

STRESS-FREE SKIING & SNOWBOARDING

KATY DARTFORD discovers the convenience and luxury of a stay at Club Med Serre Chevalier in the Southern Alps

I'm a skier. But every now and then, I get the urge to swap my trusty planks for a snowboard, just to shake things up and keep the 'muscle memory' challenged. Usually, this results in some bruises and falling leaf descents.

But thanks to Club Med Serre Chevalier, something remarkable happened – I rode a black run on a snowboard. Happily. With confidence. No flailing. No panic. And that was after just a day with an ESF instructor tied to Club Med's programme. Meeting in the morning we join our estimated group level (for me intermediate) then after a run or two we are divided into smaller groups, so you never feel out of your depth. And it's not a case of following like ducks in a pond. We just cruised around the resort with a little bit of feedback being discretely given when we paused for a break.

Fortunately the stress of my 'annual' snowboarding outing was also greatly relieved by just how easy Club Med makes everything. From the moment I arrived, it was seamless and stress-free. Arriving by car, my luggage was whizzed up to my room and my rental kit was ready in my personal locker, eliminating the usual faff of queueing at a rental shop. Lift passes? Sorted. Ski lessons? Organised. Even getting into my room and ski lockers was hassle-free thanks to the simple wristband system. No fumbling for keys – just grab your gear and go. And once you've got that wristband, everything inside is taken care of, from food to entertainment and relaxation.

Club Med Serre Chevalier reopened in December 2024 after a comprehensive €50 million upgrade, bringing it in line with the brand's latest concept of stress-free, high-quality ski holidays. "We take care of everything, so guests can simply enjoy their time in the mountains," a Club Med representative told me. And enjoy it, I did. The resort is one of the brand's premium 'Exclusive Collection' properties, meaning added luxury and upgraded services, all while maintaining Club Med's signature friendly, family-focused atmosphere.



The renovations included a new gourmet restaurant, a completely redesigned ski room and Ski Pro-Shop, and a state-of-the-art Payot spa at the top of the resort. Families were a major focus, with 91 new interconnecting rooms, a brand-new Petit Club for younger guests under four, and a dedicated snow garden for little ones to learn in a safe environment.

The resort's main restaurant, Le Vauban, has been transformed, while La Meije now serves as the specialty restaurant, offering traditional mountain cuisine like fondue, pierrade and blueberry pie in a cosy Alpine setting.

After my snowboarding success I switched back to skis for a freeride morning. I felt a small pang of 'disloyalty' when I saw my snowboarding instructor on the mountain, but he just joked that I was there to secretly review them all. I joined a group who had been skiing together all week and we boot-packed up 2,698 metres Cucumelle peak, which is easily accessible from the Vallons chairlift.



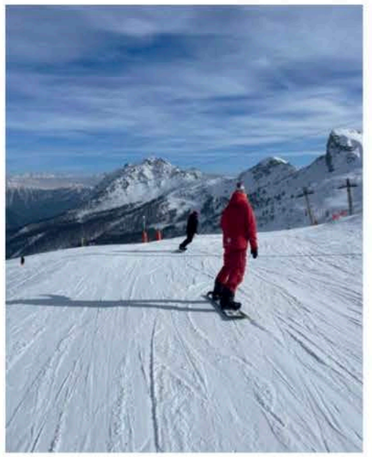
"SOMETHING REMARKABLE HAPPENED – I RODE A BLACK RUN ON A SNOWBOARD. HAPPILY"

