

## Meribel - 3 Valleys, France

The resort of Méribel is situated between 1100m (Les Allues) and 1650m (Méribel Altiport) and is linked to Courchevel in the East and Val Thorens to the west together these resorts form the Three Valleys, the world's largest skiing area. Méribel is famous amongst British skiers. It is a very lively resort and one to avoid if you want that traditional 'French' atmosphere! It is very attractively designed in traditional Savoyard style. The older village is Méribel. Several luxury hotels have been built here in recent years meaning that in terms of sophistication Meribel is now snapping at the heels of Courchevel 1850.

If it's the nightlife that you are after Méribel is best. In fact is renowned for its nightlife and it is not unusual to see people dancing on tables still in their ski boots. The après ski distractions consist mostly of bars, with one of the most famous being Dick's Tea Bar (Those that have been around for a long time will know that in the 80's, there was a bar in La Plagne, Called Tom's Bar, a bar in Tignes called Harri's bar, which with Dick's T-Bar produced the drinker's triangle known as Tom , Dick and Harri's!) There are many happy hours, all well planned so that at one finishes the next one starts, and the next and the next! There is a well defined centre. Accommodation can be some distance away. So, if you are going out, take advantage of the free bus service. If you are returning late be prepared to taxi or walk back.

Méribel-Motteret consists of apartments, hotels and restaurants spread over an area about 4 kms above Méribel. It is ideal for families and the higher altitude means more reliable snow. The Mottaret nightlife is different to Méribel. There are no shortages of bars to keep you entertained, but the emphasis is on eating-out. As part of the largest ski area in Europe, there is access to plenty of quality pistes. Méribel itself covers about 100km and there are runs for all grades of skier. Méribel has some superb vantage points on the mountainside. It is positioned such, that you can spend the whole day in the sun (when it is sunny!) . This is especially good for fair weather skiers. Spring can come early on the lower slopes of the valley but the north-west-facing slopes above the Altiport and also the southern end of the valley have more reliable snow. Although Méribel now has the largest density of snow making equipment with over 700 snow canons, so whatever the natural conditions, the snow will always be great. The most popular area for beginners is at Altiport. The Blanchot has lovely green pistes but you will need to learn to use a drag lift first. The lack of good nursery slopes set apart from the main areas means that Méribel is not an ideal choice for beginners. For the intermediate and the expert it's a different story you'll both find more than enough long smooth runs or challenging runs to keep you amused. Méribel and the rest of the Three Valleys is a paradise for intermediates; there are few other resorts where a keen piste-basher can cover so many miles so easily. Meribel's boarder facilities are increasing dramatically. There are competitions, two snow parks and specialist boarder shops, Oxygène and Board Brains.

You also have a fantastic Boulangerie/Pâtisserie in Maison Braissand, possibly one of the best in the Alps, its difficult to remomend just one thing because it is all so good, but if you try the tartelette aux framboises, you'll get an idea of what I mean. There is also a good selection of restaurants, Le Refuge never disappoints, La Fromagerie is a great choice for mixed groups of veggies and carnivores, and Les Enfants Terribles is great for a special night out. If you have a special haunt, then take the time to share it with your fellow skiers and boarders.

