



Around the world

Tignes, France

Searching for an affordable Alpine chalet this season? Unlike some bare resorts, this high-altitude spot is made of the white stuff, says Cathy Hawker

The Espace Killy, also known as the Tignes-Val d'Isère ski area, is one of France's most impressive ski domains. It covers 186 miles and includes two glaciers and 90 lifts with adrenaline-charged activities from summer lake swimming to winter ice climbing. It is also one of the few places in the French Alps with pistes graced with bountiful amounts of snow this week.

Tignes sits at about 2,000m with skiing up to 3,600m, providing a season that lasts well into May. Tignes and Val d'Isère are two separate resorts that share the same slopes, but while the latter has global fame, the former is rather more under the radar. That's changing, says Tess Swallow of Free Spirit Alpine estate agency.

"I've had a flat in Tignes for 14 years and it used to be mainly where the *seasonaires* [seasonal workers] would stay," she says. "It has always been considered a brilliant place to ski, but not such a brilliant place to stay, with lots of small, unremarkable apartments. But infrastructure changes — high-speed lifts and fibre-optic broadband — and the arrival of upmarket hotels and restaurants, along with a drive to bring properties up to high eco standards, has had an impact.

Everyone is looking for high-altitude snow-sure resorts and that's what Tignes has. Val d'Isère is saturated. Tignes is where the smart money is going."

There's spring skiing on the glacier and good restaurants across a wide price point (Swallow recommends Le Kaya and Le Panoramic). It's a sunny, open resort comprising three separate villages around the lake: Le Lavachet, Le Lac and Val Claret. In a further sign of Tignes' appeal, the elite Apex Ski Academy, with Clive Woodward, the former England rugby coach, as its director of sport, chose Tignes Le Lac as its base in 2020, bringing world-class athletes to train on its slopes and off-piste tracks.

"Tignes has got real character," says Ali Mitchell, 34, an avid skier from Bristol who has chosen Tignes annually for over a decade. "Val d'Isère can feel like a victim of its own success, busy and overcrowded with accommodation likely to be a long, concrete-based schlep from the slopes, whereas in Tignes, at any budget, I've always stayed somewhere within stumbling distance of the snow. The skiing in Tignes feels wilder, still slightly rough around the edges, which makes it more fun. You can easily dip into the bustle of Val for lunch, then be almost off the edge of the ski map for the afternoon."

What's key for property buyers, Swallow says, is that developers are introducing properties

where the quality is equal to anything in Val d'Isère, but the prices are very

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different. In the process, they are also "prettifying" the resort, recladding buildings or adding a floor or two to make amazing penthouses.

"Prime prices in Val d'Isère reach €30,000 to €35,000 per square metre while in Tignes, they are closer to €17,000," Swallow says. "You would pay €800,000 plus for an OK two-bedroom flat in Val d'Isère compared with €500,000 in Tignes. And you'll find 'ski in and out' properties in Tignes much more easily than in Val d'Isère."

One development that sold out in 2022 was a chalet divided into separate three and four-bedroom apartments, each covering an entire floor. "Each apartment sold for €2 million, but the same apartment in Val d'Isère would have been €3.5 million," Swallow adds. "Tignes has become a sensible option for buyers who might previously only have considered Val d'Isère."

The savings are not just on property. The Post Office 2023 Ski Resort Report analyses typical costs for an adult for a one-week ski holiday in 32 Alpine resorts, considering ski passes, boot and ski hire, ski school and eating out on the slopes. Tignes came in as the 20th best value resort with average costs of £882 while Val d'Isère, with average costs of





£1,116, was down in 29th, with only three Swiss resorts, Zermatt, Wengen and Saas Fee, being more expensive.

“Tignes is a charming village, ideally suited for families and becoming more and more popular with our clients for the high-altitude skiing, good infrastructure and good value it offers,” says Laetitia Hodson from Knight Frank. She puts typical values at €8,800 to €16,500 a square metre for apartments and from €11,000 to €18,000 for chalets, pointing to a four-bedroom apartment in Le Lac for €1.69 million and a five-bedroom chalet in Tignes Savoie for €2.85 million.



Top: Tignes. Above and right: a four-bedroom apartment in Tignes Le Lac is on sale for €1.69 million through Knight Frank

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Need to know

- This winter, Tignes’ slopes are open from November 26 to May 7, two weeks longer than Val d’Isère.
- Fly to Chambéry or Geneva airport.
- Tignes lake was created 70 years ago by flooding the original village to create a hydroelectric dam.



