outside French school holidays.

What’s the 2019/2020 growth forecast for mountain travel?

Mountains in winter are a growing destination. First-timers all over the world, and South Africans specifically, are able to

discover another world and enjoy experiences that just cannot be equalled. There is a sense of freedom and absolute quiet where you are surrounded by the mountains and snow. Now you can experience it in summer. For the climate-sensitive, when it is hot everywhere else, it is always cooler higher in the mountains! Mountain travel is literally a breath of fresh air, in summer or winter, and great for family holidays.

How easy is the French visa process for South Africans?

France is, together with 25 other European countries, part of the Schengen area, which South Africans need a visa to access. The French government has outsourced the visa application to Capago International centres located in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town. The French consulates both in Cape Town and Johannesburg work to deliver the visa within two working days, provided of course all the documentation submitted is compliant.

The application portal is <https://france-visas.gouv.fr/web/france-visas/>.



France as a destination has and will continue to be a favourite amongst Club Med travellers for its tourist and cultural offering. Now we can offer current and new markets another exciting side of France they might have not experienced before.

Olivier Hannaert
 MD Club Med Southern Africa



In conversation with...

Olivier Hannaert
Managing Director – Club Med Southern Africa

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How does Club Med reconcile being the leader in All-Inclusive holidays and having serious luxury credentials?

Club Med has been a key player in the luxury segment for the last 10 years, whether you are at the seaside or in the mountains. Our resort design is upscale and set in the finest destinations around the world. Our mountain resorts are ski-in and ski-out, with amazing views, spacious rooms and incredible cuisine. Our premium All-Inclusive formula includes ski passes and lessons from renowned French ski schools, as well as all the other activities. However, it is not just a ski resort - it's a complete holiday resort with multiple dining options, fitness activities, gym, hiking, childcare programs, swimming pools, and so on. All this gives you the luxury of a totally hassle-free trip, which is critical when it comes to winter holidays, as there are often many pain points for clients heading to the mountains. Our All-Inclusive formula fixes all these issues, so you don't have to.

What's changed in terms of expectations when it comes to the on-mountain experience travellers are asking for?

There has been a notable shift. Due to the economic constraints, vacationers are expecting more from their trips and summer/spring mountain holidays are becoming more popular, because the days are longer. You literally get a whole 'second' day! Assuming you ski in the morning, you still have the afternoon to enjoy other activities. Of course, the resort must be located somewhere at high altitude, where you can ski late in the season. In the French Alps, in particular, there's a growing clientele that's entirely new: from South Africa, Russia, the Middle East, Turkey, Lebanon, Israel and farther away, like Brazil, Singapore and China. It's a growing trend, because in those countries it's seen as very exotic to spend a winter holiday in the mountains. Our responsibility is to welcome them not just as beginner skiers, but as newcomers to the mountain world in general. Because they are coming from very far away, we need to handle all the boring aspects of

long-distance travel and the logistics. With us, they don't have to deal with anything - they just book and enjoy. And this is a trend that's just beginning – it's only going to grow.



What are the biggest challenges that Club Med faces in the coming years?

Priority is securing the last, top sites in the European Alps. Our plan to launch a new Club Med mountain resort every year is very ambitious, so we're accelerating our development pipeline. The second challenge is growing our international clientele, which can be tough. The European market is quite stable, so we are focusing globally on Asia, Africa and America. To be successful, we must design the experience for these new markets, which will require some adaptation on our part. The third challenge is to keep expanding the length of the season. To have luxury resorts on the best sites in the Alps is a huge investment, so we must be able to operate year-round. With the growth of mountain tourism in winter, there is potential to grow it as a summer destination and target markets that will benefit from the various summer mountain activities. We can't just have a six-month season lasting from November to April - we must expand.

In terms of enticing the under-leveraged source markets, what can you do to convince those guests to make the trip to the Alps?

People want to relax and disconnect from their day-to-day life. As Club Med, we want to free them from the organisation of the trip and acknowledge their money concerns and need for value for money – meaning, once they are there, they don't have to pay anything extra, and we give them a gorgeous environment to enjoy and rediscover the pleasure of life! Our job at Club Med is to save them from the boring things in life. This is the very reason why we invented the All-Inclusive formula 70 years ago. France as a destination has and will continue to be a favourite amongst Club Med travellers for its tourist and cultural offering. Now we can offer current and new markets another side of France they might have not experienced before. Club Med is continuing to expand and improve, as seen by the opening of Les Arcs Panorama, a premium 4Trident resort with a 5Trident Exclusive Collection space which opened in the Paradiski® domain in December 2018. There are also plans to add new resorts in Tignes and La Rosière in 2020, as well as to renovate our Alpe d'Huez resort over the course of the next three years.



