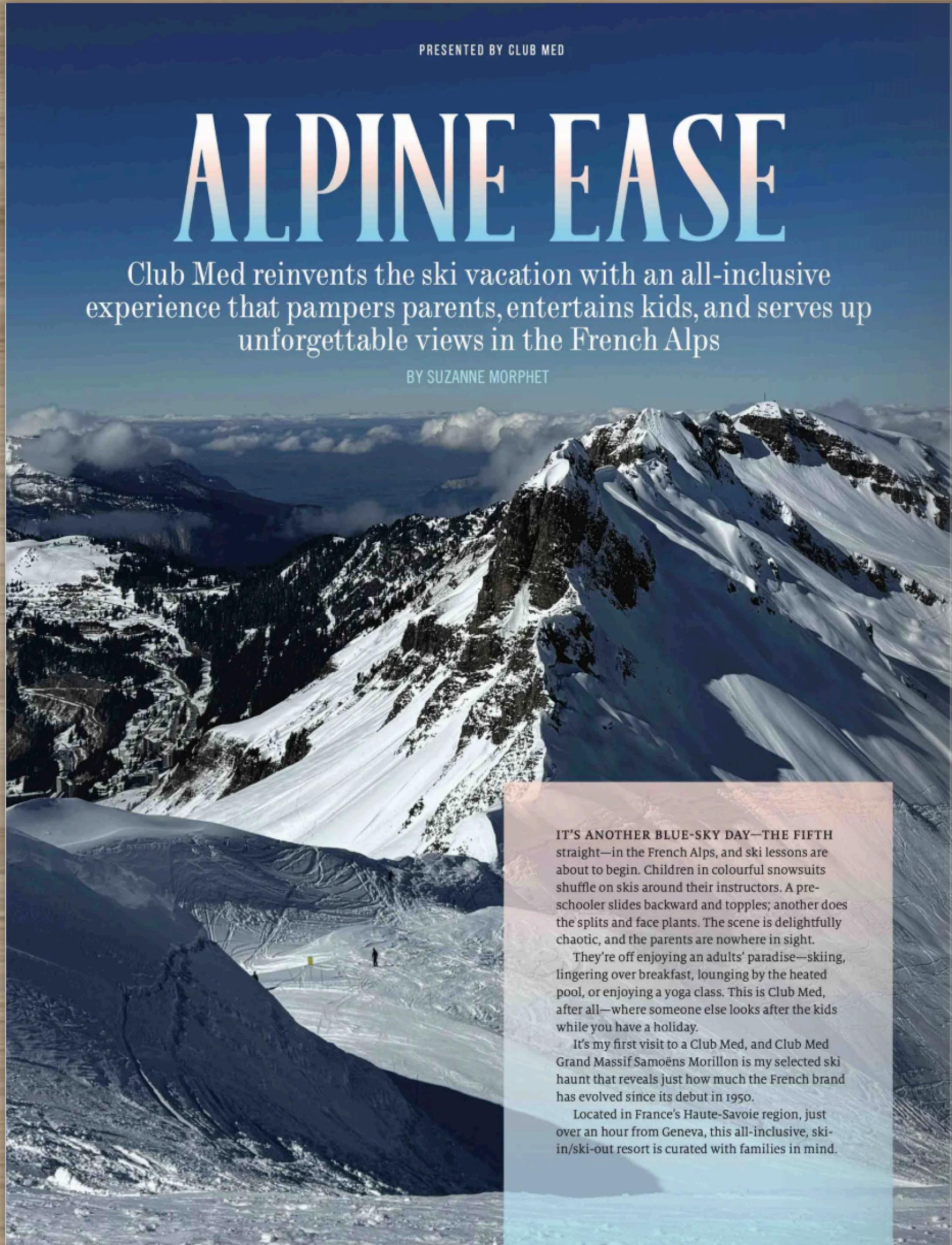


PRESENTED BY CLUB MED

ALPINE EASE

Club Med reinvents the ski vacation with an all-inclusive experience that pampers parents, entertains kids, and serves up unforgettable views in the French Alps

BY SUZANNE MORPHET



IT'S ANOTHER BLUE-SKY DAY—THE FIFTH straight—in the French Alps, and ski lessons are about to begin. Children in colourful snowsuits shuffle on skis around their instructors. A preschooler slides backward and topples; another does the splits and face plants. The scene is delightfully chaotic, and the parents are nowhere in sight.

They're off enjoying an adults' paradise—skiing, lingering over breakfast, lounging by the heated pool, or enjoying a yoga class. This is Club Med, after all—where someone else looks after the kids while you have a holiday.

It's my first visit to a Club Med, and Club Med Grand Massif Samoëns Morillon is my selected ski haunt that reveals just how much the French brand has evolved since its debut in 1950.

