



The finest of French Alpine experiences

Morzine is a traditional Alpine resort in the heart of the French Alps.

It is located in the heart of the Portes du Soleil, one of the world's largest ski areas.

As such, Morzine offers excellent and expansive skiing and snowboarding for all levels, along with a wide range of other wintertime activities.

And in late afternoon and evening Morzine comes into its own with fine apres ski opportunities to suit all tastes and palates.

Morzine is also an increasingly popular summer destination for those who enjoy active pursuits including mountain biking and Alpine hiking.

In either season the stunning French Alps are an enveloping and energising backdrop.

<https://en.morzine-avoriaz.com/>

Ashley Gibbins
Commissioning Editor
AllWays traveller



All one could wish for in an Alpine getaway

The French Alps resort of Morzine is going to be well known and highly regarded by regular ski and snowboard enthusiasts.

By Ashley Gibbins



A smooth transfer from Geneva Airport makes getting in and out of Morzine an easy prospect.

And once there, with Morzine as a base, one has an integrated network of ski lifts to the slopes of *Morzine* and *Les Gets* and *Avoriaz* with some 600 km of pistes on the Portes du Soleil ski area.

There is a wide range of hotel and chalet accommodation to suit couples and groups and, of course, being France, fine dining galore and an *apres ski* as relaxing or as lively as one could wish for.

In this respect, Morzine does not need to sell itself to experienced skiers or snowboarders.

But is Morzine suited to the novice?

Or to those like Ann who, reaching 60 has never skied but would like to do so.

And what about me?

While, getting out and about in the French Alps certainly appeals, I have no inherent desire to be 'slip, sliding away' on a pair of long, narrow runners.

Spoiler alert on both counts. Yes!



A great time in the Alps

Ann and I paid a first weeklong visit to Morzine in early March, so towards the end of the winter season.

She to start learning to ski, as a slightly more elderly absolute novice, and I to see what there was to enjoy as a relatively active non-skier.

This also gave us time to take in in the car free mountain resort of Avoriaz that sits high above Morzine.

Those who decide not to ski or snowboard all the way back down have the Prodains Express cable car and then a free shuttle bus back to Morzine.

Really enthralling

By the time we left Morzine, Ann had become a really quite proficient skier and found it to be genuinely enthralling (as she writes below).

She is looking forward to getting back on her skis.

I took advantage of everything else that this part of the French Alps has to offer and enjoyed an invigorating and truly bracing experience.

Not skiing in no way meant losing out.



When Ann returns to Morzine to become even more proficient on her skis, I will jump (not ski-jump) at the chance to join her.

Having tasted the French Alps in winter, we are also keen to get back to the mountains in summer.

I know this will offer a totally different, yet equally rewarding experience.



Skiing for the mature beginner in Morzine

I have always wanted to ski. To glide effortlessly down soft, snowy slopes, enjoying stunning mountain views whilst heading towards a snug alpine bar serving warm wine or indulgent hot chocolate.

By Ann Mealor

Alas, however, I have never skied the dream.

I find this disappointing as I am a competent horse rider and therefore have good sense of balance.

So, I should be good on snow and skis.

But, after an unsuccessful trip to Tignes, France 23 years ago when a beginner slid into me damaging my knee, I felt fear every day.

Swaying chair lifts and steep, icy slopes filled me with dread and much to my chagrin, I wasn't tempted back to the snow until five years ago.

Ashley and I went to Samoans in French Alps and had a two-hour ski lesson.

While that was it, I quite enjoyed the experience, and here I am in Morzine ready to give skiing a proper go.

On arrival

On arriving at our chalet in Morzine I was equipped with skis, boots, poles and helmet.

However, the next day, walking to the ski lift, weighed down in my cumbersome gear, I felt, with some trepidation, like an astronaut on a mission to the moon or a diver heading to the bottom of the sea.

I shuffled uneasily towards the cable car, hoping I would make it on before the doors closed.

I did, and we started our journey upwards. As we went higher, I could only think what if...

On safely reaching the top, I lumbered out of the gondola in my ten tonne boots, before it headed back down again.

I had made it to the bottom of the beginner's slopes and was in the right place to meet my instructor.



It was Matt from the *Ecole du Ski Français* (ESF), a young Frenchman who was finishing his last season on the slopes before starting a career as a rocket scientist.

I felt I was in safe hands.

Matt first showed me how to put on my skis, and we slid slowly over towards the *Magic Carpet*.

This a travelator similar to the ones they have in airports.

It looked easy enough to get on, but as my skis hit the rolling carpet I was pulled forward and nearly lost my balance.

