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It's one of those precious family-holiday moments that's now banked in my memory forever. The four of us are sitting on a cluster of rocks near the bottom of the Signal 2 chairlift, happily gnawing on cheese and ham baguettes, the warmth of the sun on our backs as we take in the dramatic view of the steep-sided snowy mountains below the deep blue sky that seems to go on forever. Our appetites are piqued by the fresh air that's still crisply cold despite the sun's presence, plus the exertion of exercising at altitude..

In fact, we enjoyed that lunchtime experience so much that we repeated it several times during our week's skiing in the French ski resort of Les Deux Alpes at the beginning of April 2025. There was no need to battle with the crowds at the pricey mountain restaurants, as the sunny spring days allowed us to comfortably sit outside in the peace and quiet and be reminded of just how beautiful our natural world is.

HIGH AND MIGHTY

You'll find the town of Les Deux Alpes in the mountains southeast of Lyon, at 1,650m altitude. With the ski area topping out at 3,600m, it lays claim to having the highest ski runs in France, and also boasts an impressively long vertical drop of 2,300m. Of the resort's huge 200km of slopes, over



Emma and family brave the Belvédère des Ecrins viewing platform at 3,400m

half of the 88 runs are blue, making it an excellent choice for the majority of skiers. Despite heading there very late in the season, we weren't worried about lack of snow either, as a massive 75 per cent of ski area sits above 2,000m, allowing for a very long ski season (in 2024-2025, it ran from Nov

30 to May 4; then the high-altitude glacier area opened from May 5 to the start of July).

With 43 lifts, we were never queuing for long, either - especially now that the state-of-the-art Jandri 3S lift, brand new at start of 2024/25 season, is up and running from the centre of town. It can whisk you up to the top of the resort in just 17 minutes and replaces the old Jandri Express Gondola that took half the number of people and over twice as long. The new gondola system is much more energy-efficient than its predecessor, too - global warming is of particular concern to places like ski resorts for obvious reasons.

Beginners are well catered to as well, with free ski lifts right by the town for finding your feet on, plus easy-to-access runs higher up the mountain to progress to. For experts, there's off-piste skiing to rival top-notch neighbouring La Grave, as well as plenty of challenging pistes. A large snowpark at 2,600m is filled with fun obstacles for all levels.



There's nothing better than good snow, quiet slopes and blue skies, thinks Emma

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GREAT GLACIER

A huge part of the appeal of this resort is the glacier, which means you'll be guaranteed skiing through the ski season. We enjoyed lovely piste conditions at the top of the mountain, even when temperatures allowed you to wear T-shirts down in the town. And the glacier should be there for many more years to come, thanks to year-round

'Any time I'm feeling frazzled, I close my eyes and I'm back on that mountainside'

monitoring and management, its north-westerly exposure and its naturally domed shape that spreads the sun's rays over a wider area than a glacier with a narrower shape.

When you're up at the top of the resort, make sure you take a selfie at the Belvédère des Écrins. The cantilevered metal platform, at 3,400m, is described as a 'step into the void', and is accessible to both



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skiers and walkers, giving massive views of the Écrins National Park. Don't miss the nearby otherworldly ice cave in the glacier, either.

AMAZING ACTIVITIES

It's always fun to shake up your trip with some other activities, so take a look at the resort's calendar of events. The annual British-run Rise Festival, for example, took place from December 6-13, 2025, with music, skiing and all sorts of fun things to do. Or perhaps the Lumières de la Muselle night trail-running event with distances from 8-42km is more your thing? Then there are all sorts of exciting experiences such as glacier hikes where you're roped together and wearing crampons (€120 for a day), tandem paraglides (from €85) and snowshoe hikes to spot chamois (from €25 for half a day), plus evening ski touring or e-mountain biking trips including dinner at La Troika mountain restaurant, which run regularly throughout the season (from €90). Night skiing also runs from Christmas until the end of the February holidays; and Snake Gliss sledging, where sledges are linked together to form a snake (from €25) and is bound to be a holiday highlight for youngsters, runs regularly, too.

FOODIE FOCUS

We also enjoyed an afternoon trip to the picturesque village of Venosc in

the Vénéon valley. You can use your ski pass to take an eight-minute ride down from the resort on the Venosc cable car, then wander the cobbled, pedestrianised streets littered with shops, cafés, restaurants and artisan workshops. Back up in Les Deux Alpes, stylish bar Ginette on the main street does a great cocktail (and has a lovely sun terrace). For coffee, head to Le Yonder Café where they roast the coffee in the resort. There are plenty of restaurants offering everything from pizza to fondu, and serious foodies could even treat themselves to Michelin starred-restaurant Le P'tit Polyte.

AND RELAX...

One evening, I was also lucky enough to have a session with fascinating psychotherapist Julie Chalvin, whose family has lived in Les Deux Alpes for several generations. She specialises in body-psychological techniques for emotional release at her studio Terres Almã (or 'Lands of the Soul'; terres-alma.fr) in the heart of town. After travelling to Mongolia, Nepal, Mexico and Amazonia to learn from shaman-healers, she has created four themed areas that hark back to these experiences. She is dedicated to physical, mental and emotional wellbeing and helping to rebalance body and mind. I rarely take time for myself like this, and came away beautifully relaxed and determined to

listen to and be kinder to my body, mind and soul.

HAPPY HOTEL

In our family, food's a big part of any holiday, and the Hôtel Ibiza was perfect, with a huge array of items to tempt even the fussiest child at its breakfast and dinner buffets. We made use of the indoor pool and spa, played cards in the bar area, plus pool and air hockey in the games room, and appreciated the on-demand private shuttles to and from ski lifts, as well as a well set-up suite with separate rooms for adults and kids.

Fast-forward to January in the UK, and it's cold, dark and damp. But any time I'm feeling frazzled, I can close my eyes and transport myself back to that mountainside in the sunshine, the vast, empty mountainscape opposite, family by my side, as I inhale the tonic of happy holiday vibes combined with the invigorating Alpine air... ❄️

Words: Emma Lewis | Photography: Les Deux Alpes, Lyndon Lewis, Pyrene Duffau



FACT FILE

Emma and family flew from Bristol to Grenoble with EasyJet. Flights cost from £95pp. Private transfers are available with Ski France's own company, MV Transport (mvtransport.fr/en), or buses cost from around £13 one-way (go2alpes.com)

They travelled to Les Deux Alpes with [Ski France](http://SkiFrance.com), staying in a family suite in the 3-star Hôtel Ibiza, where kids under 18 stay free, for 7 nights, on a half board basis with wine at dinner. Prices cost from £741 for two people with the kids go free offer in season 2024-25. Visit skifrance.co.uk

Lift passes cost €63 (adult day) and pedestrian €33 (adult day). The family's passes cost €830 in total for the week (les2alpes.com).

Emma hired equipment from the excellent Intersport France Les Lutins near the Jandri Express gondola in the centre of town. Average rental costs €8pp per day for skis, helmet, poles and boots (intersportrent.com).