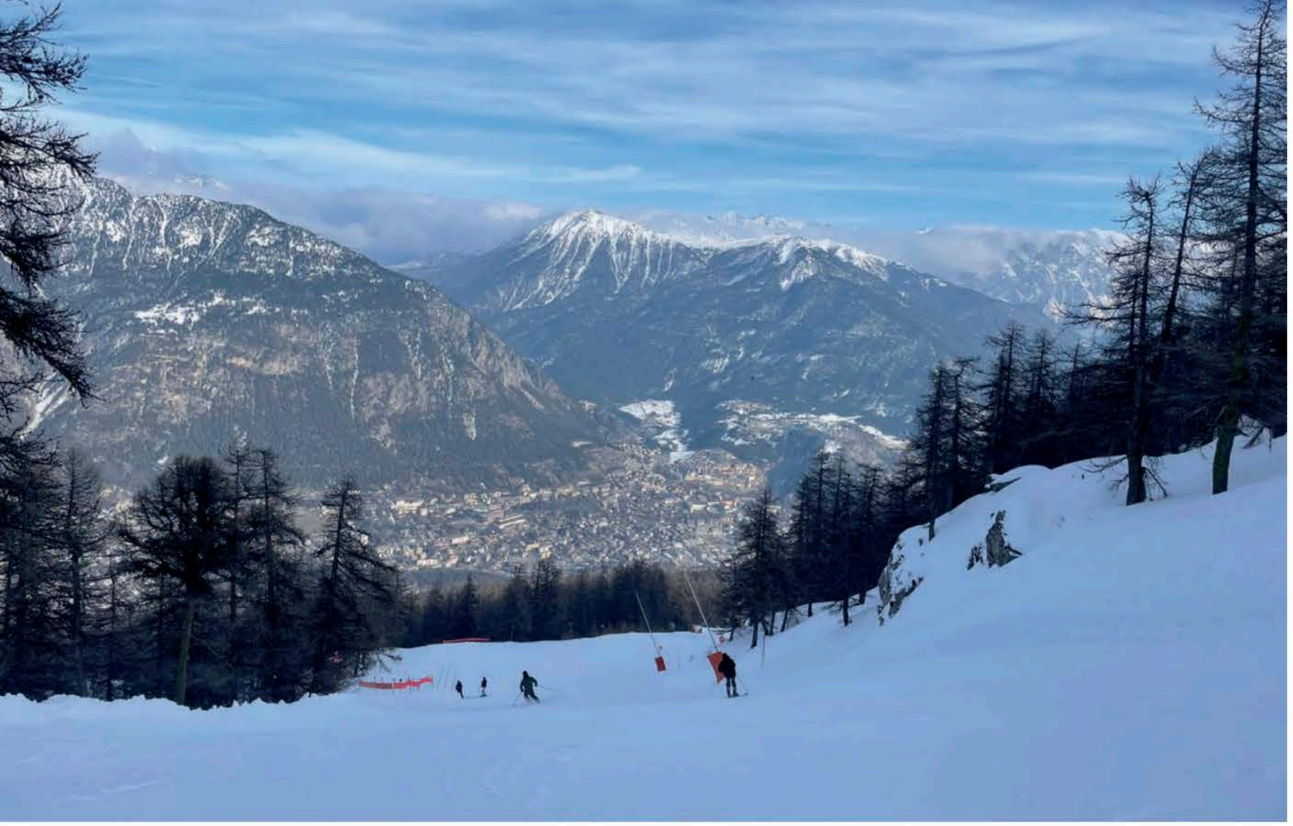
We then skied the Vallon de Corneilles, making the most of Serre Chevalier's famous off-piste terrain. "Serre Chevalier is unique because almost the entire resort is on the north side, which means the snow quality stays good for longer," our instructor told me. He also pointed out that the abundance of tree runs makes the off-piste skiing here particularly good in bad weather, offering better visibility and protection when other high-altitude resorts, like Val Thorens, are completely whited out.

That said, with around 300 days of sunshine a year – thanks to its location in the Southern Alps – bad weather doesn't seem like too much of a concern. Serre Chevalier is actually one of the sunniest ski resorts in France, yet it still maintains great snow conditions due to its high-altitude slopes and north-facing terrain. Best of both worlds!

For our freeride session, we headed to Monêtier, where the cold temperatures kept the snow light and fluffy. It was a very cold day however despite the sunshine, and my instructor recommended Briançon for warmer skiing, as it tends to get more sun.

The main gondola, which whisks guests up the mountain straight from the Club Med, was newly installed just two years ago, making access to the slopes even smoother. So





we were easily down for lunch at 12.30pm and back on the slopes at 2pm with no hassle.

And speaking of infrastructure, Serre Chevalier is looking ahead to the 2030 Winter Olympics, which will see slopestyle and halfpipe events hosted here, with other competitions taking place in Briançon. A fact which piqued the interest of two-time Team GB Olympian snowboarder Aimee Fuller, who had joined us for the afternoon. I kept my skis on for this session as I wanted to have some chance of keeping up!

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Aimee had never been to Serre Chevalier before, but it was interesting to hear her reflect on life after professional snowboarding. "I don't regret stepping away," she said. "I love the freedom I have now to explore the mountains in a different way."

We cruised around the Briançon side of the resort with ESF instructor, Tony Ramoin, himself a former Olympic snowboarder for France. Tony kept things fun, regularly showing off his 'buttering' trick on the green slopes – a stylish move where the board stays in contact with the snow while spinning and twisting.

But Club Med isn't just about skiing. Back at the hotel, après-ski starts early – sometimes as soon as 11.30am. "You really don't need to leave the hotel," another guest told me. "Everything's here – great food, entertainment, even a nightclub atmosphere in the evenings." The staff themselves double up as performers, creating a fun, informal vibe that keeps guests entertained well into the evening.

There's plenty for families, but adults aren't forgotten, with a DJ and lively bar scene making it easy to socialise. The Izoard bar, named after the nearby mountain pass, has panoramic views over La Salle-les-Alpes, making it the perfect spot to unwind.

