



# Club Med $\Psi$

*Ski Report 2021/22*



# THE RETURN TO SKI: WINTER SPORTS IN A NEW ERA

Club Med is pleased to share a summary of their ninth annual ski report, which seeks to examine the latest developments within the industry as we look ahead to the winter 2021/22 season.

“At the start of 2020, it would have been unimaginable to think that Brits are only just now able to think about heading back to the slopes as we approach winter 2021/22, following two seasons of disruptions. Coming from the first signs of the global pandemic impacting the 2019/20 season, forcing it to end abruptly in March, to a season which never went ahead last year, we are confident and optimistic that the upcoming season will be bigger and better than ever as demand for missed ski holidays soars. We are however acutely aware that we need to continue to provide reassurance to customers as Covid-19 continues to affect the way in which people are thinking about winter sports holidays,” said Estelle Giraudeau, Managing Director, UK & Northern Europe at Club Med.

It cannot be ignored that the reopening of international travel under the traffic light system has been nothing short of chaotic for holidaymakers, who have constantly had to battle with ever changing and unclear rules from the outset. While there is still a long way to go in rebuilding consumer confidence and getting the travel industry well and truly back on its feet, the recent announcement of the overhaul of the traffic light system in favour of a new two-tier system is at least a step in the right direction. We hope this will continue to ignite a level of assurance for customers as they look ahead to the upcoming winter season and help to get Brits back to the slopes as soon as possible.

**“We are confident and optimistic that the upcoming season will be bigger and better than ever as demand for missed ski holidays soars”** said Estelle Giraudeau, Managing Director, UK & Northern Europe at Club Med.





## COVID-19



Over the past 18 months, millions of people across the UK had their holiday plans altered. For those who had been on a winter sports holiday in the past four years, over half (58%) had a trip cancelled due to the pandemic. From this, three quarters (75%) chose to postpone their holiday to the following season, with 45% of Club Med customers doing this from the 2020/21 season.

