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Number 1 – Magazine 2019/2020

HAUTE MAURIENNE VANOISE MAGAZINE

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HAUTE MAURIENNE VANOISE MAGAZINE

Valfréjus • La Norma • Aussois • Val Cenis • Bessans • Bonneval sur Arc



n°1

2019 | 2020

Base camp

48 hours in Modane:
prepare to be amazed!

Family

Belle and Sebastian,
life-size cinema

Roaming

The mountain passes,
silent witnesses
to legendary stories

Innovation

Water,
the driving
force of a region



Haute Maurienne Vanoise

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**Haute Maurienne
Vanoise**

Venture to the generous Alps

The pursuit of authentic pleasures holds great surprises in store for those who choose travel over “doing sightseeing”. Nature has been generous in Haute Maurienne Vanoise, sprouting other-worldly landscapes among the mountain pastures.

This generosity is cultivated in a land of refuge, a living mountain valley inhabited all year round.

A different kind of mountain rests here for those who are willing to look for it or are able to find it. This mountain is for the contemplative, the active, and those who simply want to soak in the Alps in all seasons.

Even the weather forecast is generous here. Summer offers a cool retreat, autumn is dry and bright. While abundant, quality snow means you can take in the best of the winter. Here in our village resorts, you will meet the inhabitants first. You will find mountain activities galore and high-performance ski areas for great Alpine and Nordic skiing at all levels.

This getaway between Vanoise and Italy starts here, in Haute Maurienne Vanoise!

Now the secret is also yours. Come here and share it.

Laurent Poupard
President of Haute Maurienne Vanoise Tourisme

Au CIS Éthic Étapes de Val Cenis, ***vous avez tout compris aux vacances !***



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CONTENTS

4

Map

Access

6

Contact persons

7

News

The call of the wild

14

Gastronomy

Local picnic way of life

18

Family

Belle and Sebastian,
life-size cinema



25

Interview

Yves Dimier &
Thibault Anselmet:
at the crossroads

28

Elevation

Decompression stops

37

Contemplation

Portfolio

45

Innovation

Water, the driving
force of a region

Mountain pastures, custodians
and strategic observers

52

Base camp

48 hours in Modane:
prepare to be amazed!

58

Way of life

La Dolce Vita

Biculturalism



65

Roaming

The mountain passes of Haute
Maurienne Vanoise, silent
witnesses to legendary stories

70

Summer

Mountain biking has never
been more inclusive!

The Transmaurienne Vanoise,
from elite athletes to children,
a cycling institution!

79

Good addresses

Haute Maurienne Vanoise Magazine n°01

Edited by Haute Maurienne Vanoise Tourisme – 6 Rue Napoléon – Lanslebourg – 73480 Val-Cenis – Tel: 04 79 05 99 06 – www.haute-Maurienne-Vanoise.com / info@hautemaurienne.com | Publication Director: Laurent Poupard | Editorial coordination: Éditions Glénat – Léonie Uchiyama – leonie.uchiyama@glenat.com – Tel: 04 76 90 85 18 | Editor: Nolwenn Patrigeon | Journalist: Mélanie Pontet | Photos: A. Pernet, G. L. Perron, J-L Viart, N. Vanier, J. Baptiste, J. Jeanmart, E. Travers – Radar Films Gaumont M6 Films Rhône Alpes, F. L. Goffard, S. Berca, P-Y. Odin – Facim Fondation, C. Tardivet, F. Grosset, N. Tissot – Vanoise National Park, J. L. Rigaud, B. Cilio, E. Parent, LGO – V. Piccerelle, C. Simon, H. Chiapusso, C. Théolier, ONERA, G. Pilloud, A. Magnenot, Fresh Influence D. Durand, Haute Maurienne Vanoise Tourist Office | Cover: Alban Pernet | Graphic designer: Lisa Boyadjian | Prepress: Glénat Production – Tel: 04 76 88 75 75 | Printed in France by Pollina on sustainable forest paper | Éditions Glénat – Couvent Saint-Cécile – 37, rue Servan 38000 Grenoble – President: Jacques Glénat – Director of partnership development and direct sales: Aurore Belluard – Business development Manager: Léonie Uchiyama – leonie.uchiyama@glenat.com – Tel: 04 76 90 85 18.

Glénat



Haute Maurienne
Vanoise



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MAP



Access

By train

TGV (high-speed train)
and bus station at Modane.

By bus Belle Savoie Express

During the season, connections from
Modane to the Haute Maurienne Vanoise
resorts and villages.
www.mobisavoie.fr

By car

A43, exit 30 then RD1006 road,
follow the direction of the
Haute Maurienne Vanoise
resorts and villages.

By air

Airports at Lyon (2h30), Grenoble
or Turin (2h) and Geneva (3h)



- Modane – Val Cenis: 23 km
- Val Cenis – Bonneval sur Arc: 19 km
- Modane – Chambéry: 125 km
- Val Cenis – Susa: 40 km (via the Col du Mont Cenis/only open during summer)
- Val Cenis – Turin: 97 km (via the Col du Mont Cenis/only open during summer)

CONTACT PERSONS

Contact persons | The keys of the territory



Nadia Tourt

Nadia has the answers to all your questions. She is the regional press officer, a native of Val Cenis Lanslebourg and combines dynamism and discretion to promote Haute Maurienne Vanoise and its inhabitants.



Claudine Théolier

It only took a few seconds for Claudine to usher us into her world. The Muséobar museum manager guided us through compelling and exciting testimonies from the main periods in Modane's history.



Gilbert Pilloud

The President of the Amis du Mont Cenis Association is also in charge of the Maison Franco-Italienne tourist office and Mont-Cenis Pyramid Museum. This impassioned, former gendarme knows all the historical secrets of this legendary site.



Jean-François Durand

Manager of the Archaeological Museum of Val Cenis Sollières, Jean-François led us on the trail of the first farmer-pastoralists of the Neolithic period, who settled in the cave of Balmes 5,600 years ago. A true return to roots...

Photographers | 3 outlooks on the land



Stefano Berca

Stefano Berca, architecture and fashion photographer based in Spain and Morocco, grew up in Modane. The photos he delivered for the '48 hours in Modane' article bear witness to his deep attachment to his home town.



Jean-Luc Viart

Jean-Luc Viart, the finest portrait artist in France, skilfully captures gazes and characters, both in his Modane studio and outside.



Christian Simon

Based in Val Cenis Lanslebourg, Christian Simon loves the mountain, which he loves to hike around in all seasons and weather. From up there, he captures and conveys the strength, beauty and majesty of the fauna and flora of Haute Maurienne Vanoise.

The call of the wild

Highlights, news and events... In this region, sheltered by glaciers, and surrounded by forests and rivers, time seems to stand still... However, there's always something going on in Haute Maurienne Vanoise! And the dynamic mountain dwellers who live in this high-altitude valley, embody the very best that the region has to offer.

Ski the length and breadth of Haute Maurienne Vanoise with a single pass

.....

Explore the entire Haute Maurienne Vanoise ski area with just 1 pass, covering 6 resorts: Valfréjus, La Norma, Aussois, Val Cenise, Bessans and Bonneval sur Arc; in other words, 350 kilometres of downhill skiing and 200 kilometres of cross-country skiing! With a 6-day ski pass (or longer), you can enjoy 1 day's skiing in each of the Alpine resorts as well as unlimited access to all cross-country trails. And for a special, low-cost deal, if you purchase an annual pass (entire winter season and access to ski lifts in summer) in September-October, you can enjoy a 50% discount.

Overlooking the Mont Cenise lake.



9,000

This is the number of people who live in Haute Maurienne Vanoise throughout the year. This represents a population density of 4 people per square metre for the entire region, which is exactly the same as Canada! The inhabitants of Haute Maurienne Vanoise, residing throughout the region's 10 traditional villages, welcome visitors in search of unspoilt countryside and the great outdoors.

107

mountain peaks, reaching a height of more than 3,000 metres, extend over this vast Alpine region. These star-grazing peaks provide us with a unique overview of a staggeringly beautiful, natural world, ideal for both activity and more contemplative pursuits.

75%

of Bonneval sur Arc's 250 inhabitants are under 35. This small, unspoilt village exudes youth and dynamism while managing to retain its traditional character.



Bonneval sur Arc during summer.

Off you go!

.....

This isn't just a celebration to mark the start of the winter season in Val Cenis, or a simple resort opening. It's THE mid-December event; a friendly gathering where accommodation hosts, restaurateurs, facilitators and tourism professionals go out of their way to offer the event's 5,000 visitors a welcome normally reserved for friends. Gourmet food stands set up on the slopes, opportunities to test equipment, new winter sports gear to try out... And in the evening, a free concert under the stars! A high altitude date!

Tous en piste, 14th December 2019.



250

different
species
of flowers
have been

identified in the Mont Cenis mountain range. In the Vanoise National Park, which extends over an area of 147,500 hectares, including a central zone of some 53,000 hectares, mother nature reigns supreme.

www.vanoise-parcnational.fr

Unprecedented: The Tour de France in Aussois

.....

In 2019 the montée d'Aussois will enter into the Tour de France legend. On the 26th July 2019, for the first time in its history, this route, which is well known to bike enthusiasts and fans of Haute Maurienne Vanoise, will form part of the iconic Tour de France race. This section comes just before the epic Col de l'Iseran climb, Europe's highest mountain pass, and 48 hours before the finish on the Champs Élysées. This 19th stage is the perfect "warm-up" for Bardet, Froome, Sagan et al, and all cycling enthusiasts, keen to ride in the slipstream of champions on the following day.



29

cross-country trails,
totalling 325 kilometres,
are now available.
The ideal mountain
bike destination!

Information about routes, training and supervision,
and hire facilities can be found on
www.haute-maurienne-vanoise.com

The spirit of spring

.....

After a harsh winter, the return of the sun's rays creates a happy, joyful mood. Laurent Gerra, one of France's favourite mimics, has a chalet in Val Cenise where he comes regularly to recharge his batteries between two shows and three TV broadcasts. The 400 seater auditorium in Val Cenise Lanslebourg is named after him and every year he is given carte blanche to devise the programme for the "C'est l'Printemps à Val Cenise" Festival held in Val Cenise.

The "C'est l'Printemps à Val Cenise"
(It's Spring in Val Cenise)
Festival is held every year in March
in Val Cenise Lanslebourg.

High-altitude tango and a family-friendly atmosphere

.....

Imagine a week of dancing, courses and demonstrations...
Imagine a gathering of experts from all over the world
and novices, looking for new experiences and excitement.
Every year, at the end of August, dating back almost
15 years, an exceptional line-up of dancers gather, at an
altitude of 2,100 metres, to take part in the "Milonga des
nuages," against the backdrop of Mont Cenise lake. Tango
in Val Cenise? It's a story that goes way back! As you stroll
through the streets of Val Cenise Lanslebourg, you'll come
across rue d'Argentine and place du Rio de la Plata, in
honour of the thousands of Haute Maurienne residents
who set off for South America 150 years ago!

Val Cenise International Tango Festival. 2019 Festival:
from 18th to 24th August.

60 years old

The village of Aussois is
also celebrating the ski
resort's 60th anniversary.

Preserving snow

.....

The process, known as "snow-farming" involves covering any snow
left at the end of the season with sawdust to provide insulation
from the sun and air temperature. This technique, which comes
from Scandinavia, is both effective and environmentally friendly.
It also means that, from early November onwards, Bessans ski
resort can provide guaranteed access to a 2.5 km cross-country ski
loop, thanks to the 10,000 cubic metres of snow that have been
preserved and reused along this Nordic trail.





The immaculate, open slopes of Valfréjus.

13 minutes

The duration of the express lift ride to the top of the slopes at Valfréjus. And then it's... 13 kilometres of downhill skiing with the aptly named piste du Jeu!

Grenier 2.0

Jonathan Pascal, mountain dweller, backpacker and expert in digital strategy was born in the valley and loves the wealth of riches that it produces. This hyperactive thirty-year-old has put all his energy into creating the platform www.terroirdemaurienne.com. The site details carefully selected, outstanding local producers who have signed an ethics charter guaranteeing production processes that comply “with rules and regulations, and are respectful of the environment, region and human rights.” Which means, the wealth of the gastronomic and culinary delights, available in Haute Maurienne Vanoise, is just a click away. From Beaufort d’Alpage cheese and dried beef from Bessans’ butcher, to beer made from Vanoise spring water, wild juniper picked at 3,000 metres and honey from Fourneaux beehives. The platform is also a forum where visitors can exchange views and information, with recipe suggestions and dates of local cookery workshops.



www.terroirdemaurienne.com

The World Cup: an early present under the tree

Aussois is hosting a stage of the Ski Mountaineering World Cup on the 20th and 21st December 2019. The discipline’s top athletes will gather for an exceptional weekend, celebrating a sport that combines athleticism and nature. And to mark the occasion this family-friendly village resort will open its slopes on the 14th December. Christmas is coming early!

The Ski Mountaineering World Cup in Aussois: 20th and 21st December 2019 The resort will be open from the 14th December.

75%

tourist loyalty... Visitors that know the place come back! This is one of the highest rates in France and evidence of genuine customer satisfaction. In other words, setting foot in Haute Maurienne Vanoise, represents the start of a whole new chapter.



cars allowed in La Norma family-friendly ski resort. On this pretty, wooded slope, children are free to run around and have fun, winter and summer alike.

Something's brewing!

Two craft brewpubs have recently opened in the region...