However, once on I was able to stay upright.

Getting off was much trickier

After nearly hitting the deck on exit, Matt said I needed to resist the temptation to lean backwards and instead lean forwards with my skis pointing straight ahead and just let them slide.

Easier said than done, but after a few goes I felt less likely to flatten any one on my way out.

The first thing Matt taught me was how to stop and feel safe using the snow plough position or pizza slice as they call it now.

We did this a few times until I felt comfortable with it and then I followed him down to the bottom of the nursery run.

We progressed to snow ploughing across the slope and turning, focusing on shifting weight from one leg to the other.

It was a good session and Matt suggested I could try and get on a chair lift and attempt the other beginner slopes.

However, I played safe and spent the afternoon getting to grips with the Magic Carpet and skiing back down the way I knew.

This was not without risk, as I had to dodge the many free flowing toddlers and other hapless beginners, like myself, who cannot change direction once a path had been set.

The second day

I was back on the beginner slopes by 10am as I wanted to practice before my lesson.

However, my favourite nursery slope was icy and although I managed to stay on two skis, I felt my confidence waning.

I went up and down a few times, getting to grips with the *Magic Carpet* and skiing to the very bottom of the beginner slope, which was steep and tricky, to meet Matt.

I explained how I felt, so we spent the first hour of our lesson building on what I had learned the previous day and concentrating on skiing and turning across the slope.

The sun had started to thaw the snow a little and this made it easier for me, so Matt suggested we try the chair lift and the green slopes in the beginner's area.



I was worried.

Skiing down to the chair lifts was daunting as the slopes, although still beginner level were steeper.

However, with Matt's help and encouragement, I did it.

Getting on the lift wasn't too bad, although it was a bit of a shock when the chair came whizzing up behind me and I tumbled in!

Next time, I looked back so I had an idea of when it was approaching.

Travelling up the slope was very peaceful and relaxing once I became used to the height and the drops beneath – the views were incredible!

When the time came to get off, I had to lift up the safety bar, wriggle to the edge of my seat - scary - put my feet on the landing platform, stand up and slide away.

I managed half of it. Skis on the platform ok but couldn't stand up so ended up sliding away on my bum!

Fortunately, Matt was there to help heave me up. It made skiing down the new slope seem so much easier.

We went up and down a few times but still the lift dismount was difficult. I never actually fell over, just wobbled all over the place.



By the end of my second and final lesson, Matt said he was pleased with my progress and that unknown to me, I had actually skied down parts of some blue runs.

Now it was a case of practicing and building on what I had learned.

So that afternoon, I went up and down on *The Magic Carpet* to the top of the nursery slope, along with the ski school toddlers.

I implemented what Matt had taught me, whilst the littluns zipped past me in all directions, like ducklings on a pond.



Going it alone

The following day, I wanted to make the most of my ski pass by going back to the learner area and trying to tackle the chair lifts again.

Unfortunately, the rest of my party were heading off in the opposite direction to Avoriaz.

So, I had to go it alone or not at all. I needed to face my demons, so off I went.

Back on the mountain, I spent an hour on my favourite beginner slope.

Having built up my courage I made for the chair lifts alone, skiing down the tricky parts to reach them.

After conquering my fear, I managed to get on and off unaided, if not ungainly.

On skiing past the *Magic Carpet*, I saw a fellow novice heading down the piste at full speed, out of control and screaming.

There was her instructor at the bottom of the slope arms outstretched, directly in the line of fire.

She flattened him like roadkill, but the impact did bring her to a halt, and she had a relatively soft landing.

That's dedication for you!

On the Wednesday, I had to find my way to the Ski- Joering (skiing behind a horse) meeting point.

This meant going up a new cable car – The Super Morzine-to Avoriaz a different town and mountain and down two never before experienced green slopes.

I was thinking mission impossible.

However, my knowledgeable and expert skier cousin Colin, said he would come with me and reassured me that I would be able to cope with the skiing.

Ashley was going to come up with us in the gondola and walk to the meeting point – so many things could go wrong.

Before getting on The Super Morzine, skis had to go in a rack on the outside of the gondola.

If you weren't quick, you and your footwear could become separated like lost luggage.

However, with Colin's help I got myself sorted and we arrived at the top.

Ashley headed on his way, and I started skiing into the unknown with Colin leading the way.

He was shouting instructions like bend your knees, stick your bum out, look down the mountain, not behind you!

I did look behind me and that was a mistake – it looked like the M25.

