



What's New in Val d'Isère for 2016/17

December sees the opening of a major state-of-the-art gondola that rises from the heart of the resort. It's the biggest innovation in France's top resort for a decade, and it will transform mountain access in Val d'Isère for all standards of skier.

The opening of the Solaise Gondola is the final phase of the two-year €16 million redevelopment of Solaise, one of the resort's two iconic mountains, reached from the *front de neige* base area.

During the course of this summer, the old Solaise Express chair-lift and the even older Solaise cable-car – the original was built in 1938 – were dismantled. In their place comes a 10-person gondola with 91 cabins, complete with heated seats and WiFi. You can park your skis in exterior baskets, or bring them inside - the choice speeds up loading time.

The lift company has taken every step to minimise the environmental impact of the project. The redevelopment reduces the number of lift stations from a total of eight with 34 pylons to just two with 16 pylons.

The new gondola will increase capacity by 40% and can carry up to 3,600 passengers per hour, bringing an end to any previous peak-hour bottlenecks at the base on high-season dates. The journey time will be just seven minutes, making it one of the fastest lifts in the world.

The gondola machinery is buried underground at the base area. This significantly reduces the noise impact both for two- and four-legged inhabitants that live here at the foot of the mountain.

New Day Lodge

The top station of the Solaise Gondola is located on the reshaped summit of Solaise, higher up the mountain than the old chair and cable car. Bulldozers shifted 70,000 cubic metres – a million tons – of earth to create the new station platform. The North-American-style Day Lodge, opening this season beside it, has floor-to-ceiling windows with spectacular views. It will be the focal point for skiers and boarders in the Solaise sector of the resort. It's a place where you can meet up with friends, warm up on cold days, and generally recharge your batteries between runs.

Picnickers Welcome

The Day Lodge features art displays as well as a bar area serving coffee, tea, and pastries and – very unusual in a European ski resort – a comfortable picnic area, where skiers can eat their lunch and relax in warm and comfortable surroundings. It's equipped with a microwave and vending machines for snacks and drinks. To keep older children happy there's table football, while for younger ones there's a Kids Corner on the first floor with cushions and a TV showing cartoons. Outside, there are two sun terraces with magnificent views of Bellevarde in one direction and the Solaise pistes in the other.

New Beginner Area

The Solaise redevelopment will encourage novice skiers to venture away from the nursery slopes on the *front de neige*, go up the mountain, and experience the full glory of the ski area.

The new, secure, beginner slopes created at the top of the gondola have been regraded to provide the perfect pitch for learning first steps on skis and snowboard. They're served by three covered magic carpets lifts. Beginners can swiftly progress from these slopes to the easy, rolling terrain reached from the adjacent Madeleine chair-lift.

New Reduced Price Lift Passes

To celebrate the redevelopment of this part of the mountain Val d'Isère is offering a special lift pass. It covers the new beginner area as well as a substantial amount of terrain suited to more accomplished skiers. The pass includes the two village lifts of Legettaz and Rogoney, the Solaise Gondola, and the three magic carpets as well as the Madeleine, Datcha, and Glacier chairs.

Cost is just 35€ for one day.

The lift company is also offering a one-day Discovery pass, which covers all the Val d'Isère (but not Tignes) lifts for 49€. If you book a week of beginner lessons with a recognised ski school you can get a six-day Val d'Isère –Tignes pass for just 139€ – an incredible saving of 139€.

Full lift pass prices for the main season (17.12.16 – 01.05.17) Val d'Isère-Tignes:

Adult:

One day: 55.50€

Six days: 278€

Child (5-13) and senior (65-74):

One day, 44.50€

Six days 222.50€.

(Early season reduced price lift passes available 26.11.16 – 16.12.16).

BMW xDrive Skimovie

Test your skills against the clock on the new BMW slalom course beside the Rogoney piste, and then watch yourself in action at www.bmw-xdrive-cup.fr and on the Skiline app.

Access is with your lift pass. The entry gate records your details, and your time is automatically recorded as the camera rolls. You can then take part in the BMW xDrive Cup and share your results by email or on social media.

New Val d'Isère app

The Android version of the hugely successful Val d'Isère app, introduced last season for iPhone, is now available for free download. This is the definitive resort app, with constantly evolving information that is personalised to you and designed to keep you up to date with all that is happening in the resort, making a holiday all the more enjoyable. Innovations now allow you to check out your skiing performance - it records your speed, distance covered, and your total vertical metres. As a result of the gamification of the app, discover the best of what's happening both on the mountain and in the resort itself, and win exclusive art works created by local artists.

NEW ACCOMMODATION

La Mourra

Five-star Hotel Village La Mourra joins the luxury chalets that opened last winter. The complex, at the top end of town, is a kind of resort within a resort. It's been developed by the owners of the long established five-star Hotel Le Blizzard and is designed in the style of a typical Savoyard hamlet. The hotel comprises 10 luxurious suites, while the four spacious chalets each have five to seven rooms. There's a pool, sauna, steam room, a spa using Clarins products, and a home cinema. The restaurant specialises in French cuisine with a Japanese inspiration.

