

Savings tips for a family trip to the world's largest resort

Stretching from Méribel to Val Thorens, Les 3 Vallées offers new discount stays, plus a family pass that brings costs way down, explains Felix Milns

Les 3 Vallées (3Vs) – home to seven of France's leading ski resorts – has long been a top family ski destination, with many a Monty and Matilda growing up to call Méribel their go-to in the Alps. But, as prices have risen in parallel with the snow-line, it has become ever more unattainable for families watching the bottom line.

Recognising this, the resorts are ushering in a spate of more budget-focused openings, offerings and a significant change to the area's family ski passes. Whereas previously discounted kids' passes were available only to children under 12, the new Family Flex ski pass means the entire family can ski for the price of a child, saving €74 for each family member over 12 – the equivalent of a free day on the mountain. This winter, a six-day pass costs €335pp based on a minimum of five days for two adults and at least one child 17 or under (up to a maximum of six children).

It's a thrifty approach to skiing in the world's largest linked ski area, which extends from Courchevel and Méribel to Les Menuires, Val Thorens and Orelle. Here we review the latest family-friendly developments and rate each resort's affordability.

St Martin de Belleville

— Family budget rating 2/5 —

What was once a sleepy hamlet has quietly become one of the most luxurious and desirable villages in the 3Vs, with two recently opened luxury hotels and newly refurbished luxury chalets every season. So finding a family bargain here is harder than it used to be, but well worth exploring as the authentic village has such a strong *"esprit de vie"*.



ABOUT OUR EXPERT

Felix Milns

Felix has written about skiing for 25 years. He grew up skiing in the 3Vs before working multiple winter seasons in Méribel. Ski journalism took him all over the world but the extent and breadth of the 3Vs is extremely tough to beat

Families should consider a self-catered chalet apartment. There are a few options right by the gondola, but if a slopeside location is not a must-have you can also look at the satellite village of Le Châtelard or the lower part of St Martin itself.

— Family favourite —

New last season, La Belle Vie is a wellness and swimming pool complex with an indoor/outdoor pool with cascades, jets and splash zones, plus a Finnish sauna with a panoramic view. Single pool entry is €9 (£8), reduced under-16 rate is €7 (£6).

— What to book —

Peak Retreats (peakretreats.co.uk) offers seven nights in a three-bedroom Chalet

Selini at Chalets Caseblanche, 50m from the main gondola, from £729pp, self-catering based on five sharing, including Eurotunnel crossing, with a free upgrade to its premium FlexiPlus service.

Courchevel

— Family budget rating 3/5 —

The glamorous headliner of the bunch, Courchevel is better known for five-star luxury than affordable family breaks, but wind the clock back 30 years and this was a middle-Britain budget favourite. Finding value nowadays means going to the fringes, though this is no bad thing.

Courchevel 1650, rebranded as Moriond, has some good self-catering apartments and some great value lunch spots set back from the snowfront. Alternatively, 1500 and Le Praz are also satellite villages with cheaper accommodation.

Yet perhaps the best bet for families is purpose-built and car-free La Tania, with easy-to-access tree-lined beginner zones, and some great restaurants. If you want to splash out, the Michelin-starred Le Farçon offers a set-price three-course lunch from €35.

— Family favourite —

Aquamotion is a large aquatic centre, a short drive or bus ride from La Tania, with indoor and outdoor pools, a water slide and an indoor surfing wave. Book a family pass from €58 (£50; two adults and two children under 12).

— What to book —

Le Ski (leski.com) offers a week at Chalet Le Rabel, which sleeps 23 in a mixture of twin and family rooms near the centre of La Tania, from £1,130 per

adult, with £395 off for children aged two to four and £282 off for kids up to 12 years old, chalet board, including flights and transfers.

Orelle

— Family budget rating 3/5 —

The mystical fourth valley, Orelle is a collection of 10 hamlets on the back side of Val Thorens, and the skiing, which was once primarily off-piste access, has gradually been opened up. Since 2021 it has been more accessible than ever thanks to a state-of-the-art gondola that runs all the way from the valley base to the top of Cime de Caron, at 3,195m, the highest point in the 3Vs, gaining 2,300m of altitude in just under 20 minutes.

New for 2025 was Orelle's first hotel, Hob. A short 100m walk from the gondola, it's a community-owned, low-cost cross between a refuge and a hostel, with eight six-bed dormitories, six double rooms and six spacious family rooms offering what should be the cheapest family rooms in the entire region. However, the limited amount of accommodation means better deals may be found in larger resorts during peak weeks. Also new this season is the Cosylodge, seven contemporary apartments ideal for families.

Culturally, Orelle is completely different from anywhere else in the 3Vs – the only life outside the hotel is a pizza van, the village square and one small bar, but it's hard to put a price on door-to-door, queue-free access to 3,200m for some families.