Hundreds of skiers of all levels behind me, racing to get past and to the bottom so they could take the lift back up to more adventurous slopes.

Apparently, this one green slope was the gateway to the rest of the mountain.

The ski code is you don't worry about the skiers behind you – they have to dodge you.

Knowing how difficult it would be for me to dodge anyone, I was expecting to be involved in one pile up at the very least.

Miraculously, I escaped any injury and took the chair lift back up the mountain.

Colin showed me how to dismount without incurring damage, and we rendezvoused with Ashley at the agreed place – and on time!

My last few days were spent practising on those green pistes, including a very steep and bumpy slope leading to a café in Avoriaz.



A comforting hot chocolate providing the incentive to get to the bottom.

A real sense of achievement

I ended the week on a high note skiing the whole way down a mighty blue run following in the ski tracks of my cousin Deb, with Colin shouting instructions – 'lift your left leg, lift your right leg -stick your bum out' – all very constructive.

I did find skiing tricky and sometimes alarming, but it was also exhilarating, challenging and gave me a great sense of achievement.

The nursery slopes in Morzine were just right for me and I probably could have stayed pottering around on them for the week.

The ski pass for that area is very good value too, if I hadn't had to go further afield.

In thinking back on my time in Morzine, I just loved being in the mountains, simply stunning.

The lessons with Matt (an absolute must for the beginner), were excellent.

And finally, the camaraderie back in the chalet sharing the day's events around the dinner table was special.

More information :

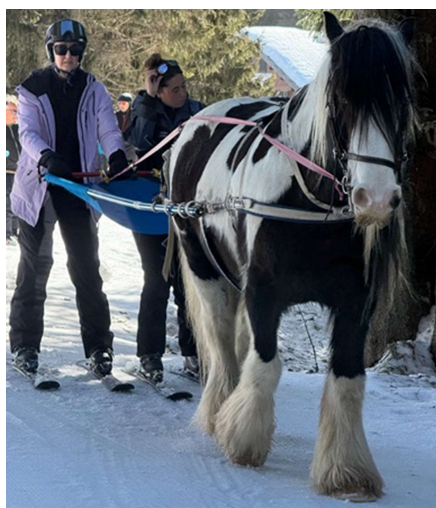
<https://www.esf-uk.co.uk/>

The horses enjoy this as much as we do

Skijoring is being towed on skis by one or more horses and can be enjoyed by novice and experienced skiers.



By Ann Mealor



For my first experience of skijoring I went to Avoriaz Skijoring, met Phillipe who has a real love and passion for his horses, and was partnered with Jongo.

He is a well-built, a handsome, black and white, nine-year-old Irish Draught.

Before starting, everyone in our small group were given instructions on how to steer using the driving reins; stop and go using voice commands and how to position our skis.

It was very important that they always stayed parallel, even going around corners!

As a beginner skier, I had one of the trainers alongside me to offer a helping hand if needed.

We all set off at a leisurely pace, with Jongo leading the way.

It was a very soothing and enjoyable experience being gently pulled along white, tree lined paths and a very different way of enjoying the alps whilst experiencing a new equestrian activity.

As a novice skier I stayed mainly in walk, but it was also fun being pulled by Jongo at an energetic trot in places.

I declined the canter phase as I didn't feel confident enough on my skis to go any faster.

I also didn't want to fall, or lose my balance, as I thought it may upset Jongo, who clearly enjoys his role.

I would love to try this again when my skiing has improved and experience the thrill of being pulled at speed, by a horse, through a wintry, woodland landscape.

Phillipe also runs a range of horse-riding excursions into the mountains during the summer months which, as a horse rider sounds particularly enticing.

More information :

<https://en.avoriaz-skijoring.com/> and <https://en.morzine-avoriaz.com/activity/ski-joering/>



A spectacular snowshoe adventure

One thing Ann and I had to do was to go snowshoe walking, and we did this on a half-day's with *DaysAway Adventures*.

By Ashley Gibbins



Jason

It was a great way to take in the spectacular French Alps in a half-day that was absolutely exhilarating and a real personal achievement.

The snowshoe walks are run by Vivien and Jason Day, with their delightful border collie Gaia often along for the walk.

Vivien and Jason, both certified International Mountain Leaders, offer small group half and full day snowshoe walks in the mountains of Haute Savoie.

Ann and I opted for the half-day walk led by Jason (and Gaia) and joined six others on a group that quickly bonded.





Spreading the weight

Snowshoes, as he explained at the outset, are designed for walking over snow because their large footprint spreads our weight.

This means we can walk largely on top of snow, rather than having to struggle through it.