If skiing isn't your thing, or you just fancy a break from the slopes, there's plenty more to do. The resort's Payot Spa is a luxurious retreat, but Club Med also offers a packed schedule of alternative activities. You can try Aquadynamic classes in the pool, take part in Cross Training sessions, or stretch out with Les Mills Yoga. There's even a dedicated stretching class in the evening to help unwind after a day in the mountains.



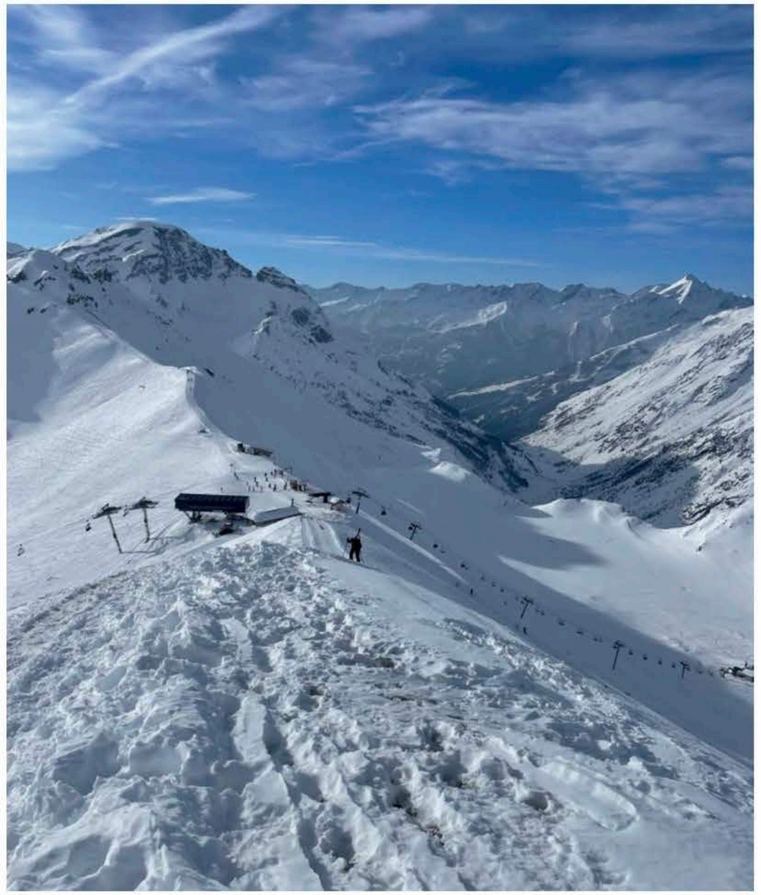
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For those looking for more adventure, the resort also offers alternative winter sports like snowshoeing, fat biking, ice karting and even heli-skiing. History fans can explore nearby Briançon, a UNESCO World Heritage Site with Vauban fortifications dating back to the 17th century.

The food is another standout feature. Forget the standard 'canteen' experience – this was more like a gourmet buffet. There were fresh salads, mountains of vegetables, a pizza and pasta station, grilled meats and even a whole swordfish that was carved up and served raw. The raclette and fondue area was, unsurprisingly, always busy, but the real highlight for me was the dessert station, complete with an ice cream bar.

Beyond the convenience and luxury, Club Med has also been integrating sustainability into its operations. "Serre Chevalier is leading the way in sustainability efforts," said a Club Med spokesperson. The resort is part of Serre Chevalier's wider environmental





push, which includes renewable energy projects like hydroelectric power, solar panels, and even an initiative to generate energy from ski lifts. Club Med itself has been working towards reducing waste and improving energy efficiency in its resorts, making the all-inclusive experience a little greener.

Serre Chevalier is also the first Club Med ski resort to generate its own electricity, with a goal of covering 30–50% of its energy needs by 2030. The resort's recent renovation was carried out with sustainability in mind, using eco-friendly materials, upgrading insulation and installing energy-efficient heating systems. Old furniture and materials weren't simply discarded – many were donated to charities, schools and shelters, while others were repurposed within the resort.

While staying in an all-inclusive resort means you don't get to explore Serre Chevalier's town as much, I can see why people choose it. If you want a completely stress-free ski holiday where everything is taken care of, this is it. And if you happen to be a skier who fancies trying snowboarding for a day, well, there's a good chance you'll come away tackling a black run with confidence – just like I did.

TRAVEL FACTS

Seven nights all-inclusive stay at Club Med Serre-Chevalier, French Alps from £2,905 per adult (based on double occupancy) with return flights from London (LGW) with transfers included. Price based on departure date 06.04.25. Book by calling 03453 676767 or visit **www.clubmed.co.uk/r/serre-chevalier/w**