

The half-term ski trip is hell – but my children are just in heaven

Emily
Maitlis



ON THE floor in front of me there is a pile of sick. The air hostess is gracefully gesturing it into a smaller, taller pile with paper towels and dry shampoo. The mother of the pigtailed puker is apologising to the rows behind her who will have to walk through it.

And in the middle of it all the pilot then tannoys to tell us passengers that we have been grounded in London for two hours because of delays over in Geneva.

It is hour one, day one, of February half-term and I am rather enjoying the feng shui balance of this entire opening

scene: it beautifully captures what I feel about skiing holidays.

I look to the Vom Queen to see if she is dreading the week as much as me, and am curiously disappointed when her mother tells me no, she's just "overexcited".

And there's the rub. You see, you're not allowed to hate skiing. It's just one of those things no one admits. Even as I write here – luxuriating in the thrill of being the Anais Nin of self-exploration – I keep one hand jiggling up and down on the backspace/delete button, worried that I'm going too far in public with my dirty little secret.

It is not that we are a planeload of the smug middle class, all heading inexorably towards somewhere we can discuss afterwards with overly loud voices. Or the idea that a third of the

plane will return with unnecessary and debilitating bone deformities, thus putting us out of action for the next three months.

Or the fact that our children will run around a posh hotel in nothing but long-johns for a week, signing bar bills with room numbers – the epitome of entitlement.

It is not even the people who ski backwards in your face, pretending to be looking out for their children when really they're just showing you they can – you know – ski backwards in your face. Nor the ones who use the word "technical" to describe an item of ridiculously overpriced clothing they purchased as a subtle way of telling you they are Really Really Good (we all know the best skiers wear Seventies C&A gear).

No, the thing I really resent is the weird pitying look that I get if I ever break down barriers enough to tell someone that I don't like skiing: I feel like I've just fessed up to being a eunuch whose idea of a good time is an evening spent soaking chickpeas.

What is it about skiing that makes it somehow greater than the sum of its parts? If I invited you to get up early, cart endless clobber around in the freezing cold while wiping snot on your glove and queueing for a lift, would you

More so in parts of British society than elsewhere, skiing is really just about inclusion versus exclusion

be beating a path to my door? Or the exercise fallacy? We could quietly admit that sliding down something, even if you do it again and again in a nice twisty way, is not even going to burn the calories of your first lunchtime vin chaud – unless you skin up the mountain first.

No, skiing – more so in parts of British society than elsewhere – is just about inclusion versus exclusion: about being able to name the resorts, then name the runs in the resorts, then name the bars on the runs in the resorts and then chum up.

Why do I persist? Because my kids love it, of course. They know that for one week a year they can beat me down the slope (backwards, in my face). And I know that for one week, every year, I will suck it up and say nothing.