Located in France's Haute-Savoie region, just over an hour from Geneva, this all-inclusive, ski-in/ski-out resort is curated with families in mind.

"We're probably the only people here without children," laughs guest Jeff Richards from Florida, whom I meet at breakfast. He recalls Club Med's image from his college days: "It was about beaches, singles and sun-kissed women," he says. "And then I came here!"

Now those singles have children—and even grandchildren. In keeping with founder Gérard Blitz's philosophy that "the purpose of life is to be happy," Club Med has adapted by creating family-friendly resorts that cater to all ages.

I'm travelling with my friend Jeanette. Like Jeff and his wife, we're vacationing at Club Med Grand Massif Samoëns Morillon without our grown children, proving that you're never too old for a Club Med vacation.

Not Your Traditional European Ski Resort

Opened in 2017 on the Saix plateau about 900 metres above the village of Samoëns, Grand Massif Samoëns Morillon is a departure from traditional alpine resorts.

The multi-storey structure blends into the landscape with its locally sourced wood exterior and planted roof, green in summer, and now white with snow. Inside, the 423-room resort is bright and modern, with soaring ceilings and oversized windows framing glorious views

of snowy peaks. It's a striking contrast to traditional lodge decor. Gone are the dark woods and low ceilings of ski lodges past—no decorative wooden skis nailed to the wall here, either.

Green Thinking

Sustainability is more than a trend here. Club Med recycles its old skis and gear through a partnership with iconic winter sports brands Rossignol and Ski and Surf. Most of Club Med's resorts are Green Globe-certified, committing to waste reduction, energy conservation, and other environmental best practices.

The World's First All-inclusive

Club Med pioneered the all-inclusive model and still embraces it, making ski vacations easier and more cost-effective. At dinner one evening, Stephanie, an American living in Belgium, tells us: "We could've rented a condo in Samoëns, but I'd still have to book lessons, rent gear, buy food—and cook!"

FAST FACT

With climate change affecting snowfall, Club Med offers a unique snow guarantee. If fifty per cent of ski lifts close for two consecutive days, they'll transfer you to another alpine resort, pending availability.



LIVIN' THE DREAM

A PARENT'S PARADISE.

"I hate kids," jokes my friend, a retired school teacher, when we pass numerous children in the resort's hallways. Closer to the truth, we both wish we had known about Club Med's ski resorts when our own kids were young.

The childcare here is impressive, with programs for children aged four months to 17 years. Ski lessons begin at age two or three, snowboarding at age eight. There are ample activities to keep youngsters busy too, including a performance art class called "Show Time." One night, I attended a tween-led performance show that nearly moved me to tears by the music and watching their imperfect, but passionate production.

L'ESPRIT LIBRE A.K.A. "LEAVE YOUR WORRIES BEHIND."

Each night, adult entertainment takes place in the lounge with stage performances, poker games and DJ-led dancing. Club Med's signature dance moves "Crazy Signs" are still a thing! And the Sothys spa with 10 treatment rooms, sauna, steam room and quiet lounge is adults-only.

I WISH MY STOMACH WAS BIGGER.

A sumptuous buffet awaits us morning, noon and night at Cosy Mountain, the anchor restaurant at Club Med Grand Massif Samoëns Morillon. French favourites like mussels and frites tantalize our taste buds along with Savoyard specialties such as tartiflette, the traditional gratin baked with a round of local Reblochon cheese. Complimentary wine washes it all down. For panoramic mountain views, we dine at Skyline restaurant, a specialty restaurant with a "gourmet lounge" ambiance, and order à la carte. Every meal feels like an indulgence.



Here, everything is included. Equipment is pre-ordered and waiting in your locker. Within minutes of waking up, we're dressed, geared up, and on the slopes.

The Skiing is Spectacular

Each morning, our pre-ordered equipment is waiting in our ski locker. In less than ten minutes we're dressed and out the door.

Our enthusiasm is matched by the enormity of the Grand Massif ski area. More than 250 km of runs and 62 lifts connect five villages. From the top of the highest lift above Flaine we enjoy sweeping alpine views in every direction, including the north face of Mont Blanc, the highest mountain in the Alps. Just below is the start of Cascade, the longest run at Grand Massif. It winds an incredible 14 kilometres down to Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval, one of les Plus Beaux Villages de France.

DID YOU KNOW?

While many of us associate Club Med with sun and sand, the company has more than 20 mountain resorts around the world. The first opened in Leysin, Switzerland in 1957.

We ski harder and faster by the day, schussing mostly blue runs and soaking up the exquisite scenery as we ride the chairs back to the top.

Next time, I'll try for the included group lessons to confidently tackle black runs—a Club Med exclusive among all-inclusives. **DS**

TRAVEL PLANNER

For Club Med trip planning and reservations, visit clubmed.ca