The Brasserie des sources de la Vanoise, in Villarodin-Bourget, serves organic, saffron beer (blond, amber and pale ale) which, as the name suggests, derives its strength and its water from a local spring in the Vanoise region... www.brasserievanoise.com

The Brasserie d'Oé in Aussois, set up by three friends: a guide and two lodge keepers. It serves a variety of delicious, non-filtered, organic beer, uniquely brewed using local, organic ingredients. Head for the village pub and taste them now! www.bieredoe.fr

4 hours

the journey time from Paris to Modane by TGV train.



and only one hairpin bend to reach Val Cenis; no horrible, windy roads or travel sickness.

Transport throughout the region



In addition to the shuttle services within each resort, there is now a new public transport network linking all villages and ski resorts in the Haute Maurienne Vanoise region. It's ideal for the local population, who will enjoy both its practical and financial benefits, as well as tourists who will be able to leave their cars in the car park for the duration of their stay and enjoy easy access to the wealth of activities on offer in Haute Maurienne Vanoise. It's a great way of simplifying travel and encouraging visitors to explore further afield. It's never been easier to take a short hop to Bessans, without worrying about snow fall on the roads, set off for a day's hike from Aussois or go for a dip in La Norma's swimming lake with the whole family. In winter, transport is free for skiers who hold an annual pass or 6-day pass. Otherwise, a Mobility Pass costs €10 for one week or €25 for the entire season!

Timetables available on www.haute-maurienne-vanoise.com

Nowhere else

.....

These two cheeses grace the plates of some of the world's finest restaurants. They are produced here and only here.

– The Bleu de Bonneval is a blue veined cheese made using full fat, unpasteurised cows' milk from Tarentaise and Abondance cattle. This mild, creamy cheese, with its rustic, Alpine flavour, originated in the village of Bonneval sur Arc.

– The Bleu de Termignon is France's rarest cheese! Its method of production is a closely guarded secret: it is produced on just four mountain farms, located at an altitude of 2,300 metres, using techniques handed down through the generations. The flavours of this grainy textured cheese explode on the tongue. Occasionally mild, occasionally powerful, this cheese is brimming with character, just like the Alpine landscape from where it originates.

11,000

This is the number of Beaufort cheese wheels that are produced every year by the Haute Maurienne Vanoise cooperative. Each wheel is manufactured on site in Val Cenis Lanslebourg, using a total of 5 million litres of milk collected annually from farmers across the region, from Aussois to Bonneval sur Arc.

Information and points of sale available on the Haute Maurienne Vanoise Dairy Cooperative's website – www.coophautemaurienne.fr



Made in HMV

.....

The last house in Val Cenis Lanslevillard is home to Sylvie Roche's studio-boutique. The designer, who loves the rugged mountains that surround her, designs and creates unique collections for both men and women. Immune to the vagaries of fashion, Sylvie offers modern, timeless clothes. The designer, who puts her heart and soul into her work, selects her fabric in Italy, focusing on colours and the emotions that they evoke. However, the cut of garments means her designs are also popular for the comfort and freedom of movement they offer.

Her studio-boutique is open Tuesday to Saturday.
www.srochecreation.com



Closer to the stars

.....

The valley's first and only 4-star hotel is located in Val Cenis. Its 83 spacious bedrooms with wide balconies and large picture windows prove that being close to nature remains the most important factor. The heated pool, Japanese bath and vast Pure Altitude spa complete the offer, ensuring that guests enjoy an authentic, comfortable and stylish stay.

Saint Charles Hôtel & Spa****
www.hotel-saintcharles.com



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the latest news,
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GASTRONOMY

Local picnic way of life

Varied, unique and gourmet, the Haute Maurienne Vanoise gastronomy goes well beyond mountain-dweller stereotypes. This vast, elevated region so close to Italy offers a myriad of flavours to discover in both summer and winter!





Local winter picnic

Beaufort

The star cheese of Haute Maurienne Vanoise is a PDO product manufactured in large quantities, allowing forty or so farmers to make a decent living from their work.

Bleu de Bonneval

This creamy, blue-grey veined cheese originating in Bonneval sur Arc is made with full fat, unpasteurised milk from the famous Tarentaise and Abondance cattle.

Coppa

The valley's geographic and historical proximity to Northern Italy means "Italian" cured meats like coppa are traditionally prepared by artisan butchers from Haute Maurienne Vanoise.

Farci de Bessans

This typical country recipe, which used to be a festive dish, will delight lovers of original products.

Grissinos

These dry, elongated breadsticks from Italy are eaten daily by the inhabitants of the valley. Local bakeries are actually equipped with machines directly imported from their Italian neighbours.

Craft beer "d'Oé"

Cédric, Julien and Sébastien are three friends from Aussois; a guide, a ski patroller and a refuge keeper come traditional brewers. Their beer is produced using only organic malts and hops.

Quinka

Halfway between bread and brioche, Qinka gets its name from the regional dialect "quinqua", which means five. Five is the number of ingredients required to make it: flour, butter, eggs, water, raisins and the flavour of your choice (orange or lemon peel, orange blossom).

Red wine

A little glass of Mondeuse, that emblematic Savoie variety with a fruity, rustic character is the perfect accompaniment to these great products!

Local summer picnic

Salami

An essential part of any picnic! In this region, it is often made from pork but can also be made with donkey or ewe meat; 100% plain or with nuts, beaufort cheese, etc.

Goat's cheese

Beaufort isn't the only cheese available! There are many goat herders in the valley. Respectful of the artisan tradition, they make their delicious little cheeses daily, and then mature them in a cellar.

"Jambon cossu" (stitched cured ham)

A Bessanaise speciality, this raw ham is de-boned fresh, salted and flavoured before being hung to dry for at least a year!

"Sources de Vanoises" Beer

These beers traditionally brewed in the village of Bourget contain entirely organically-produced raw materials. Discover the flavours of the "Grimpeur" (climber), "Guide" or "Moniteur" (instructor)...

Honey

This golden nectar comes from beehives kept around the valley at a height of up to 2,000 metres in summer. The honey originates from a mixture of mountain flowers, specifically from rhododendrons, chestnut trees and other species.

Herbal teas

Plants that grow in fresh air at an altitude of 1,500 to 3,200 metres all have their own specific properties. Get advice from the experts!

Modane Bread

This bread was the Sunday dessert of labourers boring the Fréjus tunnel at the end of the 19th Century. Filled with candied melon and combining the best features of brioche and panettone, Modane bread is a real treat for food-lovers...

Apple juice

After a lovely hike, there's nothing quite like a large glass of juice made from Savoyard apples, known for their sweet and tart taste.

Accessories

The photo shows...

Opinel knives by Igor Charon, with their carved handles and exotic wood, horn or acrylic resin finishes...

Coloured bamboo plates and summer table cloth from the new *Maison des métiers d'art* shop in Aussois.

Dishes sculpted in the cembro pine-tree by the creative craftsman Damien Noyne, whose shop is found in Val Cenis Termignon.





FAMILY

Belle and Sebastian, life-size cinema

All three of the Belle and Sebastian films were mainly shot in the region. The mountain and countryside are not just a backdrop but play a genuine role in this story! Haute Maurienne Vanoise offers visitors, both young and old, a chance to experience the other side of the screen and immerse themselves in the world of their heroes. It's an opportunity to track down some must-see film locations and answer the call of the great outdoors depicted in these films. Follow in the footsteps of the small boy and his dog!

The hamlet of Écot, an unspoilt mountain gem and, in the film, the village where Sebastian lived.



First hike

The Refuge du Lac-Blanc loop, in the heart of the National Park, is accessible even to the youngest walkers (from 3 years upwards). The trail, which begins at 2,385 metres, has just 200 metres elevation gain, leading you along a wide path to the refuge, from where you can admire the reflection of the Dent Parrachée in the calm waters of the mountain lake. After roaming along footpaths through Alpine pastures, your children will enjoy a short break near the lake, relaxing on the exact same stone on which their hero once sat (cf. photo page 21).

On the return trip, more adventurous hikers may prefer to prolong their enjoyment and take the one hour longer, scenic route back.

What? Hiking.

Where? From Val Cenis Termignon, follow the road to Bellecombe car park.

Taking the plunge

In the first film, we see Sebastian deep in “conversation” with Belle in a dramatic setting, surrounded by granite rocks, waterfalls and turquoise water. This river bank, with its rather Mediterranean feel,

is located in the vicinity of Bonneval sur Arc, next to the Écot Gorge. The canyon, carved out over the years by glacial meltwater, is 900 metres long with a descent time of 2.5 hours, alternating between natural slides, walks and jumps (1.5 m to 9 m) in pure, fresh water with a few roped, aerial sections.

A water-based activity in the headwaters of the river Arc. Laughter, thrills and exhilarating times guaranteed!

What? Canyoning.

Where? In the Écot Gorge. Activity available from April to October, for ages 10 and over; must be accompanied by specialist guide.

Canyoning: Take a dip in the turquoise water!



Photo from first film: Belle and Sebastian deep in “conversation” on the banks of the Écot gorge.





Sebastian on his playing field... Truancy beckons!



It doesn't matter about the season as long as there's a slope!

Hurtle down the mountain pastures, in summer and winter

Is there anything more exhilarating than sliding downhill? The thrill of speed, the landscape whizzing past and the air whipping across your face... When you hear Sebastian's laughter, sitting on his wooden sledge, in the second film of the series, you just want to join in the fun. There's no age restriction and there's no seasonal restriction either!

Sledging is obviously perfect for winter, with several runs, specially designed for these tiny, high-speed vehicles, in all resorts; or for a more rugged experience, you can just find a meadow, garden, slope or glade. However, you can also go sledging in the summer, on the thick grass and flower-strewn mountain pastures of Val Cenis: but now, you can replace the old wooden sledge, as used by Sebastian, with the famous Mountainboard. And off you go!

What? Tobogganing.

Where? Depends on the seasons and expectations! The purpose-built, winter toboggan runs have

different facilities, depending on the resort: they may be floodlit at night, positioned next to the ski lifts or reachable by ski lift with long runs and banked turns or themed runs like the tracks at Val Cenis and Valfréjus Bob-Park! The école de Glisse d'été (www.ecoledeglissedete.fr) organises dirtboarding (Mountainboarding on grass) sessions.

Fishing expedition

Les Avenières lake is located just next to the summer swimming lake by La Norma water activities centre. It's a quiet area, surrounded by trees and large picnic tables, ideal for a family fishing expedition; but when a rainbow trout starts to nibble at the bait, excitement reaches fever pitch!

It requires a lot of imagination to make the link between this idyllic site and one of the most disturbing scenes in *Belle and Sebastian: the final chapter*. It's here, however, that on a cold winter's night the character of Joseph, played by Clovis Cornillac, slips with Belle down into the dark, icy waters!

Transforming this small corner of paradise, into a place that gives you goosebumps... now that's the magic of cinema!

What? Fishing.

Where? At La Norma water sports centre.



Yomping across a piedmont fort

Although in the first *Belle and Sebastian* film, the Barrière de l'Esseillon represents a somewhat intimidating German garrison, in real life, this series of five tiered forts, located on a sunny hillside, is rather majestic. This military site, which was built in the early 19th century by the kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia,

Opposite

Photo from the first film: the heroes take a little nap by the lake, relaxing on a stone warmed by the sun along the Lac Blanc.





In the summer, this flying machine swaps its skis for wheels for a crazy aerial adventure that is every bit as hair-raising.

has become a cultural and recreational centre for all the family: a heritage interpretation centre, fun, themed walks, treetop trails as well as Europe's longest via ferrata. There are no fewer than seven separate segments, from the more accessible to the more vertiginous.

What? Via Ferrata.

Where? Via ferrata du Diable – Aussois and Avrieux – For ages 5 and above.

Flying through the air

The aerial shots from the second *Belle and Sebastian* film (*Belle and Sebastian: the adventure continues*) offer a glimpse of this high-altitude valley, and its beautiful landscapes, seen from above. Take to the skies and explore this vast region from above, just like Pierre, Sebastian's father, behind the wheel of his plane. Look out over Mont Cenise lake with its expanse of green, white and turquoise blue mosaics, and the glaciers which, when seen from on high, are even more dazzling. Soar above the peaks in a two-seater ultralight and admire this breath-taking,



Pierre, Belle and Sebastian, in front of the famous Broussard airplane.

natural spectacle. It's a unique way of appreciating the scale of the place and its exceptional beauty.

What? Ultralight Flights.

Where? Take off from the Val Cenise Sollières airfield for pedestrians (outside of winter season) and, in winter, from the Val Cenise resort airstrip, at the top of the lake ski-lift, for skiers! There are lots of opportunities for paragliding (Aussois, Val Cenise and Bonneval sur Arc).



The region's vast open spaces are ideal for an experience with the huskies.

You too can have a four legged friend

In winter, you can visit a dog sled school and act out your childhood dream of being a dog musher on the vast slopes of Bessans, Val Cenis and Aussois. Try an introductory ride or adventure course and learn about the exciting world of mushing with qualified instructors.

In summer, you can try dog-hiking, a sporting activity accompanied by beautiful huskies. The dog, who is equipped with a harness, leads the way; you just have to keep pace and guide him using your voice and specific gestures. A chance to enjoy a special moment with Belle's friends!

What? Introduction to dog sledding, mushing courses, dog-hiking.

Where? At Husky Adventure, suitable for ages 2 and above.

www.huskyadventure.net

Other must-see sites from *Belle and Sebastian*

During the course of your hikes and other adventures, you'll come across some iconic film locations from these three hugely successful films. Will you be able to recognise them?

Bonneval sur Arc is a genuine open-air studio, ideal for filming outdoor scenes of village life: you'll recognise the village square, the church, bakery, some of the sites of the German raids and finally, the well-known school attended by Sebastian, which is, in fact, the existing village school. This well-maintained mountain village, as charming in the height of summer as it is under a blanket of snow, is a natural gem.

