The secrets to visiting the world's largest ski area as a family, without blowing the budget

From Méribel to Val Thorens, Les 3 Vallées has unveiled fresh budget stays and a family pass that slashes costs across the Alps

Felix Milns

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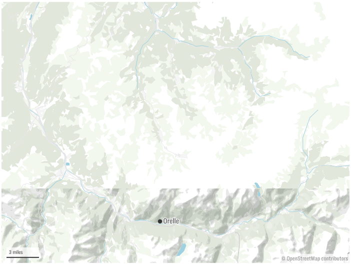
Les 3 Vallées spans Courchevel and Méribel to Les Menuires and Val Thorens Credit: Alexis Brot

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 snowline, 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.

Trois Vallées ski resorts



Whereas previously discounted kids' passes were only available 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 €335 per person

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It's a thrifty approach to skiing in the world's largest linked ski area, which spans 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.

Writer Felix regularly enjoys ski trips with his family

St Martin de Belleville

Family budget rating: 2/5

What was once a sleepy little 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".

St Martin de Belleville is one of the most luxurious and desirable villages in the 3Vs Credit: Arthur Bertrand

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).

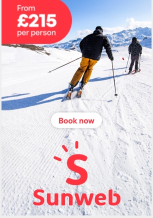
What to book

Peak Retreats offers seven nights in a three-bedroom Chalet Selini at Chalets Caseblanche, 50 metres away from the main gondola, from £729pp, self-catering based on five sharing, including Eurotunnel crossing, with a free upgrade to their 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.



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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 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 £1130 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.

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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 to 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.

How to save money on a family ski holiday in Les 3 Vallées

- Buy the Family Flex ski pass, saving €74 for each family member over 12 (assuming a 6 day pass).
- Look to drive rather than fly. This can save up to £400pp at peak periods, according to a report by Iglu Ski. Combine driving with self-catering and stock up on essentials at the Super U supermarket in Moutiers on your way up to the resort – it's considerably cheaper and you can pre-order and collect.
- Staying in a half-board hotel or catered chalet? Max out on the generous breakfasts, afternoon tea and dinner. Mountain lunches are one of the great pleasures of skiing, but add serious bucks to a week's budget.
- Booking into a larger chalet that is shared with other guests can save around £175pp, according to data from Iglu Ski. The same report also found that opting for all-inclusive over half-board can save up to £500pp
- Pre-book your equipment for the best discounts. Visit Intersport or Skiset and choose the shop nearest your accommodation.
- Go early or late. The pre-Christmas week has some excellent early-bird prices and the resorts generally run at about 35 per cent occupancy. Easter runs at around 50 per cent capacity, so you can save up to £600pp.

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 Allues, but assuming it's 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.

Méribel is particularly popular with English families Credit: Arthur Bertrand

The other alternative is high-altitude Mottaret. Most family-friendly accommodation here is self-catering apartments, but the Hotel 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 their 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 offers seven nights at the 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 flights form Gatwick to Geneva from £58pp.

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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 is all but guaranteed.

Val Thorens is the highest resort in Europe Credit: Alexis Brot

There are dedicated high-altitude beginner zones and accessible fun parks, plus ten-pin bowling and a large leisure centre with pools, soft play 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.

What to book

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

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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 slopes. For families happy to transit up from the valley, Brides is a good value option and has several new accommodation options this season.

Brides-les-Bains is connected by gondola to La Chaudanne Credit: Alexis Brot

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 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 years for €223 (£193), including all equipment rental.

What to book

Erna Low 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.

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About our expert

Felix Milns

As a teenager Felix grew up skiing in the 3Vs, before working multiple winter seasons in Méribel. Having written about skiing for 25 years, journalism has subsequently taken him all over the world – but the extent and breadth of the 3Vs is extremely hard to beat.

Plan the perfect ski holiday

The Telegraph's ski section has everything you need to hit the slopes this winter, including expert guides of the world's best resorts – from Austria and France, to Japan and Canada – the latest snow reports, top winter holidays, booking tips and gear guides.

Whether you're planning a family trip to the Alps or a bucket-list powder tour of North America, our ski experts are here to help you plan the perfect trip to the mountains.

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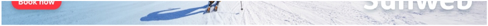

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