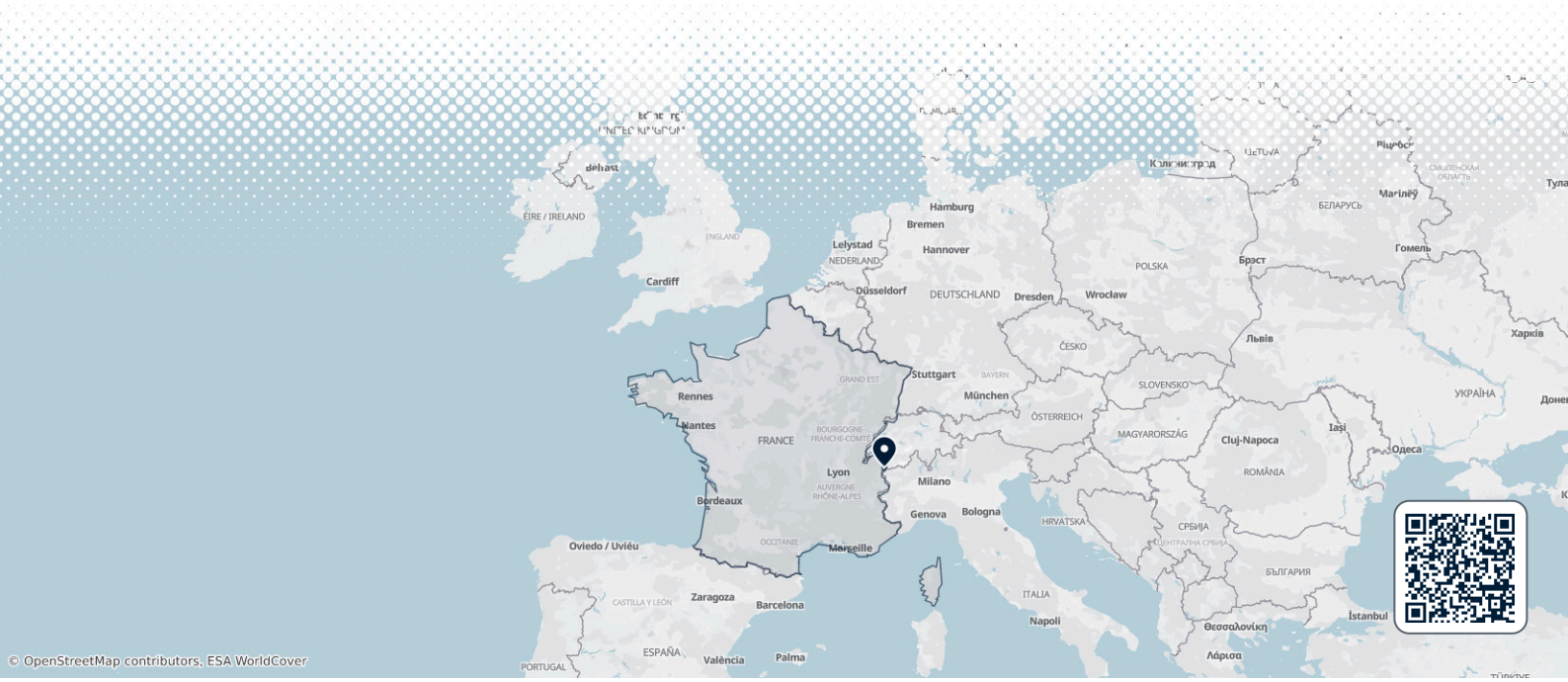


Chamonix

Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes · France

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Chamonix sits in a narrow valley beneath Mont Blanc, Western Europe's highest peak, in the French Alps near the Swiss and Italian borders. It is the birthplace of modern mountaineering: the sport began here in 1786, and Chamonix hosted the first Winter Olympic Games in 1924. The town center is compact and easy to walk, ringed by cable cars that climb straight into the high mountains within minutes.

Visit for the mix of high-altitude thrills and an easy base: ride a cable car above 3,800 m for lunch, then walk back to a hotel in the valley. It suits hikers, skiers, and anyone who wants dramatic mountain views without a multi-day trek. Chamonix draws climbers and adventure travelers as much as sightseers, so expect an active, outdoor-focused town rather than a quiet resort.