— Family favourite —

There is a regular programme of low-key but charming afternoon *"animations"* such as live music and wine tastings in the main village square throughout the winter.

— What to book —

Heidi (heidi.com) offers the Hob Hotel in Orelle with prices starting at £1,192pp, B&B, based on a family of four over Easter, including flights and transfers.

Méribel

— Family budget rating 4/5 —

The heart of the 3Vs, Méribel has long been a British favourite. The key to visiting on a budget is to look beyond the main resort centre. There is good value accommodation down the valley in lift-linked Les Alluës, but assuming it's

Snow and smiles: the writer and his family pose in the 3V Alpine sunshine

Snow-sure: Val Thorens is the highest ski resort in Europe

ski-in/ski-out access you are after, then Méribel Village is a charming base for families. Village life revolves around Lodge du Village, one of the best après bars in the valley.

The other alternative is high-altitude Mottaret. Most family-friendly accommodation here is self-catering apartments, but Hôtel Le Mottaret is a shining exception. The three-star jewel in the crown of family experts Ski France, it offers incredible value for money.

Book into one of its family rooms and kids go free, half board and all. The hotel has a swimming pool, games room area and offers just the right amount of luxury.

— Family favourite —

A short walk across the piste from the Hotel Mottaret is the BigAirBag, a perfect après activity for teenagers who will love to fly on the tubes, with or without you.

— What to book —

Ski France (skifrance.co.uk) offers seven nights at Hôtel Le Mottaret from £558pp, half board, based on a family of four sharing a family room – kids under 18 go free. A private transfer from Geneva to Méribel with MV Transport costs £763 return for four passengers. EasyJet flies from Gatwick to Geneva from £58pp.

Val Thorens

— Family budget rating 4/5 —

The highest resort in Europe, with a base elevation of 2,300m, Val Thorens is a great early- or late-season choice, especially at the end of the Easter holidays when most resorts are closing down.

In late April, the sun doesn't set until 8:30pm and the snow coverage is all but guaranteed.

There are dedicated high-altitude beginner zones and accessible fun parks, plus 10-pin bowling and a large leisure centre with pools, soft play areas and trampolines for any white-out days. Beginner skiers in their first couple of weeks can take advantage of the beginner lift pass at €35.50 (£31), half the price of a standard day pass, and can access three gondolas and one chairlift.

— Family favourite —

Try the Moon Xperience snow tubing or the cosmojet toboggan run, at 6km long, the longest in France.

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Higher learning: Les Menuires at 3 Vallées is home to the largest ski school in France

accommodation options to choose from this season.

Connected by a covered walkway to the thermal baths, B&B Home has been fully refurbished. Formerly known as the Grand Hotel des Thermes, it has family rooms and a tasteful, simple design. Note, however, that the baths are only for those aged 16 and over. It's a 250m walk to the newly refurbished gondola base station, for easy access up to Méribel.

— Family favourite —

The tourist office runs free après activities in the square every Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday, ranging from laser tag to concerts with wine and cheese tastings.

— What to book —

Crystal Ski (crystalski.co.uk) offers seven nights at the B&B Home from £666pp, B&B, based on two double/twin rooms, including flights and transfers.

Les Menuires

— Family budget rating 5/5 —

With a base altitude of 1,450m and the largest ski school in France, Les Menuires has long been the best go-to budget-friendly base in the 3Vs. While historically focused on self-catered apartments – only seven per cent of beds are in hotels and chalets – there have been a few hotel openings in recent years including Alpeen, a newly refurbished three-star ski-in/ski-out situated on the piste from the Croisette to Reberty (and the new Pointe de la Masse gondola).

The hotel is a short five-minute walk from the Croisette, the main retail hub and largest of the Les Menuires villages. It's not got the glamour of Courchevel's Croisette, but it has everything a family would need. Le Comptoir is a buzzy brasserie with main courses around €25 and Jacks, of Méribel après-ski fame, opened an outpost here in 2024.

— Family favourite —

New for this season, the ESF in Les Menuires is offering a week of half-day ski/snowboard lessons for teenagers aged from 13 to 17 for €223 (£193), including all equipment rental (esf-les-menuires.com).

— What to book —

Erna Low (ernalow.co.uk) offers a week in a family room, with additional beds on a mezzanine, at Hotel Alpeen from £687pp, B&B, including flights and transfers, based on four sharing.

— What to book —

Iglu Ski (igluski.com) offers seven nights at the four-star ski-in/ski-out Hotel & Résidence Hameau du Kashmir from £1,180pp, self catering accommodation, including flights and transfers, based on four sharing a two-bedroom apartment.

Brides-les-Bains

— Family budget rating 5/5 —

Just above Moûtiers in the valley below the ski area, the village of Brides-les-Bains is connected by gondola to La Chaudanne, the base of Méribel's slopes. For families who are happy to transit up from the valley, Brides is a good-value option and has several new