Chalet Skadi – Village Montana

This new complex of 38 luxury self-catering apartments opens on December 17. It's located a five-minute walk from the town centre, and the lifts. The ski bus stops right outside the door. In case you're wondering, it's named after the Nordic goddess of skiing and mountains.

The apartments have all the comfort and charm that you'd expect to find in a five-star mountain chalet. While self-contained, they share a full hotel service with covered parking, 24/7 reception area, laundry facility and WiFi. Ski passes can be picked up on arrival.

Les Bains du Montana is the communal spa with a swimming pool, Jacuzzi, sauna, hammam and a treatment room with Cinq Mondes products.

<http://www.village-montana.com/fr/val-d-isere-appartements.php>

Each apartment is finished to a very high standard, and the modern Alpine style creates the ambience of a cosy mountain retreat. The separate bedrooms and living rooms ensure everyone has their own space – and no one's left sleeping on sofa beds. Some apartments have fireplaces, all have balconies.

Both Crystal and Erna Low are offering self-catering chalets here.

Crystal Ski;(020 8939 0726; <http://www.crystalski.co.uk/ski-resorts/france-ski-holidays/val-disere/chalet-skadi/>) offers a week's self-catering from £634 per person (four sharing) including flights from Gatwick to Chambéry and transfers (price given is for departure on 14 January 2017). Direct flights available from all major UK airports.

Erna Low is offering three, four, and five bedroom apartments here sleeping up to 10 people. Prices start at £3,125 for a five-bedroom apartment for the week beginning 07/01/17. Erna Low (0207 584 2841; www.ernalow.co.uk)

Hotel Le Samovar

Four-star Le Samovar has undergone further major renovations this summer with the addition of four rooms and a 165sq m suite with a 70 sq m south-facing terrace overlooking the pistes. There's also a five-bedroom apartment covering the whole of the second floor with a 79 sq m terrace. Hotel Le Samovar (+33 4 79 06 13 51; www.lesamovar.com/en).

Hotel Le Tsanteleina

The four-star Tsanteleina has converted 17 of its rooms into nine luxurious suites of 42 to 56 sq m, each sleeping up to six people. Hotel Tsanteleina (+33 4 79 06 12 13; <http://tsanteleina.com/en>).

Chalet Calistoga

Calistoga is a designer chalet that's been developed this summer for Consensio in partnership with its new Parisian owners. It's situated in the smart Domaine du Crêt *quartier* and sleeps 10 guests in great comfort. It has a fabulous new spa and swimming pool and enjoys stunning, uninterrupted views towards La Daille. From £19,500 per week. Consensio Chalets (0203 393 0833: <http://www.consensiochalets.co.uk/properties/val-disere/chalet-calistoga>).

Apartment Etoile Filante

This is one of the larger duplexes (it means Shooting Star) in the new building called Résidence Canadienne, located on route de la Balme. The apartment is the flagship of Consensio's new Luxury Alpine Apartments Collection (<http://www.consensioalpineapartments.co.uk>). It's been created by Alpine designer Nicky Dobree (<http://www.nickydobree.com>). The luxurious apartment is 150 sq m in size and sleeps nine guests in three double bedrooms and one children's room. Etoile Filante is available on a self-catering basis from 6,000 € per week.

Consensio Alpine Apartments: (+44 (0)203 3188 375; www.consensioalpineapartments.co.uk).

Other Tour Operator News

VIP has created a new Club Chalet floor at Aspen Lodge in the very centre of Val d'Isère, with the use of the VIP SKI shuttle collection from La Daille. This follows on from the success of the Bellevarde Club Chalet, aimed at guests who don't want to take a whole property and would prefer to share with other like-minded skiers or families. VIP's Club Chalets are reserved by the room, have chefs and a more flexible menu plan, canapé receptions every evening, complimentary beer and wine, breakfast and cleaning every day and priority ski guiding.

A holiday in a VIP SKI CLUB chalet gives you the very best of both worlds: the fun atmosphere of a club-hotel with the intimacy and exclusivity of a private chalet, all wrapped up in ubiquitous VIP SKI service. VIP (020 875 1957: www.vip-chalets.com).

Skiworld's The Lodge, which sleeps up to 86 people, has been entirely refurbished for this season, along with 10-person Chalet Cime in the same building. Skiworld (0330 102 8004; www.skiworld.co.uk)

Mark Warner is offering ski guiding with a ski instructor on certain weeks – Chalet hotel Val d'Isère on January 8 and Chalet hotel Moris on March 19. Cost £70pp for two mornings, £140 for four mornings. Groups limited to 10 people. Mark Warner (0333 3057428; www.markwarner.co.uk).

Powder White has six new luxurious chalets for this season, sleeping 8-14 people and bringing their total in Val to 13. Prices start at £649 on January 7 for Chalet The Pinto. (020 8877 8888; www.powderwhite.com).

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