When to visit

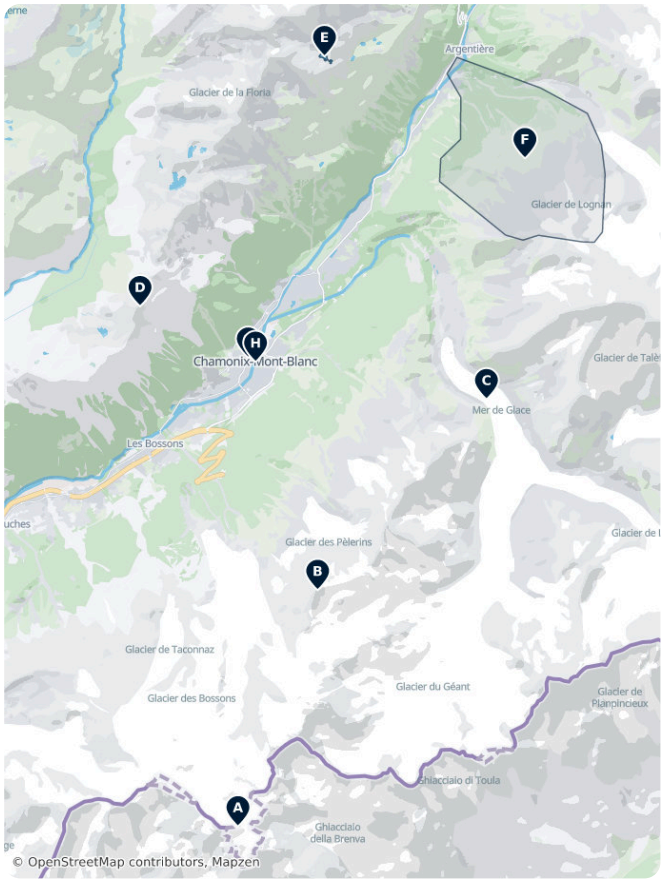
Chamonix has two distinct high seasons. Winter (December-March) is for skiing; valley days are cold, but sunny spells are common. Summer (June-September) is for hiking and climbing; valley days are mild, though nights stay cool even in August. Spring and autumn are quieter, and many high-altitude lifts and via ferratas close for maintenance.

Plan around the Ultra-Trail du Mont-Blanc (UTMB), a week-long trail-running festival held in late August. Thousands of runners and spectators fill the town, and accommodation books out months ahead.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Great Great for skiing	2° / 6° Feels like -2°	-6° / -14°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
February	Great Great for skiing	3° / 8° Feels like -1°	-6° / -16°	Dry air · Calm winds
March	Good Good for skiing	6° / 13° Feels like 2°	-3° / -11°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
April	Fair Fair for cycling	12° / 19°	2° / -5°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
May	Fair Fair for cycling	17° / 23°	7° / 1°	18 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
June	Good Good for sightseeing	21° / 27°	11° / 6°	16 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
July	Good Good for sightseeing	22° / 28°	12° / 7°	15 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
August	Good Good for sightseeing	23° / 29°	12° / 7°	Dry air · Calm winds
September	Good Good for sightseeing	19° / 25°	9° / 3°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
October	Good Good for cycling	15° / 21°	5° / -1°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
November	Fair Fair for skiing	8° / 16° Feels like 5°	0° / -9°	14 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
December	Good Good for skiing	4° / 9° Feels like 0°	-4° / -13°	14 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights



A Mont Blanc - Monte Bianco is the highest peak in the Alps and Western Europe, at around 4,805 m. Only experienced climbers with a guide reach the summit, but the mountain dominates every view from town.

B Aiguille du Midi is a cable car station at 3,842 m, among the highest in the world. The glass-floored Pas dans le Vide skywalk and the Panoramic Mont-Blanc gondola to Italy's Punta Helbronner both start here.

C Mer de Glace is France's largest glacier, reached by a historic cog railway. Its ice has thinned sharply in recent decades, and signposts along the path mark how far it has retreated.

D Le Brévent faces Mont Blanc directly across the valley and gives one of the best views of the whole massif. A cable car runs to the summit from the edge of town.

E Lac Blanc is a turquoise lake below the Aiguilles Rouges, reached on a half-day hike from the La Flégère cable car. On clear days it reflects Mont Blanc.

F Grands Montets – Argentière (Chamonix) is the valley's most challenging ski area, with long, steep runs and reliable snow into spring.

G Église Saint-Michel is Chamonix's parish church, rebuilt in the 18th century and the main landmark on the town's central square.

H Statue of Horace Bénédict de Saussure stands in the town center and marks the men who first climbed Mont Blanc in 1786, a moment widely considered the birth of mountaineering.

