

RIDING OUT THE
RECESSION IN THE
MOUNTAINS IS AN
UNFULFILLED DREAM
FOR MANY BUT TAKING
THE PLUNGE COULD
PAY OFF, BIG
STYLE

Unemployment's at two million, the future's looking uncertain and Jedward are out of the *X Factor* – who wouldn't consider cutting their losses and running away to the mountains for the season? We certainly have, and so have many thousands of you.

Natives recruitment manager Jim Duncombe said, "Our candidate-o-meter was off the scale this year. If we had still been using paper CVs, we would be going through a tree a day, and that's just from the poor folk in redundancy land. Even Nigella or Delia would have struggled to get chalet hosting jobs this winter."

At Natives HQ we saw an unprecedented number of candidates this season, thanks to redundancies and the lure of escaping the doom and gloom. Coupled with a shrinking supply of jobs as tour operators cut back in response to expected demand, it's made for a sticky situation for wannabe season workers. The competition was greater than ever before, and being a well-qualified and highly skilled city worker isn't enough to guarantee you a job in the Alps – as many of the applicants this winter discovered.

But there are other routes to a winter in the mountains, as James and Gemma Greenway have shown. Desperate to escape the 9 to 5, they've leapt in with both feet and set up their own company, Green Mountain Chalets. After an average

chalet holiday in Les Arcs, they were inspired to set up their own business as they believed they could provide a better service than the one they received. Green

Mountain Chalets was conceived in just three months, from finding their chalet in Saint Martin de Belleville in April to launching the website in June. With absolutely no previous experience in the industry, and no formal catering skills between them, they made the brave move and quit their jobs (Gemma as a solicitor and James as a recruitment consultant) in July to concentrate full-time on making the business a success, and living and working in the Three Valleys, a ski area neither of them had been to before.

You have to take your hat off to them – it's completely bonkers but also very ballsy. "It's a reaction to the rat race," says James, and when you look at the upsides – living in the mountains, being your own boss, immense job satisfaction – they make the risks seem worthwhile. Plus while it may seem a tricky time to start a company, James and Gemma's

timing – starting a business during a recession – could potentially work in their favour. Provided they've planned carefully and are going about it in the right way, it may well succeed. If a business can thrive in a recession, just think how it'll soar when the good times come again.

Which is the sentiment that Donnie Macleod, founding director of Synergy Snowsports, employed when he took over the baton from Extreme Holidays. Based in Davos, Extreme went bust in 2008 and Donnie was able to step in, starting his own version of the holiday and instruction company. "Leaving the 9 to 5 to start a business with uncertainties is daunting, but waking up each morning to the snowy peaks acts as a constant reminder of how good things really are, and our business is doing well as we seek to provide outstanding tuition and good times for our customers," he says. "In the UK it's easy to lose perspective of what's important – life in the mountains is about so much more than just work for work's sake that it's worth taking the plunge," advises Donnie.

With McDonalds receiving 2,200 applications a day and 100,000 people a month being made redundant, the lure of the mountains is strong for many. We should all take our bobble hats off to those who are fighting the recession their own way in the mountains. [t](#)



James and Gemma Greenway, the faces of bravery and balls