

# ESPRIT HAUT-GIFFRE MAGAZINE

LE CIRQUE DU  
**FER-À-CHEVAL**  
EN 4 MODES

**PORTRAIT[S]**

**ZEN** EN MONTAGNE

**TOUR DE PISTES**  
DU GRAND MASSIF

LE MAGAZINE DE L'OFFICE DE TOURISME INTERCOMMUNAL "GRAND MASSIF MONTAGNES DU GIFFRE"

**#01 -2020**

CHÂTILLON-SUR-CLUSES | LA RIVIÈRE-ENVERSE | MORILLON | VERCHAIX | SIXT-FER-À-CHEVAL





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du Giffre

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## EDITORIAL

Living in the Haut-Giffre Valley means living with the elements! It means being surrounded by an abundant and preserved natural environment. As a photographer, I'm lucky enough to have seen this with my own eyes. As I hike across this land, all year round, I photograph these outstanding landscapes, to pass on to those who haven't been here, those who are not able to come here, and to our children; to keep this precious gem in the best possible condition, to preserve these landscapes and pass on the values of this land.

All the people living in this valley are bound by the very same river: the Giffre. This river runs through the territory, its movement seemingly eternal. The water, a source of life, comes from the many waterfalls, mainly found in the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval. It took several thousands of years for the valley to be shaped as we can see it today. Intervention from mankind has ensured that the Giffre is today contained, thanks to a system of controlled irrigation. It is within this lush green setting, the snow-covered lowlands or the rocky highlands, that man has been able to find just the right balance, to develop activities while preserving the best of this superb ecosystem.

The Giffre Valley is one of the last valleys to be preserved from fast-growing urbanisation in Haute-Savoie. What do I love about Giffre Valley? Its authentic and agricultural side. It is a great place to live all year round. Life is centred around tourist, local, farming and trade activities. The fast pace of modern life is probably a bit slower here, thanks in part to this natural environment. Each of the four seasons has its advantages and specialities on offer, giving the whole territory a natural and innate cohesion. In Giffre Valley, we take the time to admire a sunset, new snowfall, the light of a new dawn. We take the time to harvest blueberries or mushrooms; the gift of time really is worth all the riches in the world. We are entranced by this setting, that remind us that what's important is the present moment, not tomorrow and not yesterday. Enjoy reading this new magazine, and I hope you will feel the special atmosphere and spirit of the area, through the various articles about the passionate men and women who live life to the full in Giffre Valley.

David Casartelli  
Photographer  
*Find out more about David Casartelli on p. 36*



# GRAND SITE DE SIXT-FER-À-CHEVAL



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Syndicat mixte du Grand Site de Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval



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# EXPERIENCES

What's the best way to explore Giffre Valley? By plunging headfirst into the natural environment and heading to the highlands. Haut-Giffre has the ideal playground for anyone looking for mountain sports or walking. Alpine skiing, ski-touring, hiking, walking or showshoeing, trekking from shelter to shelter: so many experiences to be enjoyed as and when you like.







# TOUR OF THE SLOPES

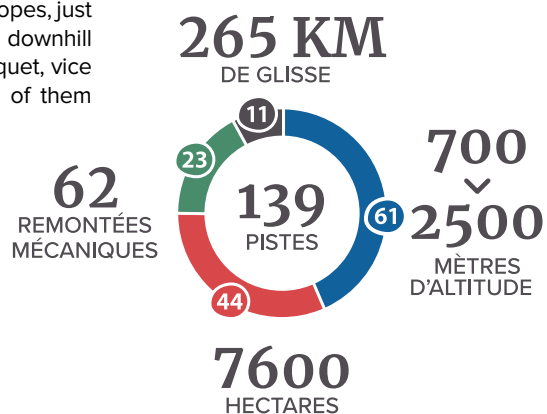
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With 265km of diverse slopes, the Grand Massif is one of the biggest connected ski areas in France.

The ski area is in Haute-Savoie, opposite Mont blanc, in a preserved natural environment, with 360° panoramic views. The green runs are perfect for beginners, and the black run is for advanced skiers and snowboarders. The Grand Massif has something for everyone and to suit every level of ability. Some come here for their very first experience and become champions right here on these slopes, just like Antoine Dénériaz, Olympic downhill medallist, and Argeline Tan-Bouquet, vice world telemark champion. Both of them are originally from Morillon.

## ☁ slopes of all different colours ☁

The Grand Massif is a huge mountain sports area that was created in winter 1982-1983 when the Tête des Saix and its five resorts were joined together: Flaine, Les Carroz, Morillon, Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval and Samoëns. 80% of the Grand Massif slopes are north-facing meaning that there is always an abundant amount of snow. A special feature of the Grand Massif? A large area with superb views, where you can ski between the fir trees.



## 1st ski area to be "Green Globe" certified

In autumn 2016, Grand Massif became the first ski area in the world to be "Green Globe" certified for all ski lifts, slopes and associated facilities and services. Just like 450 other international companies in the tourism industry, Grand Massif Domaines Skiables chose to aim for the Green Globe certification, in line with their values and which will showcase the notion of sustainable development for the area, with their environmental observatory for example, a first for France, and also their environmental policy that aims to reduce the impact of pollution and prevent pollution, for all the operational activities and facilities of the ski area.

**Opening dates of the resort:**  
2020-2021:  
Partial opening from the 12th to the 18th December, then full opening of the Grand Massif from the 19th December to 18th April.



## "Dénériaz Ski Academy"

Local champion Antoine Dénériaz, multiple medal winner and Olympic downhill champion (Turin Olympics 2006) is today a master designer of skis. He also offers weekly or seasonal skiing courses, in partnership with the ESF (French Ski School) for budding young skiers ('etoile d'or' or class 3 level). Skiing in all snow conditions, special and giant slalom, video analyses, 'flèche' competitions and chamois: an exciting programme is on the cards.



## 2 favourite slopes

### AT THE HEART OF THE FOREST

The Marvel slope (Morillon)

It is on this iconic slope that Antoine Dénériaz, Olympic downhill champion, born in Morillon, got his first taste of skiing! The Marvel green run is 5km long and is an original and fun slope for beginners at the heart of a forest of century-old fir trees! As well as the educational nature trail (mountain wildlife), this slope doubles up as a "ski safari", where you have to search for life-size animal shapes dotted around the slope. The Vulture should be easy to find, but you'll need to look a bit harder for the Ptarmigan.

**Highlight: sledging at night!** During the French school holidays in February, when the slopes have closed in the evening, the Marvel slope is reserved for those who want to try out this exceptional 5km-long sledging experience!

Sledge down the Marvel



### AT THE HEART OF THE NATURE RESERVE

The 'Cascades' (waterfalls) slope (Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval)

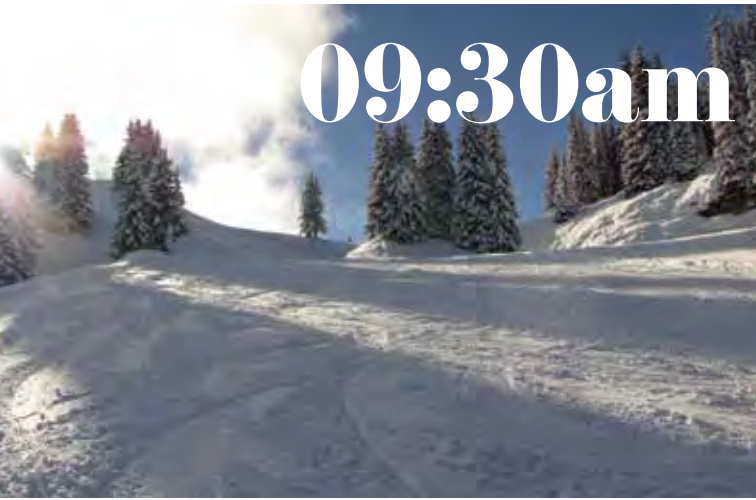
From an altitude of 2,480m at the peak of the ski area, all the way down to the village of Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval, this 14km blue run is a superb downhill experience through nature, at the heart of Sixt Nature Reserve, with no chairlifts in sight. Ice falls, chamois and birdsong will accompany skiers of all levels of ability along this skiing adventure.

### NEW!

The Labérieu slope for alternative skiing activities in Morillon, from an altitude of 1,100m right down to the village at 700m.



# A day of skiing in Morillon



## 8am

The day begins with a cup of coffee with Raymond at the bar “Le Bon Coin”, next to Morillon cable car. The perfect occasion to meet the ski lift team, the trackers of the Grand Massif and other locals from the area, and a great way to get all the useful information about the day ahead!

## 09:30am

Off we go for a day of skiing! We get warmed up slowly with a superb view, on the 7 Frères slope, and then head down towards Morillon 1100 on the Sairon slope or Marvel slope, and through the forest to really make sure you’re properly warmed up!

## 11am

Now we head to the fun areas for the borders, woops and other raised bends, or to solve the riddles on the long and famous Marvel green run, dotted with educational panels. Can you find the Ptarmigan hiding on the side of the slope? Another option: go up to Flaine to admire the view of Mont Blanc.

## 2pm

After a break for lunch at one of the picnic areas around the ski area, or at one of the Morillon mountain restaurants such as “L’Igloo” or “le Chalet d’Clair”, now you’re ready to explore the rest of the Grand Massif! In the afternoon, you’ll also have the opportunity to try out another activity such as dog-sledding, fatbike, survivalism or a trip over to a winter canyon...

## 5pm

Are you eager to head back down the slopes? When the slopes close, why not go sledding down the 5km-long Marvel slope, as a couple or with the whole family, to enjoy the very last moments before the sun goes down? Those with an Instagram account, when you arrive at the top of the Sairon charlift, there’s an exceptional viewpoint to take that perfect sunset photo.

## 7pm

After all that exercise, you deserve a treat. It’s now time to come and taste a Giffre Beer or other pick-me-up\* at one of the bars “L’Beu”, “Le 7”, “la Combe” or “le Morillon” at the Morillon 1100 Les Esserts resort... Or if you’re staying in the village of Morillon, head to “la Puzze”, “Yeti” or “Bon Coin”.

*\*in moderation*

## 9pm

After treating yourself to a local cheese speciality at one of the restaurants in Morillon, come and talk about the excitement of the day and enjoy a concert from a 100% local band, Zoubab et ses Acolytes!



Map of the slopes



# NORDIC SKIING IN GIFFRE VALLEY

Let's set the scene: A setting worthy of the Great North, in a valley that is passionate about Nordic skiing! To all those looking for the best place for Nordic skiing, there are 3 different sectors within the Haut-Giffre ski area: Morillon, Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval and Joux Plane. Overall there are 19 slopes and 55km, for the three main disciplines, suitable for beginners or experts: cross-country skiing, skating and biathlon, as well as other Nordic activities including dog-sledding or snowshoeing.

