



askjo YOUR AGONY AUNT FOR THE ALPS



Q Dear Jo
Due to the annoying credit crunch, I can't afford to get out to the Alps for my usual snow fix this winter. Have you any ideas how I can keep on top of the powder cravings?

A These days there are loads of options for those of us who find our bodies fixed in the UK but our hearts in the snow-capped mountains. Not only are there plenty of ways to keep in touch with all that is snow related through www.natives.co.uk, you can also keep your boot in at your nearest SNO!zone, where you'll find lots of white stuff in Milton Keynes, Castleford and Braehead, or at the Chill Factor in Manchester. There are also dry slopes up and down the country with thriving freestyle and racing scenes, as well as one-off artificial snow hits like The Slopes at the O2, which brought the chance to ski or snowboard to London. So you can get your snow fix, eat it, and not even leave the UK.

Q Dear Jo
What would you do if you won the lottery?

A Well, that's the easiest question I've been asked in a long time. I'd buy a chalet in my favourite resort and ride all day, eat fondue and drink Mutzig all night.

Q Dear Jo
I want to take a gap year before uni – my parents want it to be worthwhile but I want to just have fun. What can I do to keep them happy while enjoying myself?

A I have the perfect solution for you – how would mum and dad feel about a trip to South Africa, learning to surf, gaining instructor qualifications, helping at a community project, learning to cook and spending some time in the Alps? Sounds pretty ideal doesn't it? Natives has teamed up with specialist gap year surfing adventure organisers Ticket to Ride and created Season2Season, the dream mix of winter and summer seasons.

It involves coming on a Natives cookery course – successfully complete it and we'll guarantee you a job for the winter in the Alps. You'll head to South Africa to learn to surf, get involved in charity work, and take qualifications in

MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED Q...

Dear Jo,
Please please please try and find me something cushy for the winter! I really need to escape to the Alps, and would love a job that includes food, accommodation and lift pass, but not much responsibility!

Well, most job packages with tour ops include food, accommodation and lift pass, so that's straightforward enough, and if you want something without too much responsibility then consider being a *plongeur* (i.e. washing up), hotel assistant or night porter. All the larger tour ops like Crystal, First Choice and Esprit recruit to these positions, but they get snapped up quickly because, as anyone can do them, they're easy to fill. You'll have to work really hard – there's no such thing as an easy ride in resort, unless you're sitting on a chairlift – but at the end of the day you're not responsible for anything too serious in resort.

However, you stand a much better chance of getting a job if you go for a chalet host position, and if you're worried about cooking then why not go on a Natives cookery course? If you pass it we'll guarantee you a job with a tour op.

surf coaching and lifesaving. Then, after all that, do a full ski or snowboard season using your cooking qualifications, before returning to the UK to potentially work as a surf instructor. What better answer could you give to the question, "What did you do on your gap year?" You'll walk away from it with a bundle of fantastic skills to put on your CV, which will not only impress potential employers but should also keep the rentals happy. And you should have a pretty cool time too.

Q Dear Jo
My steeze is a bit whack in the park. What do you recommend?

A There's no quicker learning curve than trial and error. If there's a trick you want to learn you're just gonna have to go out there, get your balls out and take the hits. That said, there are a few things you can do to make learning new tricks safer and easier. Whether you are trying your first 360 or stepping up to throw down that elusive 900, the following points will help:

- * Do your homework – check how the pros do it. Watch a snowboard video and understand the mechanics of how the trick is done. Visualise how it is done and what each stage of the trick will feel like while in the air. If done correctly tricks feel just how you think they will!
- * Common sense – first attempts at new tricks are best done into powder. Don't force the issue. If there isn't any soft snow around you're best off waiting till Mother Nature provides. When she does, get your helmet on and grab your shovel!
- * Spend time building your jump – bigger tricks usually require more airtime so take this into account when constructing your kicker. The in-run is vitally important and it is best to have some set-up time before take-off. Choose your terrain wisely and make sure there isn't too much compression before the lip of the jump, otherwise it will buck you off balance.
- * Landing – make sure the landing is steep enough to avoid compression on your return to earth. Nobody likes blown out knees.
- * Be realistic and build on your skill level. You're not going to stomp a double cork 10 if you've only ever spun 180s before. Work your way up slowly – there's no prize for being the first of your mates to nosedive and end up in hospital.
- * Kodak courage – it's good to have a friend taking photos/video of you learning the trick so you can see where you're going wrong. It'll also help you get your speed right should you pussy out on your first few attempts.
- * Chill! If you're getting frustrated you're probably trying too hard – go take a few runs and mellow out before heading back to your booter to try again. It's amazing how a short break can improve your ability.
- * Once you're confident at the tricks in the pow, take them to the park.