Sebastian's village, which often appears in a wide-angled shot, is in fact the hamlet of Écot. This well-preserved mountain community is located at a height of 2,000 metres, upstream from Bonneval sur Arc. This unique site, which is inaccessible by road in winter, has retained its authentic feel and,



Bonneval sur Arc village in winter.

with its stone walls and slate-covered roofs, blends in seamlessly with the natural surroundings.

César's chalet: this site will certainly catch your eye! This well-known shelter, nestled above the hamlet of Avérole, is near a very accessible hike that leads to Avérole mountain refuge.

Pierre Longues' hut, where Belle and Sebastian hid in the first film, is located below the village of Val Cenis Lanslebourg and in real life is known as "The Cabin under the rock" The scenes with Belle, Sebastian and his friend, Esther, playing in the snow, were shot just a stone's throw from the village of Bressans, near the hamlet of La Goulaz. And finally, a little further along, in this same valley, in the hamlet of Avérole, you'll find César's sheep barn!

Just like a treasure hunt, all these elements will add a fun dimension and sense of occasion to your family outings, whatever the time of year; it's a great opportunity to engage all your senses and experience, at first hand, the unique world that is so beautifully depicted in these films.



The Avérole valley and hamlet.

INTERVIEW

Yves Dimier & Thibault Anselmet: at the crossroads

*One has returned to his homeland, the other is barely leaving the nest...
Two generations, two personalities: a comparison of two athletes born and bred here who are both equally attached to the region.*





Late on this snowy afternoon, Yves Dimier is juggling, as best he can, the demanding schedule of a ski resort manager in the height of the winter season. He shoves his constantly-ringing phone into the pocket of his Val Cenis embossed jacket and then sits down at the table of the La Bergerie restaurant. Thibault Anselmet arrives shortly after, shakes his hand and takes off his hat. This rising star of ski-mountaineering has just packed his bag for the Andorran stage of the ski mountaineering world cup. *"I asked my father for some information when I found out we were going to meet,"* confesses Thibault with a smile, despite the last minute postponement of the meeting. The introductions are out of the way!

Twenty-nine years and, at first glance at least, quite a lot else separates these two local figures; however, they both share the same attachment to their region and, although they don't realise it, the same commitment to the pursuit of excellence. Yves' career in alpine skiing later gave way to a wide-ranging professional life that eventually brought him back home while, at the age of 21, Thibault is in the early stages of an exceptional mountain career that is propelling him to international stardom.

"The previous record holder was none other than... my father."

Both began their careers with the same sport. But for Yves, the question of ski mountaineering never arose: *"When I was a child, the only formal club that existed was the alpine*

skiing club; I loved the sport and competing so I quickly joined." Thibault also started out with alpine skiing but quickly changed course. *"I had good results but then when you progress through the categories, in the summer, they ask you to go and ski on glaciers. I was really opposed to the idea: I obviously preferred running around on the mountains."* A strong character and committed athlete, this Bonneval sur Arc native then turned his attention to ski mountaineering; a sport where he can enjoy the rhythm of nature – something that he obviously really loves – and still compete.

Which bring us, appropriately enough, to competitions: during his slalom career, representing the French Team from 1987 to 1999, Yves Dimier won three World Cup medals, four French Championship titles and was selected for the Lillehammer Olympics. However, once his sporting career was over he didn't abandon the world of skiing: he joined the French outfitters, Rossignol before becoming technical director with the French Ski Federation. Before returning to his roots, to take over the management of the Val Cenis ski area five years ago, this fifty year old with blue eyes and flecked grey hair, continued to follow his passion, sometimes far beyond his native Haute Maurienne: in 2009, he shipped out his entire family to the Russian mountains where he coordinated the organisation of the Sochi World Olympics Alpine skiing events!

"High level sport teaches you how to fight and deal with setbacks, in particular."

For his part, Thibault has already made a name for himself in the world of ski mountaineering! This sharp-minded, serious, dark-haired young man has been competing on the world stage for three years and is hovering around the top ten. At the start of the winter season in Aussois, he was crowned French champion in his category before then becoming a World Cup medal winner. However, his impressive results are not enough for him to make a living so to earn money he also works as a carpenter. This young man, who competes in all skiing disciplines, is famous for having beaten the record in 2017 for the fastest ascent of the iconic Albaron mountain (3 627 m), the highest peak in Bonneval sur Arc, with

his team-mate, Samuel Erquy, completing the climb in an incredible 2 hours, 5 minutes. *"It was a magical experience... In fact, the previous record holder was none other than... my father."* laughs Thibault. *"I remember the day that it happened very clearly; I was in school and thought about him all day long. As soon as I reached that level, I wanted to have a go myself."*

This ski mountaineer has plans for other record-breaking projects: *"The Dent Parrachée and the Grande Casse; I'm really keen to try and it's very positive for my career: I've had more feedback about the Albaron record than my World Cup results!"* he declares, a touch disillusioned. The stunning mountain photos that Thibault posts on social media are enjoyed by a growing number of people and although he admits to worrying about too much self-promotion, he already seems more than capable of speaking his mind.

HMV Magazine: Yves, do you have any advice for Thibault?

Y.D.: "I don't think I need to tell him anything; he's young but he already knows that and he's mature, that's obvious! You've got to go for it all the time, in competitions but also in every training session so you don't have any regrets. When I listen to Thibault talking, it takes me back thirty years and I relive those moments again. Although, I know how difficult it is to do it every day."

Thibault Anselmet is also the sponsor for the Ski touring World Cup which will be held in Aussois on the 20th and 21st December 2019.



HMV Magazine: What is your view of high level sport?

Y.D.: "It teaches you how to fight and deal with setbacks, in particular. In the world of business, I've come across people with very good training who could have been excellent managers but who, when faced with a failure or difficult situation, were unable to move beyond the problem or take steps to overcome it, which is something you learn to do as an athlete."

T.A.: "This sport taught me commitment and rigour every single day; it's also allowed me to travel, and discover new places even though you don't really have much time to enjoy them. It has lots of benefits and, as Yves' career shows, it also provides lots of opportunities."

HMV Magazine: What is it that you love so much about living here, in Haute Maurienne Vanoise, that has made you come back; and, Thibault, what is it that prevents you from thinking about leaving, for the time being at least?

Y.D.: "I grew up here, I'm attached to the place and although I went off in search of adventure, I'm also pleased to be back and reconnect with my roots. I love the village feel and tradition. These days, I've got more time to enjoy the surrounding countryside although nowadays I use my electric MTB to do so!"

T.A.: "When you're born in a village, you're inevitably tied to it! My roots are here in Bonneval! I love the fact that you're in the countryside, away from all the crowds. I love the mountains around here so much that I had them painted on my helmet so they can travel with me!"

The two men take their leave, each wishing the other a good season. Yves will, no doubt, follow Thibault's results with interest and perhaps a little hint of nostalgia; while Thibault will keep in mind that one athlete can always understand what motivates another athlete. They go their separate ways, each heading in a different direction but there's no doubt their paths will cross again some day.

ELEVATION

Decompression stops

The Haute Maurienne Vanoise region is located at an altitude of between 1,000 and 3,700 metres; elevations that offer a range of excursions and a variety of mountainous terrain. Whether you're a pleasure-seeker, go-getter, active type, or seeking inspiration or fulfilment, you'll find what you're looking for at every altitude level. Suggestions...

Alpine pasture in bloom at Vallonbrun refuge.



Elevation of 1,000 metres

Direct access to the great outdoors

.....

It may seem contradictory but this little “corner of the world” is as beautiful and unspoilt as it is accessible. Modane TGV train station and junction 30 of the A43 motorway are just a few kilometres from the ski resorts and mountain villages. La Norma, for example, is 6 kilometres from the station and 9 kilometres from the motorway exit. There is direct and easy access from Paris, Lyon and Turin. And the local transport network means you can manage without a car. In both summer and winter, buses and shuttles link the villages, resorts, station and walk starting points.



Into the wild

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The GR5 is the famous, long-distance footpath that links the North Sea coast in Holland to the Mediterranean beaches of Nice. The route, which consists of 2,500 km of marked trails, traverses the maximum number of mountain ranges possible and, of course, passes through Haute Maurienne Vanoise and its resorts. You can join it directly from Modane train station: as soon as you leave the station, you'll see a sign guiding you to the footpath.

Slip on your backpack and hiking boots and just follow the path to the great outdoors!

Col du Barbier, a pass on the GR5 route.





Right in the very heart

Explore the central zone of the Vanoise National Park with its sunny, southern slopes, located high above the villages. This protected area, which extends over some 535 square km, features around twenty glaciers, more than 100 peaks in excess of 3,000 metres, 600 kilometres of trails, and hundreds of different species of plants and animals to discover along the way, from the iconic ibex to the cuddly marmot! It is located next to the Gran Paradiso Italian National Park and is Europe's biggest protected area. Welcome to a stunning, unspoilt landscape!

www.vanoise-parcnational.fr



Super-fort

This site, located on a sunny slope between Modane and La Norma, resembles a cascade of rocks. The Barrière de l'Esseillon consists of five forts, built by the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia in the early 19th century to ward off any French attack. But by the time the Barrière was completed, the attack never came... The forts became French at the same time as the Savoie region! The Barrière de l'Esseillon has been converted from a military site to a family-friendly centre designed for leisure activities, fun and contemplation. There's something for all tastes and all ages: thrill-seekers can enjoy the vertiginous via ferrata routes and giant zip-lines, puzzle enthusiasts can try out *escape games*, you can take a discovery tour, following in the footsteps of a 19th century Sardinian soldier and there are even pushchair-accessible walks.

Access: Aussois and Avrieux (route des forts)
or RD 1006 (Redoute Marie-Thérèse, pont du Nant).

A Leaning Tour

As you leave Modane, heading towards Valfréjus, you'll come across an odd concrete building at the side of the road. The story goes that this bunker was blown up by the Germans in 1944 and literally propelled into the air, only to land a dozen or so metres away, intact but completely slanted! Enjoy an inclined visit, free of charge, to this gravity-defying building known locally as "The Leaning House." It's enough to make you lose your bearings!

The leaning house – route de Valfréjus.



Elevation of 1,500 metres

La Norma, where the sun is as warm as the friendly atmosphere at the foot of the slopes.



Base areas to suit all tastes

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In winter, the atmosphere at the foot of the slopes varies considerably from one resort to another, each perfectly complementing the other. Thanks to their snow-making machines, they have snow throughout the year, regardless of slope orientation. The choice is yours! At nightfall, the special beginners' base area in the centre of Bonneval sur Arc village, is transformed to a "paret" (a traditional sledge with a single runner) toboggan run. In Bessans, the sunny base area, at the start of the small ski area, contrasts with the atmosphere around the resort's cross-country ski tracks. Val Cenis has five base areas equipped with a beginners' park and small ski lifts dotted throughout the resort. Its northern orientation keeps the snow cool until the end of winter... and come evening, these base areas are transformed into sledging meccas. In La Norma, a car-free village resort, children can play, in complete safety, on the vast semi-circular area, surrounded by sunny terraces. And when night falls, there are two floodlit toboggan runs to enjoy! The sunny base area in Aussois features a secured toboggan run, open throughout the day. And when the slopes close, it becomes a lively place to try your hand at snow bowling, laser games or compete in a children's slalom race.

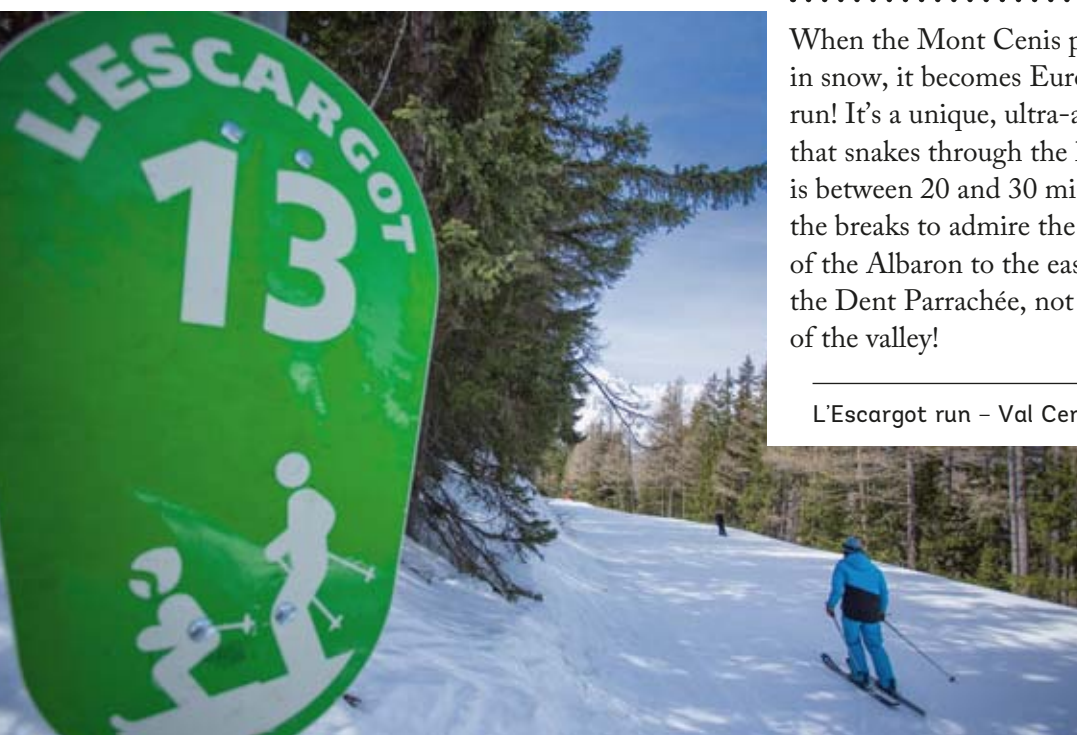


The appearance of the Escargot!

