

MEGEVE

From the mountain to the valley, Jessica Basi embraces the charms of medieval Megève and discovers that chapels and cheeses are big attractions off the slopes

Why go? Nestled within the Rhône-Alpes region between the arms of Mont d'Arbois and Rochebrune, Megève offers all the elegance of an exclusive Parisian getaway, while retaining the sleepy charm of a Savoyard village. Art galleries featuring works by César Baldaccini and Pablo Picasso sit comfortably alongside an imposing 13th-century church; the clang of its bells is often overlaid by the sound of muted jazz from nearby bars. The medieval centre is a vehicle-free zone, allowing visitors to roam freely between the cobbled streets and timber-frame buildings, home to a hotchpotch of boutique shops and haute cuisine restaurants.

What to do The Evasion Mont Blanc mountains offer a mass of gentle, silky slopes ideal for weekend ski breaks. Mont d'Arbois and Rochebrune have off-piste terrains, perfect for cross-country adventures, and daredevils will be drawn to Mont Joly, and the famous Stade Descente black run on Côte 2000. When you feel the need for a break from exploring the area's 444km of routes, descend into the heart of Megève and warm up with a steaming, sweet chocolat chaud in one of the town's cosy tea rooms. At the town square, you can take a horse-drawn carriage to Calvary Way, a collection of 15 chapels dating back to the late 1800s. From here, you can also admire the panoramic view of the serene Arly Valley and jagged Mont Blanc. Seek out Galerie Christian Dazy (galeriedazy.com) for equally beautiful examples of European art, or head over to the church of Saint Jean Baptiste. Parts of this Gothic structure date back to 1202 when Benedictine monks took in and fed needy travellers. The modern stained-glass windows added in the 1950s are stunning when illuminated with a burst of Alpine sunshine.

Where to stay Les Fermes de Marie (00 33 450 93 03 10, fermesdemarie.com) caters perfectly for those torn between the appeal of log-cabin living, and the luxury of 24-hour room service. Sister restaurant L'Alpette Alt.1895 (00 33 4 50 21 03 69) is a relaxing mountain-side dine. The Giazzis have been bustling

about their family-run hotel Au Coeur de Megève, (00 33 450 21 25 30, hotel-megeve.com) for three generations. The terracotta and cream decor gives the interiors a Mediterranean warmth. Boutique eight-room chalets neighbouring Alpine forests can be found at Le Chalet (00 33 450 21 01 01, lechaletzannier.com).

Where to eat and drink Megève is laden with gourmet cuisine from arguably the best restaurants in the Alps. Freshwater fish such as char and pike feature heavily on menus, alongside plenty of meats and cheese. Creamy Reblochan and Savoyard Tamié rippled with black truffles grace the cheeseboards at Les Enfants Terribles (00 33 450 21 20 02, hotelmontblanc.com) and local favourite raclette (melted cheese served with vegetables and charcuterie) can be found on most menus. Hidden in the forests on Mont d'Arbois, La Ravière (00 33 450 93 15 71) is ideal for long lunches and decadent desserts. Family portions of filling mountain food like Farcement (pork and potato stew with prunes and nuts) are served up at Le Refuge Porcherey (00 33 680 64 01 43, refugeporcherey.com) where you will be rewarded with awesome views of Mont Blanc, which sits on the opposite side of the valley. Savour a sticky glazed pear rissole with cinnamon mulled wine at the Prieure tea rooms in the main square (00 33 450 21 01 79, leprieure-megeve.com), or head to Michelin-starred Flocons de Sel (00 33 450 21 49 99, floconsdesel.com). If inspired by the many beautifully presented dishes here, enrol in a cookery lesson with head chef Emmanuel Renaut. When night falls, head over to Club de Jazz Cinq Rues (00 33 450 91 90 69) for live music, open fires and a glass of Mondeuse or Apremont, both popular local wines.

Time running out? Stop by the farmers' market in the village square to pick up freshly baked pastries and local produce to take home. Open from 9am-2pm every Friday.

Trip tip Recharge your ski pass online or via your mobile before you hit the slopes to avoid long queues (skiamegeve.com).

Resources

Savoie Mont Blanc (savoie-mont-blanc.com) for skiing details; **Megève Tourist Office** (megeve.com) for skiing and events.

Further reading

Two Planks and a Passion: The Dramatic History of Skiing by Roland Huntford (£14.99, Continuum Publishing). A detailed overview of the world's favourite winter sport.

AVERAGE DAILY TEMPERATURES

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Min °C	-3	-3	1	3	8	11	13	12	9	5	0	-3
Max °C	6	8	13	15	21	24	27	26	21	17	10	6

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: STROLLING ALONG MEGEVE'S MEDIEVAL STREETS; DOG SLEDDING; A COSY FIRE AT AU COEUR DE MEGEVE; THE SNOW-COVERED ROOFS OF MEGEVE; ROOM AT AU COEUR DE MEGEVE; DOWNHILL SKIING; MICHELIN-STARRED FARE AT FLOCONS DE SEL; THE KITCHEN AT LES ENFANTS TERRIBLES; THE WELCOMING FOYER, AND RECEPTION AT AU COEUR DE MEGEVE; AN ALPINE SETTING



Photography by Megève Tourist Office