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Chalet Machapuchare: Does France's best ski chalet live up to its reputation?

Luxury needn't be the enemy of good taste. Chalet Machapuchare in Val D'Isère shows us how it's done.

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So you arrive at [Chalet Machapuchare in Val D'Isère](#) after a three-hour drive not in a state of total exhaustion and rage, but on a cloud, feeling divine. The divine is a theme: Machapuchare is named after Machhapuchhare, a mountain in Nepal that's mooted as a residence of the god Shiva. As such, it has never been officially climbed, because the Nepalese government will not issue a permit to do so. Thankfully, you can get a permit to visit Chalet Machapuchare, and they start at about £46,000 for a week.



One of the master suites, with sublime views of the resort.

(Image credit: Mike Jones/Waterline)

It's fitting of its namesake. The residence has twice been named France's Best Ski Chalet by [The World Ski Awards](#). Flicking through the photographs on the website of chalet managers [Purple Ski](#), I was already impressed by the design, the location, the indoor pool and the interiors. But a private transfer with Champagne and snacks? Included with the price? A holiday doesn't begin when you get to your destination. It should begin when you step off the plane.



The steam room, pool and gym.

(Image credit: Mike Jones / WATERLINE MEDIA)

Which is what makes Machapuchare so impressive. It is that very special and difficult thing: luxury and authenticity. Everything you could want is here. An army of helpful staff. A generational talent of a chef in Hugo Attou. The indoor pool. The heated boot room, the views, the wines, a cinema room, a gym, a steam room, seven vast bedrooms and even step-free access. Nothing has been missed.

But none of it is offensive. At its heart, Machapuchare is just a very comfortable place to rest after a day of skiing. The fire roars, the beers are cold and the food is wonderful. There's no crystal, marble or plastic, and heritage is the very DNA of the building. Yoann and Charlotte spent years sourcing the materials, turning anything they can find, from old cider-presses and horse-carts to cheese casings and wheels, into tables and chairs. The history of this valley, one which is so often overlooked by those who visit, is so present.



From the valley, of the valley. Reclaimed materials make up so much of Chalet Machapuchare.

(Image credit: Mike Jones / WATERLINE MEDIA)

That's not to say that there's not a little bit of flair in this hillside retreat. The main sitting area is a vast double-height open space with views for miles, centred around a glorious fire. The garage and boot room have been dug into the mountain and resemble a Bond-villain's lair. There's even an outdoor hot-tub.

Luxury can be a very binary concept, however. What good is an outdoor hot-tub if you have to keep getting out to go and get another drink? What makes it all work is the staff, and you'll find few as helpful as those at Machapuchare. They are friendly, knowledgeable and kind and no request is too absurd. Do you have a specialised orthopaedic mattress that you need flown out from the US for your holiday? That can be, and has been, arranged. Do you want to bring your own art? You wouldn't be the first. What impressed me most, however, is how quickly they understand you as a guest. There's always a cup of tea or a beer waiting for you, before you have even asked.



After three days, I got my napkin out and was doing the maths. The chalet sleeps 14 people, so if you divide £46,000 by 14, it adds up to about £3,300 each. A not insignificant amount of money. But throw in the breakfast and dinner, the wine, the beer and spirits, the tea and cake, the location and the luxury and it starts to make a bit of sense. And after that first sip of Champagne on the French border, that first evening gazing out on the snow-capped Alps, that first four-course meal, I can promise that you really won't care.

