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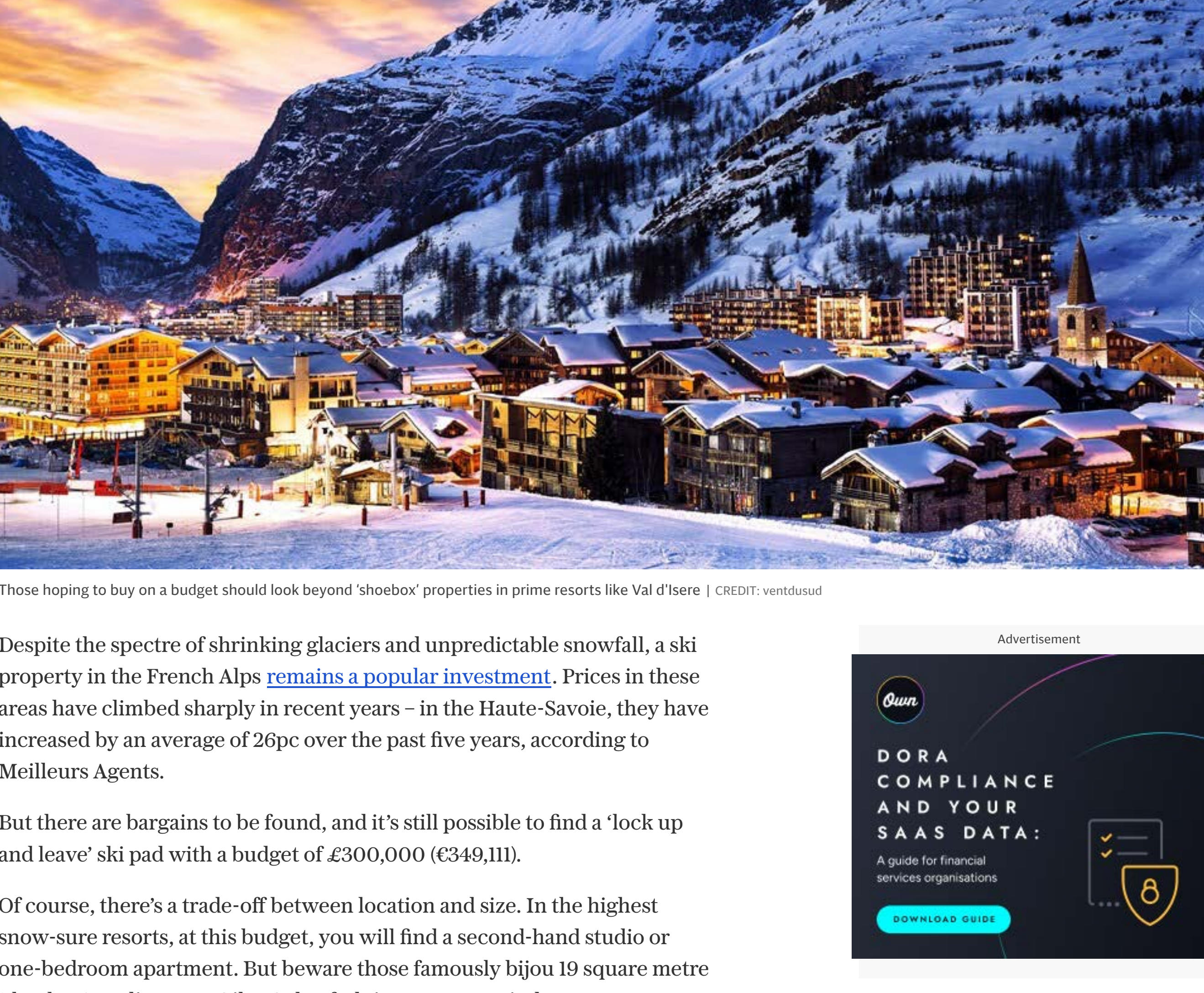
# Where to buy a ski property in the French Alps for under £300,000

