

# Chamonix Mont-Blanc, France

By Emily K. Weber

Chamonix, resting in the Rhone-Alpes region of southeastern France, shares a summit with Mont-Blanc, Europe's highest mountain at approximately 15,780 feet. The views are breathtaking, making Chamonix an extremely popular destination for skiers and mountain enthusiasts. A bustling town of 10,000 with a quaint Old Town area laced with cobbled pedestrian streets, France's oldest ski resort boasts authentic alpine flavor.

Home of the first Winter Olympics in 1924, Chamonix prides itself on being a hub for winter sports. With well-packed downhill ski slopes and famous off-track skiing routes, it caters to skiers and snowboarders at a variety of skill levels. Amongst the ski trails on five mountains, the Grand Montets ski area reaches a height of 10,750 feet. Skiers and snowboarders can descend adjacent to the Argentiere Glacier across 10 miles of powder. Annual snowfall for the area is 264 inches. Skiers enjoy a long season, with lifts open into May.

The Breverent and Flegere ski areas have been linked by a cable car since 1997 and offer some of the most stunning panoramic views of the French Alps. Slopes at Breverent and Flegere are available to skiers of all levels with the highest peak at 8,284 feet. Accessible from the villages of Le Tour and Vallorcine, the snow-covered pastures offer a variety of ski and snowboard options on two



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different mountainsides. On Charamillon, riders can enjoy wide-open gentle slopes that provide views overlooking the entire Charmonix Valley; on the Vallorcine side you can ski tree-lined slopes bordering Switzerland. The highest peak reaches 7,447 feet. Just two minutes from the center of town, Les Planards is a low valley ski area reaching a summit of 4,074 feet. It provides a variety of runs for beginning to intermediate skiers. Strong intermediate and above skiers accept the challenge of the Aiguille du Midi, reached by a two-stage cable car. The 7,000-foot descent on and along the glacier of Vallee Blanche features glorious vistas dominated by Mont-Blanc.

If your group is not feeling up to downhill skiing, you can enjoy a leisurely journey or private tour through the forest on cross-country skis. Les Houches ski area provides leisurely forest runs for the pleasure of all skiers. Popular trekking, hiking and snowshoeing routes include the Haute Route and the Tour of Mont Blanc. Both routes take roughly 10 days to complete and take hikers over some of the highest peaks in the Alps.



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If you are in need of a day of pure relaxation, you can visit one of Chamonix's many spas to indulge in a massage, sauna or Turkish bath. Popular spas are Pre-Saint-Didier Spa and Le Spa du Mont Blanc. Other diversions range from casino gambling to shopping for French perfumes. Restaurants in town range from French and Italian to Japanese, Indian and Tex-Mex.

After long days of adventure you and your group will be able to rejuvenate by spending your nights in anything from a tent to a four-star hotel. Hotel Hameau Albert 1er provides a comfortable setting with a variety of rooms including deluxe rooms with fireplaces. Guests can relax in the spa center and enjoy a gourmet meal at the restaurant, which has earned two Michelin stars.

Auberge le Bois Prin is a charming hotel with 10 comfortable rooms offering spectacular views. After a recent renovation, Ski B&B offers a luxurious and laid-back atmosphere that can comfortably sleep 21 guests in a variety of rooms. Located at the foot of the Glacier de Bossons, Ski B&B is near many mountain activities. Cremerie Du Glacier is located in Chamonix Valley beneath Mont-Blanc and the Glacier des Bossons. Its friendly atmosphere provides a relaxing stay for all guests.

Chamonix is situated 54 miles from Geneva-Cointrin airport, 136 miles from Lyon-St-Exupery airport and 106 miles from Turin-Caselle airport. Transportation from these airports to the village is by taxi, bus or train.

Chamonix Mont-Blanc is a prime destination for travelers with a wide array of activities available, comfortable accommodations and breathtaking views of the French Alps.

Contact: [chamonix.com](http://chamonix.com)



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## New & Noteworthy in Europe

### Austria

Tirol, a region in West Austria popular for its ski resorts that offer state-of-the-art infrastructure and services, is to invest in new projects for the 2011/2012 season. One project is **Ötztal's Gaislachkogel Gondola**. The new aerial passenger line features eight-person gondolas with a capacity to carry 3,600 per hour, taking skiers to the top of Sölden's Gaislachkogel ([oetzta.com](http://oetzta.com)).



