**Samoëns**

**Categories**

**Good For**

Beginners

Intermediates

Experts

Snowboarders

Families

Après ski

**Data**

**Beginner Runs**

77

**Intermediate Runs**

53

**Advanced Runs**

14

**Total Runs**

144

**Lifts**

68

**Chairs**

29

**Drags**

31

**Gondola Cable Cars**

8

**Parks**

1

**Pipes**

0

**Weather**

**Annual Snowfall**

5m (16.4ft).

**Overview**

Nestled in a wide, sunny valley encircled by seven dramatic mountain peaks, Samoëns provides visitors with the best of both worlds. On the one hand there’s the authentic and unspoiled mountain village; on the other, France’s fourth largest ski area, the Grand Massif, links directly to the village by a modern gondola lift.

Unlike many well-known French ski areas, Samoëns has a rich heritage and a thriving year-round community – it’s definitely not a purpose-built resort and, in fact, has roots back to the Middle Ages. The fine 17th-century architecture created by local stonemasons is evident all around the village and the quality of workmanship is such that these craftspeople were employed across Europe and in the USA.

For those looking for an easy journey to the slopes, it’s worth noting that Samoëns is one of the easiest resorts to reach by road, with no steep winding roads, hairpin bends or high mountain passes to negotiate. It’s also relatively easily accessible by rail or air with Geneva just 60km (37 miles) away.

**Location**

Samoëns is located in the Haute-Savoie region, between Lake Geneva and Mont Blanc. The village lies in the heart of the Upper Giffre Valley, not far from the Dents Blanches mountain range in the Alps.

**Website**

http://www.samoens.com

**Piste Map**

http://winter.grand-massif.com/lift-map

**Hit The Slopes**

At just 700m (2,297ft) in altitude, Samoëns’ base is low for a French Alps resort. While this allows easy access, its location is not as ideal for snow cover. Fortunately, however, that’s not the case for the ski area above, which has one of the region’s best snow records, with the season invariably ending in early May. This is due, in part, to the proximity to the imposing Mont Blanc, extensive snowmaking on key lower runs, and mainly north-facing slopes.

The Grand Massif Express gondola and the Chariande Express chairlift transfer skiers from 720m to 2,120m (2,362ft to 6,955ft) in just 15 minutes. But beginners only need to take the gondola from the village to the beginners’ slopes (1,600m/5,250ft) at the bottom of the pistes – a swift eight-minute journey.

More experienced skiers can take the chairlift to Tête des Saix, from which the vast snow bowl of the Grand Massif – shared with neighbours Flaine, Morillon and Les Carroz d’Arâches – can be enjoyed by all levels of ability.

Among the toughest trails in the freeride area is the Gers piste, while La Combe de Vernant provides some excellent runs through the forest. This corrie leads skiers to excellent powder snow stashes, while another good sector for expert skiers is the Espace de Vérêt, which is accessed by the Tête de Vérêt drag lift.

There are also extensive cross-country trails, while freestyle skiers and boarders will savour the boardercross course created by local champion Nicolas Marduel and the Jampark in Aujon.

**Samoëns**

**Resort**

720

**Base**

1600

**Top**

2480

**General**

**Beyond The Slopes**

Choose from a range of outdoor activities in Samoëns, which include archery, snowmobiling, dog sledding and snowshoe hikes. More adventurous options encompass paragliding, speed riding, ice climbing and helicopter sightseeing flights.

Come nightfall, English-language films are shown several nights a week by Société Cinémonde (tel: 04 5034 4140; [www.allocine.fr](http://www.allocine.fr)). There are live performances in the performing arts too at Le Bois Aux Dames (Centre Sportif et culturel; tel: 04 5089 7118), which can accommodate more than 400 seated guests or 1,100 standing.

As with most ski resorts in the Alps, it’s also possible to unwind with a wide range of spa and massage treatments at several different facilities throughout Samoëns.

**Family Fun**

Samoëns prides itself on being family friendly and its homely atmosphere makes it a good base for quality time together. In recognition of its facilities and services, the resort has been given the highest French government certification for the quality of its service and facilities for families.

Children aged from three months to six years old can be cared for in the central Les Loupiots nursery (Place de la Gare; tel: 04 5034 1396; [www.garderielesloupiots.com](http://www.garderielesloupiots.com)) in the village. Pushchairs are available from nearby Neige et Montagne (Place de la Gare; tel: 04 5034 4090; [www.neige-montagne.com](http://www.neige-montagne.com)).

On the slopes, kids’ ski classes are available from age three at the École du Ski Français (Place de l'Autogare; tel: 04 5034 4086; [www.esfsamoens.com](http://www.esfsamoens.com)), with lessons specially tailored to age and ability. Ski Session (Avenue Cognacq-Jay; tel: 06 1075 5859; [www.skisession.fr](http://www.skisession.fr)) runs private lessons for children, while Zigzag Ski (46 Rue de la Garetel: 06 3120 4410; [www.zigzagski.com](http://www.zigzagski.com)) and 360 International Ski School (Avenue du Giffre; tel: 04 5053 3892; [www.ecoledeski360.com](http://www.ecoledeski360.com)) also provide tuition for kids aged from three and four years respectively.

