



Muddy Stilettos



28 November 2025

THE LOWDOWN

If there were a 'Goldilocks zone' for ski resorts, Méribel would be it. Set in the heart of Les 3 Vallées – the world's largest ski area – it's the rare destination that truly works for everyone. Beginners, families, party people, adrenaline junkies, and 'I'll just be in the spa' types all happily coexist here. It's the ultimate one-size-fits-all ski escape: snow-sure, good-looking, and just the right amount of glam.

A bit of background for your next chalet chat: Méribel was founded in 1938 by British colonel Peter Lindsay, who had impeccable taste in both architecture and après. He banned ugly buildings (merci, Peter), insisted everything be built in wood and stone, and basically designed the resort to be as photogenic as it is skiable. The name itself comes from the Latin mirare bellum – to look upon beauty. Modest, it is not.

It's also a bit of a celebrity magnet – the Beckhams, Emma Watson and even the odd royal have all carved turns here – but in that understated, everyone's-in-ski-goggles kinda way. There's a rumour that even the après at Le Rond Point has seen a spontaneous conga line or two involving famous faces.

And if you need another bragging right, Méribel hosted the 1992 Winter Olympics women's downhill, so yes, technically, you can claim you've skied on Olympic snow – and it's a regular fixture on the World Cup Ski calendar. The resort opens this year from 6 Dec 2025 to 17 Apr 2026, meaning you can carve up the slopes long after most people have packed away their puffers.



PILLOW TALK

Let's start with the good stuff: Hôtel & Spa Le Mottaret's location is unbeatable. Sitting pretty at 1,750 m in Méribel-Mottaret, it's ski-in, ski-out perfection – no schlepping, no queues, no muttered marital disputes over who forgot the lift passes. The ski school meeting point is next door, and the Three Valleys are yours to roam.

The hotel itself nails that Alpine-luxe look – all warm wood, faux-fur throws and roaring fires. Rooms are cosy and modern with balconies overlooking the piste. Downstairs, there's a lively lounge bar, an outdoor jacuzzi and heated pool, and a terrace where the après is lively enough to be fun but not so rowdy you lose a glove in the process.

Families love the friendly vibe and easy layout; couples sneak off for a massage in the spa; and everyone ends the day feeling pleasantly smug about their life choices. The pool party was one of the après highlights for my youngest, that and the food.

SCOFF & QUAFF

French mountain cuisine with a family dining feel. As you would expect, Savoyard fondue, raclette and tartiflette make frequent appearances, alongside Mediterranean dishes, grill nights and even sushi. The all-inclusive option is a winner for families, with the ability to lunch at partner slope-side restaurants dotted around the valleys.

The Café del Mott terrace is where things come alive come 4pm – mountain views, and après-ski that's just the right side of sensible (unless you're on your third vin chaud, in which case vive la fête). Breakfasts are hearty, buffets are plentiful, and the vibe is refuel, not faff.

THINGS TO DO

On the slopes: Beginners are spoiled with gentle nursery runs and world-class ski schools just a glide away, with plenty of green and blue runs as they gain confidence. Intermediates can ski new territory daily – Courchevel for chic lunches, Les Menuires for wide blues, and Val Thorens for altitude adrenaline rushes – all seamlessly connected across 600 km of runs.

Skiing/boarding can be as challenging as you dare. I'm more of a cruisey skier, but in a group of very good, more adventurous skiers, I was definitely pushed outside of my comfort zone and probably to my limits. Exhilarating and terrifying in equal measure – next time I'll factor in more pit stops and people watching.

It's worth noting, ski passes for the Les 3 Valleys area can be pricier, but if you're after variety, it's worth splashing the cash.



Off the slopes: Kids can hit the tubing slope (brilliant fun and highly recommend) or mini pool parties while grown-ups head for the spa or a glass of rosé in the hot tub. Down the hill, there's bowling, ice-skating, husky rides and more snowy fun than you can shake a ski pole at.

Feeling flash? Take to the skies on Méribel's ski-in, ski-out runway for a microlight flight over Mont Vallon – an utterly bonkers, utterly brilliant way to appreciate just how vast and beautiful the Three Valleys really are. It was one of the highlights of our trip.

EXPLORE

Each part of Méribel has its own personality:

Méribel Centre (1,450 m) – buzzy, social and après-central.

Méribel-Mottaret (1,750 m) – high, snow-sure, and the easiest access to the slopes.

Les Allues (1,100 m) Méribel Village (1,400 m) – rustic charm, luxury chalets and local restaurants for quieter nights.

Beyond the skiing, there's snowshoeing, sledging, spa-hopping and, for the brave, the occasional dance-off at Le Rond Point , the legendary après spot where just one drink often turns into three hours of ski-boot karaoke.

THE MUDDY VERDICT

GOOD FOR: A mixed crowd – teens, tots, grandparents, or a partner who would rather hit the spa than a black run – Méribel and Hôtel & Spa Le Mottaret are your one-stop winter solution. Beginners thrive, intermediates are in heaven, and everyone can meet on the terrace for fondue and fizz when the lifts close.

NOT FOR: Skiers who want an everything-on-your-doorstep ski village – Meribel stretches up a hill, so be prepared to hop on a bus.

NEED TO KNOW

Board options: B&B, Half Board or All-Inclusive (with lunches at partner restaurants).

Facilities: Spa, jacuzzi, heated pool, terrace bar, ski hire, Wi-Fi.

Family perks: Tubing slope, kids' pool fun, bowling nearby, ski school next door.

Getting there: 2.5 hrs from Geneva or Lyon; 25 mins from Moutiers train station.

HOW MUCH?



Seven nights at the Hôtel & Spa Le Mottaret from £1,564pp, book with **Ski France**

MORE HOLIDAY INSPO HERE

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