You can still find bargains with access to the best skiing

Liz Rowlinson  
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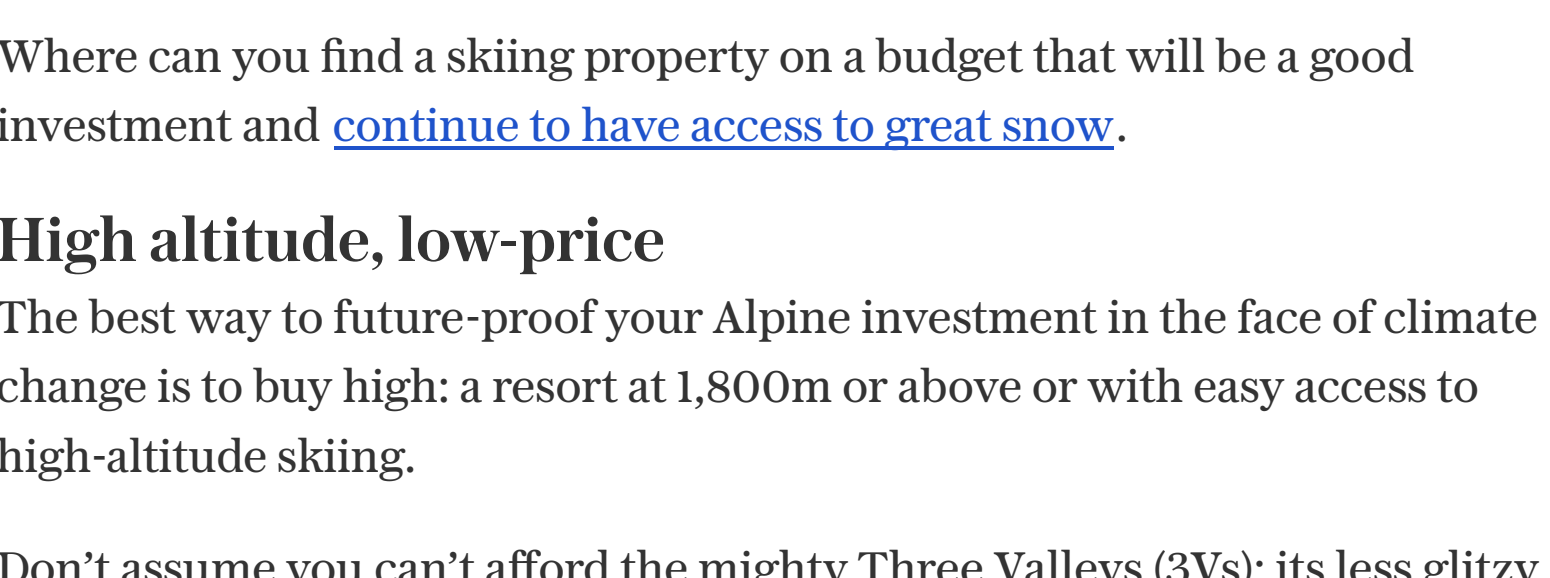
Those hoping to buy on a budget should look beyond 'shoebox' properties in prime resorts like Val d'Isère | CREDIT: ventusouth

Despite the spectre of shrinking glaciers and unpredictable snowfall, a ski property in the French Alps [remains a popular investment](#). Prices in these areas have climbed sharply in recent years – in the Haute-Savoie, they have increased by an average of 26pc over the past five years, according to Meilleurs Agents.

But there are bargains to be found, and it's still possible to find a 'lock up and leave' ski pad with a budget of £300,000 (£348,111).

Of course, there's a trade-off between location and size. In the highest snow-sure resorts, at this budget, you will find a second-hand studio or one-bedroom apartment. But beware those famously bijou 19 square metre 'shoebox' studios, says Giles Gale of Alpine Property Finders.

"It might be tempting that you could afford one in a super prime resort like Val d'Isère, but how comfortable will they be?"



"Look for a larger apartment with a 'Coin Montagne' – an alcove with bunk beds in the hallway – which will increase the rentability of your apartment. Your one-bedroom could even sleep five or six people."

Where can you find a skiing property on a budget that will be a good investment and [continue to have access to great snow](#).

## High altitude, low-price

The best way to future-proof your Alpine investment in the face of climate change is to buy high: a resort at 1,800m or above or with easy access to high-altitude skiing.

Don't assume you can't afford the mighty Three Valleys (3Vs): its less glitzy resorts link also into a ski area that is 85pc above 1,800m.



Les Menuires offers affordable access to La Masse ski area | CREDIT: JARRYTRIPFELON

Celebrating its 60th birthday this year, the unpretentious, family-friendly Les Menuires is a good place to look, says Steve Pangli of agent Leggett Immobilier.