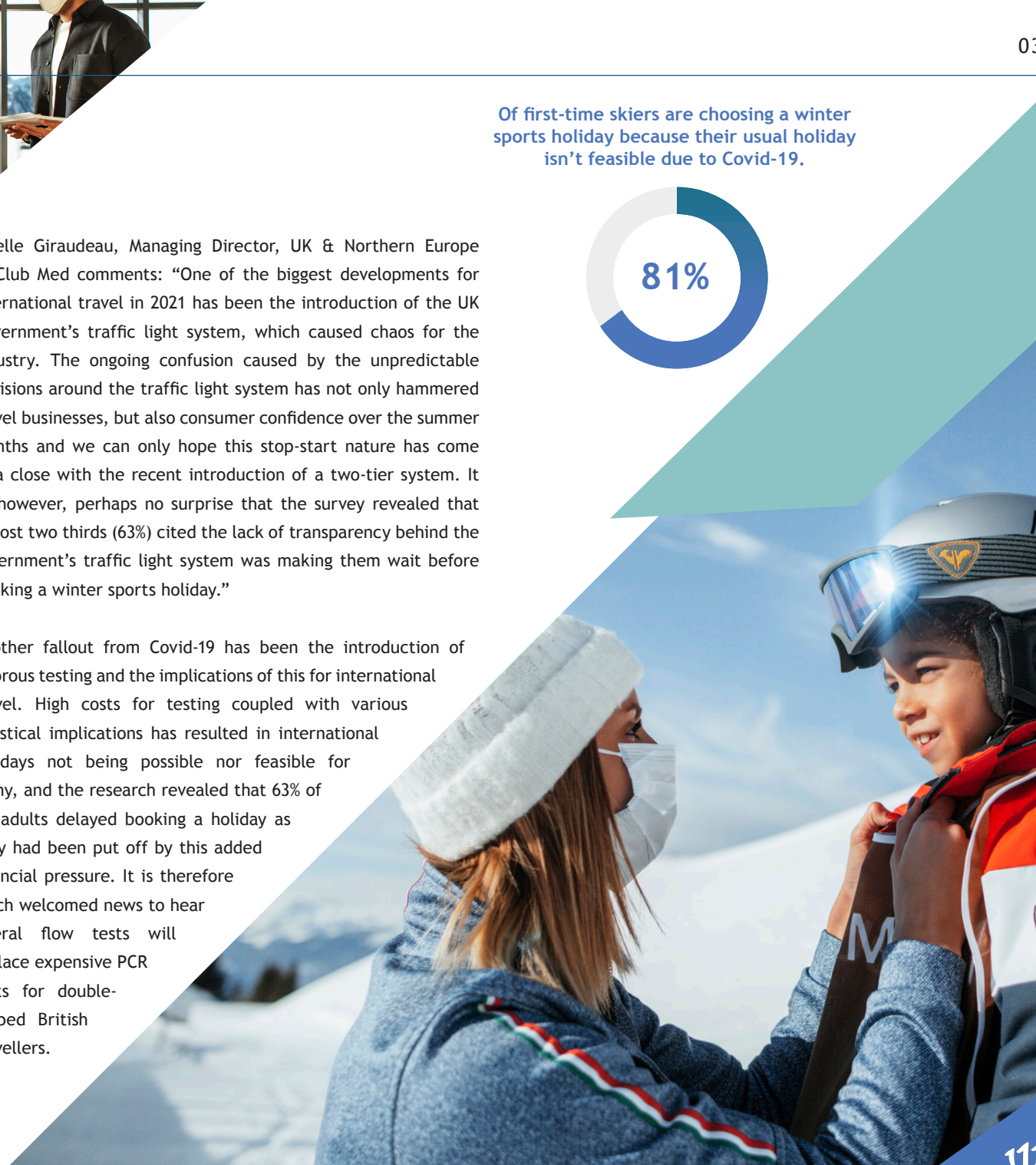
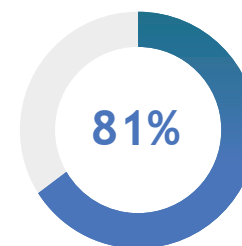
Of those polled, 21% received a refund credit note and a further 23% received a full refund. Offering a refundable stay, should a country's status change to 'red' is crucial for Brits booking a holiday with 57% saying it was the single most important factor when choosing their travel provider.

It is evident to see how eager winter sports enthusiasts are to get back to the mountains, with almost half (46%) still wanting to go ahead with their ski holiday even if they had to quarantine on arrival back in the UK. Yet this year, this type of trip is also proving to be an incredibly attractive proposition for non-skiers, with 81% of first-time skiers choosing a winter sports holiday because their usual type of holiday isn't feasible due to Covid-19. This is further backed up by Club Med data, with a 100% year-on-year increase in new customers for the upcoming winter sports season, and given the open-air surroundings of a winter sports holiday, it is perhaps unsurprising that this is an attractive holiday proposition to many in the current climate.

Estelle Giraudeau, Managing Director, UK & Northern Europe at Club Med comments: "One of the biggest developments for international travel in 2021 has been the introduction of the UK Government's traffic light system, which caused chaos for the industry. The ongoing confusion caused by the unpredictable decisions around the traffic light system has not only hammered travel businesses, but also consumer confidence over the summer months and we can only hope this stop-start nature has come to a close with the recent introduction of a two-tier system. It is, however, perhaps no surprise that the survey revealed that almost two thirds (63%) cited the lack of transparency behind the government's traffic light system was making them wait before booking a winter sports holiday."

Another fallout from Covid-19 has been the introduction of rigorous testing and the implications of this for international travel. High costs for testing coupled with various logistical implications has resulted in international holidays not being possible nor feasible for many, and the research revealed that 63% of UK adults delayed booking a holiday as they had been put off by this added financial pressure. It is therefore much welcomed news to hear lateral flow tests will replace expensive PCR tests for double-jabbed British travellers.

Of first-time skiers are choosing a winter sports holiday because their usual holiday isn't feasible due to Covid-19.