Ski comparison tool

As mentioned previously in this report, All-Inclusive offerings that include accommodation, flights, transfers, lift passes, ski lessons, full-board, dining, unlimited drinks, entertainment and all non-ski activities are proving an appealing proposition for travellers. But the perception still exists that the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) approach to booking a similar holiday works out cheaper.

Taking this perception into account and considering the increased need for value for money, Club Med created the online Club Med Ski Comparison Tool, which enables customers to see precisely the savings they can make compared to the chalet and DIY options.

The tool not only shows overall savings but is able to break down the costs per category (flights, accommodation, meals, ski lift passes, ski lessons, childcare, etc), thus allowing travellers to not only get an overview of the costs included, but also make an informed decision when it comes to who to book with.



Ski holiday comparison tool example

[Click here for the link to the tool](#)

Which ski area?

Paradiski

When?

During school holidays

Travelling with?

2 adults 0 kids

Accommodation type?

Chalet or apartment

An example of the search results...

The table below shows the cost per category difference between a ski holiday with Club Med (at Club Med Arcs Extreme) versus a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) approach:

	Club Med Arcs Extreme All-Inclusive package excluding flights (Paradiski domain France)	Price of the Arcs 2000 resort in the Paradiski domain
Accommodation	Included	R17 081 average
Grocery shopping and meals	Included	R11 155 average
Ski lift pass	Included	R10 242 average
Adult ski and snowboard classes	Included	R9 571 average
Non-ski activities	Included	R1 250 average
Entertainment	Included	R1 394 average
Total	R37 224	R50 693
R13 469 TOTAL SAVINGS WITH CLUB MED ALL-INCLUSIVE		

*This comparison was based on the prices at the time of publishing. These prices are subject to change.





In conversation with...

Peter Peyper
Sales & Marketing Director – Afriski
Founder & GM – Gone Skiing



How can South Africans try skiing as a wellness activity, before booking a holiday?

Skiing is not a cheap sport and all the gear needed for a snow holiday is often a barrier to entry. Added to that, there is no ski culture in South Africa and most see it as a sport practised by Europeans and Americans or the elite few in Southern Africa. We've made a large investment in our snowmaking system to offer skiing for the months of June to August and we now must change the general perception that you can only ski when there is natural snow. We are trying to make it more accessible to all South Africans by offering day packages, where people can have a short ski lesson, try tubing and bumboarding, and finish off with some après-ski to get the full snow experience before heading off to the French Alps

And what about ski gear? What should people know and where can they buy?

At Gone Skiing, we help customers in the build-up to their snow holiday by creating a fun and relaxed shopping environment and a variety of the top ski and snowboard brands from around the world. Our knowledgeable staff have all skied before or spent a

few seasons working in ski resorts. To accommodate a price-conscious market, we also allow parents to trade in their kids' ski gear once they've outgrown it.

What concrete steps can be taken to win more business in coming years and keep ski holidays top of mind for vacationers?

There are opportunities to market destinations across each other's platforms to engage with a wider audience. For example:

- Be aware that consumers are growing more price-conscious and offer more value for less
- Focus on increased exposure through partners
- Attend more shows and exhibitions
- Create a strong digital media presence sharing engaging content



A couple of important points:

- Cheaper is not always better and having the right gear is very important
- Buy a ski jacket that you will use outside of skiing and wear out at night or to work
- Clothing should not just be warm, but needs to be breathable and waterproof
- Layer, shell jackets and mid-layers are more practical and can always be worn separately in our mild South African winters
- Prepare for the worst, because what you leave at home you need to buy in euros
- Most people know someone who has skied before, so borrow what you can



Technology

There is no question that technology has and will continue to play a major part in the way we interact with the world on a day-to-day basis. When it comes to skiing and mountain activities, technology is indeed making ski trips easier to plan and enjoy. The popularity of the GoPro amongst thrill-seekers is a testament to this, with the 170-degree wide-angle lens capturing some amazing scenes that a normal camera simply can't.

Further, the lifting of limitations placed on the commercial and recreational use of drones by various civil aviation authorities has opened up new possibilities for the capturing of incredible action shots while on the slopes. On top of that, smartwatches and fitness tracking devices like Garmin and Fitbit have been revolutionary in allowing users to not only track their fitness levels, but also understand and manage their health.