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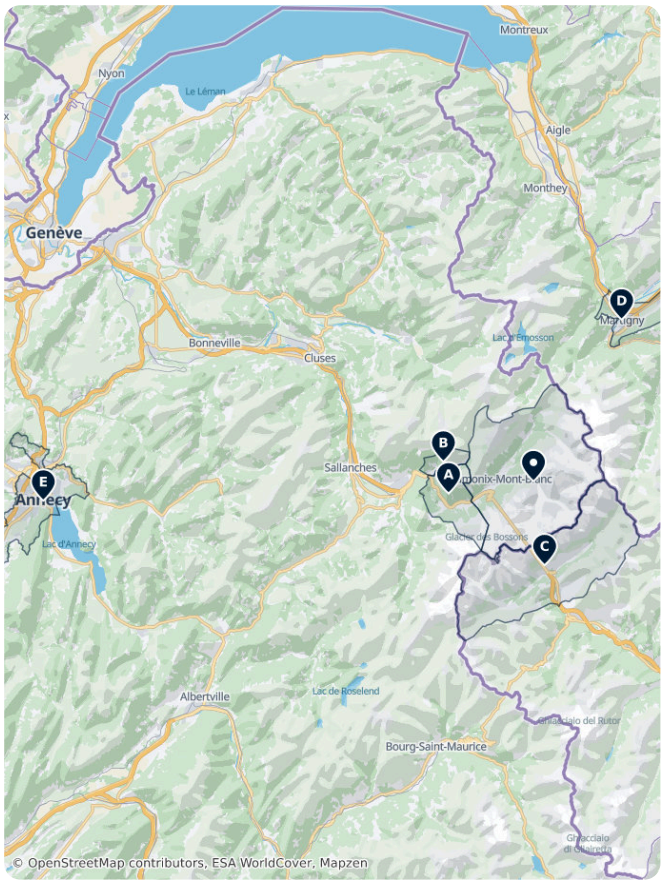
What to experience

- Ride the Panoramic Mont-Blanc gondola from the Aiguille du Midi across the glacier to Punta Helbronner in Italy, one of the highest border crossings by cable car in the world.
- Watch, or join, the Ultra-Trail du Mont-Blanc in late August, when thousands of runners pass through town on a route that circles the entire massif.
- Try the Vallée Blanche, a 20 km off-piste ski descent from the Aiguille du Midi across a glacier; book a mountain guide, since crevasses make it unsafe alone.
- Spend a night in a mountain refuge partway up a trail, waking up at altitude before the day's crowds arrive.

Day trips

Chamonix sits close to the French, Italian, and Swiss borders, so several very different day trips are within reach.

- A Les Houches - 10 minutes by car or train, a quieter ski and hiking village at the start of the Tour du Mont-Blanc trek.
- B Servoz - 20 minutes by car or train, gateway to the Gorges de la Diosaz, a dramatic river canyon with waterfalls and walkways.
- C Courmayeur - 35-45 minutes by car through the Mont Blanc Tunnel, an Italian Alpine town with its own cable car, the Skyway Monte Bianco, up to Punta Helbronner.
- D Martigny - about 1 hour by car, or closer to 2 hours by train with a change at the border, a Swiss town with Roman ruins and the Fondation Gianadda art museum.
- E Annecy - about 1.5 hours by car, or closer to 2.5 hours by train with a change, a lakeside old town with canals and a well-preserved medieval quarter.



Getting there

- **By air**: Geneva Airport (GVA) in Switzerland is the main gateway, about 90 km away. Shuttle buses and private transfers take roughly 1-1.5 hours. Lyon-Saint-Exupéry (LYS) is a second option, about 2.5 hours away by car.
- **By train**: Take a train to Saint-Gervais-les-Bains-Le Fayet, reachable directly from Paris, then change to the narrow-gauge Mont-Blanc Express, which climbs to Chamonix in about 40 minutes. Book both legs via SNCF Connect.
- **By bus**: Regular coaches connect Chamonix with Geneva Airport, Geneva city center, and Annecy, useful when flying into Geneva without a rental car.

Getting around

- **Public transit**: A local shuttle bus connects the center with outlying hamlets like Argentière and Les Houches; guests holding the resort's guest card ride free, others buy a ticket on board. The Mont-Blanc Express train also stops at village stations along the valley floor.
- **Taxi / ride-hailing**: Local taxi companies serve the valley; app-based ride-hailing is limited outside peak season.
- **On foot / cycling**: The town center is compact and easy to explore on foot. A flat, paved cycle path runs the length of the valley between Chamonix and Servoz, a pleasant way to see several villages without a car.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The center is compact, mostly on foot-friendly streets, and easy to explore without a car.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

A flat valley-floor cycle path connects several villages, but the surrounding terrain is steep and not suited to casual road cycling.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?** Not needed for the town center, which is compact and walkable, but useful for day trips to Courmayeur, Martigny, or Annecy and for reaching outlying hamlets and trailheads.
- **Parking**: Several paid car parks sit around the center, including near the train station and the Aiguille du Midi cable car base; pay by app or at machines. Street parking in the center is limited and metered.
- **Restrictions**: The Mont Blanc Tunnel toward Italy charges a toll; carry a card or cash for the booth.

