

OLYMPIC SPIRIT

In 1924, Chamonix Mont-Blanc played host to the first ever Winter Olympics Games; 99 years on, the town is preparing to welcome back the event for the 2024 Games in Paris, celebrating a century of Olympic spirit in Chamonix Mont-Blanc and a lifelong love of snowsports



On 25 January, 1924, the opening ceremony for the first ever Winter Olympic Games took place in Chamonix Mont-Blanc. The event was held in a 45,000-capacity stadium, built especially for the occasion.

Are you Game?

When Paris was awarded the 1924 Games, the Olympic Committee decided it was time to add winter sports to their offering. The town of Chamonix was the obvious choice with its railway line, grand hotels, and winter sport's culture. In less than a year, an ice stadium was built capable of holding two ice hockey pitches and two open areas for figure skating – the biggest in the world – as well as a ski jump that could accommodate 60m jumps.

There were nine sports at the Chamonix Games – bobsleigh, curling, ice hockey, figure and speed skating, cross-country skiing, ski jumping, Nordic combined and military patrol (a sort of biathlon). The prestige of the Winter Games was such that 258 athletes from 16 countries attended; 14 from Europe, plus Canada and America.

The Olympic spirit still reigns in the Chamonix Valley where snowsports are a way of life. Next year marks the Cen-

tenary of the Winter Olympic Games, and Paris is once again playing host, with Chamonix at the centre of the 2024 event and celebrations.

Destination: Chamonix Mont-Blanc

It's hardly surprising that Chamonix Mont-Blanc has subsequently become an international hub for snowsports. Located a mere 30 minutes' drive from both the Swiss and Italian borders and just one hour's drive from Geneva International airport, this historic town is cradled in a valley that stretches 17 miles through the superb summits and needles of the Mont Blanc massif and the Aiguilles Rouges.

The first thing to strike visitors when they arrive in Chamonix is the dramatic scenery: eternal snows, immaculate summits, vertical granite rock faces, cascading glaciers, and alpine meadows. But despite its polarity, Chamonix remains an authentic Alpine town where modernity and tradition live harmoniously side by side. When people speak of Chamonix, they often say it is a place with a soul. The valley is home to 13,000 permanent residents of all nationalities, and their unwavering passion for this valley is readily shared with those who visit. Chamonix is cosmopolitan, an international melting pot offering an eclectic choice of everything

which reflects the people who live here and the people who visit. Here, you'll find something to suits all tastes, from luxury hotels and Michelin-star restaurants, to backpacker's gites and lively clubs and bars.

From the town's centre, you can catch the famous Aiguille du Midi cable car, a direct line that carries you 3,842m up to experience the wonders of a high-mountain environment. This is the closest you will get to the summit of Mont Blanc and the sweeping 360° view of the Alps is breathtaking.

Skiing capital of the world

Chamonix's colourful history and architectural heritage offer an extraordinary journey through time. From the first explorers in the 1700s to the technical prowess of one of the most remarkable cable cars in the world (Aiguille du Midi - 1955) Chamonix is a pioneer of mountain tourism. Today, both summer and winter seasons are equally popular, and it is not without reason that Chamonix Mont-Blanc is hailed as birthplace of mountaineering skiing capital of the world.

Proud to be member of the "Best of the Alps" resorts, Chamonix offers outstanding skiing from December-May with reliable snow-cover and excellent springtime conditions. Best known for its iconic descents such as the Vallée

Blanche (a 20km-long glacier itinerary), its free-ride spots, and vertical drops, the valley also offers gentle tree-lined slopes, wide-open panoramic pistes, snow parks, and nursery slopes for beginners and children.

The Mont-Blanc Unlimited lift pass is the best way to discover the region. With it you can enjoy 1,000km of skiing in three countries: Chamonix Valley, Megève, Saint-Gervais, Courmayeur (Italy), Crans Montana (Switzerland), as well as the sight-seeing excursions including the Aiguille du Midi.

Ski-touring fans can enjoy more than 40km of scenic cross-country slopes, a perfect way to discover the valley. Other winter activities include dog-sledding, snowshoeing, ice climbing, scenic flights, tandem paragliding, and the Alps Coaster luge.

After all that cold-weather adventure, QC Terme is the perfect place to unwind. With over 30 wellness practices, relaxation rooms, gardens and terraces, a panoramic restaurant, and an incredible infinity pool at the foot of Mont Blanc, this is an exceptional, multi-sensory journey like no other and the most scenic Spa in the Alps. [W](#)

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