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When the Mont Cenis pass road is covered in snow, it becomes Europe's longest green run! It's a unique, ultra-accessible, wide route that snakes through the larch trees. Descent time is between 20 and 30 minutes, without counting the breaks to admire the view: a clear view of the Albaron to the east and, to the west, the Dent Parrachée, not to mention the view of the valley!

L'Escargot run – Val Cenis Ski Area



Baroque treasure hunt

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Chubby-faced cherubs, spiral columns, finely carved retables etc. The interiors of the churches and chapels in the Haute Maurienne Vanoise region are awash with gilt objects, sculptures and 16th century Alpine Baroque murals. Head for Saint-Thomas-Becket in Avrieux, for a guided visit of the church where believers can supposedly enjoy a foretaste of paradise. At the Saint-Roch chapel in Val Cenis, an attendant will give you the key to the doors of the ten other museum-chapels dotted throughout the village hamlets. This unique, fun, cultural circuit allows you to discover a variety of treasures, at your own pace, on foot, snowshoes, or cross-country skis.

Visit to Avrieux church: each week, summer and winter. History Trails (Val Cenis): from Monday to Friday, winter and summer.





Le Petit Bonheur trail: 50 kilometres of pure joy

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This footpath, which is accessible to all the family, links Modane to Bonneval sur Arc, passing through La Norma, the villages of Val Cenis (Bramans, Sollières, Termignon, Lanslebourg, Lanslevillard) and Bressans. In other words, there are nearly 50 kilometres, from one side of the river Arc to the other, to explore by bike, on horseback, snowshoes or cross-country skis, throughout the year!

The Petit Bonheur trail.

A beach in the shadow of the mountains!

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Fancy taking a dip in some of the world's purest water after a nice walk? The Ludi-Lacs leisure area in Bessans can be reached either by road or footpath.

Three beautiful lakes, bordered by a lovely, sandy beach and green areas equipped with picnic tables and barbecues, are the perfect place to enjoy a range of water sports. Each lake has its own unique character: the first is for fishing, the second for swimming and the third is ideal for canoeing and stand-up paddle! In La Norma, there's a beautiful, turquoise lake reserved exclusively for fishing, but there's also another lake right next to it, with a lovely swimming area, slide and stunning view of the surrounding peaks.

Ludi'Lacs Leisure Area – Bessans.
La Norma Water Sports Centre



Elevation of 2,000 metres

The highest in Europe.

At 2,770 m, the Col d'Iseran is Europe's highest paved mountain pass. Every year in an attempt to "do the Iseran," thousands of riders make a pilgrimage, using brute force to climb the 13 kilometres that separates them from Bonneval sur Arc, in a unique high-mountain setting.



Merry-go-round, slides and snow castle



The view from the top of the slopes is not just reserved for good skiers! In Valfréjus, a beginners' area and Kids Park are located on a vast plateau, at a height of some 2,200 metres! This special, themed play area, which can be reached by cable car, features a merry-go-round, maze, tunnels and snow castle as well as magnificent scenery for all to enjoy.

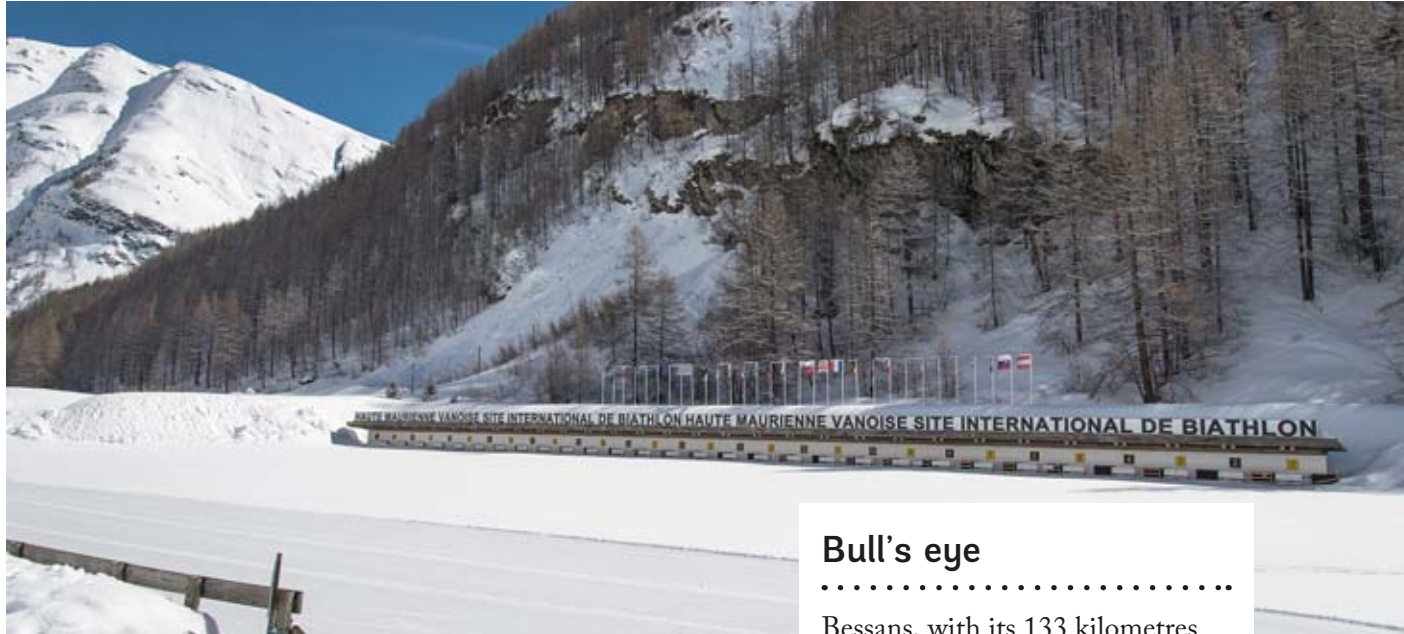
Valfréjus Kids Park.

A night spent on high

With its 24 mountain lodges, Haute Maurienne Vanoise has the highest density of refuges in the Alps. Admire the sunset over the mountain peaks, watch the last hikers taking the valley road home, and enjoy the privilege of sleeping at more than 2,000 metres, in this vast natural expanse, observing the stars. It's a fabulous little adventure, perfect for a solo trip or to share with loved ones and children; in fact, several refuges cater specially for families, for example those in Orgère, the Plan-du-Lac and Avérole which have easy access, games areas and family-friendly bedrooms.

List of refuges available on
www.haute-maurienne-vanoise.com – Heading "Refuge."





Bull's eye

Bessans, with its 133 kilometres of trails, is a mecca for cross-country skiing, and also boasts a renowned biathlon stadium. With a 400 m central track, a 2,500 m course and 30 targets, this major training venue hosts international competitions and is used by numerous athletes for training. In winter, members of the public can try their hand at this sport, combining cross-country skiing with rifle shooting. In summer, roller skaters and roller-skiers take over the 3 km asphalt track. It's a discipline that requires immense self-control, combining endurance and fun.

Biathlon Stadium – Bessans

The marmots of Orgère

Marmots are everywhere in the Haute Maurienne Vanoise region, from Mont Cenis to Bonneval sur Arc, including Aussois. There's a colony of these small mountain rodents living, for example, in Orgère, a small valley in the Vanoise National Park. It's a wonderful natural setting, located above the village of Saint-André, with unspoilt forests and meadows, dominated by the Aiguille Doran. A wheelchair accessible pathway, also suitable for people with disabilities, offers a fun way to explore this valley's natural and historic heritage, and a chance to observe the life and games of these small animals who have become a symbol of the mountains.

Vallon de l'Orgère footpath.

Elevation of 2,800 metres and above

Passing the 3,000 metre mark



Getting to the top of a 3,000 metre peak is a small challenge for some and a significant goal for others but, undoubtedly, a powerful experience for all. The Haute Maurienne Vanoise region has several mountains in excess of 3,000 metres. You can hike up some of the peaks, for example the Thabor in Valfréjus or the Râteau in Aussois but there are also other classic peaks that you can skin up on touring skis in spring or climb in summer.

This is true of the iconic Albaron (3,637 m) in Bessans and the Dent Parrachée (cf. photo) at 3,697 m.

Between heaven and earth

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Val Cenise is the largest ski area in Haute Maurienne Vanoise with a summit that boasts magnificent 360 degree panoramic views. To fully appreciate the scale, you just need to step out onto the Canopée des cimes. This circular, stainless steel platform is suspended above a sheer drop. Seemingly suspended in mid-air, you can look down over Mont Cenise Lake, some 800 metres below and across at the peaks of the Vanoise massif, behind which sit the Écrins mountains and the Italian Monte Viso.

The Canopée des cimes – Val Cenise.

You've reached the top

.....

The highest ski run in the Haute Maurienne Vanoise region is found in the ski resort of Bonneval sur Arc, at a height of 3,000 metres, just below the Pointe d'Andagne which stands at 3,217 metres! This magic 3,000 m mark means that this fabulous resort offers ideal skiing and snowboarding conditions until the end of April.



A little taste of Patagonia

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The Grand Méan, which is a 2.5 hour hike from the hamlet of Écot, offers a view to rival that of the greatest expeditions. After a first stage, that leads you to the Cirque des Évettes and the mountain refuge of the same name, a final effort rewards you with a stunning, edge-of-the-world type landscape: a glacier that plunges directly into a lake with icebergs... It's an incredible sight.

Grand Méan glacier.

Natural border

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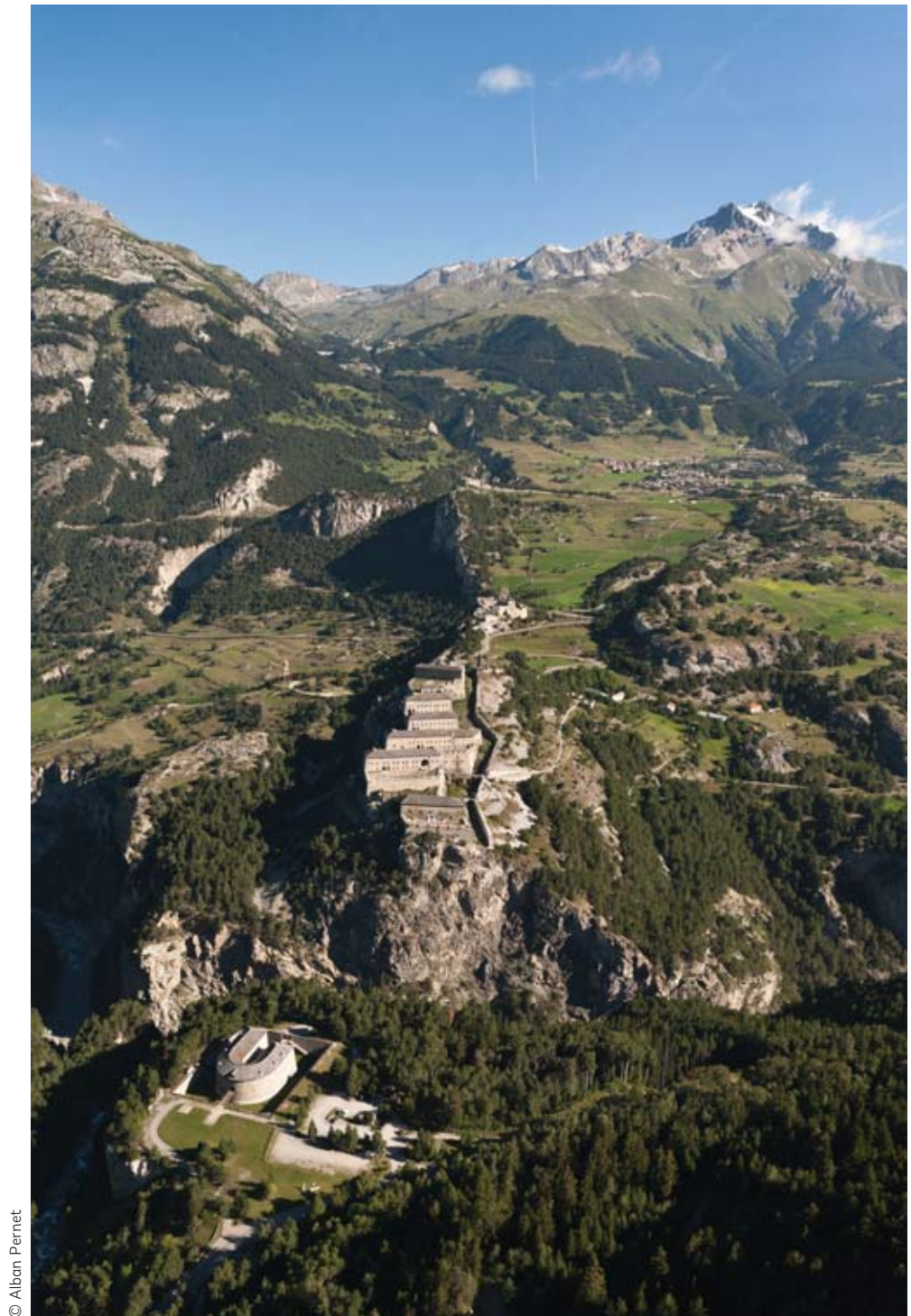
Admire the high peaks of Punta Bagna, rising above Valfréjus and extending as far as la Levana in Bonneval sur Arc. This mountain range marks the natural border between the residents of this high-altitude valley and their Italian neighbours.