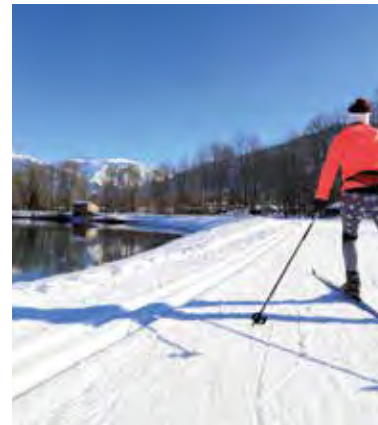
## Fancy trying your hand at Nordic skiing?

For beginner's or more advanced skiers, the ESF and ESI ski schools offer lessons devoted to diagonal stride and skating, before taking you on a Nordic hiking expedition to the heart of the surrounding natural environment. In Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval, you can be a biathlon champion for the day right at the heart of the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval, on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

## A fun Nordic experience?

Head over to the two "Nordic parks" of the Haut-Giffre (depending on snow cover) in Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval and Joux Plane (Verchaix). A fun way to learn the basics of cross-country skiing with slaloms, bumps, woops and other various tracks.

## Where can we go to ski? A closer look at the Haut-Giffre Nordic area



### THE PLAIN

▲ 670-900m

**4 green runs - 2 blue runs - 2 connecting red runs**

Along the river Giffre, there's a gentle uphill section that leads to Samoëns, Morillon and Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval, near the villages, through the forest, across the plain, around the lakes.

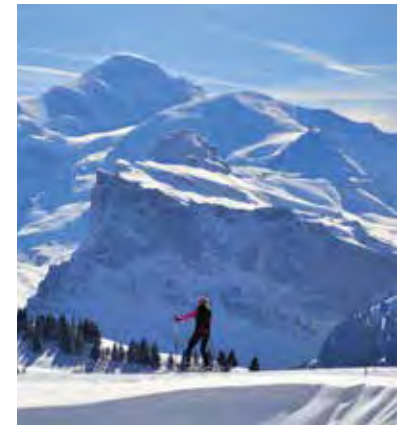


### FER-À-CHEVAL

▲ 950m

**1 green run - 3 blue runs**

A 10km loop through a superb natural area, from Molliet to the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval; add on extra intermediate loops as you wish (Molliet green loop, Pelly and Frénalay blue loops...).



### JOUX PLANE

▲ 1,700m

**3 green runs - 2 blue runs - 2 red runs**

In Verchaix, you are guaranteed snow all winter at this high-mountain site, with perfect sun exposure and a superb view of Mont Blanc and the Giffre Valley.



## AN INTRODUCTION TO NORDIC DISCIPLINES

### LES HIVERNALES DU HAUT-GIFFRE

SUNDAY 24TH JANUARY 2021

The Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval, Samoëns, Morillon and Verchaix resorts are pulling out all the stops so you can discover a wide range of Nordic activities, all in the exceptional Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval! The Hivernales du Haut-Giffre is a fun and festive day to find out (free-of-charge) all about the Nordic activities available in the valley: ski touring, biathlon, rifle shooting, snowshoeing, introduction to 'paret' (sledding), children's area, fat bike, pony sledding, and much more. There's also a wide range of entertainment on offer: educational activities with the Nature Reserve to learn about the wildlife in the valley, building igloos (depending on snow conditions), using an avalanche transceiver, etc. Come and join in the fun from 10am!

Free shuttle buses from the Tourist Offices throughout the valley (Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval and Samoëns), and from Lac Bleu in Morillon.

Grand Massif Montagnes du Giffre Tourist Office in Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval





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## A gentle stroll or sporty hiking

Hiking here is not just about a guidebook; it's an open book about nature and the history of the Giffre Valley and surrounding mountains, where walkers, beginner's or the more experienced, find the route to suit them. 650km of marked footpaths are available to use as and when you want.

Did you know that hiking is the number 1 sports activity for French people on holiday? According to a survey carried out by Atout France, "in light of increasing urbanisation, the need to return to nature and for activities in the great outdoors, as well as an increased focus on health and well-being, could explain why hiking is becoming more and more popular". And the mountains remain the most popular destination.

## 5 OF OUR TOP HIKES

### ALPINE LAKE & VIEW OF MONT BLANC

▲ 1,100m  
🕒 6.5 hours

A hike in the highlands, past the shelter, the lake and Anterne mountain pass (difficult).

### ALPINE PASTURES & PANORAMIC VIEW

▲ 600m  
🕒 4 hours

The Pointe de Chalune (average difficulty): 3 mountain passes, 1 peak, chamois, marmots.

### LE CRIOU ICONIC PEAK

▲ 600m  
🕒 4 hours

The chalets and the Aouille du Criou (very difficult): mountain ridges and a viewpoint.

### GLACIAL SITE OF FER-À-CHEVAL

▲ 435m  
🕒 4 hours

The "Bout du monde" (ends of the earth) and Boret chalet (quite difficult): winding mountain paths, waterfalls and Alpine ibex.

### DENTS BLANCHES WITH A NIGHT IN A SHELTER

Two days with a night in a shelter, encounter chamois up in the limestone peaks of the Dents Blanches, along the former route taken by smugglers, overlooking the Haut-Giffre Valley.

## Reconnect with nature and with yourself: hiking

with **Agnieszka Warszawska,** mountain guide in Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval

Agnieszka chose Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval as her base camp 22 years ago. She had always been passionate about the mountains and climbing in her home country, Poland, and she literally fell head over heels for this part of the valley, where she now knows all the hiking trails like the back of her hand. Agnieszka will take anyone wanting to find out more about the natural surroundings, for a walking tour or more sporty hiking trip. She passionately unveils the heart and soul and secrets of "this mountain paradise" (in her own words) that she explores all year round.

### Where are you going to take us?

"To heaven on earth! In the winter, I'll take you snowshoeing in complete safety and often off the beaten track, and in the summer we'll be hiking through a very diversified natural environment. We are so lucky here! I also like revealing some well-kept secrets. As a guide, I take participants on half-day or full-day hiking trips. The walks range from easy to difficult, and I even offer several days of trekking, that we call a "tour". There are so many possibilities on offer, depending on the season."

### Have you got a favourite spot?

"I enjoy going into the highlands of the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval, to the Vogealle shleter via the Pas de l'Ours,

the countryside and Chambres lake; it's a great itinerary, overlooking the staggering Tenneverge Massif. Facing this astounding wonder of Mother Nature, I find it inspires respect and humility, from beings as small as ourselves in comparison! I love the diversity of our valley, with its mountains, forests, lakes and rivers, all just as awe-inspiring as the last."

### Which hiking trail is the most popular with visitors?

"The Fer-à-Cheval is known as the pearl of the valley due to its simplicity, its beauty and I'd even go as far to say, its magnificence. When we are there, we feel completely overwhelmed, and I'm not the only one who feels that way. I've taken a lot



of people there, it's in high demand. It is a magnetic and thrilling place! It brings a tear to my eye every time!"

### Is that what gave you the idea to combine hiking and yoga with Julia Barnes?

"It was an obvious combination! Hiking is a great way to connect with nature, essential if you want to really feel alive. We are not in a landscape museum here; we have to realise that we are just as alive as this natural environment, we are close to Mother Nature and without her, we don't exist. Hiking is very much like yoga in that it's a meditative activity, that we take to at a gentle pace and in full consciousness, allowing us to reconnect to nature and to our own body and mind."

## Why is it better to venture into the mountains with a guide?

🗨️ In the winter, it is better to go on a showshoeing outing in the mountains with a guide, for safety reasons. In the summer: if you choose to go with a guide, you can find out about the details and landscapes that you might overlook if you are alone. A guide can provide information about the natural environment, share their

knowledge of the wildlife, our environment, these mountains, the geology and history of the area. Alone, these details may be overlooked. And there are places off the beaten track, with passages that only the Mountain Guides know about. Finally, it's essential to be accompanied for sporty hiking trips. 🗨️



# Walking in the pastures

The Vieille alpine pastures are in the highlands of Morillon, with the slopes of Les Carroz serving as the backdrop. This is a superb place for walking and features humid pastures and a beautiful spruce forest. Whether you choose to stop off for a snack at the farm or a glass of lemonade out on the terrace, you'll enjoy these moments up on the pastures, with a fantastic view over Giffre Valley.

On foot, by bicycle or via the chair lift, the Vieille alpine pastures, near Morillon 1100 Les Esserts is a place that is accessible to all. This superb family-friendly walk will take you along mountain footpaths and into the undergrowth (around 2.5 hours on foot, with 500m difference in altitude). The whole family will enjoy themselves, especially on very hot days! It is a perfect way for the children to discover life in the alpine pastures, walk at an altitude of 1,600m with sheep and goats roaming freely, appreciate the views, stop off for a well-deserved snack and then leave with some local products made on-site.

## Top 5 fun hikes as a family

### 1. THE FER-À-CHEVAL

Very easy

⌚ 2.5 hours – ⚓ 110m

The magic of the waterfalls and the sheer magnitude of the place make it truly one-of-a-kind. Walk through the Fer-à-Cheval (equipped with monoculars and binoculars) to identify and observe the mountain wildlife (ibex, eagles, vultures, etc.). The tourist offices can provide you with explanatory materials about the glaciers, so that you can read and understand the Alpine landscapes much better. Departure from the Fer-à-Cheval car park, then walk along the wide footpaths through the nature reserve.

### 2. THE LORNAZ TRAIL

Very easy

⌚ 1.5 hours – ⚓ 117m

A pleasant and instructive walk, leaving from Verchaix. Along the way: 15 educational panels on various topics including fauna, flora, architectural heritage, etc.

### 3. THE BOURGEOISE SUMMIT

Very easy

⌚ 2 hours – ⚓ 150m

Hiking trail across the pastures, above the forest. From the Bourgeoise Summit, there's a superb 360° view, with a breath-taking view of Mont Blanc and the surrounding peaks. The footpath is overlooking Giffre Valley and from up there, you can see the Jura and Switzerland.

### 4. THE ANCIENT TINES GORGES

Easy

⌚ 2 hours – ⚓ 286m

An exploration of the strange gorges, shaped by the river Giffre! A refreshing walk through this special world, with steps that make it easier to explore. At the top of the gorges, a superb view over the valley awaits you. On the way back, through the entrance to the gorges, there are some cliff faces that are perfect for rock climbing.

### 5. SALES VALLEY

Difficult

⌚ 5 hours – ⚓ 700m

From Lignon in Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval, take the footpath towards Sales mountain shelter. The first hour is a steep uphill climb to some magnificent waterfalls: the Pleureuse, Sauffat, etc. You'll then arrive at a superb plateau full of flowers and a torrent. A very pleasant footpath along the mountainside will lead you to the shelter and alpine pastures. Make sure you keep an eye out for Alpine ibex and marmots! You will return along the same footpath.