## DESTINATIONS



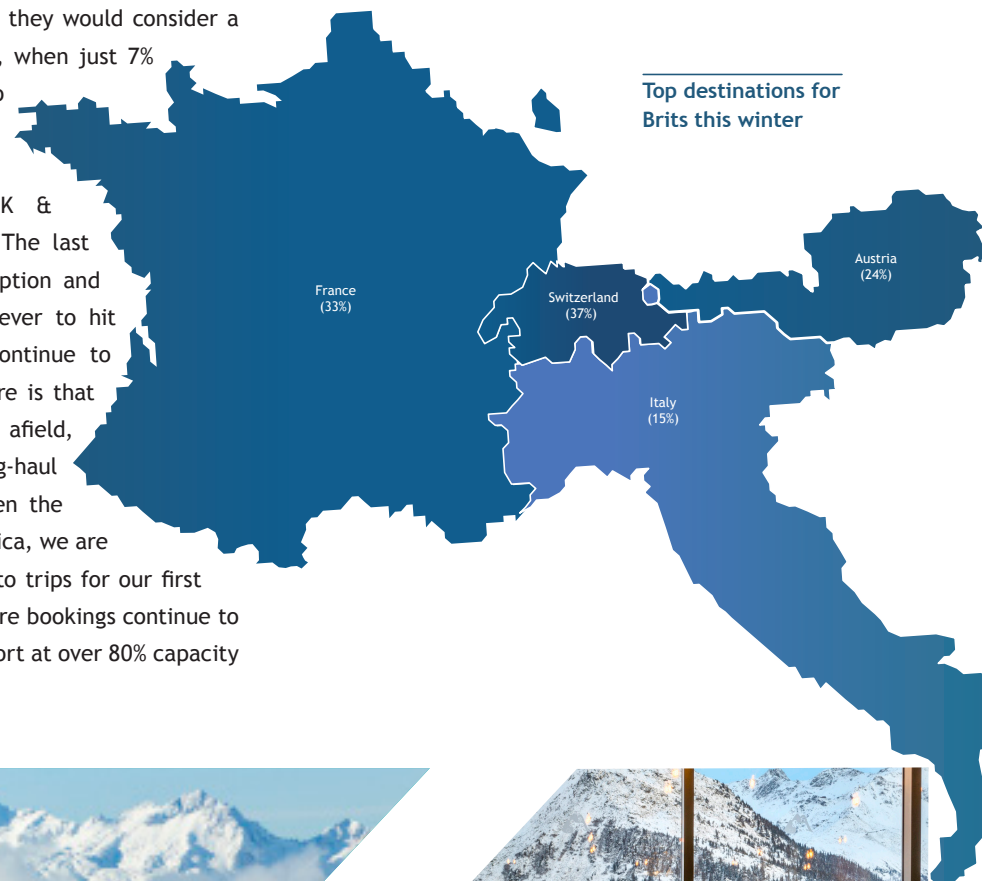
With the introduction of the traffic light system earlier in the year, which saw a number of popular British holiday destinations constantly moving between the green, amber, and red lists, followed by the constant changes of travel restrictions for fully vaccinated Brits, holiday destinations have been a popular topic of discussion throughout 2021.

Switzerland ranked as the top choice (37%) for British travellers, followed by France (33%) and Austria (24%) with these results increasing since the 2019/20 season, suggesting that people are opting more for traditionally sought after alpine destinations and those which were previously shaped by the traffic light system when it came to green versus amber lists. Currently, Club Med's resorts in the French Alps including Val Thorens Sensations, Alpe d'Huez and Les Arcs Panorama are all proving to be the bestsellers for the upcoming season, with February half term, New Years week and the Easter holidays being the most popular weeks booked to date.

Almost half (44%) are considering a new destination this year for their winter sports holiday in light of Covid-19, including destinations closer to home, with one in ten (16%) saying they would consider a Scottish winter break compared to last year, when just 7% said they would consider visiting Scotland to ski or snowboard.