Food & drink

Chamonix's kitchens lean into Savoyard mountain food: melted cheese dishes like fondue and raclette, tartiflette (potatoes baked with reblochon cheese, bacon, and onion), and diots (small pork sausages) simmered in white wine. After a day on the mountain, a génépi liqueur is a common way to finish a meal.

For a sit-down meal, the streets around Place Balmat and Rue du Docteur Paccard in the old center have the highest concentration of restaurants. A handful of Michelin-recognized kitchens in town are worth booking ahead for something more distinctive.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Croissant
Buttery, flaky laminated pastry and a classic French breakfast staple.

LUNCH

Ratatouille
A Provençal stewed vegetable dish of eggplant, zucchini, peppers, and tomatoes.

DINNER

Coq au Vin
Chicken braised slowly in red wine with mushrooms, onions, and lardons.

Beef Bourguignon · Bœuf Bourguignon
Beef stewed in red Burgundy wine with carrots, onions, and mushrooms.

Escargot · Escargots de Bourgogne
Snails cooked in garlic and parsley butter, a classic starter.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Baguette
Long, crusty white bread loaf bought fresh daily from the local boulangerie.

Cheese · Fromage
France produces hundreds of cheese varieties, often served as a course before dessert.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Crepes · Crêpes
Thin pancakes served sweet with sugar or jam, or savory as galettes.

Macarons
Delicate almond meringue sandwich cookies in a range of flavors and colors.

DRINKS

Wine · Vin
France's wine regions, including Bordeaux, Burgundy, and Champagne, are among the world's most renowned.

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Safety & health

Chamonix is generally very safe. Petty theft is rare but does happen around cable car queues and train stations in peak season, so keep bags zipped and in sight.

The real risks here are outdoors: mountain weather changes fast, glaciers hide crevasses, and altitude affects even short excursions above 3,000 m. Never leave marked trails or step onto a glacier without a guide, and check conditions before any high-altitude trip. In winter, avalanche risk off-piste is real; always check the daily bulletin before leaving the marked runs. Mountain rescue is well organized, but a rescue can be costly without travel insurance that covers mountain activities.

Tap water is safe to drink everywhere in town.

History

Chamonix was a quiet farming valley until *Jacques Balmat* and *Michel-Gabriel Paccard* reached the summit of Mont Blanc - Monte Bianco on 8 August 1786, spurred by a prize offered by the scientist *Horace-Bénédict de Saussure*. Their climb is widely considered the birth of modern mountaineering, and the town has drawn climbers ever since. A statue in the town center, Statue of Horace Bénédict de Saussure, marks the achievement.

Tourism grew through the 19th century as roads and hotels reached the valley, and the Mer de Glace glacier became a stop on the Grand Tour of Europe. In 1924, Chamonix hosted the first Winter Olympic Games, cementing its place as a mountain sports capital. The Mont Blanc Tunnel, opened in 1965, connected the valley directly to Italy and reshaped Chamonix into the year-round resort it is today.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for France at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY

