Don't Peak Down

"Come on, Jack, it'll be a blast!" Oscar exclaimed, pointing at the poster on the wall which was advertising the ski trip to France. He was almost jumping up and down in excitement like a cheeky Chihuahua chewing at my ankles.

 "I'm allergic to snow," I replied. I would have rather pulled my leg hairs out individually with tweezers than throw myself down a mountain with only two strips of plastic for protection.

Even as a child, unlike all of my friends, I had never been one to embrace the charm of the snow. Whilst most of my friends would immediately go out to attempt to re-enact a scene from 'The Snowman' as the first few flakes fell, I always preferred the home comforts of slippers, hot chocolate and central heating. This was why I wasn't particularly enthusiastic about Oscar's bright idea of endangering our lives 'for fun' in sub-zero temperatures.

Over the coming months, their excitement snowballed but so did my feelings of fear and trepidation. As we approached 'Ski-Day' (my equivalent of D-Day), conversations usually drifted back to skiing, mountains and snow. Hurray. Although a few of my friends had been skiing before, I was a complete novice so was encouraged by the teachers to attend some sessions at the dry-skiing location.

At my first session, I was glad that the teachers had confiscated our mobile phones as I was a sight to behold. When I first put the skis on, I was like a new-born giraffe learning to walk for the first time. My legs seemed to have a life of their own: they went in one direction while my upper body went in another! Throughout the rest of the session, I held onto the support bar for dear life as we slowly, slowly moved up the treacherous slope which seemed to be getting steeper and slippier with every shoddy shuffle. I walked out about four feet, turned my skis and took a deep breath as my speed started to accelerate. Sadly, I wasn't in control. Crash! I had smashed directly into an instructor and wiped him out like a set of bowling pins. As I muttered an apology, I knew from that moment on that my ski trip was not going to go well.

After a handful of visits to the dry ski slopes, I managed to complete each trip without breaking either my own or someone else's neck which made me slightly more confident about the trip. Yet I still didn't exactly feel confident about going and crossed each day off until 'Ski-Day'.

Arriving at the airport, my bags bursting to the brim, I only had around twenty minutes until our flight boarded. Anxiety kicked in. Whilst some of my friends were nervous about flying and had nightmares about the plane crashing down, all I had visions of was myself... crashing down a mountain. Would my first skiing experience end up like a human game of pinball, with me snowballing down the slope, wiping out everyone in my path and finishing with a nice trip to hospital? Staring out the window, I wondered why I had signed up for this. I mean, a nice beach holiday in the Caribbean, yes please. But not a cold, miserable skiing holiday in the French Alps.

All too soon, we landed at the shoebox airport called Chambery. We queued for hours simply to get through the harsh French security who treated us like criminals. We were herded like cattle into a large metal cage where each and every passport was inspected then we were all scanned. Perhaps we all looked like we all belonged on 'Crimewatch' but this didn't exactly make me feel more relaxed about the trip.

The bus journey to the resort lasted a gruelling three hours. As we edged closer, the 'fun' time ahead was looming. I couldn't wimp out now. Not in front of my teachers, not in front of the group and especially not in front of my friends. This feeling of apprehension wasn't eased when we arrived at the accommodation: we were welcomed by towering concrete walls, soaring peaks and menacing-looking slopes which made our hotel look like it was microscopic. And it didn't get any better when we went inside. It was 'freshly adorned' (according to the website) with decaying, decomposing sofas, manky, nicotine-yellow curtains, a permanent smell of damp and finally... the toilets. If you can just imagine a public toilet in the centre of Mumbai; times that by ten and that's what we had. Using it was like one of the Bushtucker Trials on 'I'm a Celebrity'. Then the real trial started when I faced my nemesis the next day. The slopes.

I slipped into my ski boots, buckled them up and set off to the ski lift. I carried my skis over my shoulder in the same motion as a lumberjack carrying an axe. We clambered aboard the ski lift and soared up into the sky, towards the slopes. I jumped off the lift, clicked in my skis and slowly pushed myself to the meeting point.

The instructors pointed to a slope that towered over us like a green giant. It had fierce corners, arrow straights and sheer cliff edges. We took a ride in the gondola to the top of the slope. My heart was racing. I was surrounded by a group of French girls who I was hoping to impress with my "expert" skiing. We started to ski. There were a few errors with my initial set off. Almost a wipe out. But after a few bends and turns, I stated to get the hang of it.

Then I crashed. I came right off my skis. I face planted into a wall of snow at the corner of a sharp bend I was trying to negotiate. I couldn't move. My back and legs were killing me. I got the attention of instructor. I said to him “Call. The medics.”

Throughout my ski trip I learned a lot of important things. Never let an opportunity pass you by. Make sure you live in the moment, try new things and push yourself. If you don't, you will never know what might have been. I gave into the pressure of going on the skiing holiday. It was one of the best decisions that I've ever made.