**Valmorel**

**Categories**

**Good For**

Beginners

Intermediates

Snowboarders

Families

Environmental awareness

**Data**

**Beginner Runs**

22

**Intermediate Runs**

56

**Advanced Runs**

8

**Total Runs**

86

**Lifts**

50

**Chairs**

14

**Drags**

29

**Gondola Cable Cars**

3

**Parks**

3

**Pipes**

0

**Weather**

**Annual Snowfall**

Unavailable.

**Overview**

Being the last of more than 50 purpose-built ski resorts in France, designers of Valmorel ski resort had the advantage of being able to learn from the mistakes of the previous two decades. As a consequence, they planned a resort that not only had all the advantages of a ski centre built for snow sports – rather than a traditional village that tries to cater for skiers and boarders – but also traditional-style, wooden buildings with slate roofs and trompe l’oeil façades, rather than a mass of concrete boxes.

This approach immediately won Valmorel praise from skiers and boarders (as well as reviewers) when it opened in 1977, and today it is still gaining in status on the world stage. The relatively new 5-star MGM and lavish Club Med developments have increased the resort’s appeal further.

Despite these big projects, Valmorel ski resort is keen to stress its environmental credentials. The resort’s buildings cover only 3% of the land it occupies and the village is certified to the highest environmental management standard. There’s also no car traffic in the resort itself, where everything can be reached on foot or over snow on skis or snowboard, contributing to its family-oriented nature.

Valmorel’s Grand Domaine ski area – which links the ski resort by pistes to the neighbouring villages of Celliers, Doucy-Valmorel and Saint François-Longchamp – covers 3,600 hectares (8,900 acres) with 165km (103 miles) of pistes. Developments on these slopes continue with new lifts having been installed to increase capacity, speed and comfort in accessing the slopes.

**Location**

Valmorel ski resort is situated close to the Vanoise National Park, in the heart of the Tarentaise Mountains (part of the French Alps) in the southeast of the country. The resort is the first major ski village when arriving from Chambéry (one hour’s drive to the west), or when driving from the north.

**Website**

http://www.valmorel.com

**Piste Map**

http://www.valmorel.com/images/stories/PDF/DSV/plan2012-2013\_v2.jpg

**Hit The Slopes**

Valmorel’s Grand Domaine ski area has a good mix of terrain, with an impressive 165km (103 miles) of groomed pistes. This resort is particularly suited to beginners and intermediates; although there are also some steeper areas for advanced skiers and boarders.

Valmorel ski resort has no fewer than six learning areas especially for beginners to learn to ski, which is a unique proposition in France. Two of these are just for young children (in the ski nursery area); a further two are located at Malatrai; while the remaining areas are at Crève-Coeur and Doucy Combelouvière.

Intermediates have the most to enjoy here, with much of the terrain suited to their ability level, including long cruising pistes of up to 4km (2.5 miles) in length.

Although not known as a destination for advanced skiers, there are challenges to be had – particularly on the red and black graded runs of the Col du Mottet, as well as on the Massif de la Lauzière. The eight blacks include the challenging 3km-long (2 miles) Riondet descent.

The local mountain guides office will be happy to take skiers off-piste when the conditions are good and safe – one popular off-piste route is the long descent down the Belleville Valley to emerge below Les Menuires in the Trois Vallées (Three Valleys) ski area. It’s also possible to sign up for two- to four-day ski safaris of the wider region with the mountain guides.

For freestyle skiers and boarders, there are several specially designed sectors located throughout the ski area. The ‘snow zone’ has a boardercross, slopestyle and freeride area, and there are three snow parks (at Gollet, Prariod and Beaudin), two boardercross courses (at Arenouillaz and Charmette) and a further two snow cross areas (at Gollet and Riondet).

Valmorel is the only resort in the world to have built an eight-seater gondola to access non-downhill terrain – Belvédère du Bozon, which sits at 2,000m (6,562ft) above sea level.

