

## TECHNIQUE TOP-UP

It's not just speed that counts down the mountain, technique comes first, as **Amanda Lennon** discovers on a women-only week in Austria



**WATCHING A VIDEO** of yourself picking your way down a slope is agonising. Surely I don't look like that? For a start, I thought I was going much faster. "A common misconception," says Greg, instructor and co-founder of Redpoint Holidays.

The only consolation is I'm sat in the bar of a cosy four-star hotel with a glass of glühwein in my hand. Sara, my instructor, steps in with the positives, "Look how in control you look!"

Redpoint Holidays, based in the small Austrian town of Fügen in the Ziller valley, runs two women-only weeks each season. There were just three women on the course, including me, which was great as we received lots of instructor time. But on the flipside, there was nowhere to hide. Pharmacist

Fiona had come on the course to boost her confidence. "I don't like ice, bumps or people on the piste," she said. She wanted to refine her technique and feel in control

on any run. Margaret, a paediatrician, wanted to be able to keep up with her friends on their next ski trip.

Mornings were spent working on technique on an easy blue run, doing all manner of exercises to correct our individual foibles – I was leaning in on my turns and cutting them short. Although some of the exercises left me feeling like that one person in an aerobics class who doesn't know the steps, British-qualified instructor Sara had the patience of a saint. We spent the afternoons putting what we'd learnt into practice, and exploring our own way down the slopes.

## Sara pointed out that women are technically better than men

Amanda leads from the front



Two days into the week and I felt like a total beginner again – Sara had deconstructed our techniques and now she was trying to re-build them. She told us that each turn was like a story, needing a beginning, middle and end. Taking this advice on board I was starting to make beautiful arc-like turns, and expending less energy getting down a slope. Of course, there were times when the conditions were icy or it was particularly busy and my new technique disintegrated. But these occasions became fewer and fewer.

All three of us were tackling black runs by mid-week and enjoying the challenge. Sara even had us carving by the end of the course, and she kept the sessions fun and enjoyable. Fiona had tried lessons before but had always dropped out, "I've skied more this week than ever before. I'd recommend this course to all my friends."

On the last day Sara took me off piste to tackle some fearsome moguls, which I now feel confident enough to do again. Having a female instructor really helped, especially when she pointed out that in her experience women are technically better than men, even if they don't get down the mountain as quickly. Sara was able to talk to us about our fears and hopes without us being embarrassed and without patronising us.

By the end there was much camaraderie within our group. We were full of encouragement when a run went well and would console each other when things didn't go so smoothly – something I've never experienced in a mixed group.

### DETAILS, DETAILS

Redpoint has Women's Weeks on 19 to 26 January and 1 to 8 March 2008, starting from £420 for seven nights' half-board accommodation in the four-star Hotel Post, based on two sharing. The price includes transfers, three hours' tuition each day for five days and free ski guiding for partners of the Women's Week participants. Flights are available via Redpoint from an extra £78 per person or you can book your own. Call 0845 680 1214 or visit [www.redpoint.co.uk](http://www.redpoint.co.uk) for more details.



The sisterhood