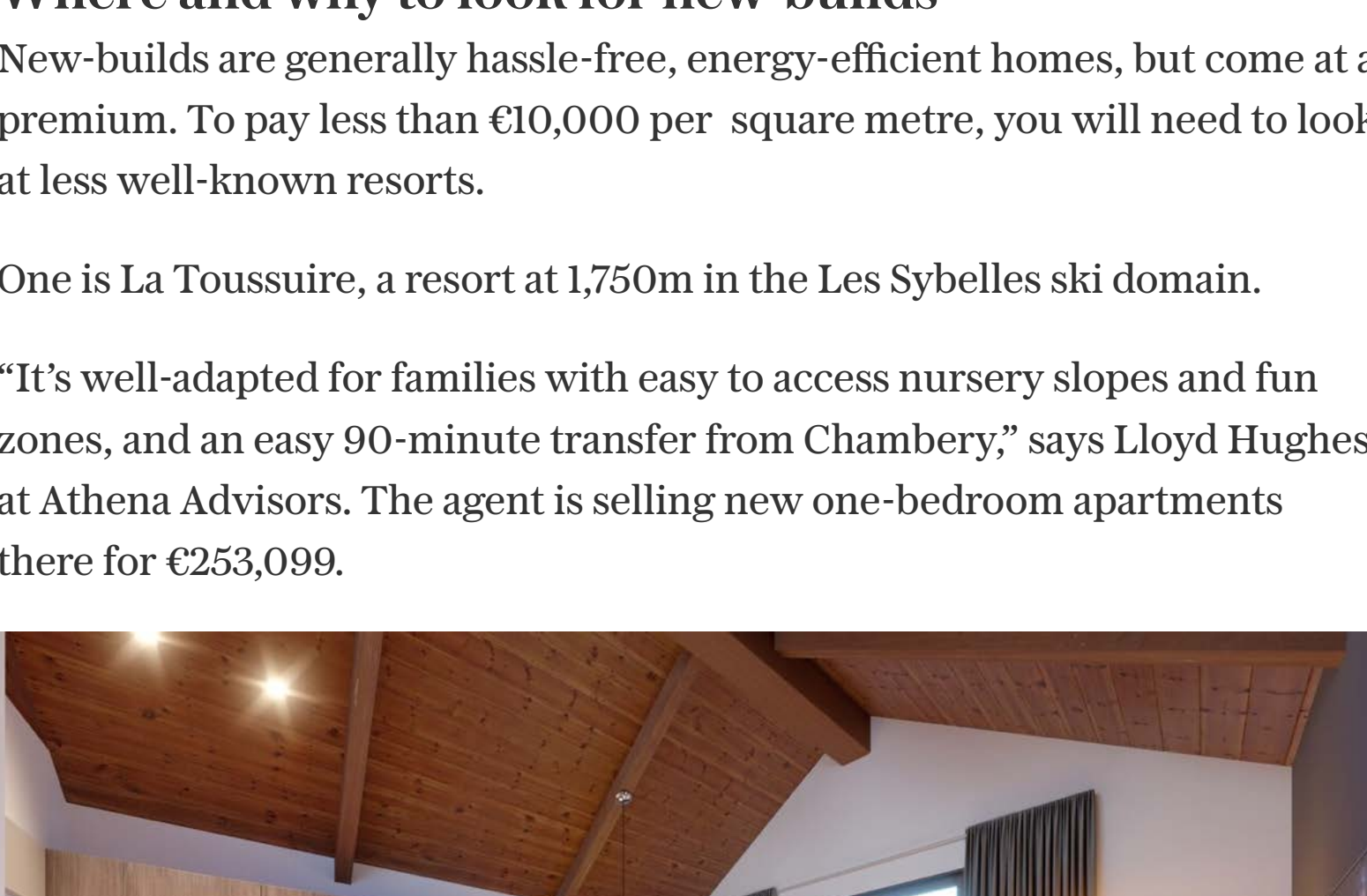
"Some of the architecture is outdated and not easy on the eye, but it offers great access into Val Thorens and sunny afternoon pistes, plus the pretty vast ski area of La Masse."

He says that with prices €6,000-10,000 per square metre you can find a two-bedroom apartment for sale for around €270,000.

Meanwhile, Charlie McKee of buying agent Alpine Property Intelligence suggests La Tania, another somewhat utilitarian resort. "Everything is close to the slopes, and it's very popular with families," he says of the pedestrianised centre built for the 1992 Winter Olympics.

The small mountain village of Orelle, with its stone and wood houses, has more charm and a fast route into the Val Thorens sector of the 3Vs thanks to a new gondola.