Try out some  
other hiking  
trails



## MY VERY FIRST HIKE

The self-guided hike along the Lornaz footpath in Verchaix is perfect for families and is a very easy, pleasant and instructive walk. Highlight: a very nice panoramic view of Morillon! Departure from Verchaix church.



# Trekking from shelter to shelter



## RUAN TOUR

The very best trekking adventure for hiking! A trekking expedition spread over several days, with overnight stays in shelters, across French and Swiss territory. The most varied and in an authentic superb Alpine setting, with some great views!

## DENTS BLANCHES TOUR

You can't go wrong! Along the former smuggler's route, this Franco-Swiss itinerary will take you through the mountains, forests, across pastures and Alpine passages in the limestone Dents Blanches mountains, overlooking Haut-Giffre Valley in Haute-Savoie and the Val d'Illeiez in Valais. To be done over three days (sporty trek) or 5 days (long trek), to enjoy this superb setting, and encounter chamois, ibex and marmots who will cross paths with you along the way.

## FIZ TOUR

A great classic, generally over 2 days. The Fiz mountain range is between Giffre Valley and Mont Blanc, and is a magical place in terms of landscapes and nature. From Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval or Passy: several 2 to 7-day trails are available, to choose depending on your needs. The itinerary will take you through the Sixt-Passy Nature Reserve and there are 9 shelters along the way, with 4 hours' walk between each one, accessible from June to September.

Find out about other trekking expeditions.



# A closer look at the Alfred Wills shelter with Bruno Pezet

There are 9 shelters in Haut-Giffre. One of them is perched at an altitude of 1,800m at the heart of Sixt Nature Reserve: the Alfred Wills shelter, and Bruno Pezet has been the caretaker there for 16 years now. Because an experience staying at a mountain shelter is all about the people you meet there, Bruno Pezet tells us all about life up there.

## Why did you become caretaker of a shelter?

"I was a ski instructor in the winter and I started managing the shelter in "Anterne" (the other name for the shelter) in the summer. I've been doing that for 16 years now! I love the Alpine pastures and the mountains; "Anterne" is an exceptional place! It is amazing working in these mountains. From mid-June to the end of September, I work here to welcome and meet the hikers passing through! Alfred Wills is a communal shelter and is open to all. I love being up there!"

## What is special about the Alfred Wills shelter?

"Its setting in the middle of Sixt Nature Reserve; it is accessible and completely isolated at the same time. It's not difficult to get to (but only on foot) and when you arrive, you find yourself in the middle of nowhere! It brings a very pleasant sense of calmness!"

## How do we get there?

"We get there on foot from Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval and more specifically the Rouget Waterfall. It takes two hours. This is quite a sporty hike, due to 720m difference in altitude. You will leave from the forest and pass by the Pleureuse waterfall which is absolutely magical! Then we go through the "lanches" (screes with sparse vegetation) before arriving at the entrance to the pastures, with Mont Blanc serving as the backdrop. Sheep have been grazing here since 1974 and it's a favourite habitat for marmots! You are right at the heart of Sixt-Passy Nature Reserve!"

## Is the shelter a departure point for trekking expeditions?

"Trekking is very popular at the moment! At the heart of the nature reserve, Alfred Wills can also be the departure point for a 3-day trekking expedition. The shelter works together with all the other shelters. Including Chatelet d'Ayères shelter (5 hour's walk) and Platé shelter: the ideal trio of shelters for a 3-day hiking trip through incredibly diverse landscapes, overlooking the Mont-Blanc Massif the whole way."

## What is life like at Alfred Wills shelter?

"It is a rustic-style shelter, divided into two buildings (a former fruit farm and a mountain chalet) with facilities to sleep 50, in dormitories with all the necessary facilities: shower, toilet, quilts, pillows, etc. Staying at a shelter is all about getting back to basics: pack light, just bring a sheet or hire one when you arrive! Included in your overnight stay is a bed, dinner and breakfast the next morning. We speak several languages. For dinner you can expect a traditional Savoyard Fondue, vegetarian options, special hiker's meat dishes, polenta and Nepalese cuisine. The environment surrounding the shelter is very green, with rivers and streams flowing past; a great place for children to run about, and they also enjoy exploring around the outdoor terrace. At Alfred Wills, your first overnight experience at a shelter is guaranteed to be a great one!"

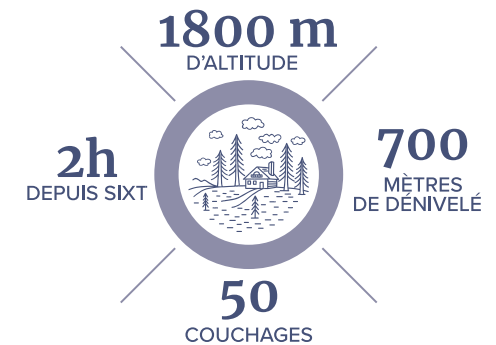
## Do you organise special Nepalese-themed evenings and events?

"Our chef here is from Nepal and we have a strong connection with the country through the "Play for Nepal" association. On two occasions during the high season, we organise a slideshow presentation at the shelter; sometimes I organise the event entitled "6,000 years of pastures in Anterne". The Conservatoire d'Espaces Naturels de Haute-Savoie, who manage the nature reserve, also organise events here throughout the summer."

## How do you manage the natural resources, for the everyday operation of the shelter?

"How can you welcome 50 people to the shelter without using too many resources? In the high mountains it's not easy to access resources and there are no 4x4 access roads. At the heart of the reserve, the shelter has had to adapt to this situation. It's a kind of modern energy laboratory! For example water and electricity are used sparingly."

Find out more!



## Who is Alfred Wills?

Alfred Wills (1828-1912) was a judge from the English court, passionate about the mountains, and he came to Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval in around 1850 to build a "holiday chalet" at the Fonds pastures. He explored every nook and cranny of the pastures and mountains and discovered the passages and peaks. His successors even built their own shelter at the Collet d'Anterne. He made a key contribution to the development of tourism in the valley.



# Make sure you are well-equipped for hiking: the check-list

Before setting off, you need to make sure you have everything you need. “The equipment you need depends entirely on your goal. If your bag is too heavy, you’ll be walking more slowly! And of course, it is essential to know how to use the equipment. For difficult hiking trails, make sure you have had proper training with the equipment, how to use it and safety”. Here are some basic recommendations from Gilles Leroy, expert survival guide, and his check-list to make sure you have what you need in your backpack, in summer or winter.

IN MY HIKING BACKPACK



SUNGLASSES



SUN CREAM



A SURVIVAL BLANKET



A CAP OR A HAT



PROTECTIVE CLOTHING AGAINST THE WIND AND RAIN (jacket with lining)



EXTRA LACES for your shoes



TOILET PAPER



A HEADLAMP



A SMALL FIRST AID KIT including: antiseptic solution, compresses, plasters, 1 bandage, 1 roll of adhesive plasters, maybe a pair of tick tweezers



WATER at least 1.5 litres



A JUMPER OR JACKET fleece-style, thick or thin, depending on the season and the temperature.



HIGH ENERGY SUPPLEMENTS (gingerbread, cereal bars, dried fruit, etc.)

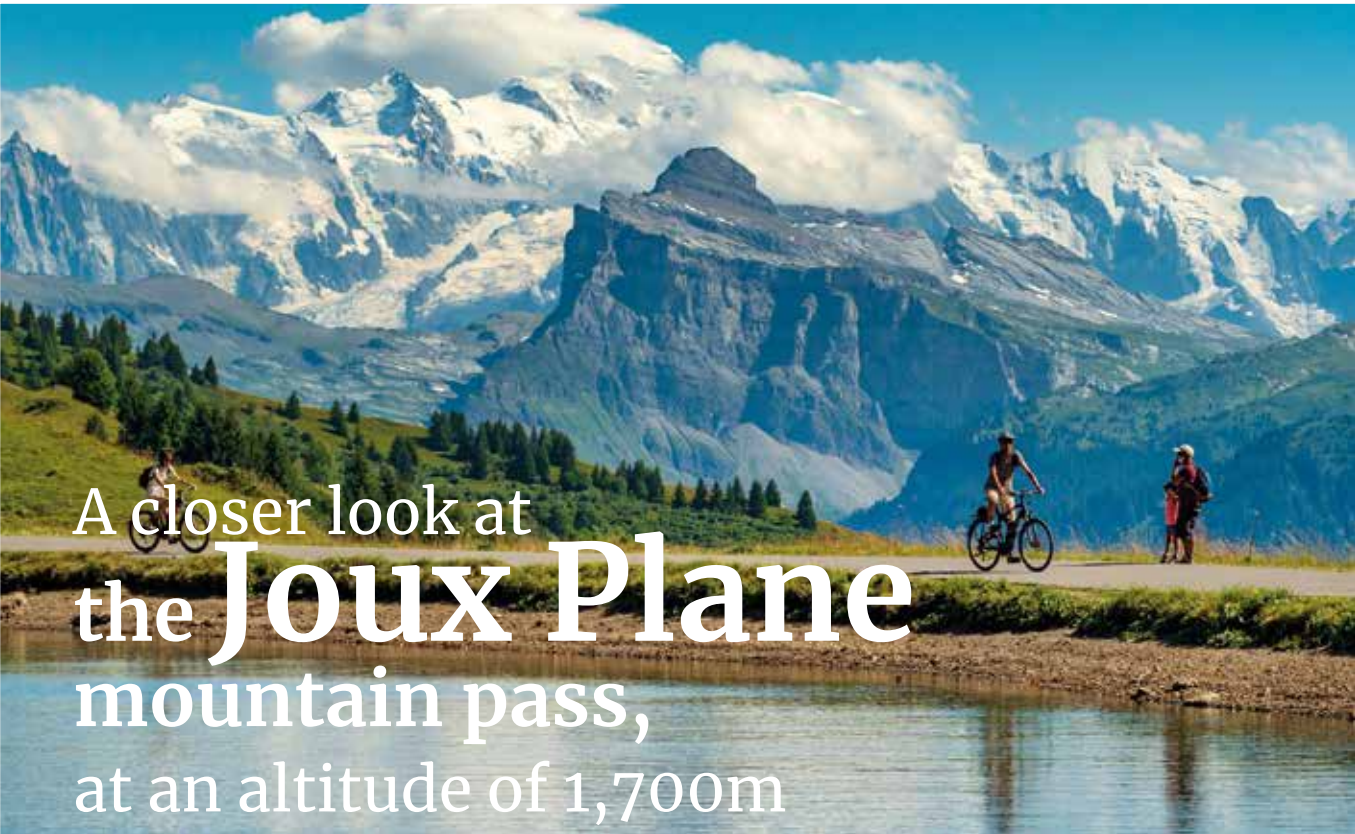
**TIP**  
KEEP YOUR PAPERS AND TELEPHONE IN A WATERPROOF BAG

Having a well-organised bag is absolutely essential! To be as comfortable as possible, the load needs to be concentrated around your hips and away from the shoulders. The weight should be organised so that the bag sits as close to your back as possible. Heavy items should be placed in the middle of your bag, against your back, and lighter items should be stored in outside pockets.

