

PISTE DE RÉSISTANCE

Stretch the ski season well into spring and chase the snow by heading up high to these late-season resorts

Below: the slopes of Savoie.
Opposite page, clockwise
from top left: expect cosy
restaurants; a quick break;
Le Blizzard terrace; all levels
can enjoy the varied terrain





Left, from top: a chalet at Refuge de la Traye; the exhilarating slopes of Val Thorens; cheese haven La Laiterie; the resort a-glow

VAL THORENS FRANCE

Holding the title of Europe's highest ski resort, Val Thorens is one of the best bets for both early and late skiing, with 150km of pistes well above the treeline. Mileage-hungry skiers have a total of 600km across the Trois Vallées domain, which includes Orelle next door in the Maurienne Valley (also open until 5 May). It's the starting point for the Tyrolienne zipwire that whizzes thrill seekers across to Val Thorens at 100km/h – though there's just as much exhilaration to be had on the slopes. The descent from the Cime de Caron at 3,200m meanders down red and black pistes before covering more ground in neighbouring Les Menuires – an epic route that harnesses the euphoric feeling of freedom found in the mountains.

And, while spring sees lower-altitude resorts begin to wind down, Les 3 Vallées ramps things up with the annual Enduro competition on 31 March enduro.les3vallees.com which capitalises on the area's snow-sureness by welcoming thousands of pros and amateurs alike to compete in teams of three. This year sees new events (Giant Slalom) as well as regulars (Big Air Bag) – with the final event, the Family Schuss, taking place on Val Thorens' Génépi slope.

No surprise that the town plays host to one of the main after-parties – the resort has long been famed for its youthful spirit. Over recent years, however, a more upmarket scene has emerged (the sense of serenity and artful dishes at Michelin-starred Le Daimant Noir are testament to that), but there's no doubt the predilection to fun-filled après-ski remains strong.

WHERE TO EAT

ON THE SLOPES

Le Cèpe It's just two ski lifts from Val Thorens into the Méribel valley – take a bowl of Le Cèpe's legendary mushroom 'cappuccino' soup on the sun-drenched terrace, followed by regional delicacies including veal sweetbreads and *pain perdu* with snails; the more adventurous might consider rounding things off with a Mont Blanc, which incorporates porcini ice cream into the dessert mountain. Two courses from £51. 00 33 4 79 224608

IN TOWN

La Laiterie It's rare to come across a more considered fondue or Raclette menu than that done in collaboration with local cheesemaker Frédéric Royer – whose knowledge on heritage breeds, rich terroir and artful ripening knows no bounds. Pair with wines from the same origin for the ultimate Savoyard experience. Three-course menu £55. altapura.webflow.io

WHERE TO STAY

Fahrenheit Seven For great late-season value and true ski-in-ski-out, you can't do better than this retro-style design hotel. Expect generously sized rooms, hearty breakfasts and stunning views from 2,300m up. Doubles from £320. fahrenheitseven.com

Refuge de la Traye This isolated getaway deep within the mountains is as immersive as it gets, with everything from Savoyard cooking classes to pottery workshops, archery and massages in the animal-skin teepee available. And when the slopes beckon, staff will happily chauffeur guests to and from the cable car at Les Allues in one of the electric 4x4s. Doubles from £637. refugedelatraye.fr