

15 Top Destinations For Film Tourism

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KARAN JOHAR

On Finding Himself In Style & Long Haul Flights

VERONA | KYRGYZSTAN | FRENCH ALPS

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Outfit, **Abu Jani Sandeep Khosla**; accessories, **Joules by Radhika and Tyaani Fine Jewellery**; sunglasses, **Leisure society** available at **R. Kumar opticians**; all prices on request.

▲ Johar believes what you say should be strong, but it needn't look real. (p.52).

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CINEMATIC COURCHEVEL

Gliding through snow-covered trails and indulgent alpine experiences, **Alfea Jamal** discovers Courchevel's seamless blend of luxury, adventure, and mountain charm



AS SOMEONE WHO'S SEEN plenty of snow-covered peaks, I didn't expect to be this awestruck. But nothing prepared me for my first real snowfall in Courchevel. Not the kind that lies in neat piles on rooftops or gets churned into slush by cars, but actual powder-soft flakes drifting from the sky in a silent, cinematic hush.

I had landed in Courchevel in early April, right at the tail end of the ski season. Late enough for the sun to kiss your cheeks on the slopes, but snowy enough for the mountains to feel like scenes pulled straight out of *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, *Inception* or a James Bond movie. Set high in the French Alps, Courchevel isn't just a ski resort, it's a film set come to life.

Season of Splendour

Courchevel's ski season typically begins in early December and stretches into late April, offering nearly five months of pristine skiing across the sprawling Les Trois Vallées, the largest interconnected ski area in the world.

After checking into **Fahrenheit 7** (fahrenheitseven.com), my ski-in/ski-out base in Courchevel Moriond (1650), I was whisked to **Aman Le Melezin's** (aman.com/resorts/aman-le-melezin) Nama, for a sublime Japanese lunch, my first taste of how indulgence and elegance are part of everyday life here. Imagine having silky sashimi, crispy panko-battered prawns, perfectly cooked

steak, buttery black cod and a dessert platter that looked too beautiful to touch—sorbets, pastries, and mochi arranged like edible art. There's something oddly joyful about eating seafood as sunlight warms your face and the snow glistens around you.

The afternoon, a holistic massage in Aman's subterranean sanctuary restored muscles I didn't even know skiing would require. That evening, over drinks and fondue, I had slipped into a lifestyle that was no longer reserved for cinema, even if it was just for a few days.

Luxury in Every Frame

The next morning, I met my instructor Sacha Develay from ESF 1550, and let's just say: skiing is not for the faint of thighs. I was sweating in sub-zero. Every slope looked steeper than it probably

▲ Courchevel is part of Les Trois Vallées, the largest linked ski area in the world.

Set on the Bellecôte piste, Aman Le Mélezin blends alpine charm with signature Aman serenity. ▼





◀ *Clockwise from here:* Courchevel 1850 is known for its luxury hotels, Michelin-starred restaurants, and designer boutiques; originally developed in the 1940s, Courchevel was the first resort in France to be built from scratch.

like a sun-drenched escape in the middle of the Alps. Another day, I enjoyed the rustic elegance of **Portetta** (portetta.com), nestled at the foot of the slopes, I feasted on Savoie specialities as fellow diners peeled off their ski jackets like cloaks of glamour.

Epic Backdrops

My final abode was **Ecrin**

Blanc, a joyfully offbeat hotel. Polar bears stand guard by the lifts, artworks bloom over the walls, and the bar looks like you fell into a speakeasy from another era. They even have hot chocolate on tap, and every hallway feels like a new discovery. Later that day, a serene walk around Lac de la Rosière gave me a moment of quiet introspection, the lake's frozen surface catching the last gold of sunset.

Our final dinner at **Le Bistrot du Praz** (bistrotdupraz.fr) was the perfect farewell, cozy, local, full of charm. The owners, Antoine and Aurélie, run the place like it's their home. Their son cooks in the kitchen with Antoine, while their daughter helps Aurélie serve. We were fed like family.

On my last morning, I watched the snowfall again, slower this time, almost ceremonial. I had skied, face-planted, quad-biked, spa'd, and eaten my weight in cheese and chocolate. But the real warmth wasn't just in the fireplaces, it was in the people. And I found myself dreaming of returning, even before I'd left. 🍷

GETTING THERE

Several airlines, including **Air France** (airfrance.in), **Lufthansa** (lufthansa.com), and **Emirates** (emirates.com), offer regular flights from Mumbai and Delhi to Lyon via major European hubs. From Lyon-Saint Exupéry Airport, Courchevel is a 2.5 to 3-hour scenic drive into the French Alps. Private transfers, car rentals, or shared shuttles are available, and helicopter transfers can also be arranged for those short on time and big on views. Alternatively, travellers can fly into Geneva, which is about a 2.5-hour drive from the resort.

Pro tip: In peak season, spontaneity can cost you. Pre-book your experiences, restaurant reservations, and transfers well in advance—last-minute changes often come with steep penalties.

STAY

Fahrenheit Seven Courchevel: Chic yet relaxed, this stylish ski-in/ski-out hotel is ideal for those who want to balance slope-side access with après-ski buzz. *Doubles from ₹28,000;* fahrenheitseven.com

Ecrin Blanc Resort offers a resort-style stay without losing alpine charm along with direct access to the massive Aquamotion spa and wellness centre. It's perfect for families and wellness-focused travellers, with rustic-chic rooms and mountain views. *Doubles from ₹33,000;* ecrinblanc.com

was, and I spent more time horizontal than upright. But my instructor, bless her, was patient, kind, and gently firm. At one point, she practically hugged me down the slope, holding on as I panicked, then letting go when I didn't even notice. She made me try the harder slopes, too. "You'll surprise yourself," she said. And I did. Mid-ski, I paused for lunch at **Courcheneige** (courcheneige.com), where the salad was crisp, the potatoes golden, and the views worth every shaky turn.

It's not just the snow that glistens in Courchevel, luxury is stitched into the fabric of the ski town. From private chalets tucked into pine forests to palace hotels like **Barrière Les Neiges** (hotelsbarriere.com), this is a destination that's attracted royalty (real and cinematic) for decades.

And then there's the shopping. Where else can you ski down a slope and slide directly into flagship boutiques of Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Fendi, Dior, and Hermès? The streets of Courchevel 1850 are the ultimate blend of piste and prestige.

Taste of the Stars

Courchevel has the highest concentration of Michelin-starred restaurants of any ski destination. For dinner one night, I made my way to **La Sivolière's** (hotel-la-sivoliere.com), where I tucked into hearty lamb, delicious Chestnut Veloute, freshly-churned butter—all against the backdrop of snowy peaks and a crackling fireplace.

One afternoon, after touring Courchevel's six charming villages, I lunched at Loulou at Barrière Les Neiges, where the menu felt