IF YOU ENCOUNTER ANY PROBLEMS WHILE HIKING...

Before calling any of the French emergency numbers (15, 112 or 18), make sure you localise your position. Look for the town and exact location (peak, path name, GPS mountain coordinates). You will be asked to provide information about the nature of the accident (road, fire, fall, malaise, etc.), the number of victims and their ages. Listen to the advice given and instructions of what to do. Make sure someone is visible and they wait there for the emergency services, do not hang up the phone because you will be put through to a doctor (it could take a few minutes BUT the emergency services have been notified).

**Good to know: if you can't dial 112 because you have no signal, send an SMS, email or chat message to 114.** If the person doesn't speak French: call 112 and you will be provided with an interpreter, for whatever language you need.



A closer look at the **Joux Plane** mountain pass, at an altitude of 1,700m



**ON FOOT**  
**HIKING IN ALPINE PASTURES**  
In the summer or winter, Joux Plane mountain pass is the perfect starting point for hiking trips towards the Bourgeoise peak, the Tête d'Angollon, to cross the Tête de Vuargne (on foot or with snowshoes), with an exceptional view of Mont Blanc the whole way. The number 1 hiking trail? “Along the ridges from Joux Plane to the Bourgeoise”: this hiking trail departs from Verchaix, with very high passages along the ridges, from the Joux Plane mountain pass to the Bourgeoise peak, where a view of Samoens and Giffre Valley awaits you. This 4.17km trail will take around 1 hour and 35 minutes, with a difference in altitude of 179m.



**BY BICYCLE**  
**MAJOR MOUNTAIN PASS OF FRANCE**  
The Joux Plane mountain pass is one of the six major mountain passes in the French mountains, along with Galibier, Mont Ventoux or Tourmalet. Along this mountain pass, there's a section overlooking the whole valley. It's a great mountain trail (13.9km), where it's important to pace yourself. The first cyclists to take on Joux Plane were the Tour de France participants in 1978, and since then it has become one of the iconic mountain passes of the sections through the Alps. The Tour de France has been here 17 times. For cyclists, Joux Plane is a magnificent summit to be conquered.



**ON SKIS / SHOWSHOES**  
**HIGH-ALTITUDE NORDIC AREA**  
Joux Plane is one of the top destinations for Nordic activities, with marked cross-country skiing tracks and superb panoramic views. It's invigorating up there with the 360° view at the Bourgeoise, and skiing through nature in the Croz sector - La Mouille au Bois Lairon, one of the entrances to Loex plateau (a classified biotope area). Natural snow cover and animal footprints make this a magical place. Joux Plane is a Nordic area that is both sporty, with a difference in altitude of 370m, and family-friendly, with introductory sessions at the ESF ski school, where you can also try out biathlon, just like the champions.



# Ski touring in your DNA

with **Christophe  
Avocat-Gros**



Go skiing off-piste and enjoy the natural, calm and wild side of the mountains... For this experience you'll be equipped with ski skins under your skis for the ascent, and in freeride mode on the way back down, accompanied with a professional who will help you discover this thrilling activity. Ski touring is a combination of fitness and cardio, and it has been booming over the past years at the resort, and more and more people are trying out this activity. Let's have a closer look at this winter hiking activity that is so popular in the Grand Massif, with Christophe Avocat-Gros, director of the Morillon French Ski School (ESF), who have 65 instructors, some of whom are expert ski touring guides.

"Skiing is not something that comes naturally, whether its alpine skiing, off-piste or ski touring! We need to know the techniques to be able to get pleasure out of it, and to ensure our safety", explains Christophe. "The Giffre Mountains are perfect for ski touring, with off-piste itineraries ranging from easy to advanced, some of which are well-known. We are surrounded by mountains with no rocks, wooded areas and it's all easy-to-access. For the more advanced skiers, Mont Buet with a summit at 3,090m is a great objective before taking on Mont Blanc", he adds. Whether you're looking for introductory sessions (400/500m difference in

altitude) or more advanced sessions (1,000m), Morillon Ski School (ESF) has passionate instructors who are specialised in ski touring and freeride skiing. "It's important to be accompanied by an instructor because it is forbidden to go ski touring up an Alpine ski slope; and for the descents, you need to go off-piste. It's better to begin with freeride skiing; which is also something we offer at the ESF throughout the winter season. We also provide all the necessary safety gear: spade, sensor, avalanche transceiver, etc.", reminds Christophe, who gives us his top 3 guided ski touring outings.



## NEW MARKED ITINERARIES

### LABERIEU SLOPE

The "Labérieu" slope in Morillon has been marked out for ski touring and new mountain sports (fat bike and yooner). You'll be skiing back down this blue run around the chalets and across pastures.

### RANDO PARK

Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval is opening "rando park", right at the heart of the ski area, for introductory sessions, to practice and to work on your skills. This new area is completely marked out and is 100% devoted to this activity, for sporty or more easy-going sessions, in complete safety.



Try out ski  
touring with  
the ski schools  
across the  
valley

### 1. Lignon Chalet

400m difference in altitude, leaving from Rouget Waterfall (Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval); a loop via the Pelly de Sales and Geais bridge. Total of 3.5 hours with an easy descent.

### 2. Bostan mountain shelter

At an altitude of 1,763m, with a difference in altitude of 700m, leaving from Allamands; a technical full-day ski touring trail, average to difficult.

### 3. Bostan mountain pass

At an altitude of 2,290m, 1,300m difference in altitude. Technically difficult: for experienced hikers.



## 1 SNOWSHOEING OUTING PER DAY ⌚ 3 HOURS

with **Arnaud Rétrif**,  
mountain guide

Find out about  
all the guides  
and the outings  
they propose



### MONDAY

Bighorn sheep at  
the Pointe d'Uble  
Massif

⚓ 200m

### TUESDAY

The animals of  
Sixt Nature Re-  
serve

⚓ 220m

### WEDNESDAY

The superb views  
from Bourgeoise  
peak

⚓ 300m

### THURSDAY

Panoramic views  
and animal  
footprints at Loex  
Plateau

⚓ 250m

### FRIDAY

A day  
of views in the  
Loex mountains

⚓ 250m



# FER À CHE VAL

Ends of the earth © David Casartelli

The "Ends of the earth", is a perfectly good phrase to describe the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval. At the far end of Giffre Valley, there's an amphitheatre of rocky cliffs and hidden treasures within. It is the second biggest natural 'cirque' in France, with 50 waterfalls. The bearded vulture can be seen circling up above Sixt Nature Reserve and the summits, including the majestic Tenneverge at an altitude of 2,989m and Mont Buet (3,096m), known as "Mont Blanc des Dames", where the very first Alpine high-mountain climb took place in 1770. The 'cirque' is a major advantage for Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval, in obtaining the 'Grand Site de France' label, hopefully in the near future. This classified natural site is perfect for hiking, walking and trail running, with a pleasant and well-deserved break in one of the 9 mountain shelters. This itinerary has been tried and tested by "The French Outdoors". A thrilling mountainous terrain where yoga and music lovers from all over the world come in search for inspiration. Article about the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval, the people here and the must-sees.

Where did the name "Fer-à-Cheval" come from? Fer-à-Chevel is French for "horseshoe" and it describes the semi-circular shape of the cliffs here.





# At the heart of Sixt-Passy Nature Reserve

Sixt Nature Reserve is one of the biggest of its kind in France, and the most widespread of the Haute-Savoie French department. There are two huge glacial 'cirques' here, with impressive waterfalls: the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval and the Cirque des Fonts. The sheer diversity of the natural habitats (humid areas, mixed woodland, cliffs, grass, prairies, 'landes', etc.), a surface area of 9,000 hectares and a difference in altitude of 2,100 metres, means that there is rich and diverse wildlife here: more than 800 plant species, including no less than 21 different species of orchids. There are 166 vertebrate animal species such as the Alpine ibex, chamois or the golden eagle. It is also the lucky chosen habitat for the iconic bearded vulture, with a couple of these birds of prey settled in Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval. What challenges does the site face? To ensure the protection of its heritage sites, while ensuring a place for mankind. That's why this territory is a member of the 'Grands Sites de France' network.

## The people of the nature reserve

Franck Miramand is a guide and technician for the CEN (Conservatoire d'Espaces Naturels) and Fabrice Anthoine is the ranger of the nature reserve. They ensure the protection of this sensitive natural area, managed by the 'Conservatoire d'Espaces Naturels' of Haute Savoie.

## Come and explore!

To learn all about this area and understand the issues at stake, there are various events and workshops organised over the summer (observations, meetings at the summit and children's workshops), and in the winter (roving). There is also an exhibition open to the public at the Maison de la Réserve Naturelle in Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval.



© David Gastelli - Sixt Fer à Cheval from the top of the Pointe Sans Bêt

# Operation 'Grand Site de France' with Mathieu Battais

With 80% of its territory classified, and boasting a nature reserve, the Cirque de Fer-à-Cheval and Rouget Waterfall, Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval can apply for the 'Grand Site de France' label. Mathieu Battais, project manager at the Joint Association for the 'Grand Site de Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval', is responsible for getting the operation 'Grand Site de France' up and running, and preparing their application for this label. He tells us all about this process that will lead to the classification and showcase a real treasure of natural heritage in our valley.

## What is a 'Grand Site de France'?

"It's an iconic landscape in France. Today, there are 18 places bearing this label and around twenty applications are currently being considered, including Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval. All of them have something in common: they are all breath-taking places! These charming destinations have been protected since 1930 by the "classified sites" law. They are beautiful, rare and fragile areas."

## Why is Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval applying for this label?

"The territory known as 'Grand Site de Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval' is a real treasure of the natural and cultural heritage of Haute-Savoie. It stretches way beyond the 11,907 hectares of municipal land. It includes a part of the Nature Reserve, the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval, the famous Rouget Waterfall, the Sales Waterfalls, the Anterne hiking trails and so much more. This operation means that this remarkable landscape can be protected over the long-term and its beauty preserved. To obtain the 'Grand Site de France' label, a territory needs

to stand out, to increase attractivity and showcase the territory as a place visitors can expect a unique experience, all while protecting the area. The challenge is finding the right balance between nature and tourism. This is what we're working on at the moment, by moving parking areas, creating educational and themed trails, exhibition points, catering facilities, etc."