CONTEMPLATION

Portfolio

L'Esseillon forts

Clinging to the clifftops between the villages of Aussois and Avrieux, the Barrière de l'Esseillon forts are as impressive as ever. Two centuries ago, this awe-inspiring ensemble closed off and controlled the strategic Mont Cenis road between France and the Piedmont region.



© Alban Pernet

**The uniquely Nordic
atmosphere of Mont Cenis**

The Grande Odyssée Savoie Mont Blanc is the most challenging sled dog race in the world. Since 2005, this annual epic journey has attracted 25 mushers and 300 dogs to the snow-covered wilderness of Haute Maurienne Vanoise.



© LGO - Vincent Piccerelle



Autumn hues

*When nature is ablaze.
The low light of autumn exalts
the golden larch trees, as the Alpine
pastures turn to bronze and the
peaks are covered in white.*



© Christian Simon



After the snowfall

When the sky clears and allows the sun's last rays to reach the valley and its mere smattering of snow.



© Hubert Chrapusso



**Dent Parrachée
at moonrise,
from Lac Blanc**

*Besides the pureness of
the air, the lack of light
pollution – due to a low
population density – reveals
the full immensity of these
skies, the milky way and
uncountable constellations,
for all to see.*



© Jean-Luc Viart

Water, the driving force of a region

The sound of water flowing from the mountain peaks down to the valley below is a wonderful invitation to explore the Haute Maurienne Vanoise region. But beyond its obvious assets and its aesthetic contribution to the landscape, water also plays a crucial role here. It is thanks to this symbol of life that the region has acquired its reputation for innovation, drawing on the expertise of groups and individuals renowned for their excellence.

A walk with a view... Plan d'Amont lake in Aussois.





Arc river, a common theme throughout the valley.

Water plays a crucial role in Haute Maurienne Vanoise, a connecting thread that winds through the region. And one of its finest examples? The Arc river: the main artery that runs through the heart of the region, from the foot of the glaciers where it takes its source to the bottom, even acting as a guide for visitors, leading them from village to village. Since the mid 20th century, the region has become a centre of excellence for hydroelectricity, a renewable source of energy, thanks to the presence of this natural feature, combined with a rugged terrain. The dams of Plan d'Amont and Plan d'Aval in Aussois, built just after the Second World War, together with the Mont Cenis dam, the flagship of France's 1960s hydroelectric programme, perched at a height of 2,000 metres, are now inextricably associated with images of the Haute Maurienne Vanoise region. These sites, which blend in seamlessly with the landscape, have also become innovative experimentation centres, facilitating successful collaboration with the region's other key areas.

Hydroelectricity and agriculture, an avant-garde combination

Let's head for the mountain pastures of Grand-Croix, located downstream of Mont Cenis dam, to find an example of this. The marmots are out and there's an abundance of grass, much to the delight of the dairy cows left out to graze for the summer months. The area was practically desert a few years ago but was transformed thanks to the sediment extracted during the draining of Mont Cenis dam in 2016. This sediment, mixed with other organic plant matter, was used to enrich the soil, allowing Grand-Croix to restart its former agricultural activity. This collaborative approach between EDF and farmers has resulted in a productive, innovative and eco-friendly outcome. And this experiment has become a benchmark for other similar projects.

Ensuring canyoning remains a flagship, summer activity

Canyoning is the best known water sport in Haute Maurienne Vanoise, it's a perfect opportunity to leap into natural pools and swim in mountain streams. Canyoning is practised in the upper part of the valley, downstream from the Écot dam in Bonneval sur Arc. "Each year, 3,500 to 5,000 people discover or experience this activity," according to Philippe Roger, director of the Val Cenis "Maison des Guides." However, this sport came seriously under threat when a new law on water and aquatic environments was introduced, compelling EDF to double the instream flow, in other words, the water maintained downstream from the Écot water intake installation, the very site of the canyoning excursions. Without consultation and a collective effort, this activity would quite simply have become impossible. Fortunately, everyone involved got together and came up with an ideal solution which consists of maintaining sufficient instream flow in the summer and then, to compensate, doubling it over the winter, thus meeting the legal obligations for the entire year. "Individually, we couldn't have done it; it's because we all worked together that we were able to achieve this," notes Philippe Roger with satisfaction.



Water, a sustainable source for producing artificial snow

A change of décor, a change of season! Let's head for the ski slopes where the artificial snow helps safeguard the existence of the ski resorts. So, with this in mind... what's a key element for winter sports resorts? Water, obviously! Dams, water intake structures and other underground networks in Haute Maurienne Vanoise, needed to generate hydroelectricity, also provide resorts with clean water at low temperatures, sometimes under pressure. It's a system that makes optimal use of water reserves and existing infrastructure.

Behind the scenes of a power plant!

In summer, you can visit Avrieux and Villarodin power plants with a guide. It's a rare opportunity to see these sites from the inside.

July and August: Tuesday and Wednesday: 2.30 pm,
Friday: 9.30 pm

Book your place at the Tourist Office

Price: €8.



5 suggestions for exploring Mont Cenis Lake

With its fascinating, crystal clear, turquoise waters, Mont Cenis, an artificial lake created for the dam of the same name, makes a superb setting, ideal for getting away from it all. Make the most of it!

1. Take a tour of the lake

Take a trip around Mont Cenis Lake, either on foot, bike, mountain bike or by car, and enjoy superb views across the expanse of water as well as the surrounding scenery. It's also a treat for wildlife lovers who'll be amazed at the variety of flora on site.

2. Fishing in the kingdom of lake trout.

Lake trout, or grey trout, can reach a length of 80 centimetres! This area is a godsend for anglers who'll be thrilled at the opportunities for trout tickling, or hooking other Arctic Char.

3. Stay in a mountain chalet, overlooking the lake.

Welcome to the Savalin mountain chalet; this large, traditional chalet, with its bird's eye view of the turquoise expanse, is sure to delight family and friends.

4. Take part in the EDF Cenis Tour trail race

For the past ten years, on the first weekend in August, some one thousand or so runners gather in Haute Maurienne Vanoise, to take part in a trail run; the race, which is renowned as much for its organisation and friendly atmosphere as for its exceptional scenery, offers particularly breath-taking views of Mont Cenis lake.

www.edfcenistour.com

5. Visit forts and a pyramid

It is impossible to avoid them on the Mont Cenis plateau. These old Italian fortifications make superb walking destinations. Make the short climb up to Ronce fort where you'll also find an exhibition about this Mont Cenis military base. You should also visit the Pyramid Museum, a building overlooking the lake with a lush, Alpine garden.

Opposite

*The reservoirs at Plan d'Amont (2078m)
and Plan d'Aval (1948m).*

Below

Mont Cenis lake.





Mountain pastures, custodians and strategic observers

In summer, mountain pastures – these beautiful, unspoilt open spaces – make up 30% of the Vanoise National Park. These precious pastures are a summer haven for grazing cattle but they have also become scientific points of reference for monitoring and understanding the consequences of climate warming.

Thierry Delahaye (PNV flora officer) and Valérie Hagry (PNV ranger and guide) taking readings for the "Alpes Sentinelles" programme.





Iconic Tarentaise cows enjoying the high-quality grazing.

In the Vanoise, *festuca paniculata* grassland features prominently in the world of alpine farmers. However, until recently, this perennial grass, that grows at medium altitude in large, dense clumps on gentle slopes, was unpopular with farmers who believed that it was disliked by cattle. However, recent studies carried out with the Vanoise National Park “Alpages Sentinelle” programme have demonstrated the cattle’s interest, “particularly during years of drought and when grazed at the right time,” according to Guy Noël Grosset, Vanoise National Park Project Manager.

These Alpine grasslands, dominated by *festuca paniculata*, are a symbol of the collaborative work, undertaken by a chain of actors, including farmers, researchers (ecologists, agronomists and climatologists), agricultural technicians and protected area management. They were all involved, contributing their own area of expertise, in the Alpages Sentinelles project, designed to anticipate the impact of climatic

fluctuations and identify warning signals in order to implement changes in grazing practices.

Eight different mountain pastures in the Vanoise National Park (Beaufort “chalet d’alpage,” bleu de Termignon, sheep and cattle-grazing pastures) were, thus, selected to take part in the programme. The farmers, who worked voluntarily as both observers and key players, collected data every day, providing a means to observe the effects of climate change. “Physical parameters (rainfall, speed of snow clearance etc.), natural parameters (grass resources, plant biodiversity etc.) and human parameters (grazing practices, level of grass removal); all this information and other observations they collected are very important,” comments Guy Noël Grosset, appreciatively. The involvement of these mountain farmers was critical not only so we can find out more about current climate change in the Alps but to help us devise solutions to ensure the future of an activity that is an important part of the Haute Maurienne’s heritage.

BASE CAMP

48 hours in Modane: prepare to be amazed!

Modane is uniquely located, half-way between Paris and Rome, sharing a porous border with Italy and a local history that is part of a wider history. It is a small, unusual mountain town that defies the normal Alpine clichés. Modane was a transit route for thousands of years and promises today's visitors a range of authentic experiences and wonderful surprises.

Photographer Stefano Berca is still very attached to his hometown of Modane. Here, he shares his photos with us.





A base camp four hours from Paris.

Modane, with its unchanging mountain peaks, forms the gateway to the Vanoise National Park, and is located just a stone's throw from six renowned ski resorts, connected to Italy by rail and road. Its strategic location makes it easily accessible at all times of year, perfect for exploring this multi-faceted mountain valley and surrounding countryside. It's a great place to set up camp, take a break and get your bearings. The nomadic lifestyle is in the genes; travellers have been coming here for centuries, for work, forced into exile or simply to recharge their batteries. The culture of hospitality is a way of life, firmly ingrained in the psyche of Modane's inhabitants. Crowned by the imposing 19th century Fort du Replat fortress, Modane manages to win the heart of its visitors. Its colourful façades and wrought-iron, Sardinian-style balconies lend it a cheery appearance, reinforcing the cosmopolitan atmosphere that reigns in this small

town. On the terraces in the station district, you'll see numerous travellers sitting, sipping an Italian-style coffee, enjoying the traditional mountain atmosphere; the Tuesday morning market, in the town centre, is a lively, friendly affair where visitors interact with locals. And here and there, on a street corner or in the shade of a building, evidence of the town's history – as varied as it is fantastic – suddenly emerges.

Direct access

Paris – Modane: 4 hours by TGV

Lyon – Modane: 2 hours' drive via A43 motorway

Modane – Bardonecchia (Italy): 25 minutes via the Fréjus tunnel

Modane – Susa (Italy): 1 hour 15 minutes via Mont Ceniz mountain pass

Modane – GR5 long-distance hiking trail: 5 minutes' walk

Modane – the first ski slopes: 20 minutes by shuttle to Valfréjus

A mountain town becomes the crossroads of Europe

This town, nestled in the heart of the Savoy region, only became French in 1860. A decade later, the construction of the Fréjus tunnel, creating a rail link to Italy, further boosted its growth, providing an unexpected, international dimension. At that time, Europe's new geographical borders were being drawn up and a distinctive Wild West atmosphere reigned in the rapidly expanding town. A whole new and changing world passed through this tunnel: from the Indian Mail from England en route to Australia, to numerous Italian settlers moving to the other side of the border or setting off for the United States. At the time, two departures a week were scheduled from Modane to Le Havre to connect with the Transatlantic crossing.

At the start of the 1900s, economic growth was in full swing: the train station had more than 900 railway workers and, at the same time, 3,000 military personnel were stationed in the surrounding forts and barracks. The town, which boasted more than 80 cafés and bistros, was a place of much celebration and fun.

A Modane stopover

Treat yourself to a break that will both amaze and captivate you; it's a great way to discover the region.

DAY 1

10 am: Unlock the key to the town at the Muséobar

The best way of understanding Modane is by visiting this old cinema with its still sloping floor. This touching museum offers visitors the chance to experience the lively café atmosphere from a period of time that profoundly shaped the town and its people. Thanks to its large collection of photos, oral recordings and vibrant, colourful décor, the Museobar manages to successfully encapsulate and bring to life this period of the town's history.

The Muséobar, a museum on the Italian border,
42 rue de la République.

Open Tuesday to Saturday. Tuesday, Wednesday:
3 – 7 pm, Thursday, Friday, Saturday:
10 am – 12 midday and 3 – 7 pm.



Museobar: The colourful décor (painted by Atelier du Gypaète) immerse the visitor in the café atmosphere of bygone days.

1 pm: An exquisite lunch at L'Échappée

This gourmet restaurant, a byword for excellence in the valley, obtains its supplies from local producers and Modane's market. The chef serves traditional cuisine that goes far beyond the usual Savoy specialties. It's one of the few spots where you can eat fish, and there's also the chef's must-try signature dish: the crème brûlée, flambéed at the table.

Restaurant L'Échappée.
13 rue de la République.

3 pm: In search of dark matter

I bet, as you were hurtling down the slopes or busy spotting marmots on a hiking trail, you would never have imagined that your trip would take on a cosmic



Wrought iron balconies and colourful facades. You're very close to Italy.

dimension... However, that's exactly what's in store for curious tourists, visiting the Carré Sciences. This 120 m² building, aimed at improving public scientific literacy, has a direct link with a unique research site located just a few kilometres away: the underground laboratory of France's National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS)! In fact, right in the middle of the Fréjus road tunnel, a dozen researchers in fundamental physics, gather every day, 1,700 metres below the mountain peaks, in a gallery hewn from the rock some thirty years ago. It's here, sheltered from cosmic rays, that they measure specific epiphenomena. The goal of these tunnel-dwelling scientists is to solve the mystery of the Big-Bang. "The Small Secrets of the Universe" exhibition is a fun way for all the family to learn about the concept of natural radioactivity and the history of its discovery as well as the effect of cosmic rays on our everyday life.

