

THINK OUTSIDE THE SMART BOX

IF you're stuck for inspiration this festive season or you just want to avoid the misery of trudging up and down the High Street, then a Smart Box could be your answer.

It may sound like something you plug into your telly or laptop, but the Full Experience Company assures us the Smart Box is a very exciting gift concept.

You choose a gift experience for your loved-one from four types of activities: Adventure for the thrill seeker, Zen and Spa for those who love to be pampered, Charming Getaways and Gourmet Retreats in France for those in need of a break.. or a decent meal.

What makes Smart Box different from the rest is that you buy the "experience" for a one-off cost but the recipient selects from a number of options. For example, an Adventure costs £49.50 and offers a choice of falconry through to surfing or power kiting. Zen and Spa costs £69, while the Getaways and Gourmet Retreats cost £129 and £149 respectively.

Buy Smart Boxes online at www.thefullexperiencecompany.com or call 020 7471 1719.



RETREAT: Brelidy

PASS TO THE UNDERWORLD

SEE the city of London through the winter mist from a cruise on the river Thames. And if your nerves can take it, stop off at the spooky London Dungeon with a Catamaran Cruisers pass.

At £20 per person (£14.95 for children under 16) Catamaran Cruisers' London Dungeon pass includes fast-track entrance to the London Dungeon as well as a hopper pass, giving unlimited one-day use of Catamaran Cruisers' hop-on hop-off sightseeing cruises.



DARK: Dungeon

The hop-on hop-off cruises run between the Houses of Parliament, the London Eye, Tate Modern, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, Vinopolis, St Paul's Cathedral, the Tower of London and the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. Single or return cruises with full commentary are available.

The hopper pass includes unlimited one-day use of sightseeing river cruises between Embankment, Waterloo, Bankside, Tower and Greenwich Piers.

Visit www.catamarancruisers.co.uk or call 020 7987 1185.

TODAY we are playing **DAY 6** of **GAME 20** on your bingo card. Double Play Bingo gives two grids per game and by calling full house on a grid with numbers from the Daily Mirror you win £1,000.

TO WIN a full house £1,000 prize, all 15 numbers on either **GAME 20** grid must be correctly crossed off with Daily Mirror numbers. If you don't have all numbers by Saturday, buy the Sunday Mirror and The People for more – and the chance to claim a £500 prize.

TO CLAIM Call 08705 11 44 00 (from Rol 0044 8705

BINGO
Saturday, November 25, 2006,
Game 20, Day 6

27	19	30	87
11	72	36	
41	80	39	69

11 44 00) from 10.30am to 4pm on the day you get a full house. No responsibility accepted for failure to contact claims office within stated hours. Calls at national rate. Standard MGN Ltd rules. Terms as previously published.

TRAVEL

POLED

ALAN GARCIA

on why a ski trip to Poland will not only be an unforgettable time but it won't freeze your bank balance



HOW welcome did you feel last time you went on holiday? Were you greeted by the locals with big smiles and open arms?

Or did you feel as if they weren't too bothered in your custom? Maybe they were even a bit aggressive

I have been skiing and snowboarding all over the world for 19 years now – professionally for 6 years. Over the years I have experienced many wonderful moments in some of the most magical resorts in the world.

Some have been outstanding in their personal service and resonated with an electric energy. Others felt as though I was an unwanted minority who was seen to be invading the locals' cherished lands.

The demand has never been greater for snow sports holidays and with no well-publicised alternatives within a short haul flight available, the big four (France, Italy, Switzerland and Austria) are clearly raising their prices year on year.

But are we receiving a better service for our hard earned cash?

The answer lies within Eastern Europe. Countries such as Poland, which has recently joined the EU, are developing at an alarming rate.

They have great ski resorts yet prices are a third of those in Western Europe!

A new independent British company, Sunshine World (www.sunshineworld.co.uk) has paved the way for a new generation of skiers and boarders to have access to their favourite sports for prices more comparable to surf-

ing than skiing. I am not Polish (indeed I'm half French – home to many of the big name resorts I would recommend steering clear of if looking for value for money) and indeed have no interest in promoting Polish interests.

I merely wish to be honest about what I consider to be the best value holidays in Europe.

Don't just take my word for it. This is what John Hill editor of the Good Ski Guide said last February.

"Prices are as low as they go – yet the standards are much higher than other eastern bloc ski countries such as Bulgaria and Romania."

Zakopane, Poland's "winter capital", was once regarded as one of the best ski resorts in the world as far back as 1939. It played host to some of the first ever international winter sports competitions.

After 1939 the tragic history is well docu-

mented and it is this history which has led to Poland not being able to promote itself as smoothly and expertly as its more fortunate western neighbours.

The foundations of this great skiing nation are still strong and getting stronger. Ex-ski jumping three time World Champion Adam Malysz was born and grew up training in the Tatra mountains in southern Poland.

While the infrastructure is not quite as well developed as the Three Valleys, Whistler or Paradiski, the prices certainly don't reflect how great a time you can have compared to the big name resorts.

There are many great nightclubs, bars, restaurants and shops in Zakopane and an unusually large (for a ski resort) permanent population of over 80,000 largely very friendly and welcoming people.

We all know how quickly Ireland's economy accelerated after joining the EU and already many of our savvy and powerful

GETTING THERE..

HALF board accommodation in a luxury catered chalet
six days ski/ snowboard equipment rental, five days tuition
five days lift passes, five days return transport to and from slopes
return flights to Poland from Dublin and transfers and unlimited
beer and vodka for just £350.
Visit www.sunshineworld.co.uk