## Where are we in the process for obtaining the label?

"We are currently looking at our strategy with the launch of our action plan for the next 15, 20 years, in partnership with the departmental council, architect design offices, landscape gardeners and tourism experts. It's all about setting down the main guidelines together and asking ourselves the right questions: which projects do we need to put in place for the Cirque and flow of visitors there, the centre of the village and facilities, the Tines and preservation of the area, transport, eco-friendly modes of transport, etc. and in which order we need to tackle these issues. Members of the local council meet with the locals for

regular discussion sessions known as "the Grands Sites Saturdays", so that everyone feels involved in this development project for Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval."

## How would you define 'Grand Site Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval'?

"Sixt is the 'ends of the earth'! There's only one road in. Once you've parked your car, you need to take your time exploring the place. The further you go, the more intimate and authentic places you discover. It's magical! We are in a glacial valley, in the high mountains (3,000m), but the differences in altitude are not very significant, so the area is accessible to all. The exceptional waterfalls, streams, summits, cliffs, undergrowth all make the exploration of this area like something out of a fairytale. Visitors make their way around the area, step-by-step towards the wonderful: 'Ends of the earth!'"

[www.grand-site-sixt.fr](http://www.grand-site-sixt.fr)



☺ The Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval is a natural historical monument ☺

**MATHIEU BATAIS**  
is passionate about the development of this territory

Since January 2018, he has been leading the project for the 'Grand Site de France' label. He was previously in charge of promoting the "Villes et Villages Fleuris" label with the Min-

istry of Tourism, and responsible for the protection of classified sites for the Ministry of Ecology. He developed a passion for this territory and is now a specialist in assisting local communities, striving to preserve the balance between the environment and economic development. His role is similar to that of an architect for historical French buildings, but his 'building' is natural spaces. "I really wanted to get involved in a project and I was particularly attracted to this one. I wanted and needed to get back to the mountains. This project I'm leading is also important to me on a personal level; to see my children grow up in such a preserved and precious environment", explains this lover of the Giffre Mountains, originally from the Jura department of France.



# THE CIRQUE DU FER-À-CHEVAL 4 WAYS

The Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval is also the venue for music and wellness in the open air. Here, we take the time to breathe, relax, unwind, spend some quality time, while getting the very most out of this superb natural area.

Live from the webcams



## 1. Acoustic Les Musicales du Fer-à-Cheval

Added to this exceptional setting, is an exceptional concert with André Manoukian, as the sponsor and face of this original musical event. For the very first edition, the famous French writer-composer, and British jazz singer Malia, brought the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval to life... A fantastic piano/vocals duo in a superb natural setting, and a one-of-a-kind musical event, the success of which is also thanks to Benjamin Caill, a pianist from the valley. "What's the concept? To bring together the emotion of music, and the contemplation of a landscape in a majestic setting. This perfect venue provides the artistic backdrop of the event. However, the landscape not only serves as the decor or backdrop, it also creates a symbiosis with an acoustic artistic programme that provides a simple, flowing sound, reflecting the very heart and soul of the Cirque. From the outset, I wanted to invite André Manoukian to perform for the first edition; this artist has experience performing in the mountains. He is a wonderful pianist and has great presence on stage.

As for Benjamin Caill, the virtuoso of the valley, the audience is really in for a treat! We were lucky enough to combine his masterful work with a slideshow of David Casartelli's photos. It was magical!" explains Laurent Vriez, operational manager, in charge of events at the Grand Massif Montagnes du Giffre Tourist Office.

### A word from André Manoukian:

"I had never been to the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval, this natural site with so many hidden nooks and crannies. It's just as beautiful as my homeland (editor's note: Chamonix)! It's even more surprising in fact, with the waterfalls providing a refreshing natural water mist! I absolutely love performing in the great outdoors. This place inspired me, it's breath-taking; performing here in harmony with the natural environment was memorable. I would like to be the official sponsor for 'Musicales' for a long time! And I dream of coming here to 'the ends of the earth.'"

## 2. 'Zen' & holistic Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval yoga festival

4th edition - 21st, 22nd and 23rd  
August 2020\*

Over this 3-day event, there will be around thirty different kinds of entertainment and workshops centred around yoga, a wellness village will be set up in the Abbey gardens, and there'll be big open-air sessions with Simon Park, an American and internationally-renowned master yoga teacher (see p. 52). Yoga and climbing, relaxing Thai massages, Yoga & hiking, Afghan walking, dynamic yoga, "instinct flow": the perfect programme to get started or improve your skills in a relaxing "zen" atmosphere, at just the right altitude, to start your day on the right foot.

"I identified the 'cirque' as the perfect place, with the right vibe, ideal for a big yoga session, to bring participants into the heart of this bewitching place. Naturally, from this idea came the suggestion for a bigger festival version, using other places in the area like the centre of village, adapted especially for the event. We pause time, to really get back to basics and to find yourself through yoga practices in a relaxed atmosphere, at this modestly-sized festival, where yoga is also associated with other disciplines such as climbing, hiking and music", explains Laurent Vriez.

*\*Depending on health regulations in place*



## 3. Invigorating Rouget Waterfall

One of the top 10 most extraordinary waterfalls in France! This is the highest of the 50 waterfalls in Sixt, and it flows all year long from Sales torrent upstream, and runs into the Giffre des Fonds downstream, forming the Petit Giffre in the commune of Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval. It has two separate flows and falls for 90m. It's easy to access as it is only 6km from the village and at an altitude of 1,000m. An opportunity for a 1.5 to 2.5-hour walk, there and back, along a footpath that is suitable for all. You can also reach the waterfall by car; an option for those with reduced mobility. A dramatic and refreshing experience!

*\* 'Déplacements en France' classification.*

### Walks around Rouget Waterfall, in the summer or winter!

Spring / summer hike (01/05 to 30/11) and snowshoe hike in winter (15/12 to 31/03): two ways to reach the waterfall and witness the water or ice show provided by the "Queen of the Alps".

## 50 waterfalls

flow from the cliffs and snowfields at the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval, at an altitude of over 2,000m. Embark on an exploration along the marked hiking trails! Some of them, including the Fond de la Combe and Nant des Pères get their source from the glaciers. Under the Corne du Chamois, we recommend

La Pierette, one of the highest, known as the Fontaine d'Or (golden fountain), and not far from there, the Méridienne. Up on the cliffs, the Joaton, Pissevache, La Lyre (the most beautiful), the Genette and upstream of the same Saint-Jacques torrent, the Citerne, Folly, Massue... Downstream, above Brairet

village, you can find Dard waterfall and in the Fond de la Combe Valley: Rejon, Cage, Scie, Violon and Gouille. It's up to you to find them! To help you, ask for the waterfalls tour documentation from the Grand Massif Montagnes du Giffre Tourist Office.





# 4. Enigmatic

## When “The French Outdoors” explore the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval

Upon invitation from "The French Outdoors" (read p.31), 40 photographers, passionate about the great outdoors, went on a 4-day expedition alone to the heart of the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval and Sixt Nature Reserve. At the end of their “Instameet”, they named the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval as their number one place for exploration. One of them, Céline Ducrettet, tells us about her experience.



© photo: Fabio Comparelli - intothefab

## Céline Ducrettet's “Instameet”



On the 30th May 2019, I set off on my first trekking experience, organised by The French Outdoors. 4 days of hiking through Sixt Nature Reserve with other passionate, professional photographers. Over these 4 days, we explored “the ends of the earth” (Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval), all the way to Grenaïron shelter, via Fonts shelter. The landscapes were absolutely incredible. The Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval really is an unmissable place in Haute-Savoie. I’m from this area and I knew about this place but I’d never been to any of the shelters. What a mistake! At Fonts shelter, we were surrounded by the mountains, and it really makes you feel so tiny. At Grenaïron shelter, we had a superb view of the valley down below, the Fiz mountains and the Mont Blanc Massif. We couldn’t believe our eyes! It wasn’t always easy for me to walk with a 15kg bag on my back, but it was worth it to see one of the most beautiful sunsets I’ve ever seen in the mountains, and to be able to photograph the milky

way over the peak of Mont Blanc! Those are definitely my two favourite moments of this adventure; as well as the holiday camp atmosphere we experienced the whole time, full of laughter and support when we needed it, at more difficult times.

“Probably the 4 greatest days of my life”

### HER FAVOURITE SPOTS IN GIFFRE VALLEY

“My favourite places in Giffre Valley: the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval and the exceptional view at the ends of the earth, the blue lake in Morillon with such an intense colour, and the walk along the Giffre to Dames Lake in Samoens, with the reflection of Criou mountain in the water”. She loves to share the places she discovers in France and abroad; landscapes and more specifically mountains and lakes!

@celineducrettet



## The French Outdoors

### with Mickaël Peralta

The French Outdoors is an association that was founded by Olivia, Vincent and Mickael, all photographers, passionate about the great outdoors, and Instagrammers. The idea of organising an expedition in the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval and to capture the magic of the place in pictures came about after a conversation on Instagram. The first year, they explored the Pyrenees. For their “Instameet” 2019 in the Alps, 40 Instagrammers explored the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval for a one-of-a-kind 4-day adventure.

#### What do the 7,000 members of The French Outdoors all have in common?

“Photography, passion for nature and sharing our discoveries on Instagram; showcasing the beauty of the places we are lucky to have in France. And for our “Instameet 2019”, we chose the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval! The 40 photographers for the Instameet 2019 came from all over France and Switzerland”.

#### Why did you choose the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval in 2019?

“For us, there are two iconic places for those who are passionate about the mountains: the Pyrenees and the Alps. After Gavarnie, the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval is the 2nd biggest ‘cirque’ in France, so we wanted to explore this well-reputed place for hiking and the views overlooking Mont Blanc. It was the perfect playground with all the right conditions. We contacted the Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval Tourist Office for help creating our itinerary for our 4-day expedition. We were also lucky to be able to prepare for our trip beforehand with the help of some guides from Sixt, for the markings, the shelters we would be eating at, and where we would be pitching our tents:

Grenaïron, Vogealle and Alfred Wills; we also used the mobile app “whympr” to help us with our itineraries”.

#### What will you remember from your adventure?

“An absolutely fantastic experience, and some great times spent together! Over the 4 days, we only had 15 minutes of telephone network coverage; unheard of for Instagrammers but a unique opportunity for us nature lovers! Cut-off from the rest of the world, we experienced some special times throughout our trek, campfires with no telephones; we learnt to get to know each other, for real! The people we met were just as special as the expedition itself; that’s why we launched The French Outdoors”.

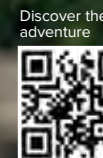
#### Which photos do you remember the most?

“The absolutely incredible sunset over Mont Blanc from Granairon shelter: magical! Exploring the ‘cirque’ and sleeping under the starry sky at the far end of the nature reserve: the first night was unforgettable!”