Carré Sciences, 1125 route de Bardonnèche.
Open Monday to Friday, 2 – 5 pm.

7 pm: Local gastronomy lesson

... Learning how to enhance the valley's rich variety of flavours. Jonathan Pascal has set up an on-line sales platform www.terroirdemaurienne.com, detailing delicious, artisanal products, specially selected for their flavour, quality, ethical production processes and producers! This thirty year old, who was born in Modane, organises small group workshops in his

kitchen where visitors can enjoy a traditional culinary experience, led by a local facilitator or valley restaurant owner.

Terroir de Maurienne Workshop.

2 rue de la Concorde, Fourneaux.

Dates and themes of courses and tasting sessions available on the www.terroirdemaurienne.com

DAY 2

Morning in the great outdoors!

To test the water and give you a flavour of what this valley has in store for you, why not explore the first few kilometres of the famous "Chemin du Petit Bonheur" either on foot, snowshoes or a mountain bike, depending on the season. The trail leads from the centre of Modane towards La Norma, following the Saint-Antoine river-stream.

This aptly named route passes close to all the local villages, from Modane to Bonneval sur Arc. It's a 50 km walk that leads through hamlets, spruce and larch forests, mountain pastures, and past chapels.

2 pm: Lyon-Turin rail link in an old rice mill

A building resembling an ancient temple in Modane? Yes! And its first activity was actually related to the rice business. This historic building, which was listed in the 20th century, probably owes its appearance to Francesco Cattaneo, a Genoese citizen who, in 1908, established a rice mill in Modane with aim of distributing this precious grain, grown in Italy's



The impressive Replaton fort.

Piedmont region, throughout France. After the war, this building became Modane's covered market. Since 2005, the rice has been used as an exhibition centre providing information about the future Lyon-Turin rail link. Contemporary displays, 3D virtual visits and animated models convey the enormity of this site that operated, practically under our feet, right up until 1930.

*The Rice Mill – Lyon-Turin Rail Project Exhibition centre
Place du 17 septembre 1943, Modane*

*Open Tuesday to Saturday, 2 – 6 pm, June to September.
From Monday to Friday, 2 – 6 pm, October to May.*

4 pm: The call of the peaks

Before you set off along the more rugged sections of the GR5 trail, or head off in search of adventure towards the region's snow-covered slopes, iconic mountain passes, lakes, forests and glaciers, make sure that you've stocked up on the best possible provisions. Don't leave without packing some cold-cuts from the renowned Rittaud deli-butcher, an essential slice of Beaufort or some unique Bleu de Bonneval from the dairy cooperative and, finally, think about something sweet in the form of the famous Modane bread from the Noguera bakery.

So now that you've refuelled and had your fill of fine food, great stories and encounters, take a last glance at Modane – I bet it looks a lot different from when you first arrived – and let nature take its course.

Not to be missed

The Leaning House: on the road to Valfréjus, an old garrison, used to store gunpowder, was blown out of position following an explosion. It landed, a dozen metres or so from the original site, intact but on an angle! Visiting the site is a really weird feeling!

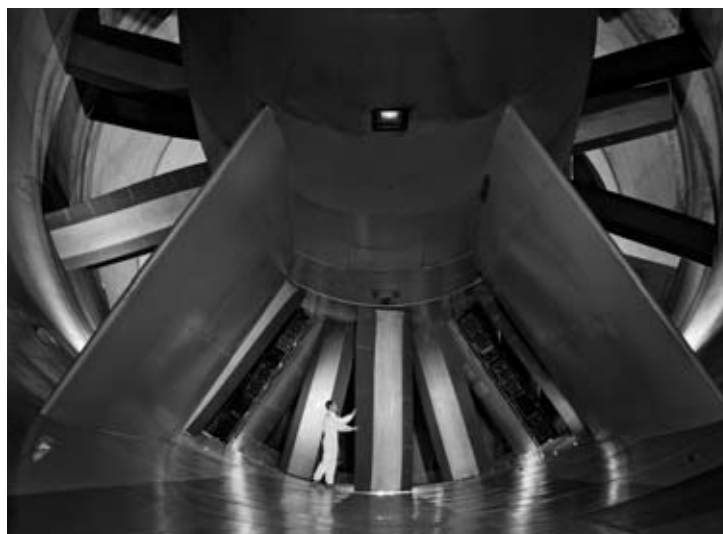
The vast entrance to the first rail tunnel: An old locomotive and two carriages are positioned in front of a reconstruction of this tunnel, built between 1857 and 1871! This exhibition is open during the summer.



The Fort Saint-Gobain: this fort, built between 1933 and 1939, is nicknamed the "submarine of the Alps." The building is a maze of tunnels (some 400 m), rooms and battle stations. It's a fascinating opportunity to find out how a garrison of 150 men was organised and able to survive underground for three months, living in complete self-sufficiency!

**Out of sight,
at the cutting edge of science**

You would never guess it existed but this region is home to a discreetly located, world-renowned site. ONERA (National Office for Aerospace Studies and Research) is located within the vicinity of Modane. All the leading civil and military aerospace programmes have carried out important tests here: Ariane, Airbus, Falcon, Rafale etc. One of ONERA's unique facilities, powered by hydroelectricity, is S1MA, a real technological triumph. It is quite simply the most powerful wind tunnel in the world, designed for simulating cruise flight conditions. This giant machine, which uses fans measuring 15 metres in diameter, produces a wind speed of nearly 1,000 km/h, equivalent to the speed of sound. Its vast size means it can be used to conduct tests on aircraft models with a wingspan of nearly 5 metres, to simulate their behaviour in flight. It is an impressive feat of technical and scientific engineering that is highly sought-after throughout the world.



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WAY OF LIFE

La Dolce Vita

Italian influence is everywhere in Haute Maurienne Vanoise: in everyday culture, culinary specialities and Italian sounding surnames. This cultural heritage is evidence of the fraternal bond between HMV and the Italian Piedmont region, located just the other side of the mountains.

"Cin cin", an Italian-style toast.



A summer evening stroll. Over there, on a bench, two 60-year-old friends are immersed in a fiery conversation, accompanied by dramatic gestures. A delicious smell of coffee wafts in through the window. A young woman is making a *ristretto*... or perhaps it's a *macchiato*? A few metres further along, the scent of cooked tomatoes, onions and oregano makes our mouths water. Small green, white and red flags flutter above the entrance to this Calabrian restaurant. It's warm out; we continue on our way. Our attention then shifts to the residential mail boxes, most of which have plates bearing Italian surnames. The sound of an engine suddenly jolts us out of our reverie. A group of youngsters drive up the road on their Vespas. Peals of laughter escape from under their vintage helmets: a teenager has just dropped his Italian ice-cream. A yellow stain on the road mirrors the vivid coloured façades dotted along the street, lined with wrought iron balconies.

All it takes is a simple evening stroll down Modane's main street to experience, at first hand, the special atmosphere that prevails in the Haute Maurienne Vanoise region. A distinctive, rustic, mountain atmosphere steeped in the French-Italian transalpine culture. Over the decades, or even centuries, these

Quinka is Patois for five, which is the number of ingredients used to make it: flour, butter, eggs, water and raisins, flavoured with orange or lemon zest. Delicious cold or toasted, served with a hot chocolate.



customs, rules and influences have gradually become an accepted way of life, to such an extent that the residents themselves are not really aware of them.

Cultural heritage in every dish

And Modane is not alone in this. You only need to spend a few days in the heart of the Haute Maurienne Vanoise region to become aware of the prevalence of this distinctive feature. At school, children learn Italian from the age of 6 to maintain the fraternal bond between these two countries both of which, up until 1860, belonged to the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia. As you move from village to village, you can discover all the stories and memories, that they share with their Italian neighbours. And you can also learn about local specialities that bear the hallmarks of this shared heritage.

Maison Bernard, in Val Cenis Lanslevillard, for example, has been producing its house speciality, *quinka*, for three generations. Cyril continues to follow, to the letter, the recipe for the sweet, aniseed flavour raisin bread, dreamt up by Auguste, his grandfather. And he's also proud of his bread sticks. Although most of the neighbouring bakeries and food shops sell them, his are made using a "machine that was specially purchased in Verona!"

A few kilometres further on, the window of Le Pontet delicatessen – a genuine institution in Bessans – catches our eye. Matthieu welcomes us to the family business and is happy to let us sample his *coppa* and *pancetta*. With great enthusiasm, he shares some of the secrets of one of his house specialities, *les angelos*, large ravioli stuffed with pork, that his grandmother used to make. And there are many, similar, must-taste specialities. Like the famous "Modane bread." This unique, soft pastry combining almond cream, apricot jam and candied melon is a decadent treat that was greatly enjoyed by the Italian labourers who worked on the Fréjus tunnel. Combining a mix of Southern flavours and products, and typical Savoyard generosity, doesn't it seem the perfect symbol for this region enriched and enlivened by its biculturalism?

WAY OF LIFE

Biculturalism

The path chosen by all the Italian-born residents that we met can be traced back to the same motivating factor. It was neither money, nor work nor political or ideological reasons that prompted them to cross the border. But Love. Encounters

Pancetta, pecorino, agnolotti... Indulgence with an Italian flavour.





Roberta Noguera

Zest for life, Italian style

Often, it is still dark outside when she joins her husband in the family bakery, ready to welcome the early-bird customers. The first batch of fresh bread and pastries have been ready for some time. Roberta is a diminutive but jovial and dynamic woman who starts each day with the same enthusiasm, happy to be part of this 30-year working partnership with her husband, Fabien. However, this couple had not intended to settle in Haute Maurienne Vanoise. *"I'm Milanese, my husband is from Normandy but born in Spain and his grandparents were pieds-noirs, explains Roberta with her lovely Italian accent. I became pregnant but there was no question of my staying in the North of France."* Climate-wise, the young Italian was completely unsuited to living in the North but, more importantly, it was much too far from her family. Fabien Noguera then came across a job opportunity near Modane. *"It was perfect, just a mountain to cross, 200 km and we could be with my parents'."*

A seamless integration for this cheery mother

This new adventure took Roberta far from Milan's urban charms and residents but this expansive Italian soon found her bearings. *"The first avenues to integration were skiing then school when my two boys started education, says the Italian. I would talk to anyone so I didn't really have problems making friends. Particularly since people know how to enjoy themselves here!"* At the same time, the entire family started learning Italian so they could *"talk to the in-laws who we saw every weekend. I'm now bilingual and proud to be able to use it in my business!"* admits Fabien. At the age of 55, Roberta has no intention of leaving "her" Haute Maurienne even once she's retired. *"We're happy here and nothing in the world could persuade me to go back to Milan! Particularly now that I'm a grandmother with a grandson – making him the second generation Noguera family member from Haute Maurienne!"*

“One mountain to cross and we were reunited with my parents!”



Angel Raphaël Nicoloro Big-hearted leather specialist

With his white hair and friendly face, Raphaël resembles Gepetto behind his workbench. The combined smell of leather, steel and glue fill his unconventional shoe-maker's workshop. It's a scene of happy chaos, presided over by this soon-to-be-70 year old, who is always to be found on site. In amongst the shoes and keys to be cut, next to his notes pinned to the wall, is a black and white thumbnail image of his mother. *"She's beautiful, isn't she? She always called me Raphaël but at the town hall, she registered my name as Angel!"*

Son of a quarry miner

Angel Raphaël's parents came here after the Second World War from a small village in the vicinity of Naples. *"My father had just come back from the army and heard about things that he didn't like. He jumped on his motorbike. They travelled as far as Haute Maurienne and then settled here."* His father found work in the mountain slate mines and they never went back.

"At the weekend, I'd go up there with my mother, seven brothers and sisters and join him for a bite to eat."

A father of three *"and now a grandfather of four,"* Angel Raphaël ran a cobbler's shop in Saint-Michel-de-Maurienne for many years before moving up to Modane in 2012. *"A lot of my customers used to come from here. I told myself it would be easier for them."* And it was here, in later life, that he discovered the place's special atmosphere with its pronounced Italian connection. *"We tease each other and argue about Piedmont and Calabria but, in the end, we're all mountain people with a shared sense of family and solidarity."*

"My father got on his motorbike and crossed the border."

Joseph Stabili

The smell of coffee and a picture of contentment

Word is that a lot of people come and drink their coffee here for the sheer pleasure of seeing him. No such luck for us! Friday is his day off! But one phone call and a few minutes later, Joseph shows up. Beret set firmly on his head, scarf knotted around his neck, deep blue eyes and a sincere expression. *"My wife forced me to slow down after I'd had a few heart problems."* However, enthusiastic and naturally hard-working, he feels better here. Joseph (his real name is Giuseppe), who managed the pizzeria next door for thirty-three years, took over the running of this bar-hotel in 2011. *"3 stars!"* he says proudly. It's a family project for this 63 year old man, *"run with my brother Nicolas and completely redecorated by two of my brothers."* And his wife, Marie, has always been by his side. They've just celebrated the 46th anniversary of their first meeting. *"In fact, she's the reason I didn't leave for Italy to do my military service in 1974."*

A life choice not an exile.