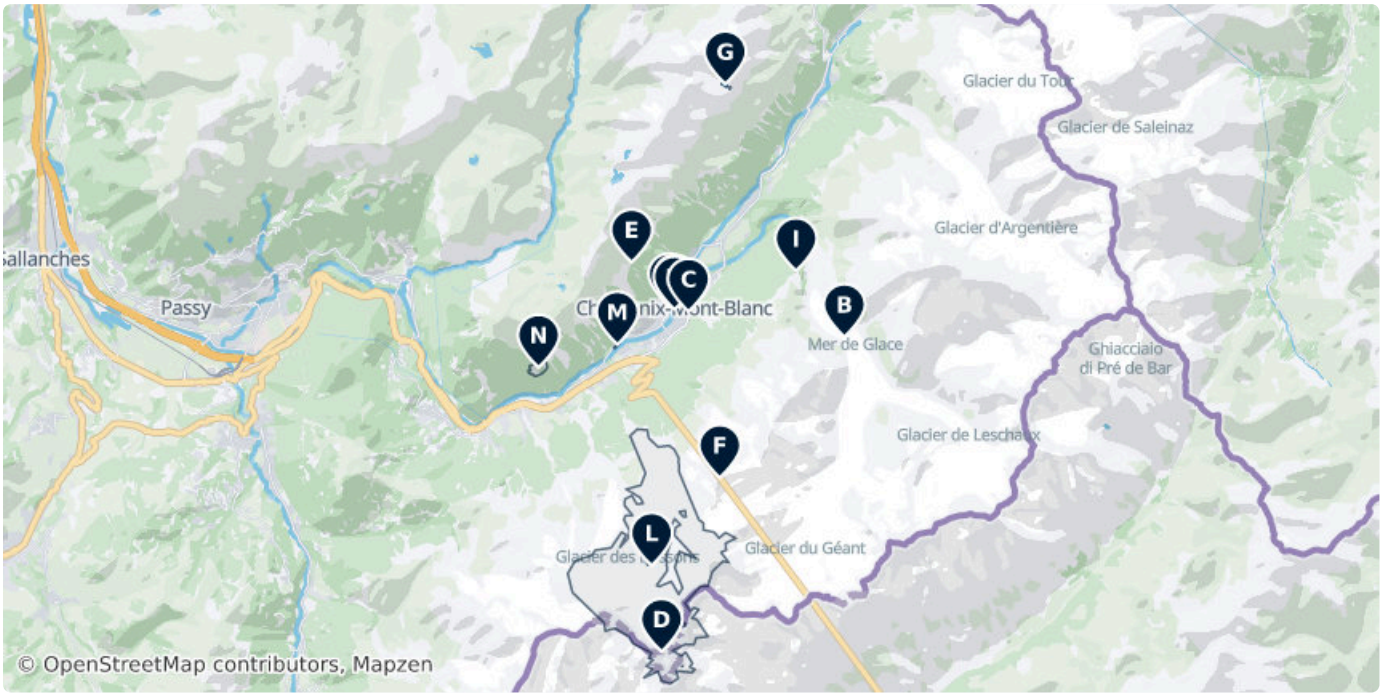
Type C / Type E
230 V · 50 Hz

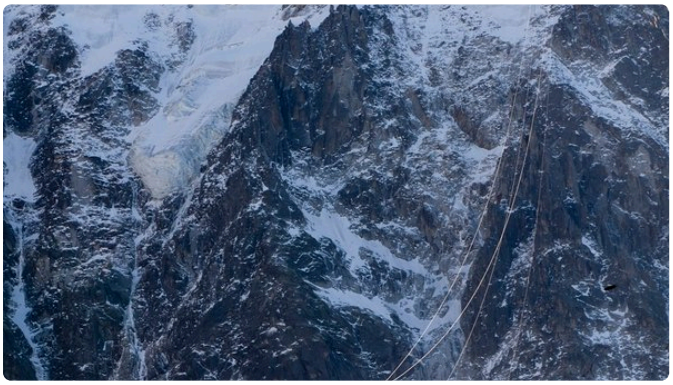
LANGUAGES
French

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Chamonix-Mont-Blanc Essentials

Chamonix-Mont-Blanc, the historic heart of mountaineering, provides access to the Alps' most significant landmarks. This selection features the 3,842-meter Aiguille du Midi, the 19th-century Montenvers rack railway, and the Mer de Glace valley glacier. The list encompasses architectural heritage like the Baroque Église Saint-Michel and natural sites including the high-altitude Lac Blanc and the Bossons Glacier. These locations highlight the valley's unique geological features and its legacy as the site of the first ascent of Mont Blanc.





A Aiguille du Midi

The Aiguille du Midi is a 3,842-metre-tall mountain in the Mont Blanc massif within the French Alps.

Tunnel du Mont-Blanc, 74400, France (45.87871, 6.88741)



B Mer de Glace

The Mer de Glace is a valley glacier located on the northern slopes of the Mont Blanc massif, in the French Alps.

74400, France (45.91582, 6.93455)



C Montenvers Railway

The Montenvers Railway or Chemin de fer du Montenvers is a rack railway line in the Haute-Savoie department of France.

