**Chamonix**

**Categories**

**Good For**

Intermediates

Experts

Non-skiers

Après ski

Snow reliability

**Data**

**Beginner Runs**

16

**Intermediate Runs**

52

**Advanced Runs**

12

**Total Runs**

80

**Lifts**

47

**Chairs**

16

**Drags**

16

**Gondola Cable Cars**

15

**Parks**

1

**Pipes**

0

**Weather**

**Annual Snowfall**

11m (36 ft).

**Overview**

Boasting challenging skiing, a lively après-ski scene and a bustling town feel, Chamonix has been attracting winter sports enthusiasts for well over a century and summer mountain lovers long before that.

With Western Europe's highest mountain, Mont Blanc, towering over the town, the skiing here will challenge the very best; although there are also more than enough options for lesser mortals. The overall ski area, more accurately titled The Chamonix Valley, is a series of separate villages and ski areas, including Les Houches, Le Brévent, La Flégère, Grand Montets and Balme, which are spread along the valley. Of these, however, only Le Brévent and La Flégère are linked by lifts.

In fact, there's no actual ski area that goes by the name of Chamonix – this is actually just a reference to the large bustling town around which all the skiing is focused.

**Location**

Chamonix is situated in the Haute-Savoie region of France, in the French Alps. It is bordered by Switzerland and Italy and dominated by the Aiguilles de Chamonix mountain chain, part of the Mont-Blanc Massif that peaks at the top of Mont Blanc (4,810m /15782ft in height).

**Website**

http://www.chamonix.com

**Piste Map**

http://www.chamonix.com/ski-areas,22,en.html

**Hit The Slopes**

For good skiers, both on- and off-piste options are sensational; but competent snow sports enthusiasts should not overestimate their ability, as Chamonix offers some of the world's most challenging terrain. Snow conditions can vary enormously and lower slopes can be unreliable unless it's a good season, but the upper slopes are high enough to guarantee snow cover – as a consequence, the ski season in Chamonix runs from mid-December until early May.

Chamonix specialises in the spectacular, such as the wonderful 24km-long (15-mile) Vallée Blanche off-piste run from the top of the 3,842m (12,605ft) Aiguille du Midi – famously the longest lift-served run in the world – and the magnificent off-piste options of Grands Montets, for which an accompanying ski guide is essential.

The lift system for each individual area is generally good, and queues are even short at the base lifts during peak periods due major investment in new lifts on key access routes. It's frustrating for some, however, that with the exception of Le Brévent and La Flégère, none of the ski areas are lift linked.

Away from the downhill slopes, there is an extensive terrain park at the Grands Montets that includes several challenging options for different ages and levels of expertise.

The École de Ski Français (ESF) (place de l'Eglise; tel: 04 5053 2257; [www.esfchamonix.com](http://www.esfchamonix.com)) and independent operator Evolution 2 (350 avenue de la Plage; tel: 04 5055 9022; [www.evolution2-chamonix.com](http://www.evolution2-chamonix.com)) are based in the town centre, and are well regarded. These companies are especially good at more specialist training, such as off-piste skiing and ski touring.

Skiers will have no problem hiring gear since the town is inundated with ski rental shops, and there are also hire centres at the base of each ski area.

**Chamonix**

**Resort**

1035

**Base**

1035

**Top**

3842

**General**

**Beyond The Slopes**

As befits a large, year-round tourist town, Chamonix has a wide range of activities and cultural attractions to keep skiers and non-skiers of all ages entertained.

Among the many non-ski outdoor activities in Chamonix are snowshoeing, tobogganing, dog sledding, skijoering (being towed behind a pony on your skis) and ice climbing.

In the centre of town, there's a well-equipped sports complex that has an indoor ice rink and climbing wall. For the less active – or for those who want to rest their weary post-ski muscles – there's a cinema, bowling rink, alpine museum, exhibition centre and a unique rock crystal museum.

**Family Fun**

One of the most popular ski schools for youngsters is the Evo2 Panda Club (tel: 04 5055 5357; [www.panda-club.com](http://www.panda-club.com)) in Argentière (near the base of the Grands Montets cable car), which takes children from the age of three. The ESF Piou-Piou Club (tel: 04 5053 2257; [www.esfchamonix.com](http://www.esfchamonix.com)) in Chamonix also has great facilities for children above the same age.

With options such as tobogganing and ice skating, it's easy to keep younger children occupied. Older non-skiing children with a head for heights will love the two-stage Aiguille du Midi cable car ride from the edge of town outside the morning rush hour, from 0900 until 1000.

**Retail Therapy**

There's a great range of shops in the pedestrianised town centre, including a selection of top-end ski gear retailers, such as Patagonia and Peak Performance (249 and 231 rue Paccard respectively); while for ski hardware, try ChamSport (432 rue Joseph Vallot). Just down the road is Chanel (101 rue Paccard), one of many well-known boutiques in Chamonix; and there are some stylish home design and deco shops. Visitors here can peruse the wide range of souvenir shops that feature many local products, from cheese and wine to traditional wood carvings.

