

OVERSEAS

Where to buy a holiday home in Chamonix, France

Snap up a reasonably priced property in this valley nestled at the foot of Mont Blanc. By Liz Rowlinson



Views of Mont Blanc in the winter
GETTY

Liz Rowlinson

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It has been a year when many of us have felt like running for the hills — or perhaps for the fresh, clean air of the Alps. Several ski resorts have enjoyed their busiest

summer for years, with their crystalline lakes, hiking and biking offering the perfect antidote to urban lockdown.

The Haute-Savoie ski resort of Chamonix sits at the foot of Mont Blanc and has been the base from which climbers have tackled the 4,810m-high peak since 1786. Conveniently close to Geneva, it has also been one of the Alpine locations seeing a flurry of home-hunters looking for a bolthole for more than just the odd ski weekend or a climber's crash pad.

"This summer Chamonix was our most searched-for resort in the Alps," says Charlie McKee of Alpine Property Intelligence, a ski home portal. "By July demand was up to pre-lockdown levels — a mix of French buyers, Britons based in Geneva, expats from the Far East as well as Italians from just over the border."

Property hunters are planning longer stays in the area, adds Andy Symington of Mountain Base, Knight Frank's associate in the town. He says: "People are looking for a home from which they can commute a couple of days into London or Geneva, or to find a way to remote-work from here full-time.

"An Australian film director stuck here during lockdown has since decided to buy a chalet to live here; another buyer was more obsessed about the mountain view from his prospective desk than anything else." Chalets that had hung around on the market for two years are now selling to such buyers.

The entrepreneurs Jodie and Andy Broad had already made the move and now remotely run their business, [Wire and Sky](#), which offers "rooftop experiences" such as abseiling down London's O2 Arena and ArcelorMittal Orbit tower. They moved from Herefordshire for a better work-life balance, and share a four-bedroom chalet with their two daughters.

"We chose Chamonix because we like climbing as much as we like skiing," says Jodie, 45. "Proximity to Geneva was key for when Andy travels back to the UK."

Like many of this new wave of buyers, the couple preferred not to be in the town so they could get more space for their euros. According to Symington, high-end apartments in the centre cost up to €9,500 (£8,666) per sq m (resale) and €12,000 (new-build).

Knight Frank's 2020 Ski Index suggests that prime properties have gone up 2.1 per cent in the year to June.

Ten years ago you might have snapped up a studio for less than €100,000, but now you'll struggle to find one for €200,000. Chamonix Sud district is your best bet for these sorts of properties, and they can be popular rental investments, with about 20,000-odd climbers passing through Chamonix in any normal summer, as well as all those winter skiers, providing plenty of prospective guests.

Locals and international buyers seeking value are looking to little villages nearby such as Servoz, where you can get a new one-bedroom apartment for €210,000 through [Alpine Property Finders](#), or to the well-preserved and family-friendly resort of Les Houches.



The village of Servoz in the spring
GETTY

You can find a three-bedroom chalet for about €700,000 in both those locations, suggests Gordon Lawson of [La Floria Immobilier](#), local partner of Savills. “Les Houches is about 60 per cent of the price of prime Chamonix locations, which include Les Praz, Les Bois, Le Brévent, Les Moussoux, Les Nants and Les Pècles,” he says.

Les Praz and Les Bois sit next to Chamonix Golf Club, as well as the new La Flégère ski lift up to 2,500m and the buzzy little hub of the Petit Social, the go-to place for a coffee and croissant or happy-hour cocktails.

There's decent choice if you have €1 million to €2 million to spend on a chalet. The top of the market is about €5 million for Chamonix — but you won't find the trophy chalets of glitzy Courchevel 1850, with their basement nightclubs and spa complexes. "Town planning has made it difficult to build a chalet of more than 300 sq m," Lawson explains. "Here wealth tends to be discreet, not blingy."

Chamonix has never been a big favourite with families, mainly because you have to get on a bus to reach the ski lift. However, it is no longer just a place for the bearded, Gore-Tex-clad adrenaline-junkie archetype. It now has Chanel, Ralph Lauren and Swarovski boutiques, as well as La Folie Douce hotel — an offshoot of the hip après-ski bar chain, although the après-ski scene will, of course, be pared back this winter due to Covid.

"Chamonix has gentrified in recent years," says David Robertson, who lives there half of the year with his Swedish wife, Asa, and runs Action Outdoors, a ski holiday company. "But we love the fact it's a real town, not a seasonal ski resort, and that it's a cosmopolitan melting pot of people united by their passion for the mountains."

The historic former spa town of St-Gervais-Les-Bains is another popular option for both part-time commuters and remote workers. Linking into the Chamonix and Megève ski areas, it also offers a cutting-edge spa, Les Thermes, which is managed by L'Oréal, as well as a charming town centre with belle époque buildings.

"The Léman Express fast train link from St Gervais to Geneva makes the commuting easier," says Andrew Morgan of Leggett Immobilier. "Families like it for its authentic and friendly environment. The average price of an apartment, at €3,674 per sq m, is also 46 per cent less than Chamonix, at €6,831."

St Gervais is also home to the highest gin distillery in Europe, created by the Scotsman James Abbott, who left Kelso five years ago to make gin in an old donkey shed. Abbott, a former pilot, presented President Macron with a €45 bottle of Le Gin du Mont Blanc in February. "I can ski in the mornings and make gin and whisky in the afternoons," he says. "The locals really welcomed me to the town after I'd had some tough times." Further proof for the new wave of property hunters that a mountain home really can be therapeutic (and the gin can't hurt either).

Homes for sale in the region



Les Houches, €2.35m

This detached chalet, built in 2012, is in Les Houches, a few kilometres west of Chamonix. It comes with eight bedrooms, a sauna, a ski room, a hot tub, a summer pool and a detached *mazot* (outbuilding) that can be used as a home office.

savills.com



Chamonix, €550,000

This refurbished one-bedroom pied-à-terre sits conveniently next to the Savoy beginners' slopes and is part of Les Balcons du Savoy hotel, with access to its facilities. The 45 sq m flat has a balcony, a ski locker and an underground parking space.

knightfrank.com





Les Blois, €5.25m

Straight out of an alpine fairytale, this five-bedroom detached wooden chalet has a large living room with an open fire and a Jacuzzi on the south terrace. Chalet Pacha nestled near the forest of Les Blois in the Chamonix-Mont-Blanc Valley and has spectacular mountain views.

[knightfrank.com](https://www.knightfrank.com)



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