35 Place de la Mer de Glace, 74400 Chamonix, France (45.92255, 6.87544)

compagniedumontblanc.co.uk/en/site-..., +33 4 50 53 22 75



D Mont Blanc

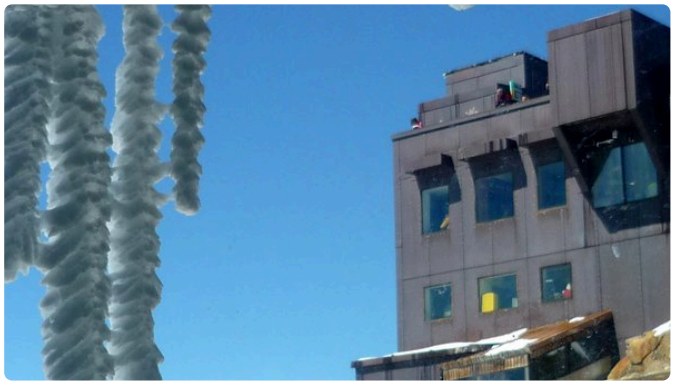
Mont Blanc is the highest mountain in the Alps and Western Europe, and the highest mountain in Europe outside the Caucasus mountains,...

11013, Italy (45.83271, 6.86517)

E Brévent

This 2,525-meter peak, accessible by cable car, provides a direct panoramic view of the Mont Blanc massif. It serves as a major trailhead for Alpine hikes and a launch site for paragliding.

(45.93552, 6.85381)



F Terrasse 3842 View Point

Located at the top of the Aiguille du Midi mountain, this restaurant has one of the best views in the world. Don't forget to book a table!

Tunnel du Mont-Blanc, 74400, France (45.87861, 6.88730)

aiguilledumidi-restaurant.com/3842/e... , +33 4 50 55 82 23



G Lac Blanc

Lac Blanc is a lake in Chamonix-Mont-Blanc, Haute-Savoie, France.

74400, France (45.98250, 6.88933)



H Statue of Horace Bénédict de Saussure

Horace Bénédict de Saussure was a Genevan geologist, meteorologist, physicist, mountaineer and Alpine explorer, often called the founder of...

43 Place Balmat, Chamonix-Mont-Blanc 74400, France (45.92310, 6.87008)



I The Glaciorium

Find out how the large glacier Mer de Glace was formed! The center presents this natural process in a comprehensible way.

74400, France (45.93321, 6.91623)



J Église Saint-Michel

An 18th-century Catholic church showcasing Savoyard Baroque architecture and a traditional Alpine onion-shaped bell tower.
The site has served as a place of worship since the 12th century.

103 Place de l'Église, Chamonix-Mont-Blanc 74400, France (45.92391, 6.86804)



K Statue of Michel-Gabriel Paccard

Michel Gabriel Paccard was a Savoyard doctor and alpinist, citizen of the Kingdom of Sardinia.

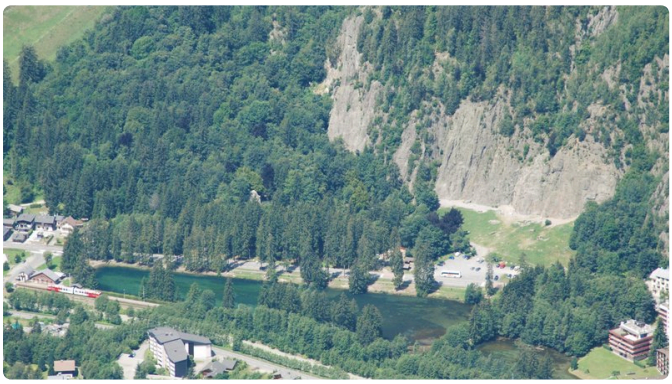
39 Avenue Michel Croz, Chamonix-Mont-Blanc 74400, France (45.92349, 6.87043)



L Bossons Glacier

The Bossons Glacier is one of the larger glaciers of the Mont Blanc massif of the Alps, found in the Chamonix valley of Haute-Savoie...

74400, France (45.85545, 6.86141)



M Lac des Gaillands

An artificial lake known for its reflections of the Mont Blanc massif. It is situated next to the Rocher des Gaillands, a prominent natural rock climbing wall.

1197 Route des Gaillands, 74400, France (45.91384, 6.84837)

N Animal Park of Merlet

Various mountain animals live in this park with an area of more than 50 acres. See chamoises, marmots or deer!

Chemin de Merlet 2495, 74310 Les Houches (45.90774, 6.81849)

Mo–Su Closed

parcdemerlet.com, +33 7 67 22 82 69

Editor's Choice

This selection highlights the Chamonix valley's natural and culinary landmarks. At its center is the Mer de Glace, France's largest glacier, reached by the historic Montenvers cog railway. The list features diverse dining options: Casa Valerio's award-winning Italian pizzas, Le Cap-Horn's seafood-focused contemporary menu, and the traditional French cuisine of the historic Bistrot des Sports, a local fixture since 1923. Rounding out the collection is Chambre Neuf, a well-known venue for live music and après-ski located near the town's central train station.