Joseph arrived with his family in 1972. *"It was a life plan for my parents who were encouraged by the enthusiasm of their friends who'd already moved here."* So leaving wasn't really a wrench. *"We didn't arrive with just a few belongings, unlike others who came before and after the war..."* Joseph met Marie the Modanaise in a café. And the couple – who soon became a family with three daughters – didn't move from here: *"We didn't go and see if we liked other parts of France better."* Joseph's attachment is pure and genuine although he has kept his Italian ID. *"I probably feel more French than those who've been granted citizenship,"* he jokes. *"After 50 years, they ought to give it to me without the paperwork!"* But it doesn't matter, now more than ever, Joseph is a "Mauriennais," *"who knows where he comes from."* And when he's behind his bar, *"with his mates,"* it's just not important. *"We don't talk about nationalities or where we're from any more but about snow, if it's snowing, or not snowing and... football!"* And that suits him very well.

**"I don't need
French ID to be
a good citizen."**





Donatella Salifia

The flamboyant Lanslebourg grocer

You notice it as soon as you meet her; her style and forthrightness are exempt from all superficiality and her hands alone convey a life of toil and courage. Donatella is the embodiment of a strong, independent, Italian *mama*, capable of single-handedly looking after her family. You quickly realise that it must have taken real character and nerve to open a 100% Italian grocer's shop in Lanslebourg twenty years ago. *"I had split from my husband. I needed to leave everything and start a new life with my 8 year old daughter,"* she tells us, in her warm accent. Planning a business is an ideal way to *"help you forget your heartache."* While her daughter was at school, she immersed herself, body and soul, in the work. *"People here thought I was brave and helped me a lot."*

Three times a week, Donatella crosses the border to buy produce from Turin station-market. *"The irony is that my driver is now my ex-husband!"* She bursts out laughing. Once there she selects fruit, vegetables, groceries, cakes and pastries which she then sells in her shop. *"I've earned the trust of a lot of people. At the*

beginning, they just stared at me with amazement when I talked about fennel and Romanesco broccoli but now they really enjoy my recipes." In particular, Donatella prides herself on telling others that *carbonara* is never improved by the addition of cream!

Faithful February holiday customers

Donatella, who is extremely proud of her career and independence, goes through some of the cards she's received from her faithful customers, locals and tourists, that she keeps safely stored in her office. *"Postcards, New Year cards... And even cards from customers telling me that they'll be back in February, as usual."* Now, at over 60, she feels herself to be French-Italian and is very much at home here. And she's no intention of hanging up her apron. *"Another ten years and then I'll rest."* In France, she's sure of that.

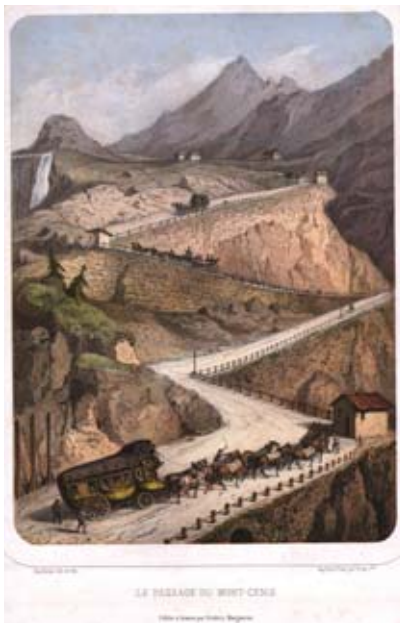
"People here thought I was brave and that helped a lot."

The mountain passes of Haute Maurienne Vanoise, silent witnesses to legendary stories

Today, adventurers, naturalists, contemplative and sporty types are fascinated by their peaks. But how many people are familiar with the countless legends and secrets concealed within these iconic Haute Maurienne mountain passes? Traversed by man since time began, they have been shaped by human activity, travel, and the history of an entire region.

Road to Mont Cenis pass and the Barrière de l'Esseillon in the background.





From a collection owned by the Amis du Mont Cenis association.

One Sunday in the middle of August. We get up early, before the scorching heat kicks in, stifling the entire Susa Valley and other northern Italian regions. The picnic basket, loaded into the car, is packed with a colourful tablecloth, traditional cold meats, bottles of Barbera, seasonal fruits and other chocolate treats. We head for Mont Cenis and its vast turquoise lake, for a Sunday afternoon trip, particularly popular amongst Piedmont inhabitants who never miss a chance to get some fresh air and relax at this altitude in excess of 2,000 metres. There is a light-hearted, festive, family atmosphere. Peals of laughter erupt in unison between Italian and French neighbours. It's difficult to imagine the many sights and events that took place here, over the centuries. At a height of 2,083 m, Mont Cenis, often referred to as "The Thousand Year Old Gateway to the Alps" forms a strategic link between the Italian peninsula and the Alps, and is regarded as one of the greatest symbols of the region's ancient travelling tradition.

Hannibal, the pope and the princes...

Despite its exclusive geographical location, Mont Cenis has not always been the main gateway linking these two closely connected civilisations. Men were already crossing these passes, as far back as Neolithic times, as demonstrated by remains discovered in La Balme cave in Sollières Sardières, providing evidence of the mix of cultures that existed on both sides of the mountains. During Roman times, travellers didn't

take the Mont Cenis route but, instead, crossed the Col de l'Autaret and Col d'Arnès mountain passes, above Bessans, or took the route from Bramans, via the Clapier – Savine Coche passes. In fact, legend has it that Hannibal and his herd of elephants also used this route in his quest to defeat the Roman Empire. These Haute Maurienne passes, which were used in turn for both religious and trading purposes, were later travelled by pilgrims en route to Rome, Jerusalem or Santiago de Compostela, as well as traders with large convoys of mules. The shrewd Princes of Savoy, the "Gatekeepers of the Alps" quickly realised the strategic importance of the route between the north and south of Europe and installed a "*seigneurie de route*," (seignorial toll booth) on either side of the mountain which made them their fortune.

"Marrons" and the tradition of portering

From the 8th century, the Col du Petit Mont Cenis pass, overlooking Bramans, gained in popularity. Some of Europe's biggest names now flocked there, from Charlemagne to Henri IV. In fact, these mountain routes served as important strategic, military and political points with armies from all over Europe marching across them to reach the battlefields of wealthy Italy.

Opposite
"Ramasse" sled descent.



During the Middle Ages, Mont Cenise became the new “Royal” route with two towns constructed as tactical gateways: Novalesse on one side and Lanslebourg on the other. The fate of this rural village changed dramatically, quickly becoming one of the most highly populated villages in the Haute Maurienne region. New jobs were created to deal with the influx of visitors and provide permanent transport to Italy, at the very spot where porters had to replace carts. It was the famous “marrons,” from an old Provençal word, who took over, providing assistance to cross the pass. In summer, they carried travellers in Sedan chairs, chairs mounted on fixed poles. In winter, they added runners to this unusual form of transport, for a daring, occasionally bumpy, tobogganing-style descent. This activity was a precursor to our winter sports, and one that conjures up happy memories as we hurtle down the slopes, taking the chairlift back up in the Val Cenise ski resort.

Napoleon conceived the very first road through the Alps!

The novel “marrons” portering system brought success and wealth to Lanslebourg... But in the 19th century when the States of Savoy were occupied by French troops, Napoleon 1st decided, to build a carriage road from Lanslebourg to Susa to strengthen the bond between the two countries. It was a massive project that lasted some 10 years, involving nearly 3,000 workers. In 1813, the 37 km road was completed, with 25 refuges dotted along the way. It took 75 road workers to maintain it daily. This first carriage road across the Alps established Haute Maurienne as a modern, forward-thinking region. On Mont Cenise, a hospice protected by a fortified enclosure housed a convent, church and garrison accommodating up to 2,200 men and 300 horses. This large-scale building was partly destroyed during the Second World War and its remains were submerged by the reservoir. Only the Pyramid and its museum, built in 1968, provide evidence of the existence of this hospice. But this highly revered, new route, did change things, signalling an end to the days of the “marrons,” portering and tobogganing, making way for postilions to drive the stagecoaches, and cartwrights and innkeepers to meet the needs of this new cross-border traffic.



The military episode

The story of travel and adventure in the Haute Maurienne was constantly being re-written. In 1868 a new chapter began with the opening of the Fréjus rail tunnel linking the Maurienne region to Piedmont, via Modane. This new access between the two countries struck a serious blow for Lanslebourg's transport and trading business which had already been hit hard eight years earlier when the pass officially became part of the border. The Savoy region became French, Italy was unified and Lanslebourg, which remained French, was cut off from the mountain pastures of Mont Cenis. Tension mounted

The Col de l'Iseran, the iconic Route des Grandes Alpes mountain pass

The Route des Grandes Alpes is one of those iconic roads which reveals the full splendour of the Alps, whether you're travelling by bike, car or motorbike. The route was originally conceived in the early 20th century, by the Touring Club of France, as a tourist attraction, and extends over some 700 kilometres between Thonon-les-Bains and Nice, including 18 iconic mountain passes.

The Col de l'Iseran pass, revered by road cyclists, is one of the route's most prestigious and iconic climbs. At 2,764 m, this mountain pass is quite simply the highest paved pass in the Alps and offers a splendid panoramic view across the glaciers. For years it was just a simple mule track, used to transport cheeses from the Beaufortain area, to the Piedmont markets via the col du Mont Cenis path. A road was opened in 1937, passable only in summer, linking the Tarantaise and the Maurienne valleys. If you follow this road in summer, starting at Val-d'Isère, you'll arrive at the picturesque village of Bonneval sur Arc. On the 26th July 2019 the famed Tour de France will be passing along this road, for the 6th time in the race's history, further reinforcing the legend of the Col de l'Iseran pass.



between the two countries, resulting in a mad scramble to build fortifications. Prior to 1880, Italy built the forts of Cassa, Ronce and Variselle. "*France immediately responded and continued building for several years,*" says Gilbert Pilloud, a living repository of the history of Lanslebourg and Mont Cenis and President of the Friends of Mont Cenis Association. "*There was a military presence at all border crossings on this vast plateau!*" A new, troubled episode unfolded in the history of this strategic location, which by then was riddled with strongholds and surrounded by troops, reaching its peak during World War 2 which opposed these two neighbouring regions, but failed to destroy their almost physical Alpine bond. Sites of cultural, commercial, political and military importance for centuries, these now peaceful passes are silent witnesses to a remarkable history. The magical beauty of the place is even enhanced by the ancient stone fortifications. But it is in their current reincarnation as a natural, giant playground offering us unlimited sporting, tourist and contemplative experiences, that they are at their most beautiful.

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SUMMER

Mountain biking has never been more inclusive!

Renowned for mountain biking, Haute Maurienne Vanoise offers original trails to delight families and outdoor enthusiasts. The innovative facilities are designed to make the activity as accessible as possible. Go with the flow...



Why would we want to copy what's been done elsewhere when we have the resources to offer something unique? Haute Maurienne Vanoise is a region unlike any other. In a number of different respects. And it's an observation that also holds true when it comes to bikes. Of course, when we talk about cycling, we inevitably think about seasoned riders and climbs like the Iseran which at 2,770 metres is Europe's highest paved mountain pass. The Col d'Iseran, which is ranked "uncategorised" (hors catégorie) has been on the Tour de France map on eight occasions (including in July 2019). Besides memorable images of brave champions and the iconic pass thronged with thousands of fans, cheering on their heroes towards the top, the Haute Maurienne Vanoise region also stands out for its mountain biking: *"The potential in this field is enormous"* according to Francis Dujardin, responsible for developing the Haute Maurienne Vanoise region's

mountain biking offer. *"It's seldom that you have the opportunity to create such a varied, unique and accessible offer in a mountainous landscape."*

Athletes, nature lovers and families: everyone, on your bike!

Enjoy a unique and stunning experience, including a trip to the heart of the Vanoise National Park, whatever your level. Because we come in all shapes, sizes and abilities, Haute Maurienne Vanoise region has managed to combine the advantages of each of its six resorts and devise an offer, designed to meet all needs. Long gone are the days when mountain biking was the exclusive reserve of young, committed athletes. *"From our research, we were able to identify three types of individuals: athletes, of course, families and finally, more contemplative visitors, keen to explore their surroundings."*





Modern, “active,” guided, cycle tourism for an alternative way of exploring the region

“We’re not great athletes but we love nature and heritage and are fans of the region,” explain Gisèle and Alain, a couple from Lille we encountered en route. *We’d never have considered getting on a bike to continue exploring.* Like this fifty-something couple, we also jumped on a bike – an electric model – and set off to explore the six, specially designed discovery trails, covering the length and breadth of Haute Maurienne Vanoise. Each trail, designed to be accessible to all, perfectly showcases the sites encountered en route. It’s a great alternative and, of course, easy way of exploring the mountains. Mountain biking is a unique way of visiting the Esseillon forts, getting up close to the region’s amazing glaciers and immersing yourself in the National Park; it’s also a great way to see the listed village of Bonneval sur Arc with its marvellous architecture, and hamlet of Écot, from an alternative perspective.

Cycling has just got a whole lot easier with our electric MTBs!

Fun without the sweat! Our electric MTBs create new possibilities, particularly in the mountains where you can explore trails, routes and scenery that you probably wouldn’t dream of tackling on a traditional bike. It also offers couples, groups and families the chance to ride together, helping to compensate for differences in levels. More athletic individuals will be able to cycle faster, higher and further while others will simply welcome the chance to explore and enjoy an experience that is active but never brutal. Trails suitable for electric MTBs in the Haute Maurienne Vanoise region are marked “VTAE.” For ease of use, electric charging points are available at several locations throughout the region.

Above
Another way to explore with the family.

Opposite, top
Head-over-heels at Aussois fun park “La Dotta”.

Opposite, bottom
Summits are accessible to all with electric MTB.