While experience in snowshoeing is not necessary, being in relatively good shape helps as one is walking up, and then down mountainsides.

While snowshoe walking can be quite strenuous, the pace is gentle and there are regular breaks along the route.

This gave Jason the chance share stories of the area and its history, and me time to catch up with the rest of the group.

And from start to finish there was magnificent mountain scenery all around.

Jason and Vivien have different routes through the mountains to meet any localised weather conditions and to give those who have been before a different experience each time.

It says much for the experience that welcoming guests for a second or third time is a regular occurrence.

As for Ann and myself, we found our half-day snowshoe walking an exhilarating achievement and a truly memorable experience, with Jason the perfect tour guide.

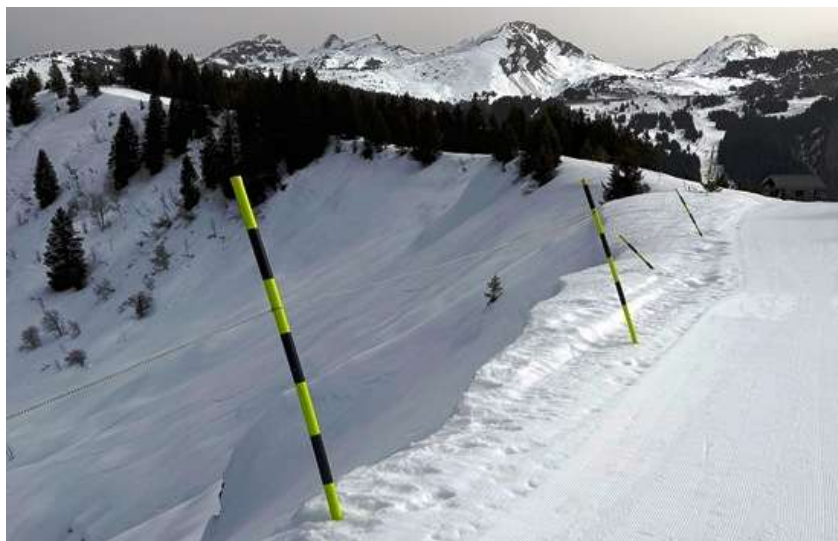


More information :



DaysAway Adventures provide snowshoes and walking poles, along with transport from a central location in each village and a welcoming apple spiced tea and a slice of cake mountainside

<https://www.daysawayadventures.com/>



Many other on-foot opportunities

Having completed my snowshoe challenge with Jason and the group, I was ready to set out on foot on my own.

I had discussed hiking routes at the Morzine Tourist Information office on my first morning in the resort.

This is located in the very centre of Morzine and the staff there are so very helpful there, speaking perfect English while also kind to me as I tried my 'pigeon' French.

I always recommend a visit to a tourist office at the outset of a trip, and this was so important in Morzine.

I was told about the pedestrian ski passes and where they could be used and hiking routes that were easy to follow and would allow me to liaise with Ann for lunch in a mountain restaurant.

The first saw me take the Super Morzine lift up from Morzine, with Ann.

While she had the first of her ski lessons with Matt, I took the designated hiking route before meeting with Ann for a beer and our pre-prepared cheese baguettes.

My second hike was even more spectacular.

We took the Super Morzine and then a chair lift high up into the mountains.

I then took the mountain top forest trail through to Avoriaz that was serene and stunning in equal measure.

Brisk but not too strenuous with a delightful café/bar as a meeting point with Ann along the way.

This was so enjoyable I walked the trail on two consecutive days.

Other hiking trails from Morzine include the Vallée de la Manche through a Nordic-style valley and the Sentier du Renard (Fox Trail), which is an easier walk along the Dranse river.



More information :

<https://www.morzine-avoriaz.com/brochure/guide-nordique/>

Les Aigles du Léman soar on high

The Aigles du Léman (Eagles of Lake Geneva) is one of the most popular winter attractions, for skiers and non-skiers alike.

By Ashley Gibbins



The Aigles du Léman is an organisation dedicated to the conservation of and education about birds of prey.

During the winter season there are two daily shows at restaurant terrace on the Pointe de Nyon.

These are led by Alexandre Ramade and featuring various birds of prey including eagles, buzzards and owls.

One is unlikely to find someone more committed than Alex to the conservation of endangered birds of prey.

A highlight of a visit is watching Darshan, an eagle, soar majestically from the summit of Pointe de Nyon before diving at tremendous speed to be rewarded by a small piece of meat held in Alex's gloved hand.

