



Chamonix License to THRILL

CHAMONIX IS THE ULTIMATE FRENCH WINTER PLAYGROUND, WITH MORE SKI RUNS, MORE APRÈS SKI EXCITEMENT AND MORE AMENITIES THAN ANY OTHER RESORT.

Standing head and shoulders above its neighbouring French Alpine crags, the Mont Blanc massif easily announces itself as the tallest mountain in western Europe. Unsurprisingly, the mountain and its main resort, Chamonix, have attracted winter sports enthusiasts from around the world for decades.

Often regarded as the spiritual home of downhill skiing, Chamonix is one of the oldest winter resorts in France, and was given the prestigious responsibility of hosting the first Winter Olympics back in 1924. With ski areas stretching throughout the valley, Chamonix has an exceptional variety of runs, suitable for everyone from absolute novices to off-piste adventurers. Add to this a range of ski schools, accommodation options and metropolitan entertainments, making Chamonix a superb modern playground as well as a historic one.

SLOPES AND SIGHTS

Chamonix is a premium destination. It's a mainstay of Mont-Blanc Natural Resort, operated by the Compagnie du Mont-Blanc. The company's Mont-Blanc Unlimited package boasts access to more than 1,000 kilometres of pistes in the 10 ski areas in Vallorcine, Chamonix, Les Houches and Megève in France, as well as adjoining ski runs in Italy's Courmayeur and Verbier in Switzerland.

Costs include a ride on the popular Tramway du Mont-Blanc, the highest rack railway in France, taking passengers to the foot of Mont Blanc (from which you can access the Bellevue Plateau), and the Montanvers rack and pinion railway. This line takes passengers to the Mer de Glace glacier, Ice Cave and Glaciorium science and exhibition centre.

Away from the snow and ice, Chamonix's bustling pedestrianised centre is alive with appealing store fronts, luxurious spas and cafés that see their tables spill out onto the sunny side

streets. The heart of the evening après ski scene is Rue des Moulins, where locals and visitors rub shoulders, and you can relax with a glass of the local tippie long into the night.

GETTING THERE

Chamonix Valley is well connected from major transport hubs. It is just half an hour from Italy via the Mont Blanc road tunnel and only an hour from the international airport in Geneva, and is one of the only French ski resorts boasting its own railway station. Access to the slopes, as well as hiking-friendly backcountry and nearby villages, is made all the easier by a series of free buses and trains. ■

Further Information

Mont-Blanc Natural Resort
www.montblancnaturalresort.com



UP CLOSE WITH ADVENTURE

The highlight of off-piste visits is perhaps the 20-minute cable car journey from Chamonix to the Aiguille du Midi, a rocky lookout point with panoramic views of Mont Blanc – the gateway to the high Alps, at 3,842 metres above sea level.

The truly fearless might relish taking a heart-stopping Step Into The Void by entering a glass 'cage' that hangs over a 1,000-metre precipice. The mild and wild at heart can enjoy the best of Savoie cookery mountain-high at Restaurant 3842m, or the gondola lift ride over the stunning Glacier du Géant to Pointe Helbronner in Italy.



Opposite: snowboarding in the Balme freestyle zone at Chamonix (photo © McPix). Top: Aiguille du Midi is perched atop a crag facing Mont Blanc (photo © Maxime Coquard) and offers a thrilling glass lookout point (photo © Mont Blanc Natural Resort).