"Property here is cheap but hard to find: look out for properties in the résidences de tourisme [apartment blocks] built there in the last 15 years," he says.



Buyers looking for easy access to the slopes in Val Thorens can net a modern studio apartment with a balcony for €283,500 | CREDIT: Val Thorens

Don't rule out Val Thorens – Europe's highest resort – either. There's a modern 26sq m studio with a balcony for sale at €283,500, through Cimalpes.

For other livelier resorts, Gale suggests that the southern Alps resorts of Alpe d'Huez (at 1,860m) or its neighbour Les Deux Alpes (at 1,650m, but with access to a glacier) are good options for a two-bedroom apartment.

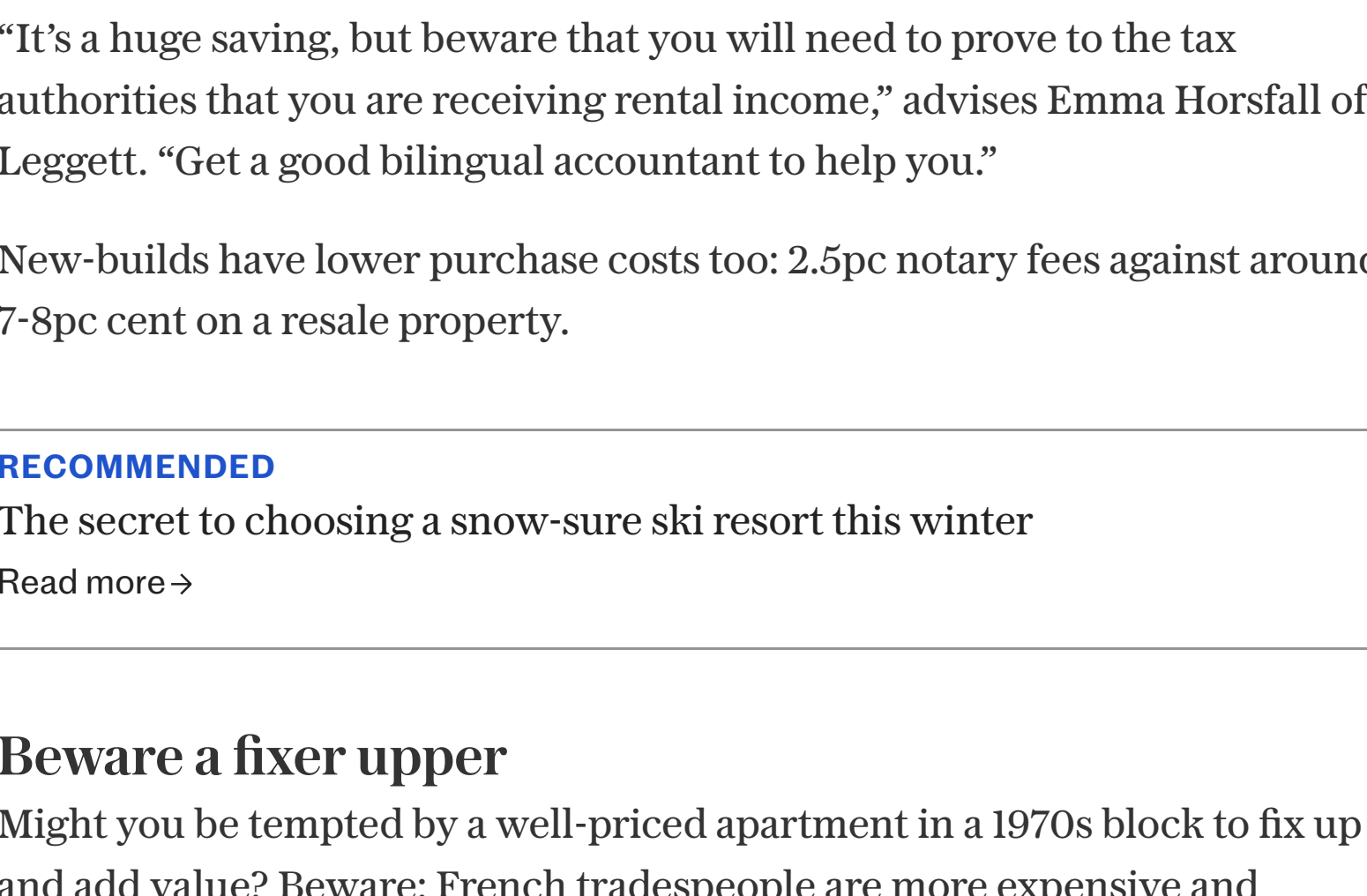
Apartments in Alpe d'Huez average €6,799 per square metre, according to Meilleurs Agents. New-builds are nearer €8,500 per square metre; there's a one-bedroom flat for sale €256,900 through David Lloyd Estates.

