

## ***Dragon Ski trip 2017***

This was my first Dragon Davos ski trip and wasn't sure what to expect.

"The hotel's OK, the food's pretty ropey – but you'll have the best time ever" was what I'd been told by past devotees.

It was better than that – a fantastic team spirit permeating through children, teachers and parents.

The hotel was cavernous – but the rooms and beds comfortable. Staff were bizarrely happy to see the onslaught of the boisterous Dragon tribe, this year – the 54<sup>th</sup> ski trip – consisting of 59 children, 41 adults, 8 teachers and three representatives of Smaug Abroad.

The loyal staff were even undefeated by sustained attempts to drain the bar of Aperol (which for the uninitiated - like me - is a Lucozade-coloured drink tasting like Campari)

Yet it's fair to say the catering is not a high spot.

Teachers who accompany the trip are amazing (I'm not usually one to gush) - cheerfully on hand to do help with almost anything, anytime.

Informality is key: Jean-Claude Faudot becomes JC, and Desmond Devitt (whose knowledge of all things Dragon and Davos is beyond remarkable), Desi.

This year it was blue skies and spring skiing all the way – until the day of the ski race.

But did a snow-storm and poor visibility get in the way? Pah! Plucky Dragons hurtled, undeterred, down the course (with surprisingly few casualties.).

The trip runs with precision; airport collection, ski hire, room keys and clear instructions of who needs to be where on any given day.

Blissfully, you could dump your hired skis in the hotel garage for collection at the end.

Yet, as with many things Dragon, it's quirkiness that wins out. There's a weird cuddly Smurf perched next to a stuffed pheasant on a shelf in the hotel dining room – but he's inspired a series of end-of -tour awards (as he sees everything that goes on)

Rewards for the biggest grin on the (ski race) podium went to Monty Smith and silliest hugger of trees; Theo Riviere.

It's hardly surprising that people get addicted to this trip – though I feel like I need a couple of days off to recover.

Judith Keeling