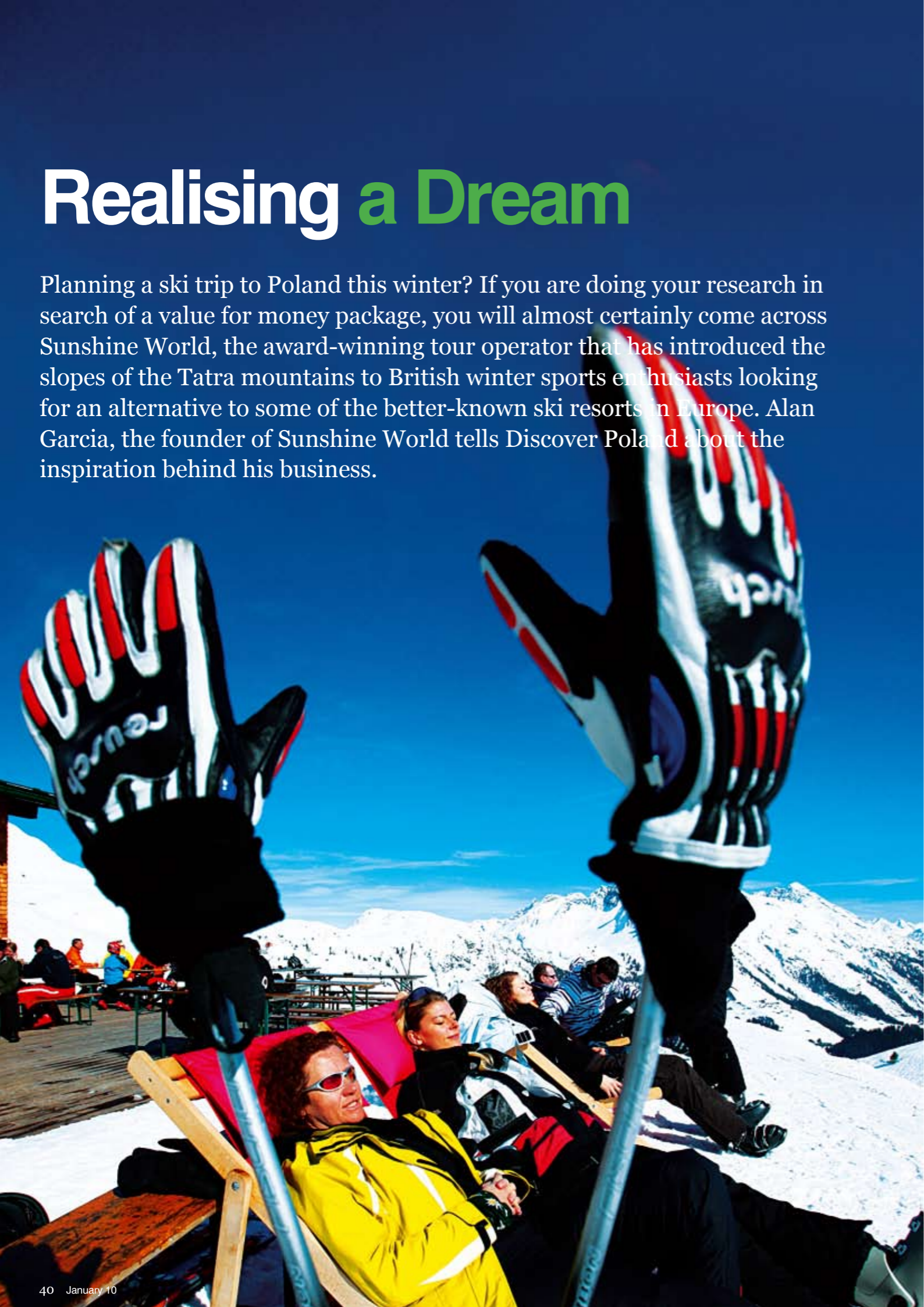


# Realising a Dream

Planning a ski trip to Poland this winter? If you are doing your research in search of a value for money package, you will almost certainly come across Sunshine World, the award-winning tour operator that has introduced the slopes of the Tatra mountains to British winter sports enthusiasts looking for an alternative to some of the better-known ski resorts in Europe. Alan Garcia, the founder of Sunshine World tells Discover Poland about the inspiration behind his business.



# Chopin 2010

Chopin Year 2010

## [www.chopin2010.pl](http://www.chopin2010.pl)

As an interactive centre of knowledge, information and communication, the portal forms an unlimited network of connections. Through its diversity, wide perspective, innovative possibilities, adaptation to users' needs and reliable information, the portal will significantly intensify the participation of many different groups in the Chopin Year celebrations.

Crucially, the portal may be instrumental in promoting by making it possible to:

- submit planned events to the Calendar and update them unassisted
- publicly share direct reports, comments and iconographic materials related to the events
- promote publications, tourist guides, recordings, etc. concerning Chopin.



I was 15 when I took the first steps towards creating Sunshine World. My stepfather had just died in a helicopter crash, and my whole world was turned upside down and thrown into confusion amidst the heartbreak and tears that enveloped my loved ones. I decided to go to Canada on my own for three months in an attempt to clear my head, and to

train to become a professionally qualified snowboard instructor. I passed my exams and, still aged 15, embarked on an 18 month period of intensive and rigorous training, after which I qualified as a professional ski instructor. At the same time, I also qualified as a professional tennis coach. I continued my training at the same time as working in places

like TGI Friday's and the dry ski slope at Sandown, as well as at a Club Med resort in Tunisia and for Simon Butler Skiing, a fantastic ski company in the French Alps. This meant that I could pay my way as much possible, support my wonderful mother and help to look after my younger brother Christophe and my sister Lucie.