© Ötztal Tourismus/Ernst Lorenzi

Sölden, a hub of winter activity in Austria's Ötztal Valley

Two new aerial passenger lines have been built in **Kitzbühel**, a sports city at the foot of Hahnenkamm Mountain. The lines feature eight-person gondolas with weather cover and heated seats. ([kitzbuehel.com](http://kitzbuehel.com))

At **SkiWelt Wilder Kaiser-Brixental**, the eastern passenger line has been renovated and converted into a gondola with children's seatbelts and a lifting platform for children. Another new attraction at SkiWelt is the Eiberg meeting point, including seating, umbrella bar and panoramic terrace along with free wireless Internet. ([skiwelt.at](http://skiwelt.at))

### Norway

**Narvikfjellet**, a ski resort in Narvik, offers some of the best and most extreme alpine skiing in Norway. Narvikfjellet offers nine ski slopes, all of which are maintained at a high standard, along with six ski lifts and a gondola line. There are also four unprepared slopes. With its views of the fjords and mountains, Narvik has long been known for its scenic setting. The skies are especially clear, allowing visitors to view the Northern Lights in the winter sky. ([narvikfjellet.no](http://narvikfjellet.no))

## Poland

The mountains along the southern border of Poland include a wide variety of resorts, ranging from fashionable towns such as Zakopane to smaller, more atmospheric villages. In the west, on the Czech border, are the Karkonosze Mountains, which reach a peak height of 5,249 feet. On these mountains are Karpacz and Szklarska Poreba ski resorts. In the middle of Poland are the Beskid Mountains, reaching almost 4,000 feet, and Szccyrk, Wisla and Ustron ski resorts. On the Slovakia border in the east are the High Tatra Mountains (nearly 8,000 feet), home of Zakopane, the “Winter Capital of Poland.” ([zakopane-life.com](http://zakopane-life.com))

## Russia

In Sochi, the site of the **2014 Winter Olympics**, the men’s and women’s ski halfpipe event will make its debut. The rise in popularity and international interest in the sport through the Winter X games influenced the International Olympic Committee’s decision to include the event. The games will take place in two clusters in Russia—one in a mountain cluster in Krasnaya Polyana and another in a coastal cluster in Sochi. The Sochi Olympic Park will be constructed by the Black Sea coast in the Imeretin Valley. ([sochi2014.com](http://sochi2014.com))

## Sweden

For those craving some mountain time in Scandinavia, Sweden’s 34 ski resorts offer a variety of options. **Edsasdalen** is located in a beautiful old village with opportunities to cross country ski from your doorstep. Thirteen runs are accessible on the mountain via six different ski lifts and are able to accommodate 2,300 skiers and snowboarders per hour. At Klappen, which is a part of the **Salen Ski Area**, skiers and boarders have access to 87 miles of downhill skiing with 86 different runs and 100 ski lifts. A pass enables you to ski at both Klappen and another Salen resort, Lindvallen. ([visitsweden.com](http://visitsweden.com))

## Switzerland

**Bergün**, a popular skiing and sledding destination, is set to open a new railway museum in the summer of 2012. Visitors can learn about the history of the Albula railway tunnel, built in 1898, that connected the villages of Bergün and Bravogn with Stugl and Stuls. Topics will include the beginning of the steam age combined with special exhibitions and a model railway shop. ([berguen-filisur.ch](http://berguen-filisur.ch))

After a three-month closure, **Pilatus Kilm** on Mount Pilatus, reopened to the public in February. The work done on the area included remodeling at the Pilatus-Kulm Hotel, featuring a new sun terrace, and a new self-service restaurant in the Hotel Bellevue. Accesses to the Oberhaupt viewpoint and dragon gallery are also opened to the public. Building work is set to be completely done on the mountain by May 2011, with a reconstructed panorama gallery opening. ([pilatus.ch](http://pilatus.ch))

**Saas-Fee**, the main village in the Saas Valley, is located close to the glaciers of Dom and Allalinhorn, providing

opportunity for a wealth of winter sports. Apart from the traditional skiing and snowboarding, Saas-Fee offers winter-canyoning in the Gorge Alpine. Taking place in the Fee gorge between Saas-Fee and Saas-Grund, the tour led by a mountain guide features climbing through the frozen gorge using cable pulleys, hanging bridges, ladders and iron pegs. Highlights include climbing past frozen waterfalls. Saas-Fee also features ice-climbing tours, for all levels of expertise, from beginners to advanced. Saas-Free, known for its ice-climbing, was home to the Ice Climbing World Cup in January 2011. ([saas-fee.ch](http://saas-fee.ch))

**Schwarzsee** is home to a new bed and breakfast, Anna’s Bed and Breakfast, featuring remodeled rooms, wi-fi Internet and balconies overlooking the mountains and lakes. It is located within a few steps of Schwarzsee’s ski lifts, restaurants, shops and tourist office. ([annasbnb.ch](http://annasbnb.ch))

Along with skiing, Switzerland offers another way to enjoy the snow with over 150 toboggan runs. The longest toboggan run in Europe, “Big Pintenfritz,” runs for over nine miles with a vertical drop of 5,351 feet as it starts at the Faulhorn winding down to Grindelwald. Prodalp-Flumserberg features a two-mile toboggan run from Prodalp to Tannenheim, ideal for families.



Switzerland Tourism