#thefrenchoutdoor2019  
#thefrenchoutdoors  
@mickael\_peralta  
www.thefrenchoutdoors.fr



© photo: mickael\_peralta



Discover the adventure





# PORTRAIT [S]

They are the embodiment of the spirit of the valley and the Giffre mountains: authentic, daring and inspiring. Argeline Tan-Bouquet, the Michaud brothers, Guillaume Wagemans, David Casartelli, Jérôme Guillot, Anne and Jean-Pierre Chaigneau are all either natives of this land or have chosen to make it their home, and they all want to share the territory with passion.

## The ultimate 'free-heeler'

### Argeline Tan-Bouquet

You can see the passion and determination in vice world telemark champion for 2019, Argeline Tan-Bouquet's sparkling eyes and bright smile. Argeline is originally from Morillon, and she really stands out from the crowd: ambassador of the mountains she holds so dearly, and for this sport, for which she hopes to compete in the Olympics one day. This surprising woman manages beautifully her double life, as a physiotherapist by day, and then 'free-heeler' on the slopes, and she's only 25 years old.

She arrived in the valley at the age of 6 and got her first taste for this discipline on the slopes of Grand Massif. She joined Morillon's ski club as soon as she could and grew up on the resort's slopes, competing well into her teens. Her future as an alpine skiing champion appeared to be mapped out. But at the age of 17 and during the 'minimes 2' season "I wasn't enjoying alpine skiing races anymore, it wasn't fun", she admits. So she decided to take another path, and ended up trying telemark skiing. This was obviously the right choice because she's now vice world champion for 2019, with a few impressive achievements under her belt, in the junior category.

#### Telemark, a coincidence

"I first tried out telemark skiing when I did an introductory session at the age of 12. I was lucky enough to participate in a week-long course in Houches, with Albin Tissot, world champion back then, and a friend of my parents. I decided to change discipline in Samoens with an association that had just been founded. I rented all the equipment. We had just had 30 centimetres of snowfall and we went into the powder, I fell over every two metres and my thighs were burning!"

This didn't stop the fan of powder

snow, who tried this largely unknown discipline at the time, for a second time. On that day, she had a revelation: she really took to the 'free-heel' technique! She was still at high school at the time in Chamonix, she skied during the week and trained with the Samoens Team Telemark at the weekend, with Julien Annequin as her main coach. She learnt all there is to know about this discipline, which is a blend of alpine skiing, skating and cross-country skiing. When she competed in her first race in Praz de Lys, she came first for her category; the experience in alpine skiing certainly helped, she was faster than the others, with extraordinary carving techniques. She competed in French championships for a season and then her first world cup in 2011. "I lost spectacularly", explains the champion.

#### Her first world cup victory

This was THE highlight after 10 years of practice; 2018, when she was just 23 years old: "It was in Pragognan. The day before I came 2nd in Sprint, something strange happened that day." ...



Find out more



Facebook/argelinetanbouquet  
Instagram/argelinetan





# The “Made in Morillon” wood guys

## The Michaud brothers

**We went to meet Maurice and André at their workshop, a place they’ve never left, where they were born, and where they fine-tuned their woodworking skills! The two brothers, aged 77 and 78 respectively, are an inseparable duo of brave and hard-working retired woodworkers, still working at their sanctuary at the heart of Morillon, their hometown. If there were a register for human heritage of the village, this duo would be at the top of the list.**

With all the due humility they deserve, the Michaud brothers call themselves carpenters/craftsmen. They are actually real artists, with an appetite for life, and a passion for wood, from which they produce

some wonderful creations. In their big workshop that has accompanied them through the decades, they are still creating furniture, boxes and various objects from sculpted wood. “We always have a knife in our pocket, ready to sculpt something”, explains André. The two brothers are inseparable, they first discovered their trade as apprentices in Annemasse then, at the age of 18, they both gained their experience working for 20 years for a company in Taninges and then 5 years in La Rivière-Enverse, always together, and always in the local area. “You have to steal yourself a trade; observe the older, more experienced than yourself, because they know things”, explains André. The village schoolteacher first noticed that these two brothers had a gift; their father decided they would leave the alpine pastures and

the farming industry behind them, and learn a trade. What a good idea that was. The Michaud brothers then lived happily ever after!

## The chalets of Morillon and development of the resort

The two natives of Morillon were the first to witness the transformation of their village into a small ski resort in the 60s, and they were at the forefront: their skills were required to build the very first rental chalets. “This transformation brought construction work to the area; labour was needed!” explains Maurice. This was when they decided to open their own workshop. What a great idea! They worked on creating beautiful roofing for the chalets, organised the interior layout, and all the joinery; in Morillon and Samoens, and all the way to Morzine, Les Gets and Arve Valley. The emergence of Formica in the 70s didn’t stop them. Because the trend for wood soon came back even stronger.

They were asked to create small items of furniture and interior renovation “in old wood”. Since they supposedly “retired”, they have built their nephew and niece’s house and renovated their family chalet. The artists have seen a number of trends over the years, without necessarily bowing to them; but they always follow the current, ready to offer their services. And that’s still the case today.

“We love working these little pieces of wood”

Who do we call when we have an old wooden door that’s falling apart? The Michaud brothers always have a knife in their pockets, ready to practise their trade. Maurice’s carved dove, André’s sculpted pictures or magic boxes take up the little spare time they grant themselves.

## Maurice, the inventor of the twin-tip skis...

This hardworking duo doesn’t have much time left for leisure activities!

“We were working too much to be able to become ski instructors. But we still enjoyed the slopes, in our own way!” declares Maurice who, one day, when he was just 20 years old, had the idea of making two small wooden skis for the descent down Les Esserts during the carnival. What was special about them? Both ends were raised! Without even realising it, Maurice invented twin-tip skis. The duo also remembers making a wooden bobsleigh. “We’ve still got it! We could fit 10 of us in it, we sledged down slopes that weren’t groomed as they are today, or down the snow-covered roads of Morillon, in the evening, with an electric torch. We followed the horse tracks that the wood skidded along in the day; we absolutely flew down them, it was so funny!”, remembers Maurice, with a boyish smile on his face! Since forever, they have been making the “Babu”, the mascot for the Carnival, and it is still tradition today to set it on fire at the end of the winter season. In the workshop, the circular saw, planer and all the other tools are still in action. And when they are asked why they never left this place, they always reply: “We never felt the need to leave. There

was always work here, we earned a living and we never questioned it. We’ve always been happy here. Back when everything was done on horseback, bicycle or on foot; we just got on with it. We took our time. Nobody had a “thingamajig” back then (editor’s note: mobile phone). We love our valley, it is still as authentic as ever”. And for those who don’t know Morillon, Maurice has some wise words for you: “If you want to see it, our mountains, our valley and us, you’ll just have to come here!”

Find out more







# An eye on the valley

David Casartelli



**When photographer David Casartelli lays eyes on the landscapes of the territory, he widens our horizons. The former paragliding champion likes to take to the airs over the Giffre Mountains (his mountains), to show us a different view of these landscapes, that he presents in his photographic masterpieces. The artist always has an eye on the valley, always has his camera on-hand, to capture the moment and share his photos with us.**

His life is centred around these mountains, that he finds so passionate and fascinating. He observes them from the big windows of his chalet in the valley. This passionate photographer cannot resist the call from the Giffre Mountains, that he loves exploring so much, in search for the hidden treasures within. At the age of 2, he got on a pair of skis for the first time and excelled on the Grand Massif slopes with the alpine skiing club, before falling in love with the skies up above. This former member of the French national paragliding team then took to the skies for 12 years; that's why David has this passion to show us the views he sees from up high. For the mountain guide, he knows the mountains and the hiking trails like the back of his hand. The Giffre Mountains is his base camp. The scene has been set, so what is his goal?

“I’ve always got a camera on me”

While his father was filming their quality family time in Super 8 film, up in the mountains where the family spent most of their free time, David was discovering the first Instamatic cameras. He was hooked! He spent his time reading photography books and at 15 years old, bought his very first SLR camera; that he’s still got now. When the champion set off on a world paragliding tour, he took his camera with him, and for 7 years he sent his photos and videos, shot from the world up above, to specialised magazines. That’s how his career as a photographer took off, quite literally, and he began working full time from that year onwards. “I’ve always got a camera with me in my backpack: my SLR camera and my smartphone. I never go

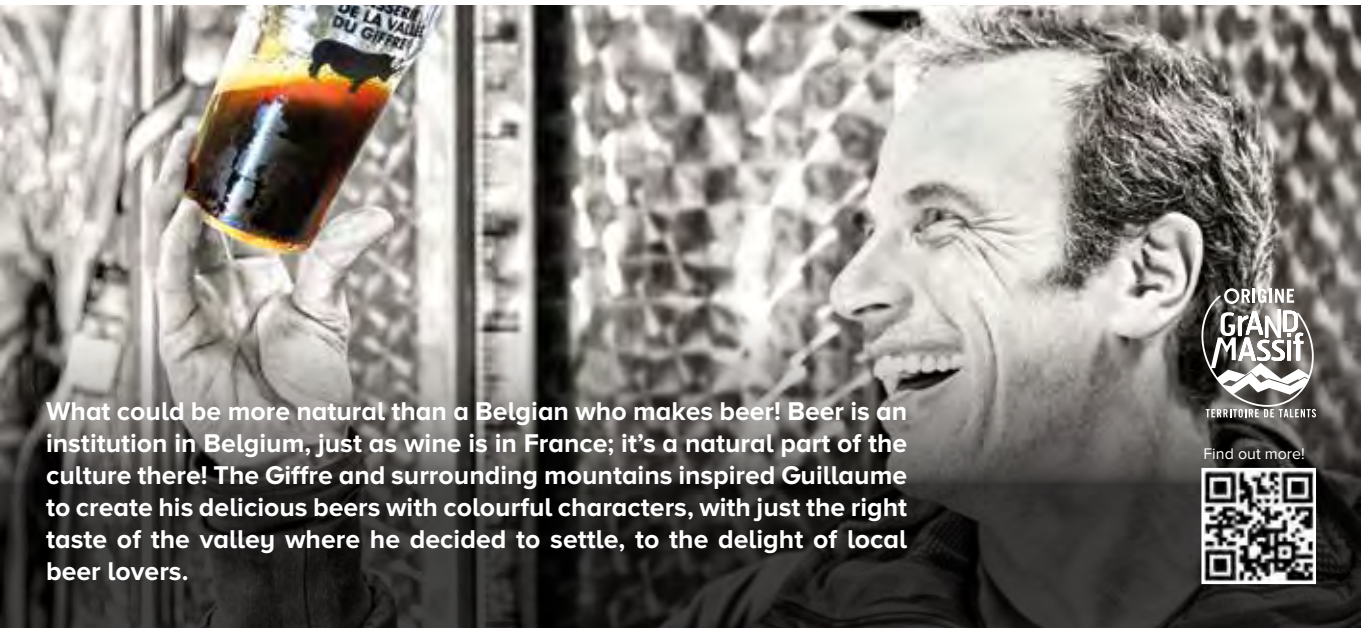
a day without taking a photo!” He also explores the mountains on foot. Just like any other explorer, he captures the treasures and colours he encounters on his adventures, to share with the public: “for those who are not lucky enough to come to the Giffre Mountains, or who have never even heard of them”, says the photographer.