## Where and why to look for new-builds

New-builds are generally hassle-free, energy-efficient homes, but come at a premium. To pay less than €10,000 per square metre, you will need to look at less well-known resorts.

One is La Toussuire, a resort at 1,750m in the Les Sybelles ski domain.

"It's well-adapted for families with easy to access nursery slopes and fun zones, and an easy 90-minute transfer from Chambéry," says Lloyd Hughes at Athena Advisors. The agent is selling new one-bedroom apartments there for €253,099.



La Toussuire sits at 1,750m and offers buyers new build properties below the €300k mark

Consider the 10 small villages of La Plagne. These include Champagny-en-Vanoise, which may be at lower altitude (1,250m) with Savoyard style chalets in a pretty wooded valley, yet it links directly into the large Paradiski ski area, says David Baghat of Alpine Property Intelligence.

"You can find two-bedroom renovated apartments for around €320,000 to €330,000, or smaller apartments for under €200,000." In La Valloise, a new-build one-bedroom apartment costs from €287,000 (through Neuf Logic Immo).

There's also Pralognan-la-Vanoise, a pretty village great for beginners. You can also save money on skiing around here rather than at big name resorts; Sian Maher at Leggett, points out that a six-day ski pass is €187 – around half that of the Three Valleys' €375.

"The ski area is smaller but there is also some great off piste," she says. The agent is selling new-build apartments there: 25 square metre studios at €167,000 or one-bedroom apartments at €269,000.

Figures for the lettings analyst AirDNA suggest you may be able to bank on some rental income there too: Pralognan offers the highest annual occupancy rates for small apartments, at 64pc a year.

You can reclaim the 20pc VAT back on a new-build property that you rent out via the para-hotelier scheme, offering hotel-style services (of cleaning, linen change, meet and greet, breakfast delivery).

"It's a huge saving, but beware that you will need to prove to the tax authorities that you are receiving rental income," advises Emma Horsfall of Leggett. "Get a good bilingual accountant to help you."

New-builds have lower purchase costs too: 2.5pc notary fees against around 7-8pc cent on a resale property.

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## Beware a fixer upper

Might you be tempted by a well-priced apartment in a 1970s block to fix up and add value? Beware: French tradespeople are more expensive and renovation costs have nearly doubled since Covid.

"Local labour is hard to find, even for dedicated developers," says Laurent Hallez of Erna Low Property. "Also, in France rental properties with poor energy efficiency are being gradually banned."

