

France

Information about Chamonix and the French Alps



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Chamonix in the Haute Savoie province of France at the foot of the Mont Blanc massif is very close to the borders between France, Switzerland and Italy. You can get a flavour of all three of these countries on our holidays.

The period early July, late August and September is the best time to go to the Alps. This is when there is the best chance of dry sunny weather, the winter snows are gone off the higher paths and it is outside the very busy seasons of winter and high summer.

Chamonix is 'the' international centre for and birth place of alpinism. The town is built around the 'maison des guides des haute montagne', the hotel ville, and the church. In the main square is a statue of Jaques Balmat, the first ascensionist of Mont Blanc, pointing at the summit of the highest mountain in Europe.

The town, the valley and the satellite villages are dominated to the south by Mont Blanc and the incredible pinnacles, faces and glaciers of the Chamonix Aiguilles. This is the most serious and challenging arena for alpinism in the world. To the north, the valley is flanked by the geologically distinct Aiguilles Rouges - a particularly fine area for walking.

Chamonix exists to serve mountain sports and the extensive uphill transport system, telepheriques and mountain railways, makes it possible to get into the mountains quickly and easily. The hard work starts when you get off the lift or the train! But this is the most developed area of alpine mountains in the world and there are interesting buvets and mountain refuges offering food and drink where you can refresh yourself never far away.

In the town, the restaurants, bars and shops offer the specialities of the region and as this is an international centre there is also a cosmopolitan flavour. As well as mountaineering there are a wide range of other active leisure pursuits catered for in Chamonix - the Sports centre and swimming pool, golf course, tennis courts, downhill 'luge' and riding facilities to name a few.

The satellite villages such as Les Houches, Les Bossons and Le Praz are nice places to stay quiet villages where you can enjoy the rural calm of a more traditional Alpine village while also being close enough to enjoy the unique flavour of Chamonix

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