Estelle Giraudeau, Managing Director, UK & Northern Europe at Club Med comments: "The last two ski seasons have been filled with disruption and we understand Brits are more eager than ever to hit the slopes. While short-haul destinations continue to be favourites, it's promising to see that there is that appetite for destinations that are further afield, notably with Canada being voted the top long-haul destination for a winter sports holiday. Given the lift in restrictions on travelling to North America, we are expecting to see pent-up demand convert into trips for our first ever Canadian resort, Quebec Charlevoix where bookings continue to be strong for its first ever season with the resort at over 80% capacity for its opening month."

Top destinations for Brits this winter





## BOOKING BEHAVIOURS



Booking patterns have shifted more in the past 18 months than they have in recent years combined. It is not only the way in which people are now locking in their holidays, but moreover, how and what they are booking. Some of which may become the new norm, and others, a short-term and direct consequence of Covid-19.

Brits have decided to hold out until the last minute to book a winter sports holiday - according to the research almost half are prepared to leave it a month in advance (46%), with one in five (20%) saying they will leave booking as late as just two weeks before the departure date. This is in stark contrast to 2019 when only 5% of people booked their winter sports holiday less than three months in advance.

The global pandemic has led people to change their holiday preferences, with 62% of those questioned saying that this year will be their first ski or snowboarding holiday versus only 40% in 2020.

35% have changed their choice of accommodation

41% self-catering

28% all-inclusive resorts

27% catered chalets



Almost half of Brits (48%) are choosing to go on a winter sports holiday just to try something different and almost a quarter of Brits (24%) are people who usually go on a winter sun holiday but have changed their plans this year.

49% of those polled are prepared to spend more on a winter sports holiday this year than previous years, perhaps to make up for lost time and missed holidays. Data from within the Club Med business supports this, showing that the Average Order Value (AOV) for ski trips has increased by 22% compared with 2019. Following trends in recent years, we are also anticipating an increase in customers booking onto more experiences to make the most of their holidays, and are opting for excursions and activities such as dog sledding, spa treatments and nordic walking to name a few.

In light of Covid-19 the type of accommodation people are looking at has changed. Over a third (35%) of those polled have changed their choice of accommodation, with self-catering proving to be the most popular option (41%) followed by an all-inclusive resort (28%) and catered chalets (27%).

22%

Of those who are switching sun for snow said they would usually be trying a long haul break but are opting for a holiday closer to home this year.



## SUSTAINABILITY



Over the last decade, discussion around climate change has shifted from speculation to a pressing concern for the travel industry and holidaymakers alike. Climate change and environmental activists are ever present in the news and the recent IPCC report made front pages around the world, declaring a 'code red' for humanity.

42% surveyed said they were currently reconsidering the type of holidays they take in light of the recent news around climate change. In addition, over half (55%) of those polled said they look at the sustainability credentials of the resort before booking their ski holiday, with the most important factors being; the holiday operator giving back to the local community (40%), serving sustainably sourced food (35%), having a single-use plastic free resort (35%) as well as a food recycling program (31%). When asked about what they think has the biggest impact on the environment when it comes to international holidays, respondents cited air pollution (51%), plastic waste (45%), food waste (37%) and energy consumption (35%) as the biggest culprits.

Estelle Giraudeau, Managing Director, UK & Northern Europe at Club Med comments: "We are very conscious of our impact on the environment and it is of paramount importance to us and our guests. We have now implemented the total removal of single-use plastics in all resort bars and restaurants, and we are working on removing all single-use plastics throughout resorts this year and this is just one part of our Happy To Care sustainability commitment. In the new resort of Quebec Charlevoix in Canada opening this coming season (2021/22), we have partnered with Solucycle, a food waste management company, to implement a sustainable system that turns waste into green energy or compost. These types of partnership and innovation are going to be vital in our efforts to provide the family holidays our guests know and love, with the smallest possible impact on the environment."



# 42%

Said they were currently reconsidering the type of holidays they take in light of the recent news around climate change.



# 55%

Said they look at the sustainability credentials of the resort before booking a ski holiday.



# 13%

Said that a resort's eco-credentials was the most important factor when choosing where to stay.