

FRANCE GETS ITS OWN VILLAGE AT THE 50TH LONDON SNOW SHOW

EVENTS

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With Britain's favourite ski country the focus of a dedicated zone at Olympia this month, resorts from the Pyrenees to the Haute-Savoie are using the anniversary show to pitch competitions, Olympic credentials and the pull of a coffee and a croissant.

France is getting a village of its own at this year's London Snow Show. The new French Village is the centrepiece of the 50th-anniversary edition, which takes place at Olympia's National Hall on 17–18 October.

The pitch is simple: the French want to be where the British skiers are. The Ski Club of Great Britain puts the share of British skiers who travel to France each winter at 59%, more than any other country, and Britons are the biggest international market for French resorts, at around 12% of skiers. More recently, InTheSnow reported that France accounts for almost half of British ski trips.

The village also reflects the show's recovery. The Mountain Trade Network relaunched it at Olympia last year after a 15-year absence, and organisers claimed 10,000 visitors across the weekend. Around 100 exhibitors took part. This year's show has more than 100 exhibitors expected, and tickets are being sold at half price.

Who's in the village

Exhibitor listings on the show website tag Les Saisies and Pyrénées 2 Vallées as French Village stands. The organisers' promotional email also gives space to ESF, Les 2 Alpes, Montgenèvre and Savoie Mont Blanc.

Pyrénées 2 Vallées is bringing four resorts (Saint-Lary, Peyragudes, Piau-Engaly and Val Louron) and four prize draws, one holiday in each. The area sells itself on a single lift pass covering all four resorts. Its piste total depends on who is counting: WeSki lists 230km combined, while a French booking site cites 247km. Piau-Engaly is the highest and most snow-sure of the four, and Pau, about an hour and a half away, is the gateway.

ESF is fronting a beginners' competition. The prize is a free December trip to La Rosière with ESF tuition. It includes accommodation for a family or group of four from Peak Retreats, plus gloves and goggles from Snow Shepherd. The school says it operates in over 250 resorts with more than 17,000 instructors, and that over 85% now speak fluent English. La Rosière suits the offer. It is high and snow-sure, and a Peak Retreats staffer describes it as having a brilliant ESF and plenty of beginner slopes, with 198km of skiing and a link to Italy. ESF La Rosière has 140 instructors and two secure beginner areas.

Les 2 Alpes is selling snow reliability. It says its glacier gives skiing from November to July, with 200km of pistes and beginner terrain at the top of the mountain. The resort's headline lift is the Jandri 3S, which opened on 30 November 2024 and cut the ride up to 3,200m from 40 minutes to 17.

Montgenèvre is playing the Olympic card. The resort sits on the Italian border and links to the Via Lattea. Its position in the 2030 Games has firmed up this year. After the IOC added ski mountaineering to the programme in June, the IOC Executive Board approved Montgenèvre as host venue for that sport. The Hautes-Alpes tourism board says Montgenèvre and Serre Chevalier will stage freestyle skiing and snowboard competitions, with Briançon as Olympic village. The Games run from 1 to 17 February 2030.

gender equal freeride added to 2030

Savoie Mont Blanc will promote Haute-Savoie, with Le Grand-Bornand alongside. The big domains are Les Portes du Soleil (600km), Evasion Mont-Blanc (400km) and Le Grand Massif (365km). Le Grand-Bornand has its own Olympic angle: it will be a first-time Olympic host, staging all the biathlon competitions in 2030.

Les Saisies completes the picture, and it has Olympic form already. The resort hosted the biathlon and cross-country events at the 1992 Albertville Games. It is the highest gateway into the Espace Diamant, which links 192km of pistes across six villages. The resort is promoting a package of accommodation plus a six-day pass from €300 per person.

The bigger picture

For the trade, the village is a chance to put a destination that needs no introduction back in front of consumers who book through UK operators. For consumers, it is a day out with free holidays to be won. Both are part of a show that has been rebuilding its pull since the move back to Olympia.

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