The Transmaurienne Vanoise takes competitors through the heart of the villages.

Terrain and trails to suit all preferences

The six resorts of Valfréjus, La Norma, Aussois, Val Cenis, Bessans and Bonneval sur Arc have developed an expanded, coordinated and varied offer, designed to meet all needs and all levels of experience.

If you want a sporty ride then head for the 27 cross-country trails, 307 kilometres of tracks, alternating ascents and descents surrounded by magnificent mountain scenery.

If you want excitement and speed, opt for the 16 Enduro trails, totalling 97 kilometres, often designed with one goal in mind: to set off from the top (having taken the ski lift up) and enjoy the ride down.

If you want fun, family-friendly tracks, then head for the region's 8 play zones.

If you want something novel, suitable for all levels, try out a new concept with the fun Bessans Chantelouve network of itineraries.

If you want to explore the region by bike, then you'll love the 6 discovery trails, specially designed to offer an alternative way of exploring the region – and you don't necessarily have to be sporty!

A pocket guide for all excursions

These sites turn out to be even more attractive and exciting, in the company of a cleverly-designed companion. The R-Bikes app, which you can download free of charge, on your smartphone, includes some of the sixty or so trails (all categories) on offer in the Haute Maurienne Vanoise region as well as GPS and voice navigation for all your outings. *"It's a bit like visiting the Louvre museum when they provide you with lots of interesting information so you can make better sense of what's in front of you!"* observe a young couple, immersed in the history of the Esseillon fortress. *"It's active, fun and really informative!"* And this small, virtual pocket guide has much else to recommend it! It can also help the user locate a nearby restaurant, method of transport or bike hire shop. All the important, useful and helpful addresses. And it even allows you to contact the service provider if you have a problem with your bike.



Besides the open itineraries with panoramic views, there are also more challenging circuits like this forest trail at Val Cenis.

Practical information

Download the R-Bike app, free of charge from <https://espaces-rbikes.com/fr/>
Discover the Haute Maurienne Vanoise region's entire mountain bike offer (routes, instructors, equipment hire) with the map on pages 76-77 or on : www.haute-maurienne-vanoise.com



To try out: a unique concept for a fun cycling experience in Bessans

Mountain biking in Haute Maurienne Vanoise continues to amaze us. Once you've enjoyed the chance to escape and explore the region's culture and heritage – without excessive sweating – we recommend that you then head towards Chantelouve, near the cross-country trails and Bessans biathlon centre. Here you'll discover newly-designed trails that blend in seamlessly with the landscape and surrounding countryside. It's a paradise for families – and much more besides! It's not just fun; it's also ground-breaking. Here you can learn the basics of mountain biking; improve your bike handling and have fun alongside one of the Haute Maurienne Vanoise region's 15 qualified instructors. These attractive, instructional, purpose-built circuits are colour-coded: green, blue, red and black, just like in skiing. But what makes it really unique is that nothing is set in stone; you can easily deviate from your trail and try another. Ultimately, you'll realise that you're better than you thought! *"The real aim of this unique site is to encourage riders, irrespective of level, to make the place their own and create their very own trail,"* explains Francis Dujardin.

KEY



Lifts



Family trails



Discovery trails



Challenging trails
(all trails accessible
by electric MTB)



Bikewash
facilities



Bike
racks



Bicycle
repairs



Bike
rentals



Charging
stations



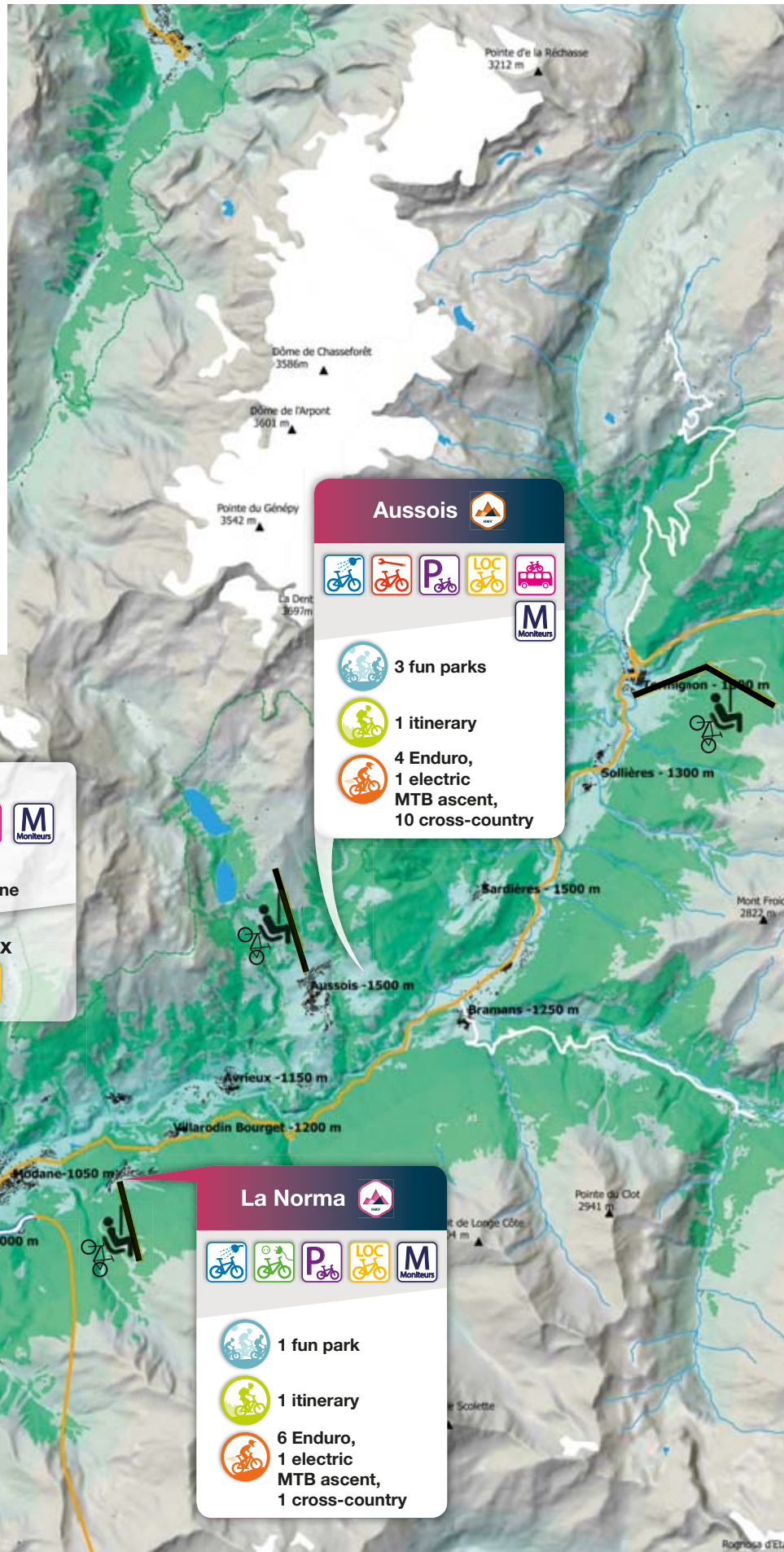
Public
transport*



Instructors

* Bikes admitted
on some services

ESPACE VTT R-BIKES HAUTE MAURIENNE VANOISE



Aussois



3 fun parks

1 itinerary

4 Enduro,
1 electric
MTB ascent,
10 cross-country

Modane



1 itinerary
from Modane

Fourneaux



Valfréjus



1 fun park,
3 XC fun loops



1 Enduro,
1 electric MTB ascent

La Norma



1 fun park



1 itinerary



6 Enduro,
1 electric
MTB ascent,
1 cross-country

Bessans



1 fun itinerary
+ Chantelouve
fun park



1 itinerary



2 cross-country

Bonneval sur Arc



1 itinerary



1 cross-country

Val Cenis



2 fun parks



2 itineraries



5 Enduro,
2 electric
MTB ascents,
12 cross-country



Haute Maurienne Vanoise

VALFRÉJUS | LA NORMA | AUSOIS
VAL CENIS | BESSANS | BONNEVAL SUR ARC

- Petit Bonheur trail, the backbone of the mountain area, covers 47 km between Modane and Bonneval sur Arc.
- 29 cross-country trails, 325 km in all.
- 16 Enduro trails, a total of 115 km.
- 3 pump tracks: 1 in Val Cenis Bramans, 1 under construction in Aussois, and 1 planned for Val Cenis Lanslebourg.
- 1 fun park in Aussois, "la Dotta", dirt and big Air bag.
- 1 fun itinerary in La Norma, the "practice des marmottes".
- Mini handling practice area in Valfréjus.
- Chantelouve fun park, an innovative space unique in France.
- 1 fun itinerary in Bessans, with 8 progressive workshops.
- Permanently-marked trails of the famous Transmaurienne Vanoise race.
- 6 Discovery theme trails to "showcase" the mountains.

SUMMER

The Transmaurienne Vanoise, from elite athletes to children, a cycling institution!

The Transmaurienne Vanoise, a competition held at the end of July every year, which is over 30 years old, has created a winning formula that brings together some of the world's best cyclists, recreational riders and children. A universal and inclusive event.



This MTB event, held in July every year, has been running for over 30 years – evidence of its formidable reputation. Some of the greatest athletes, from all over Europe, gather to take part in the 9 000 race, a name that refers to the cumulative elevation gain over the five scheduled stages. This tough but superb event leads competitors through some of the most beautiful parts of the Haute Maurienne Vanoise region. But the Transmaurienne Vanoise also offers other packages during this great week of mountain biking, designed to appeal to all bike enthusiasts as well as the plain curious. There are also several untimed routes, sessions designed specifically for children and events open to tandems, *fatbikes* and electric bikes: it's not just another sporting event but a large MTB celebration, suitable for all levels.

www.transmaurienne-vanoise.com

GOOD ADDRESSES

Sponsored article



MOUNTAIN RESTAURANT

Chalet La Féma

At the heart of the Val Cenis ski area, we are committed to offering superb food and excellent service to make your day on the slopes as enjoyable as possible. Whether you visit the snack bar or self-service restaurant, you will be able to choose from a wide range of dishes, snacks and gourmet desserts, all homemade of course! You can reach us on foot via the Vieux Moulin gondola, which means our terrace is the perfect meeting place for the whole family. See you soon!

Val Cenis Lanslevillard
Winter Opening Times, 7 days a week,
9 am – 5 pm
chaletlafema-valcenis.blogspot.com



RESTAURANT / FARM CAMPSITE

La Grange du Travérole

On the Bessans plateau, in the middle of cross-country skiing and hiking trails, we offer an authentic stopping place for a rest and some refreshment. You will be captivated by this old hay barn converted into a restaurant 30 years ago and its typically Alpine decor. Come and admire the spectacular mountain skyline from our terrace. During the summer we can accommodate 12 families in the farm campsite that surrounds the restaurant. See you very soon!

Route de Bonneval – 73480 Bessans
Opening Times: 6 days a week in winter
and 7 days a week in summer
Tel.: +33 (0)6 87 58 18 51
Email : contact@lagrangedutraverole.com
www.lagrangedutraverole.com



HOLIDAY CENTRE

Centre Anjou Vanoise

Why not choose a trouble-free break at the Centre Anjou Vanoise on one of our all-inclusive holidays in summer or winter. Holidays with family or friends give you a chance to recharge your batteries while taking advantage of an outstanding ski area and the stunning landscapes at the heart of the Vanois Massif on the Italian border. The friendly, familial atmosphere in the Centre Anjou Vanoise will leave you with fond memories worth sharing.

Sollières – 73500 Val Cenis
Tel.: +33 (0)4 79 20 50 32 / +33 (0)6 61 99 59 34
www.centre-anjou-vanoise.com



HOTEL-RESTAURANT

Le Perce-Neige**

Whether you are cycling along the Route des Grandes Alpes, hiking along the GR 5 route, or exploring Vanoise National Park, Le Perce-Neige hotel restaurant will take good care of you. You will receive a warm welcome, and the owner's cooking will give you all the energy you need. How lovely! A stage not to be missed.

Modane
Tel.: +33 (0)4 79 05 00 50
Email: auperceneige@wanadoo.fr
www.hotel-leperceneige.com



APRÈS-SKI RESTAURANT-BAR

C2

Located at the foot of the Mont Cenis pass, C2 serves lunch and dinner throughout the season. The shaded terrace with a play area for children and an unobstructed view of Dent Parrachée is an idyllic spot for a meal with friends and family. The head chef offers a menu of her own recommendations that include seasonal produce and Savoyard specialities. We offer many entertainments (concerts, magic show...)

Chemin des Crueux
73480 Lanslebourg Val Cenis
Tel.: +33 (0)4 56 96 37 37
<http://c2-valcenis.com>



HOTEL / RESTAURANT / PUB

L'Étoile des Neiges***, Le Saint Landry and Le Soleillour

Cosy, authentic atmosphere in the heart of the village. In summer, at the crossroads of the legendary Mont Cenis and Iseran mountain passes, in the heart of Vanoise National Park. In winter, at the edge of the ski resort Val Cenis. Refined local cuisine. Panoramic terrace, bar, lounge, library, pub, secure ski and bike storage and indoor parking. Deals on half-board stays longer than 7 days: 5% off in summer, 10% off in winter.

28 rue Plaine – Lanslevillard Val Cenis
Opening Times: 7 days a week for lunch
and dinner in the holiday season
Tel.: +33 (0)4 79 05 90 41
complexeetoiledesneiges@gmail.com
www.etoiledesneigeshotel.com

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