

All-inclusive holidays, snowy destinations trending for SA travellers

We spoke to Lesego Matabane, marketing manager for Club Med South Africa, about identified Club Med travel trends, and South African travellers and their habits, in particular.

■ *How popular is Club Med in the South African and African market?*

Lesego Matabane: We have a strong reputation within the South African market as being a credible global brand that provides all-inclusive holidays of exceptional value. Club Med clients know that we are more than “just a resort brand” and that when they head off on a Club Med holiday, they are heading off on an experience that no other travel brand can and will provide.

■ *What are some of the top holiday destinations South Africans are interested in?*

Matabane: One trend is that we have seen an increase in overall ski/snowboarding interest which shows that South African’s are starting to entertain the idea of spending holidays in the snow. There is still massive interest in sun holidays especially over the December school holiday period, but snow and ski is gaining interest and shows that South Africans are open to new experiences such as snowboarding and skiing.

Mauritius is still a very popular destination for South Africans, especially families. It’s easy to reach (a four-hour flight) and has lovely weather for most of the year.



Club Med Bali

Another trend is that many South African's tend to visit specific places within certain regions, like Thailand if they plan to travel and explore Asia, and there has been a general increase towards other areas, such as Indonesia (Bali, Singapore and surrounding islands like Bintan Island).

Some of our most popular sun resorts among South Africans are: Bali and Bintan Island in Asia, Gregolimano in Greece, Da Balaia in Portugal, Phuket in Thailand, Kani and Finolhu in the Maldives, and Mauritius.

❏ *How do they choose to travel – from booking flights and accommodation to outings and experiences?*

Matabane: With the unpredictability of the rand, more South Africans are looking for travel packages that don't come with any surprises or hidden costs, and holidays and packages that won't be affected by any instability of the rand. It's for this reason that people are looking to all-inclusive travel packages where everything from flights to transfers, accommodation, all meals all day, all drinks all day, entertainment, activities and sports, child care facilities (if travelling with little ones) is covered and paid for in advance.

This is a big element that sets Club Med apart from other travel brands. Once our clients have booked and paid their deposit, their price is locked in and won't be affected (negatively) should the rand take a dive. Furthermore, when they leave for their holiday, they could quite literally leave their wallet at home. When they arrive at the resort, all meals and drinks are at their disposal – all day – as part of their package. They don't need to worry about converting from rands to euros (which we are all too familiar with when travelling) to figure out how much that cocktail at the beachside pool is going to set them back. It's all included in what they paid upfront. This peace of mind is a big value add on top of the vibe and one-of-a-kind holiday experience we provide.

❏ *As you said, ski trips and snowboarding holidays are on the rise. If South Africans want to escape the heat, what are some of the most popular snow destinations?*

Matabane: There are so many incredible snow destinations that it can actually be overwhelming to know where to start. We have over 18 winter resorts (European winter) in the French Alps alone, with others in Italy, Switzerland and Japan. Ski season in Europe is from December until April, and there are many destinations and resorts that cater to different tastes. These are some of the most popular resorts in the French Alps"



• **Les Arcs - Club Med Arcs Extrême** in the French Alps is the ideal place for real snow-sports fans who are looking for good skiing and snowboarding conditions, and a lively atmosphere. With skiing from your door, the convenience factor for beginners and experts alike is unrivalled. Les Arcs is on the territory of Bourg-St-Maurice, in the Paradiski domain, and is at an altitude of 2,000 metres.

• **Val Thorens Sensations** - the resort itself sits in a prime position in Val Thorens, the highest resort in Europe (2,300 metres above sea level). At the top of the three Vallées, it opens out onto the world's largest ski area, with 600 kilometres of equipped slopes, 320 signposted runs, and some 174 ski lifts. This makes for epic skiing and snowboarding conditions all through the season. Val Thorens in general has its fair share of hidden gems that make it the ultimate snow holiday destination. The fact that it is the highest ski resort in Europe means it has great ski conditions throughout ski season – this year there was snowfall from November (where ski season “only official begins” in December!)

• **Valmorel** - in the heart of the Massif de la Tarentaise, Valmorel lies at the edge of the forest and sits at an altitude of 1,460 metres. With snow shoe walks, Nordic walking, sledding and a whole host of other activities for you to indulge in post-ski, Club Med Valmorel has something for everyone. For those who want to combine privacy, privileged, customised service and luxury comfort with the warm and friendly Club Med spirit, Le Lodge is the place.

When it comes to a family holiday, Valmorel has all bases covered. Our Baby Club Med (for babies from four to 23 months), Petit Club Med (for two to three year olds) and Mini Club Med (for four to 10 year olds) enables adult travellers to enjoy the daily ski session while the little ones are looked after. For families with children between 11 and 17 years old, they'll be in good hands at Club Med Passworld.

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