Up on the mountain near the toboggan run at Samoëns 1600, a playground and discovery area offers playtime, dressing-up workshops, stories and plenty of fun and games for three to six-year-olds.

**Retail Therapy**

There are around 50 shops in Samoëns catering for all tastes. There is also a weekly market – one of the largest in the Haute-Savoie region – every Wednesday from 0700 to 1300.

Fun Bonbons (Place du Gros Tilleul; tel: 04 5093 3715), one of several confectioners in the resort, serves 150 varieties of sweets, from alpine specialities to old-fashioned treats. For savoury local delicacies, try Le Grenier Savoyard delicatessen (Grande Rue; tel: 04 5034 4822), which is famous for its fondue and Beaufort cheeses. For gifts, head to Oxyzen (Place du Gros Tilleul; tel: 04 5034 1932), a purveyor of beautiful stones, hand-worked amber and other craft objects.

**Splashing Out**

For magnificent views over the Grand Massif, take to the air on a tandem paragliding flight with Pégase Air Samoëns in La Savoyarde (Route des Mouilles; tel: 04 5034 9580; [www.parapente-samoens.com](http://www.parapente-samoens.com)). The experienced team have been working in the area since 1973 and offer full pilot training as well as speed riding, which involves descending a ski slope on skis or a board with a small parasail attached to the skier’s back for ‘big air’.

**Apres Ski**

Although not the ideal resort choice for those looking for full-on, St Anton-style après-ski hedonism, Samoëns has several dozen bars and restaurants in its village square around the landmark 900-year-old lime tree.

Two options particularly worthy of mention are the cosy Bar Lounge Les Glaciers (Le Bourg; tel: 04 5034 4006; [hotel-les-glaciers.com](http://hotel-les-glaciers.com)) and the always popular Covey’s Irish pub (Avenue du Fer a Cheval; tel: 04 5018 2115; [www.coveysirishpub.com](http://www.coveysirishpub.com)); the latter usually being the liveliest spot in the resort.

**Eating Out**

There are about 30 places to eat in Samoëns village, in addition to a number of gourmet food shops that prepare Alpine delicacies such as fondue and *tartiflette* (a savoury potato dish), and several takeaway services, such as the Pizzeria Snack du Giffre (Avenue du Giffre; tel: 04 5058 7196).

The many atmospheric cafés and restaurants serving authentic, home-cooked Savoyard food are a big part of the Samoëns experience. Le Monde à l’Envers (Place du Criou; tel: 04 5034 1936) fits this category well and has a Michelin Guide listing, while Mezzanine (37 Chemin des Bornes; tel: 04 5053 6522; [www.mezzaninesamoens.com](http://www.mezzaninesamoens.com)) has a convivial ambience and offers a good value set menu.

**Transport**

**Getting There**

Nearest airport: Geneva International Airport (GVA); Chambéry Airport (CMF); Bern-Belp Airport (BRN).

Distance to resort: 80km (31miles); 125km (77 miles); 240km (150 miles).

Driving time: 1 hour 20 minutes; 1 hour 40 minutes; 3 hours.

**Getting Around**

Samoëns has a relatively compact centre. Its gondola base is within easy reach of most of the village, and most services and facilities are also within walking distance of each other. A ski bus service accesses key points around the village, but it is best to check whether there are good transportation links to the accommodation when booking.

**Hotels**

There is a relatively small choice of hotels in Samoëns (the most highly rated is 3-star); but the village’s increasing popularity has led to a growth in accommodation options, in particular high-quality chalets in converted older buildings. Where space allows, the construction of modern, quality apartment complexes has also taken place in recent years.

**Chalet Marie Stuart**

This traditional chalet in Le Petit Saix is just a short walk from the village centre and offers great views, good food, a small sauna and a basic exercise room.

**Category**

Cheap

**Thoroughfare**

Le Petit Saix

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Samoëns

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

04 5090 7149.

**Website**

http://www.chaletmariestuart.com

**Hôtel Neige et Roc**

This family-friendly 3-star option is composed of two adjoining traditional chalets and a range of on-site leisure facilities. The hotel’s restaurant hosts a fondue evening accompanied by live music once a week during the winter.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

Le Quart

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Samoëns

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

04 5034 4072.

**Website**

http://www.neigeetroc.com

**Chalet Falcon**

A comfortable chalet 10 minute’s walk from resort centre and a short drive from the ski lifts. Chalet Flacon has a strong reputation for its high-quality cuisine and service, as well as its panoramic views of the Upper Giffre Valley.

**Category**

Luxury

**Thoroughfare**

Chemin Rural des Combes à la Falconnière

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Samoëns

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

04 5096 4976.

**Website**

http://www.chalet365.com

**Hôtel le Gai Soleil**

A central 3-star hotel encased in a traditional chalet-style building, Hôtel le Gai Soleil has a small restaurant and a wellness suite that’s free of charge to guests.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

Le Bourg

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Samoëns

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

04 5034 4074.

**Website**

http://www.augaisoleil-hotel-restaurant.com

**Relais Cap France Le Berouze**

This family and group-oriented residence can be found on the edge of the village and provides good value accommodation with a bar and dining area.

**Category**

Cheap

**Thoroughfare**

Revalogi

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Samoëns

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

04 5034 4209.

**Website**

http://www.leberouze.com