A Mer de Glace

The Mer de Glace is a valley glacier located on the northern slopes of the Mont Blanc massif, in the French Alps.

74400, France (45.91582, 6.93455)

B Casa Valerio

Family-run Italian restaurant recognized for its award-winning pizzas and traditional pasta dishes.

(45.92194, 6.86950)

casavalerio.net, +33 4 50 55 93 40

C Le Cap-Horn

You can look forward to contemporary cuisine when going to this restaurant. They have many seafood meals on the menu.

74 Rue des Moulins, 74400 Chamonix-Mont-Blanc, France (45.92429, 6.87048)

caphorn-chamonix.com/fr/, +33 4 50 21 80 80

D Bistrot des Sports

Established in 1923, this historic bistro serves traditional French cuisine and has long been a central meeting point for the local mountaineering community.

182 Ruelle du Tortachu, Chamonix-Mont-Blanc 74400, France (45.92485, 6.86986)

E Chambre Neuf

Situated near the Chamonix train station, this bar and restaurant is a prominent venue for live music and après-ski.

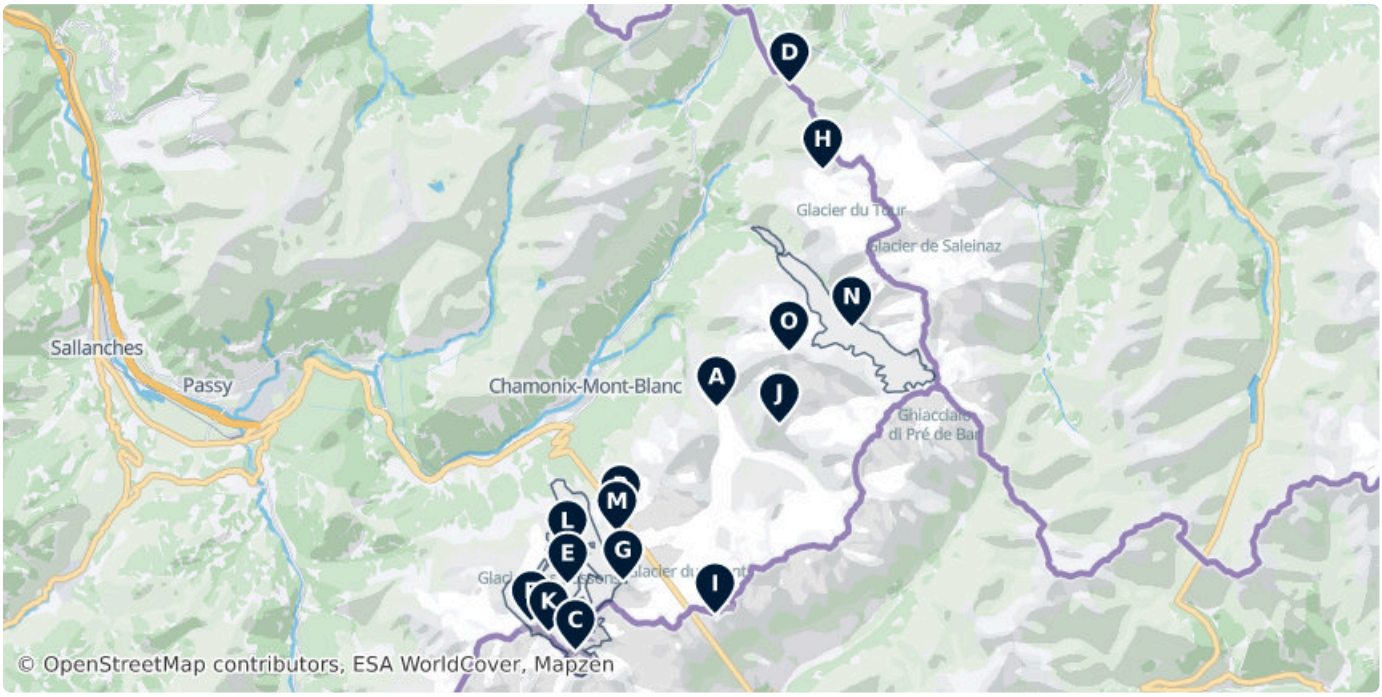
272 Avenue Michel Croz, Chamonix-Mont-Blanc 74400, France (45.92281, 6.87312)

Mo–Su	07:00–10:00, 12:00–15:00, 19:00–22:00

+33 4 50 55 89 81

Alpine Adventures

The Mont Blanc massif encompasses Europe's most iconic alpine terrain, centered around the 4,810-meter summit of Mont Blanc. This selection features the Mer de Glace, France's largest glacier, and the Aiguille du Midi, known for its high-altitude cable car station. It includes technical peaks like Aiguille Verte and essential mountaineering stops such as the Refuge des Cosmiques and the emergency Vallot Hut. Spanning the French and Italian borders, these sites highlight the region's massive ice falls, historic high-altitude shelters, and the dramatic granite spires of the Chamonix valley.