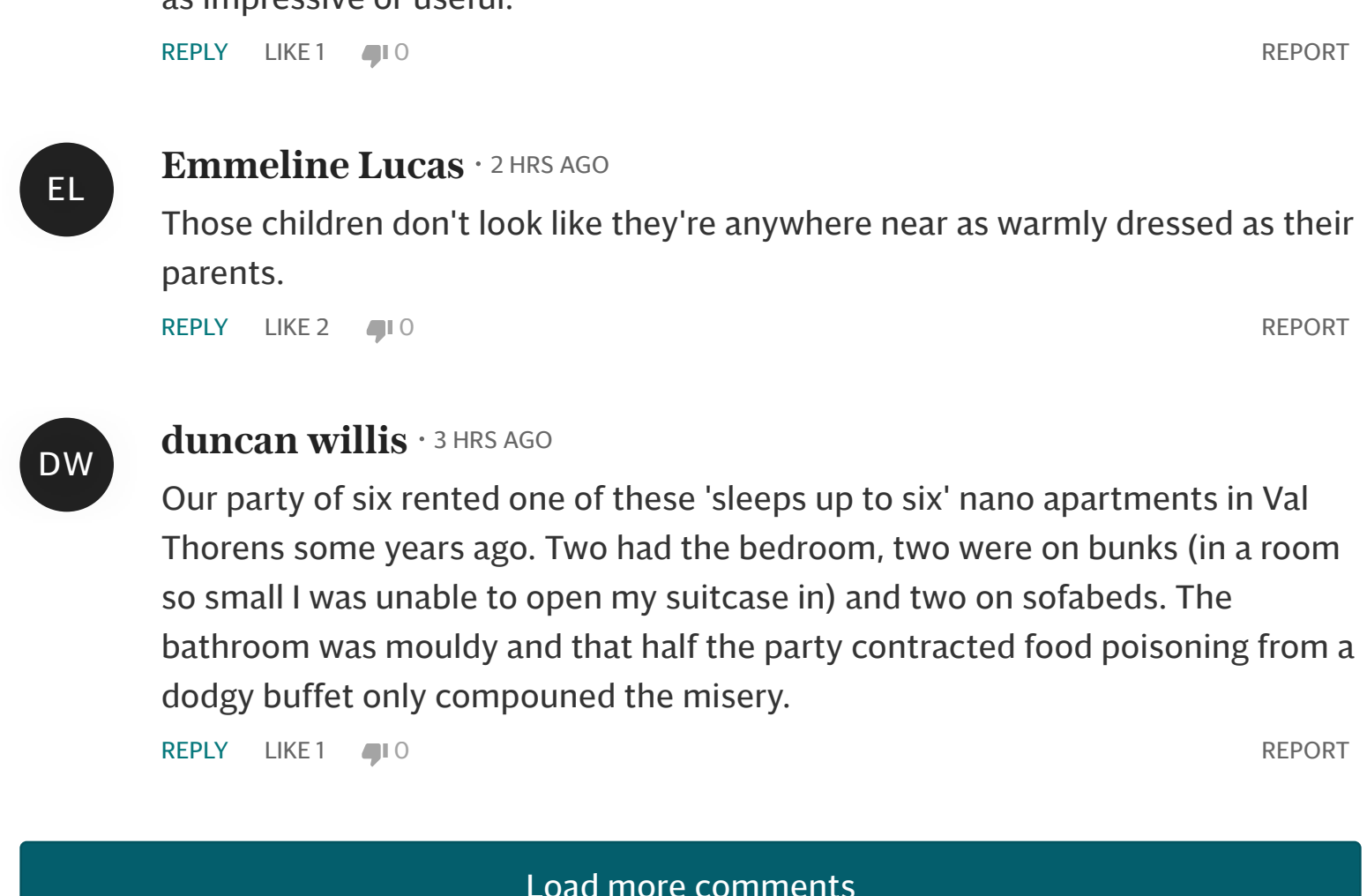
Poor insulation in an ageing building can mean high running costs, says Gale. "Check the planned building work. If it needs a new roof, then each individual owner could be on the hook for thousands of euros."

Also, beware of 'leaseback' properties that are new-build apartments that come with a rental obligation. The lease period may have nearly expired, but if not you will be obliged to rent out the property for many years. And following Brexit, French banks [won't offer finance to Britons](#) on this type of property, warns Hallez.

But these rental obligations can save you money if it suits your lifestyle. Keen skier Tim Pragmell and his family bought a one-bedroom apartment that sleeps five in La Tania last summer. He paid €35,000 less than the asking price of €185,000 as he took it on with commercial lease that means it's rented out (by the tour operator Pierre & Vacances) for three years.

"We love the Three Valleys and wanted a property we could rent out via Airbnb and then use for longer periods ourselves," says Pragmell, a quantity surveyor who is based in South Africa.

"At the moment we get to use it three weeks a year, which is fine. La Tania is home to a British community and is a great ski in, ski out location that we love."



Tim Pragmell was able to knock €35,000 off the asking price of the property he bought by agreeing to lease it for 3 years

## Part-ownership

The 90-day rule limits how much time Britons can spend in France, so some buyers are considering the co-ownership model, offered by at least four operators in the Alps.

These schemes are different from timeshares because you buy an equity share or fraction that can be re-sold or passed on.

Bordering chic Megève, in the hamlet of Demi-Quantier, you can get an eighth share (equal to 45 nights per year) of a four-bedroom, four-bath ski chalet for €323,000 through Lazazu.

This includes purchase costs but not annual running fees and you can rent out some of the days in your 'fraction' if not using it yourself.

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Our party of six rented one of these 'sleeps up to six' nano apartments in Val Thorens some years ago. Two had the bedroom, two were in bunks (in a room so small I was unable to open my suitcase in) and two on sofas/beds. The bathroom was mouldy and that half the party contracted food poisoning from a dodgy buffet only compounded the misery.  
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