[www.davidcasartelli.com](http://www.davidcasartelli.com)  
[Facebook/davidcasartelliphotography](https://www.facebook.com/davidcasartelliphotography)  
[Instagram/davidcasartelliphotography](https://www.instagram.com/davidcasartelliphotography)



# The brewer who is quenching the thirst of the valley at his own pace

Guillaume Wagemans



What could be more natural than a Belgian who makes beer! Beer is an institution in Belgium, just as wine is in France; it’s a natural part of the culture there! The Giffre and surrounding mountains inspired Guillaume to create his delicious beers with colourful characters, with just the right taste of the valley where he decided to settle, to the delight of local beer lovers.



As a lover of beer and nature, Guillaume decided to move here, to live in Verchaix, after having completed his studies in business. He had recently discovered his newfound passion and “was lucky enough to have lost his job”, in his own words. The brewer worked alongside Antoine de Swarte, founder of the Brasserie de la Vallée du Giffre, and then took over the business in 2018. Guillaume likes to say that he’s been living at the brewery for 7 years now. Because he sometimes even works overnight, working on new recipes: 60 different ones currently! A collection of flavoursome beers he creates and brews right here, not far from the river Giffre, where he collects his water source, the main ingredient in his sparkling creations.

“Making beer can be just as creative as making soup”

It’s not as easy as you think to create and produce tasty beers! Because you need a generous helping of culture, a good dose of creativity and the right know-how... just like this passionate craftsman. Working at a bar specialised in beers, he was able to gain his experience and fine-tune his art of

creation. He now knows everything there is to know about the 250 kinds of hops and he enjoys experimenting with them to come up with the best blends! “We come up with all sorts of blends”, he says. He likes to use wine, cognac or bourbon barrels to age his beers; his “Bout du monde” (ends of the earth) variety got its flavours from a Bourgogne barrel. Recently he worked with a brewer from Bauges and had the idea of filtering the beer in hay, using wild-type yeast; with his “Bérote” variety as a base. He was invited to the “Bière sur la ville” festival in Lyon, and matched his beers to Japanese cuisine, from his workshop in Croix Rousse. When creating, this micro brewer follows his instincts and trusts his heart. “La Rioule” is one of his classic India Pale Ale’s. Every week, Guillaume creates a new beer variety and he needs 5 to 6 weeks to produce it. “It’s a great moment when a new beer variety comes to life; it’s important that I like it!” His favourite moment in the whole process is when he mixes the grain using his ‘fouquet’, an ancestral tool. “I love this manual side to it because I get so much from it, actually feeling the texture and the dust from the malting process. That’s where it all begins!” Purist and authentic,

the brewer chose the rhinoceros as the official logo of the brewery: an animal that follows its course, always moving forwards, at its own pace.

**His creations are named after places in the valley**

Just like the “Bout du monde” variety, in reference to the famous and iconic hiking trail bearing the same name, in the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval. To find the perfect image for each taste, he called upon the talent of Amandine Revel, to design the labels; always featuring a mountain in the corner of the label. For the colours, it all depends on the flavour of the beer. What do they all have in common? He creates beers with a strong character, just like the people of the mountains; distinctive, rugged and genuine, like the land. A land he loves to explore, up to the mountain peaks. “When we arrive in the valley, we are overwhelmed when faced with this view of the Pic du Marcelly, and the impression of being at the ends of the earth in the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval, where I love to go exploring!”

[www.bieres-du-giffre.fr](http://www.bieres-du-giffre.fr)



# Paret sledging in the valley...

Jérôme Guillot

What makes Jérôme tick is leaving his mark in fresh snow and seeing the eager, excited glint in the eyes of the people he takes on a discovery of this contraption that was used by schoolchildren in the past, and that he, himself, now builds in his workshop: the 'paret' sledge. We met with Jérôme Guillot, a woodworker with a passion for this sledge. A passion that he shares with willing participants throughout the winter.

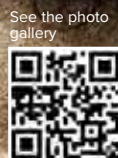
"For 7 years now, I've devoted my life to the 'paret' sledge", declares Jérôme with passion. 450 'paret' sledges have been created in his Verchaix workshop "Agencement d'autrefois"! This woodworker gained his experience by working for 3 years with a master craftsman. Since then, he experiments with wood, showing the endless possibilities of its use, with his creations and innovations. In the valley, Jérôme was the first to come up with a 'paret' sledge equipped with a ski. "With a ski underneath, there's less chance of getting stuck in the snow, compared to the traditional 'paret' sledge with a wooden blade. We can go anywhere on it! And it only takes 15 minutes to learn the basics before setting off". It takes Jérôme 4 hours to make a 'paret' sledge from ash wood or spruce, and he can personalise them to suit each customer. "Once you've tried this activity, you don't want to stop. Just like a family from Brittany who asked me to make one for them last winter!" declares Jérôme. A personalised 'paret' sledge costs around 120 euros; a little more for the more 'modern' version, the yooner, and a similar contraption that is becoming more and more popular and that Jérôme knows very well, the snooc. A brand-new invention will soon appear from his workshop: "the Pahu" is expected to be launched in the winter. Because, as Jérôme likes to say, "When the Dahu passes by, the Pahu isn't far away".

Let's head out on the slopes?

In the winter, Jérôme splits his time between his workshop and the slopes. Because this passionate woodworker is also keen on 'paret' sledging himself. He takes participants up to the slopes of the Nordic area in Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval and Joux Plane, where he leads introductory

sessions. He also works with groups of school children or holiday camps, as well as company team-building activities. This generous man sometimes provides all his equipment on loan, for example to charities like "Tom en tête", who helps people with disabilities or people in vulnerable social situations, to explore the mountains. Jérôme absolutely lives for these moments with his groups. This "wooden contraption" is popular with people of all ages, it's a great activity for the whole family! A whole new community has developed in the valley around the 'paret' sledge, yooner and the snooc, led by a trio of fanatics, including Jérôme. "There's even now a local group of around 30 people who share the same passion for 'paret' sledging and similar activities, called "Mont Paret". We like getting together, having a good time, and why not aim to organise a trip together to the French championships in Manigod, or even try to plan one of the stages right here in Morillon! As soon as it snows, we head out to the slopes!" They organise the "Yoopas", an event devoted to paret/yooner/snooc that is very popular with the people of Lyon and Grenoble. Ask Jérôme to concoct an outing just for you. From up there on your 'paret' sledge, the world is your oyster. His favourite spot? The famous descent of the Criou, the iconic summit of the valley, combined with a fondue. His favourite moment? At sunset "In the evening, it's amazing to head out equipped with a headlamp, into the wild natural environment, with the light of the moon leading the way!"

agencementdautrefois.over-blog.com  
Facebook.com/Le-Pahu-104644791020206



See the photo gallery

# "Welcome to the ends of the earth!" at Le Pelly Campsite

Anne and Jean-Pierre Chaigneau

This couple originally from the Vendée decided to move to this region six years ago, and set up their base camp in Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval. Moving from the seaside to the mountains, they've gained in altitude and started a new life here with their five children. At Le Pelly Campsite, at the entrance to the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval, they welcome hikers and nature lovers, some of them from far off lands, looking to go to the "ends of the earth".



"We arrived in Sixt almost by accident. We had always seen a sign but we never turned right to go there!" admitted Anne when she told us about how they ended up here. A desire to change their lives and escape to the great outdoors led them to the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval, that has been "their office" now for the past 6 years, and the place they fell in love with on that day, the 25th October 2014. "When we visited this municipal campsite, despite the cold and bad weather, we felt instantly comfortable and completely at home here; after just a few minutes we knew that we would be moving here. We were drawn to this place." The couple felt seized with emotion, captivated by the magic and atmosphere of the place, as Anne likes to say, and they decided to leave behind their life working in the luxury open-air accommodation establishments they had been running for 18 years in the Vendée. Because here, there's no need for added attractions: the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval is quite enough all by itself! The day before their visit, they had

We've got the best office in the world

run into a herd of bellowing deer and does. "We were on another planet", revealed Anne. That was the end of working with fancy facilities: this place brought out a desire in them to get back to working in a modestly-sized establishment, and to focus on their guests.

Sleep at the heart of the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval

Le Pelly is a two-star establishment. Anyone who has stayed on this campsite at the heart of the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval will tell you: between the thousands of stars in the sky at night and those in your eyes when you wake up in the morning, overlooking the magical spectacle of the waterfalls and majestic peaks, this place goes beyond all classifications. Visitors come from France, sometimes even from the valley, from Annecy, Chambéry, Lyon, Paris and sometimes from abroad, to explore this classified natural area. "This year, as well as our usual

clientele, we welcomed guests from Bulgaria, Croatia, Spain and Israel". What were they looking for? To relax and unwind, and to go on some superb hiking trips with spectacular views. And to experience an overnight stay, in a Canadian-style "mountain adventure tent" (sleeps two), a canvas hut or the "easy to camp" tents (for families) on the campsite. In 6 years, what fascinates Anne is the sheer diversity of guests they have, with whom the family often develops a close relationship: "Here, our guests come from so many different backgrounds. Hiking and the mountains encourages a connection between people who would probably have never had the chance to cross paths otherwise". The setting really adds to the magic of the place, and the mindset of the couple also adds stars to the classification of Le Pelly. Here, when we say "Welcome to our home", we really mean it. Anne and Jean-Pierre love to share their love for nature and the simple things in life with their guests.

www.lepelly.com

Find out about Le Pelly





# ADVENTURES

Setting off on an adventure comes naturally here! In the white-water rapids, in the air, with the animals, to relax or in a more extreme way, those looking for great food or heritage sites: everyone can push the boundaries and find brand-new pleasures to explore.





# In the white-water rapids!

In the Giffre canyon, the river and the waterfalls in Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval, you're guaranteed a refreshing experience in the summer, as long as you're not afraid to get wet!

## Rafting FOR KIDS AND THE PROS

From the Criou to Grand Ruan, via le Buet and Cheval Blanc, there are so many peaks at altitudes of between 2,000m and 3,000m, providing the sources for the waters of the Giffre, and making this area a reference for those looking for white-water sports. The river Giffre can offer some white-knuckle experiences between May and September, making it perfect for rafting or hydrospeed. In July and August, it is more fun and family-friendly, and the sporty among you can try out the airboat and canoraft.