Digitisation extends to the ski holiday journey, as well, and operators such as Club Med are looking at ways of making it a seamless experience. This applies to areas such as pre-departure research, booking, and the on-mountain experience. Club Med's Easy Arrival service prepares clients for their upcoming holiday via digital integration and allows guests to customise their rental ski gear, which is placed in personal lockers ahead of arrival, and pre-register their children in the kids' club program.

Resorts around the world are integrating digital solutions and tapping into devices that travellers are already accustomed to using. For example, at 12 of the 18 Vail Resorts properties in the United States, including Beaver Creek and Keystone, the EpicMix app tracks statistics such as "total elevation traversed", making for a more comprehensive experience.

It's an example of how operators are putting technology at the forefront of operations and guest experience, whilst wearables is another area in which operators can interact with guests and enhance their experiences, linking guest profiles to physical devices that ease friction throughout the stay.

The first of these wearable RFID-equipped wristbands launched in March 2017 at Club Med Peisey-Vallandry in France. The device serves as an all-access pass connected to a personal profile. It's a room key, a spa pass and a handy way to unlock ski rentals, meaning guests don't need to keep track of wallets or passes.

Paradiski in France, one of the world's largest ski areas, has introduced a mobile app, YUGE, which delivers up-to-the-second snow and weather conditions, lift line updates, and area maps to



Club Med research shows that almost a third of people used their smartphone for navigation



users' devices.

Club Med research has shown that almost a third of people use their smartphone for navigation, while a further one in five use apps to track their exercise and record their speed. Club Med is also cognisant of the power of social media and to that end is currently designing resorts with 'Instagram-perfect' spots in mind.

Nick Castagnoli of Rossignol, a French manufacturer of winter sports equipment, confirms that there is an appetite for the latest innovations in cutting-edge equipment.

"Some boot models even feature integrated Bluetooth-compatible heaters!" he says.



Key takeaways

Despite the socio-economic challenges faced by the South African market, the travel industry continues to gain market share and South Africans are still booking French mountain holidays.

Not deterred by the fluctuations of the Rand, they have simply become savvier in terms of how they approach their holiday bookings and are ensuring that they take advantage of discount offers and advanced booking bonuses.

There has also been a shift in what they want from a holiday, no longer satisfied with being idle on a trip and looking to be more active and pursue a healthy lifestyle. This, even on holiday, and to ensure a more well-rounded holiday experience. In particular, mountain biking is proving increasingly popular in this segment.



These changes driven by the uptake in the appreciation of wellness and a more price-conscious consumer have also seen a shift in the offerings of tour operators, who are making strides to accommodate the demands of the ‘new mountain traveller’.

In this regard, there’s a nice fit between the popularity of France - and its mountain resorts – with South African holiday-makers, and the fit with the wellness traveller emerging out of this market, thanks to what a French mountain holiday can offer on so many different levels.

As always, for operators, the key will be in knowing the product, knowing the audience/market, having the relationships, and being able to put all these elements together, to ensure regular trade and a continuation of the popularity of the French mountains as a preferred destination for South African travellers.

It’s here that Club Med is perfectly placed to capitalise on the opportunity that exists in this market, thanks to its comprehensive offering and understanding of what this market is looking for from a French mountain holiday.





ABOUT CLUB MED

Club Méditerranée SA, a French company established in 1950, has been developing premium recreation for almost 70 years. The famous quote by Gerard Blitz, Club Med founder, “The aim of life is to be happy. The place to be happy is here. The time to be happy is now”, is the company’s motto. Apart from a huge number of summer resorts, Club Med currently has 22 ski resorts, 15 of which are located in the French Alps. The company’s strategy is to open three to five new resorts every year, with at least one resort in the Alps.

Club Med 
worldwide resorts
all-inclusive experiences

ABOUT ATOUT FRANCE

France’s tourism development agency, Atout France, is responsible for reinforcing the country’s position as an international destination by guiding regions with their development strategies and encouraging the setting up of investment projects to stimulate French tourism. It provides its 1,300 partners with tools to understand the demand for tourism by offering marketing and promotional activities to boost their international development. Atout France is responsible for guaranteeing the quality of services provided to visitors by establishing rating systems, registration numbers and quality labels. Atout France leverages its network of 32 offices in 29 countries to develop its role internationally.

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