**Valmorel**

**Resort**

1400

**Base**

1250

**Top**

2550

**General**

**Beyond The Slopes**

There’s a lot to do in Valmorel besides downhill skiing and boarding; although most of the alternatives remain outdoors. Among these, ice climbing, dog sledding, winter hiking, paragliding, snowmobiling, quad biking and even Segway hire are available to try. Speed riding (riding downhill with a small parasail attached to the skier’s back) is a fun and exhilarating option for good skiers and boarders.

A major draw to the region is the Vallées d’Aigueblanche area, which offers thousands of hectares of gentle landscape buried deep in snow, which is used for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Other Nordic skiing disciplines are also popular in this area, with 40km (25 miles) of trails that extend over two linked plateaux in the Naves Valley.

**Family Fun**

With its safe pedestrianised village, family-friendly onus and stress-free, easy-to-access layout, Valmorel ski resort is a good choice for families. In recognition of its service, Valmorel is a current holder of the ‘Family Plus’ certificate awarded by the French Government to resorts that cater well to families.

For young children, there are two Piou Piou Clubs (tel: 04 7909 8186) run by the École du Ski Français that are exclusively for children aged from 18 months to six years old. The chalets where these are based are equipped with all the usual children’s comforts as well as outside snow play gardens. Children under three years of age can play under supervision, while those aged three to six can enjoy an introduction to skiing. Older children, meanwhile, can join regular ski school classes.

There are reductions on the cost of day care or ski school lessons when a family (four members or more) books for the same duration at the same time. Similar discounts are available on lift passes when one or more adults and two or more children (aged five to 20 – under fives are free) book the same ticket for the same duration.

**Retail Therapy**

Valmorel does not have a reputation as a shopping resort – there are about 25 shops in in total, most of which are either ski outlets providing clothing and accessories or other essential shops.

Wednesday evening is a very different shopping night to most ski resorts, however, as the bakers from Maryan bakery (tel: 04 7924 1770) demonstrate traditional forms of bread-making. For the gorgeous regional Beaufort cheese and other Savoie regional produce, try the Coopérative Laitière (Bourg Morel; tel: 04 7909 8271).

**Splashing Out**

A visit to the La Léchère (tel: 04 7922 6030; [www.lalechere.com](http://www.lalechere.com/)) thermal spa is well worth the 15-minute trip from Valmorel to the Vallée du Morel. Although there has been a centre for curative purposes here for a century at least, the lavish spa with its spectacular giant windows is something special.

The original spa has been recently redeveloped on three levels and incorporates 15 treatment cabins and a fun water area with four pools featuring beaches and relaxation areas. There’s also a wellbeing area with steam rooms, saunas, balneotherapy cabins, massage treatments and mud packs to enjoy. The thermal water bubbles up from 200m (656ft) below ground at a natural temperature of 61°C (142°F) and is allowed to cool to a mere toasty hot before being used in the spa.

**Apres Ski**

As with most purpose-built French resorts, Valmorel is not a place for hedonistic nightlife; but there are a dozen bars on offer and the resort’s tourist office lays on entertainment and activities four evenings a week.

Straight after skiing, head to La Source (3 Bourg-Morel; tel; 04 7909 8310) at the base of the slopes, which offers a good drinks menu featuring a range of cocktails. As the evening progresses, you can head to the livelier night-time bars, including friendly Le Café de la Gare (tel: 04 7909 8643), the quirky Le Jimbo Lolo (29 Bourg-Morel; tel: 06 8697 3714; [www.jimbololo.fr](http://www.jimbololo.fr/)) and Le Pub du Bourg (tel: 04 7909 8666; [www.hoteldubourg.com](http://www.hoteldubourg.com/)), a popular saloon bar with an open fireplace, pool table and games.

**Eating Out**

There are several dozen restaurants in Valmorel ski resort, and the growing number of 4- and 5-star accommodation options is driving up the resort’s gourmet dining offering. But most restaurants in Valmorel are simpler, family-friendly affairs.

Among the more affordable options is Le Jimbo Lolo, which has a South and Central American atmosphere, serves tapas and Mexican fare, and is fun until closing time at 0200. Le Café Alpin (5 Bourg-Morel; tel: 04 7906 9022) also offers good-value and tasty dining with its selection of pizzas.