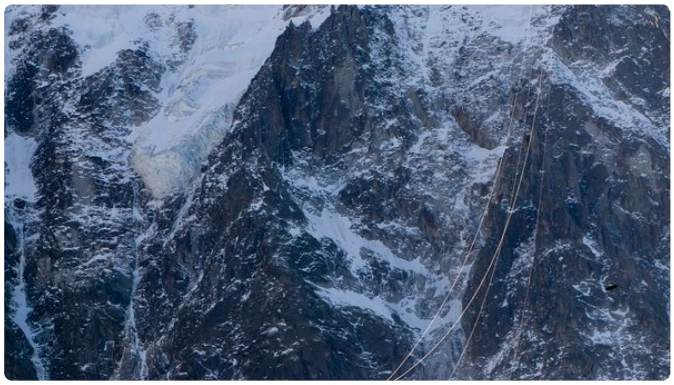




A Mer de Glace

The Mer de Glace is a valley glacier located on the northern slopes of the Mont Blanc massif, in the French Alps.

74400, France (45.91582, 6.93455)



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Tunnel du Mont-Blanc, 74400, France (45.87871, 6.88741)



C Mont Blanc

Mont Blanc is the highest mountain in the Alps and Western Europe, and the highest mountain in Europe outside the Caucasus mountains,...

11013, Italy (45.83271, 6.86517)



D Col de Balme

The Col de Balme is a high mountain pass of the Alps, located on the border between Switzerland and France.

1929, Switzerland (46.02637, 6.97029)



E Bossons Glacier

The Bossons Glacier is one of the larger glaciers of the Mont Blanc massif of the Alps, found in the Chamonix valley of Haute-Savoie...

74400, France (45.85545, 6.86141)



F Dôme du Goûter

The Dôme du Goûter is a mountain in the Mont Blanc massif. It is a shoulder of Mont Blanc, whose summit lies two kilometres to the south...

74400, France (45.84258, 6.84347)



G Mont Blanc du Tacul

Mont Blanc du Tacul is a mountain in the Mont Blanc massif of the French Alps situated midway between the Aiguille du Midi and Mont Blanc.

74400, France (45.85659, 6.88852)



H Albert Premier Hut

The Albert Premier Hut, sometimes known as Albert 1er, is located on the Haute Route between Chamonix, France and Zermatt, Switzerland.

74400, France (45.99682, 6.98664)

refugealbert1er.ffcam.fr, +33 4 50 54 06 20



I Torino Hut

The Torino Hut is a high mountain refuge in the Alps in northwestern Italy.

74400, France (45.84513, 6.93372)

rifugiotorino.com



J Couvercle Hut

Refuge du Couvercle is a refuge in the Alps.

74400, France (45.91022, 6.96531)

refugeducouvercle.ffcam.fr, +33 7 71 57 77 85



K Vallot Hut

The Vallot Hut is a refuge in the Mont Blanc massif on the upper slopes of Mont Blanc in the Alps.

74170, France (45.83907, 6.85217)

refugevallot.ffcam.fr



L Grands Mulets Hut

The Grands Mulets Hut is a mountain refuge in the Mont Blanc massif in the French Alps at an altitude of 3,051 m.

74400, France (45.86659, 6.86125)

refugedesgrandsmulets.ffcam.fr, +33 4 50 53 57 10



M Cosmiques Hut

The Cosmiques Hut is a mountain hut in the Mont Blanc massif in the French Alps at an altitude of 3,613 m.

74400, France (45.87323, 6.88561)

refuge-des-cosmiques.com, +33 4 50 54 40 16



N Argentière Glacier

The Argentière Glacier is a glacier in the French Alps. It is one of the larger glaciers found within the Mont Blanc massif, and is...

74400, France (45.94313, 7.00088)



Aiguille Verte

The Aiguille Verte, which is French for "Green Needle", is a mountain in the Mont Blanc massif in the French Alps.

74400, France (45.93473, 6.97006)

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