**Splashing Out**

An unforgettable day out is to ski the Vallée Blanche, the world’s longest lift-served ski run. Participants should be a strong intermediate skier and, most importantly, be able to cope with shuffling down a snowy ridge with a near 3,000m (9,843ft) sheer vertical drop on one side and a large descent on the other, from the Aiguille du Midi to start of the ski run. After that feat, skiers will then need enough strength in their legs to climb the 200 or so metal steps up from the glacier to the lift at the bottom – but it's well worth the effort.

Skiers will definitely need the services of a guide to descend the glacier safely due to hidden and shifting crevasses that claim a victim or two each year from the tens of thousands who do the route. Contact the Compagnie des Guides (tel: 04 5053 0088; [www.chamonix-guides.com](http://www.chamonix-guides.com)) at the Maison de la Montagne in the centre of town for further information.

**Apres Ski**

Chamonix has a fine range of après-ski options. Try the cool Chambre 9 (272 avenue Michel Croz; tel: 04 5055 8981) for great food, drinks and live music. Le Mix Bar (90 rue des Moulins; tel: 06 1114 9671; [www.mixchamonix.com](http://www.mixchamonix.com)) is a modern and funky bar run by two DJ brothers known as The Hoax. For a quieter evening and a chic cocktail by the fireplace, head to The Clubhouse (74 promenade des Sonnailles; tel: 04 5098 4220; [www.clubhouse.fr/bar.php](http://www.clubhouse.fr/bar.php)).

**Eating Out**

All tastes and budgets are catered for in restaurants in Chamonix. The pizza and pasta dishes at Italian-run Casa Valerio (88 rue du Lyret; tel: 04 5055 9340; [www.casavalerio.net](http://www.casavalerio.net)) are always popular, while some of the best-value traditional Savoyard fare is found at La P’tite Verte (89 rue Charlet Straton; tel: 04 5053 0065) in Argentière.

For an authentic mountain town ambience, try Le Bistrot (151 avenue Aiguille du Midi; tel 04 5053 5764; [www.lebistrotchamonix.com](http://www.lebistrotchamonix.com)), which boasts a Michelin star. The homely La Remise (1124 route d'Argentière; tel 04 5034 0696; [www.laremise.eu](http://www.laremise.eu)) in Argentière is also known for its quality fare, and has been rewarded with a Michelin bib gourmand of its own.

Excellent value lunches can be had at the informal Swedish-influenced Moo (239 Avenue Michel-Croz; Tel: 04 5053 3342), while the riverside Atmosphère (123 place Balmat; tel: 04 5055 9797; [www.restaurant-atmosphere.com](http://www.restaurant-atmosphere.com)) is also a popular spot.

**Transport**

**Getting There**

Nearest airports: Geneva International Airport (GVA); Lyon-Saint Exupéry (LYS).

Distances to resort: 100km (62 miles); 226km (140 miles).

Driving times: 1 hour 10 minutes; 2 hours 30 minutes.

**Getting Around**

A free ski bus service links all the ski areas – without a car it's the only way of getting between them. The train is also free and is a good option for connecting to La Flégère or Vallorcine ski areas, as the stations are very close to the lifts.

**Hotels**

This bustling resort has plenty of hotels set within beautiful old buildings flanking the village’s cobbled streets. As befits a resort of its stature, there is a wide range of accommodation in Chamonix, including chalets (both catered and self-catering), a great range of hotels to suit all budgets, and lots of apartments – especially in Chamonix Sud.

**Hotel Le Morgane**

This eco-friendly 4-star hotel is ideally located just footsteps from the Aiguille du Midi cable car and Chamonix town centre. All rooms have balconies with mountain views of either Mont Blanc or Brévent. The hotel also boasts a spa and Michelin-starred restaurant.

**Category**

Luxury

**Thoroughfare**

145 Avenue de l'Aiguille du Midi

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

74400 Chamonix

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

04 5053 5715.

**Website**

http://www.morgane-hotel-chamonix.com

**Hotel Les Aiglons**

Complete with an outdoor spa and restaurant with panoramic views, the chic Hotel Les Aiglons is just 100m (328ft) from the Aiguille du Midi cable car station and a short walk to the resort centre.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

270 Avenue de Courmayeur

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

74400 Chamonix

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

04 5055 9093.

**Website**

http://www.aiglons.com

**Hotel Montana**

A friendly, traditional 4-star chalet hotel that is ideally placed for skiing above Argentière, Hotel Montana houses a Jacuzzi, sauna and games room.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

24 Clos du Montana

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

74400 Chamonix

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

04 5054 1499.

**Website**

http://www.hotel-montana.fr

**Hameau Albert 1er**

This well-placed 5-star Relais & Chàteaux hotel has a mix of contemporary and traditional rooms, and is home to the Michelin two-starred Albert 1er gastronomic restaurant.

**Category**

Luxury

**Thoroughfare**

38 Route du Bouchet

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

74400 Chamonix

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

04 5053 0509.

**Website**

http://www.hameaualbert.fr