

Forbes Travel

# Vive la villégiature!

How one luxury resort in Chamonix has been seducing the global elite for 170 years.



It is said that the art of the holiday resort—*l'art de la villégiature*—was invented at the start of the 20th century in Chamonix. During the Belle Époque, aristocratic families discovered skiing, snowshoeing and bobsled, while the first lifts, first climbing routes, and the first Winter Olympic Games in January 1924—involving a total of six sports (including the multi-disciplined event Military Patrol, whereby military units competed in cross-country skiing, ski mountaineering and rifle shooting)—all happened at Chamonix in the French Alps.

The mountain is also home to the first international resort, the legendary 5-star Hôtel

Mont-Blanc, which has been wooing the international jet set since it opened in 1849.

Inspired by nature and the environment, Sybille de Margerie (LVMH Group, Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group, the Royal Atlantis Residences in Dubai) gave the hotel a facelift in 2016, featuring Savoyard-style woodwork, black and white checkered marble, custom-made furniture, and subtle yet bold doses of bright colors to create a warm atmosphere. The 41 delectable rooms and suites, including a 100-square-meter €1,000-a-night penthouse, face a magnificent mountain panorama, offering space, luxury and comfort.

After a day of mountaineering, golf at the 18-hole panoramic course

(only a 4-minute drive) or, in the winter, skiing (the hotel offers a free shuttle to the slopes), make use of the 250-square-meter Clarins Spa and its 14-meter heated indoor-outdoor pool with jaw-dropping views of the Mont-Blanc massif.

Of course, a resort would not be a resort without a focus on food. The gastronomic restaurant, Le Matafan, features hearty mountain fare—Iberian pork, veal, roast beef (with a few fish options thrown in)—served with seasonal products. With the exquisite presentation and the exceptional glass-ceiling setting, more than just your taste buds will be impressed. Look for the well-priced €26 lunch menu.

Long live the holiday resort.