For regional dishes, including crêpes and raclette, La Flambée (tel: 04 7909 8161) is a good choice; while another local favourite is Le Petit Prince (7 Bourg-Morel; tel: 04 7909 8171; [www.restaurant-lepetitprince.com](http://www.restaurant-lepetitprince.com/)), which cooks up Savoyard specialities including *pierrades* (meat cooked on a hot stone at the table). Le Prariond (06 0988 4405; [www.leprariond.com](http://www.leprariond.com/)) also serves simple local cuisine but with the added bonus of stunning views of Mont Blanc.

**Transport**

**Getting There**

Nearest airports: [Chambéry Airport](http://www.chambery-airport.com/index_en.html) (CMF); Geneva International Airport (GVA).

Distance to resort: 90km (56 miles); 140km (87 miles).

Driving time: 1 hour; 2 hours 20 minutes.

**Getting Around**

Valmorel has been designed as a pedestrianised village where everything can be reached on foot or by ski or snowboard; as a consequence, there is no provision for cars in the ski resort centre.

**Hotels**

Although Valmorel ski resort broke away from the concrete accommodation block model of earlier purpose-built resorts, it did still stick to the normal French ski holiday formula of predominantly apartment-style accommodation aimed at the family market. That trend is changing however, with the recent Club Med Village and MGM developments adding 4- and 5-star hotel-style accommodation.

**Chalet-Gîte L'Edelweiss**

A friendly, traditional 3-star chalet with 10 rooms, Chalet-Gîte L'Edelweiss is located in the heart of the village, five minutes from the lifts.

**Category**

Cheap

**Thoroughfare**

Chef Lieu

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Les Avanchers

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

04 7665 3639.

**Website**

XXX

**La Vigogne**

A large family-run, three-storey traditional chalet, La Vigogne offers family-friendly accommodation a short distance from the lifts and runs. On offer here are free ski lessons in peak season (for children aged six to 12 years old), a free crèche, evening entertainment and good home cooking.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

Le Pré

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Les Avanchers

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

04 7909 8189.

**Website**

http://www.la-vigogne.com

**Club Med Valmorel**

Opened in 2011 after a €75 million investment, Club Med Valmorel boasts 4- and 5-trident (the company’s equivalent of 4- and 5-star) luxury chalet apartments and suites. Guests here can stay on an all-inclusive basis with meals, entertainment and childcare included in the holiday cost. The resort also has a private spa, gourmet restaurants and its very own ice rink.

**Category**

Luxury

**Thoroughfare**

Les Avanchers-Valmorel

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Les Avanchers

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

04 7941 6100.

**Website**

http://www.clubmed.co.uk

**Le Chalet de Valmorel**

Located in the peaceful hamlet of Le Pré, this bed and breakfast chalet is only a few steps from Le Rocher ski-lift, where there are usually no queues for a quick entry to a day’s skiing. This chalet houses eight en-suite rooms, as well as a large TV lounge.

**Category**

Cheap

**Thoroughfare**

Le Pré

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Valmorel

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

04 7924 5229.

**Website**

http://www.lechaletdevalmorel.com

**Hôtel Radiana**

The 3-star Hôtel Radiana contains 87 rooms and 5 suites, as well as an additional self-catering residence with a further 90 beds. The main attraction, though, is the on-site spa and swimming pool complex with its choice of beauty treatments.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

La Léchère

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Valmorel

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

04 7922 6030.

**Website**

http://www.lalechere.com

**MGM La Grange aux Fées**

This 4-star resort was developed ahead of the 2012/13 season and provides ski in/ski out accommodation for two to five people. The complex has been built in a tasteful style with stone-tiled roofs and wood cladding that echoes the local architecture. Among its facilities are two pools, saunas and a wellness centre.

**Category**

Luxury

**Thoroughfare**

Le Hameau des Lanchettes

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Valmorel

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

04 7909 2928.

**Website**

http://www.mgm-constructeur.com