



Village church, Samoëns, Haute-Savoie, France Photo: Alamy

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Comment (http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/snowandski/9148590/Ski-France-Samoëns.html#disqus_thread)

Could Samoëns be the near-perfect resort? My love affair with the big French resorts, Val d'Isère, the Trois Vallées, has begun to waiver: the cost of accommodation, the price of lunch on the mountain and the occasional grumpiness of the locals, overwhelmed by the seasonal invasion of Britons, are all off-putting. I have always been a little envious of those who have their pet resort but have never quite found mine. Until now.

Samoëns is a breath of fresh mountain air. The French proudly describe it as one of their monuments historiques, that just happens to be attached to a great ski area. An hour by car from Geneva, this ancient village, famed for its stonemasons, is part of the Grand Massif ski domain and is connected to high-altitude, snowsure Flaine. Consisting of five resorts – Flaine, Samoëns, Morillon, Sixt and Les Carroz. The Grand Massif offers 265km of piste; 80 per cent of the slopes are north facing, so hold the snow well, and the majority of the clientele is French.

The centre of Samoëns is traffic free, and has a beautiful square dominated by a magnificent lime tree. For the self-caterer, the main street is a delight, full of gourmet shops offering mountain ham, local cheese and mouth-watering pâtisserie. Every Wednesday there is a wonderful market selling local produce. There is also a handful of gorgeous Savoyard interior designer shops offering Alpine bric-a-brac: old skis, retro skiing photographs, antler lamps, "polar bear" skin rugs, and pretty china decorated with hearts. It's enough to make you want to buy a chalet on the spot.

And then there's the famous botanical garden, the only one of its kind in the Alps, created in 1906 and with more than 5,000 plants. Alas, when we were there it was hibernating under a thicket blanket of snow.

We rented a self-catering chalet we found on the internet. Sleeping 16, it had a hot tub, a sauna and even a private cinema and at £2,960 was a quarter of the price it would have been in one of the better-known French resorts.

[Late-season ski bargains \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/snowandski/9148413/Easter-skiing-deals-slope-off-while-the-sun-shines.html\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/snowandski/9148413/Easter-skiing-deals-slope-off-while-the-sun-shines.html)