After each show there is the chance to talk to Alex and to 'glove and fly' birds of prey.

During the summer months the birds return to the Aigles du Léman park near to Lake Geneva.

The park has over 320 birds from more than 80 different species which live in over 100 aviaries including the 'eagles residence', the world's largest aviary for birds of prey,

More information :

<https://www.lesaignesduleman.com/en/summer/the-park/>





These Penguins are fast, furious and feisty

Another first for me, in Morzine, was the chance to watch a live ice-hockey match.

By Ashley Gibbins

The Penguins de Morzine-Avoriaz, the 'penguins' play competitive and friendly matches throughout the summer and winter season.

I managed to get a ticket for the Penguins match against Mont Blanc, at the Palais des Sports.

One gets really close to the action and the arena was heaving with passionate, well wrapped up, fans.

Particularly with the Penguins running (or skating) out 4-to-0 winners and most of us enjoying cold beer and pizzas.

Watching professional ice hockey live, one really gets to appreciate just how fast paced the sport is.

The teams have five skaters looking to get a vulcanized rubber puck into the opposing net and a head to toe protected 'goalie' doing his best to stop this happening.

Given how exhausting the sport is, there are continuous 'on the fly' substitutions during play.

And while ice hockey is such a physical contact sport, there was not underlying aggression between the two teams.

Not sure I would want to watch ice hockey every week but, doing so in Morzine, was an experience I would not have missed.

More information :

<https://www.hockey-morzine.com/>



The fun does not stop at the slopes

Apres ski (after ski) refers to all the social activities and entertainment that follows a day's skiing, snowboarding or hiking.



The phrase, which was first coined in the Alps in the 1950s, has become a generic term worldwide and a key component in any winter sports break.

As such it embraces those who embrace the happily raucous parties and those who are looking for more refined socialising in quite bars and delicious casual and fine dining.

In this respect, Morzine offers the whole spectrum of *apres ski*.

This being France, the chance to enjoy excellent dining goes without saying and there are any number of choices that will not disappoint.

Those looking to party will inevitably start at *Le Tremplin*, at the foot of the Pleney lift.

This is the place to cram outside for a throbbing, bopping apres-ski party, every afternoon, with live music and DJs.

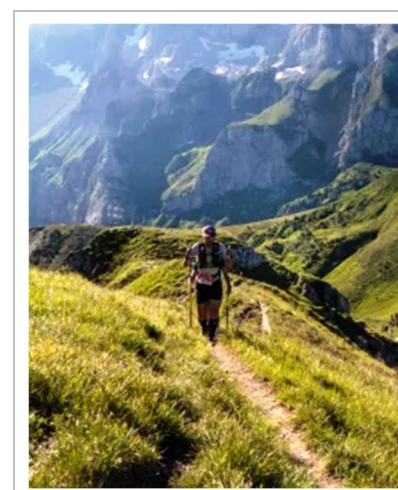
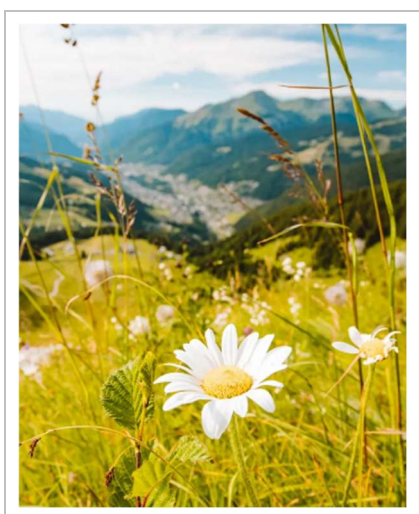
Come evening there is a less frenetic but equally enjoyable experience inside.

Le Tremplin also has a fine dining restaurant and, from summer, will open its 4-star new hotel.

<https://www.hotel-tremplin.com/>

Summertime in the French Alps

Those preferring to visit Morzine during the summer months will find the Alpine meadows blanketed with wildflowers and the mountains ever beckoning.



Many of the lifts remain open to get to any number of clearly marked lakeside walks, wild swimming and hillside hiking.

Morzine is also becoming a lure for the mountain biker.

Birdwatchers will be able to spot any number of species, particularly birds of prey, including the Lammergeier, Golden Eagle, and Goshawk.

And, of course, the bars and restaurants that serve the apres skiers so well, are there for those who have enjoyed a summer's day in the Alps.

Finally, Morzine stages a number of festivals, outdoor concerts and cultural events during the summer months.

More information :

<https://en.morzine-avoriaz.com/discover-morzine/summer/>





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www.itwalliance.com



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