By the age of 20, I decided to start my own company. I had two basic principles, which I knew would make my plan failsafe from the start:

- 1. If I don't spend any more money than there is in the bank, the company cannot go bankrupt.
- 2. The best way to learn is by doing. As long as I adhere to the first principle, we can learn without risk and keep developing and growing.

And so Sunshine World was born. I started out with £2,000 that I had saved from previous jobs. My aim was to find somewhere in the world that offered all of the elements of an incredible winter sports holiday without the high price-tag that is often associated with skiing and snowboarding. The destination also had to be just a short-haul flight from the United Kingdom and Ireland. I set about researching my options, considering everywhere from Iceland to Bulgaria, however Zakopane in Poland kept cropping up in various reports and

reviews, even though it seemed to be quite poorly presented at that time. I knew that I just had to see it for myself.

I spent my first 10 days in Kraków and Zakopane in complete awe at the quality of the facilities that were available there, especially knowing that everything cost so much less than at the better-known ski resorts in Europe. My first port of call was Zakopane's town hall, where I asked for permission from the local authorities to set up my operations there, and make sure that I wasn't treading on anyone's toes. Zofia Karpińska, the Director of Sports and Tourism, couldn't have been more accommodating and enthusiastic about Sunshine World's plans. I then sought out the most suitable service providers in Zakopane, and set up formal agreements with them in order to make sure that we could go ahead with our plans to welcome 12 guests per week during our first season. It was at this point that Sunshine World became the first licensed international tour operator to deliver professional ski and snowboarding holidays in Zakopane, Poland.

By this point I needed £40,000 in order to pay for our ATOL license and our bond, which is necessary, as it ensures that our holidays are financially protected and guaranteed by the British Civil Aviation Authority. I then approached a number of private investors (in-

cluding Mr Robin Field; the inventor of Filofax and a serial entrepreneur who would not be out of place on Dragon's Den), who confirmed that he would provide the money that I needed in exchange for company equity, the fact that I knew I could secure the financing I needed satisfied me that I independent enough in starting the business so far that I could borrow the money from my own mum and therefore keep 100% of the shares in Sunshine World myself, confident in the knowledge that I knew I would make this work. Within the first three months, we had already sold our first £42,000's worth of holidays, which meant that we had broken even. Sunshine World has paid for itself ever since.

Sunshine World has expanded over the past four years, and we now have over 50 websites offering a wide range of holidays in dozens of destinations including France, Italy, Austria, Bosnia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Lithuania - and of course, Poland. We have now introduced long-haul trips to New Zealand. We have also developed our own Professional Ski and Snowboard Instructor Training Academy, which provides professional training for ski and snowboard instructors that is ATOL protected. Our training academy is the cheapest of its kind in Europe - if not the world.

Over one thousand people have learnt to ski with Sunshine

World, and our seasonal instructor training courses are now helping instructors to gain their official qualifications each year. I like to place a special emphasis on the fact that groups are small; we do this intentionally so that we can guarantee the personal approach and dedication to service. Sunshine World has now turned over more than £650,000 worth of sales, and sales have been increasing by at least 25% to 30% every year. Our greatest testimonial is the high number of guests returning year after year. This season we will be welcoming back some guests for their fourth consecutive year with Sunshine World.

Zakopane remains - in my opinion - the number one ski destination when it comes to offering value for money, however this may change. My aim has never been (and never will be) to focus on pro-

moting any one country, but instead to provide the very best sincere and honest advice on where to find the best value from the ski and snowboard industry. Sunshine World also strives towards delivering the very friendliest and most professional service to every single guest who books a holiday with us.

While Sunshine World has achieved a lot of success in the last four years, probably one of the greatest achievements for me personally has been to help my mother to restart her own company, Sunshine People, which publishes wonderful children's stories written by my mother and illustrated by two of my cousins. Since restarting Sunshine People just under two years ago, the website has received over 100,000 visitors, and continues to grow.

Now that my mother, brother and sister are all strong and independent I no longer have to focus solely on working to look after them. My aim now is to help as many people as possible to realise their own dreams - whether through Sunshine World, Sunshine People or just by being a friendly and helpful person. Sunshine World never has been - and never will be - about making money. I have always seen money purely as a tool that can make things happen for good or bad. We all have the power in ourselves to make good or bad things happen each day: whether on a tiny or massive scale.

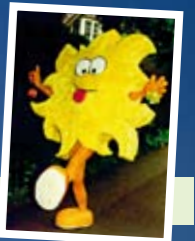
**Alan Garcia** is officially the youngest person in the history of the UK Civil Aviation Authority to be granted an ATOL license at the age of 20.

About the Author

Alan Garcia is a qualified ski and snowboarding instructor and also Managing Director of Sunshine World, a tour operator that specialises in arranging ski and snowboarding breaks in Poland. Has skied all over the world - including some of the best-known resorts in Europe and Canada, yet he does not hesitate in recommending Poland for a Winter sports break.

Further Information

Sunshine World  
[www.sunshineworld.co.uk](http://www.sunshineworld.co.uk)  
 Sunshine People  
[www.sunshinepeople.co.uk](http://www.sunshinepeople.co.uk)



Map