### My 1st rafting experience

The river Giffre is a calm river and in places, not too deep, so it's ideal for your very first experience of this water sport! From the age of 7, children who can already swim can get a taste of the joys of rafting and their very first rushes of adrenaline, getting caught in the currents with the team from Indiana Rafting.

### For the pros!

100% Raft is the ultimate "Rafting Alpine Trip" to choose for a thrilling descent down the Giffre. On the programme: hop aboard a Raft Xpert, then try out a two-seater sporty canoraft, with a section down the gorges for the more daring.

## Canyoning 4 WAYS

### As a family

What could be more fun than sliding and jumping in the water? You're guaranteed a fun and refreshing experience as a family, in a natural setting where the waters have paved the way for a fun activity that is accessible to all. The 'witches hole' passage, small jumps, slides, alone or with a group, with instructors from Trekycimes.

### A shot of adrenaline!

The canyon in the Giffre gorges in Mieussy are to be experienced with a very low level of water. In 2.5 hours, you arrive at the bottom. With the Giffre valley canyon guides.

Find out more about the white-water activities



### ONE-OF-A-KIND IN FRANCE: exclusive to the Haut-Giffre

#### By night...

In the light of the moon or with headlamps, the slides, jumps and abseiling take on a whole other dimension!

#### Icy!

In the winter, come and discover canyoning and learn about the environmental issues at stake for the water cycle. Here's the programme for this 1.5-hour extraordinary expedition organised in Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval by Gilles Leroy from Latitude Canyon. Thanks to a carefully-designed educational trail, explorers can learn about the techniques to adopt with the ropes, for abseiling, and passing through narrow spaces, while learning about how to ensure the protection of this special environment at the same time.

## TOP TIP

### THE "100% SMILEY" PACKAGE!

If you want to try out rafting, canoraft (or airboat) and canyoning, whether you're looking to slide, row, abseil or jump: this is the most enjoyable experience you can find, available from the Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval centre.

## 1. A MOUNTAIN RIVER

46.2km: the Giffre is proportionally one of the most abundant in France. A tributary of the Arve, sub-tributary of the Rhone, this torrent came to be thanks to the waterfalls of the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval and Ruan glacier on one side, and the Cirque du Fonts on the other. Its name, of Burgundian origin, means "great waters".

## 2. CROSSING 11 TOWNS

From upstream to downstream, the river Giffre crosses the following eleven towns:

Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval (its source), Samoëns, Verchaix, Morillon, La Rivière-Enverse, Châtillon-sur-Cluses, Taninges, Mieussy, Saint-Jeoire, Marignier, Vougy (confluence).

## 3. A SENSITIVE NATURAL AREA

It's a remarkable place in terms of natural heritage, due to the sheer diversity of the fauna, flora and landscapes. The river Giffre is protected (and labelled) by the department of Haute-Savoie, for its ecological and landscape value.

## 4. A PLACE FOR A DOSE OF ADRENALINE

The waters are calm between April and the end of September, and much more turbulent in June and July. Those looking for a rafting, canyoning or other white-water activities won't be disappointed. The Giffre is narrow and deep through the Tines Gorges, and then much wider downstream in the Vallon Plain. There, the banks and stony or sandy beaches are great for playing games in the water and a refreshing swim.

And through the middle of the valley, runs a river:

# the Giffre

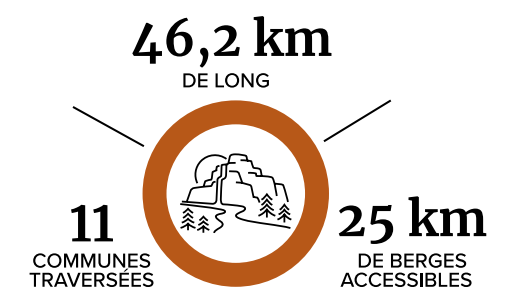
summarised in 6 points

## 5. A WALK ALONG THE BANKS

The easy-going trail "Au Fil du Giffre" is like a trail of breadcrumbs to explore the valley in a different way, in a quiet, green setting. This trail is 25km long, from the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval to Taninges, with the possibility of stopping off in the villages of the Giffre Mountains along the way, at your own pace. Whether you decide to go on foot, by bicycle or on horseback, this trail can take 1.5 hours or several days.

## 6. AN EDUCATIONAL PLACE

Learn how to distinguish between a river and another humid place, observe and understand where the water from the river actually comes from and where it goes (water cycle), and learn about the animals who live in this river. This is great for children in groups, school trips or holiday camps. The Giffre is a fantastic place to learn about the environment.





# The “survivalism” trend

Orienteering with  
**Gilles Leroy**  
survival expert

Rescue missions, rope techniques, survival in the middle of nowhere... put yourself in Bear Grylls' shoes for a course on survivalism! Survival expert Gilles Leroy will take you on an exploration of the land and our own abilities, for a half day, full day or longer with camping. He'll tell us all about this new trend, that he helps adventurers discover all year round, who are ready and willing to leave their comfort zone.

## How did you come up with the idea of survivalism courses?

“I've always lived in the mountains and been a fan of outdoor sports. From 2003 to 2011, I did some travelling to try out water sports and mountain sports. I tried to venture further and further into the wilderness, with canyons, climbing routes, and I had to survive in unknown territory. I remember on a trip to Chili when we had to trust our instincts to survive a storm. When I came back to France, I was certified with the ski patrol and a certified lifeguard so I wanted to share the experience of exploring, the beauty of the landscapes, in combination with this notion of safety; first of all with canyoning, my speciality, then more generally related to safety, with my survivalism courses that I've been running for 6 years now.”

## What exactly is survivalism?

“The people I took on canyoning trips started asking me questions like - and if we hurt ourselves, what happens? I wanted to show them how they could survive in the great outdoors. Survivalism is all about leaving your comfort zone, learning to be at one with nature, about the potential dangers, and working on pushing yourself past your limits; how to light a fire, how to find shelter, how to find water, thanks to rescue missions and orienteering scenarios. I created some educational scenarios, for example

getting lost in the forest, being taken by surprise by nightfall, having an accident... I like to make people aware of the dangers that can be avoided with the right training and prevention.”

## What does a typical course look like?

“The content of the courses depends entirely on the participants; I am there to bring my expertise and technical skills to the table, but they make their own decisions. It's essential to be able to feel danger coming and make the right decisions in the mountains! The courses are scheduled all year round. For a full day session for example, I organise a sort of orienteering course, to get from point A to point B, to escape a dangerous situation. For a course with an overnight camping experience, participants will do the orienteering course, and also be expected to choose the right place for their sleeping bag, come up with survival and advancement strategies, etc. Between point A and point B, things happen and if the wrong decisions are made over and over again, they could cause problems! Children from the age of 5 can participate with their parents for a half day course: they enjoy collecting wood and building the shelter. The only condition: come to the course equipped as if you were going on a hiking expedition. You

should already have the right reflexes to avoid putting yourself in danger. I then provide some new tips and tricks for surviving.”

## Why is the Haut-Giffre a good place for this?

“We've got everything we need: glacial canyon, diverse landscapes, forest down below and deep and narrow valleys, so we can concoct a survival experience as if we were in the heart of Alaska. Everything you need for an adventure in the great outdoors!”

*Gilles is also a canyoning guide who offers a one-of-a-kind experience in France: canyoning by night (see p.42). Read about Gilles and the Hivernales du Haut-Giffre (see p.13)*



Watch a video







# Companions on your adventure in the great outdoors!

## MUSHER WITH THE SLED DOGS

**Mushing for kids!** Cindy, an experienced musher, will take the little ones from the age of 4 on an introductory dog-sledding session, in direct contact with the animals and nature, along the snow-covered trails of Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval.

**Introduction as a family!** The whole family can experience the joys of dog-sledding in Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval and the impressive Rouget Waterfall (known as "The Queen of the Alps").

**A 2-day dog-sledding expedition!** For the full experience, Ludovic, a professional musher, organises a 2-day trek with Siberian huskies, in the highlands of Morillon. This adventure is worthy of the expeditions of the Great North, with a night in an igloo (or tent) and meal around a campfire.

## HIKING WITH DONKEYS

From a simple walk to a longer trip with overnight camping experience or at a mountain shelter, you can choose the family-friendly outing that suits you with Les Anes du Haut-Giffre. The perfect occasion to explore the footpaths and streams in an eco-friendly, fun way, in a magnificent setting with torrents, waterfalls, as well as the odd Alpine ibex, marmot, and of course the donkeys!

## EXPLORATION ON HORSEBACK

At the heart of the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval, 6km after the village of Sixt, the horse-riding centre Hippoloisirs offers rides in a horse-driven cart, as well as pony and horse rides. Jimmy and his horse-driven cart and Estelle and her riding horses, will be delighted to take visitors out for a leisurely trip to "the ends of the earth", to admire the beauty of the mountains and waterfalls.

## LA GRANDE ODYSSEE SAVOIE MONT BLANC

FROM THE 9TH TO 20TH JANUARY 2021

55 international mushers and 300 high-performance athletic dogs will depart from Morillon for this challenging race, in a one-of-a-kind Alpine setting. On the programme: entertainment from Nordic lands, ice sculpture, introduction to building igloos and a fun skiing race for duos.



## To be tried without fail! 5 ACTIVITIES YOU NEED TO TRY BEFORE LEAVING THE VALLEY!

### 1. PARAGLIDING

Even for children... Here, children as young as 5 can try out this activity, thanks to the two-seater introductory experience, especially designed for children. Rodolphe, the instructor has the right approach and experience to take children on this amazing adventure, just like a dream! What if they were equipped with skis for their very first experience in the skies? Rodolphe also organises two-seater flights, to explore the skies in winter.

### 2. HANDISKI: SKIING FOR EVERYONE IN MORILLON

The ESF ski school in Morillon has been offering "skiing activities for all" for over ten years now. Several instructors are qualified to teach and lead groups of handicapped people on the slopes thanks to the seated ski "machines" provided by the "Tatu handi giffre" association: tandem ski and tandem flex, dual piloted, kart-ski and uni-bob.

### 3. CLIMBING

**Spend a day with your head in the clouds** with a tree-climbing and zip wire session up above Lac Bleu in Morillon. A thrilling via ferrata section along a transparent walkway, and to finish, a paragliding experience with a breath-taking view of the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval: a truly sensational package deal.

**Ice falls:** climb along frozen waterfalls using ice picks and ice grippers, accompanied by a guide.

### 4. YOONER

The Yooner is a modern version of the traditional 'paret' sledge. This hybrid contraption looks like a sledge, and is a fun activity in the winter. Come and race down the slopes with family or friends. A perfect activity for some quality time together after skiing, while staying on the slopes! The night-time version with Jérôme Guillot, the 'paret' specialist of the valley, is also worth a try (read p. 38).

**Save the date: Le Yoopa, March 2021!**

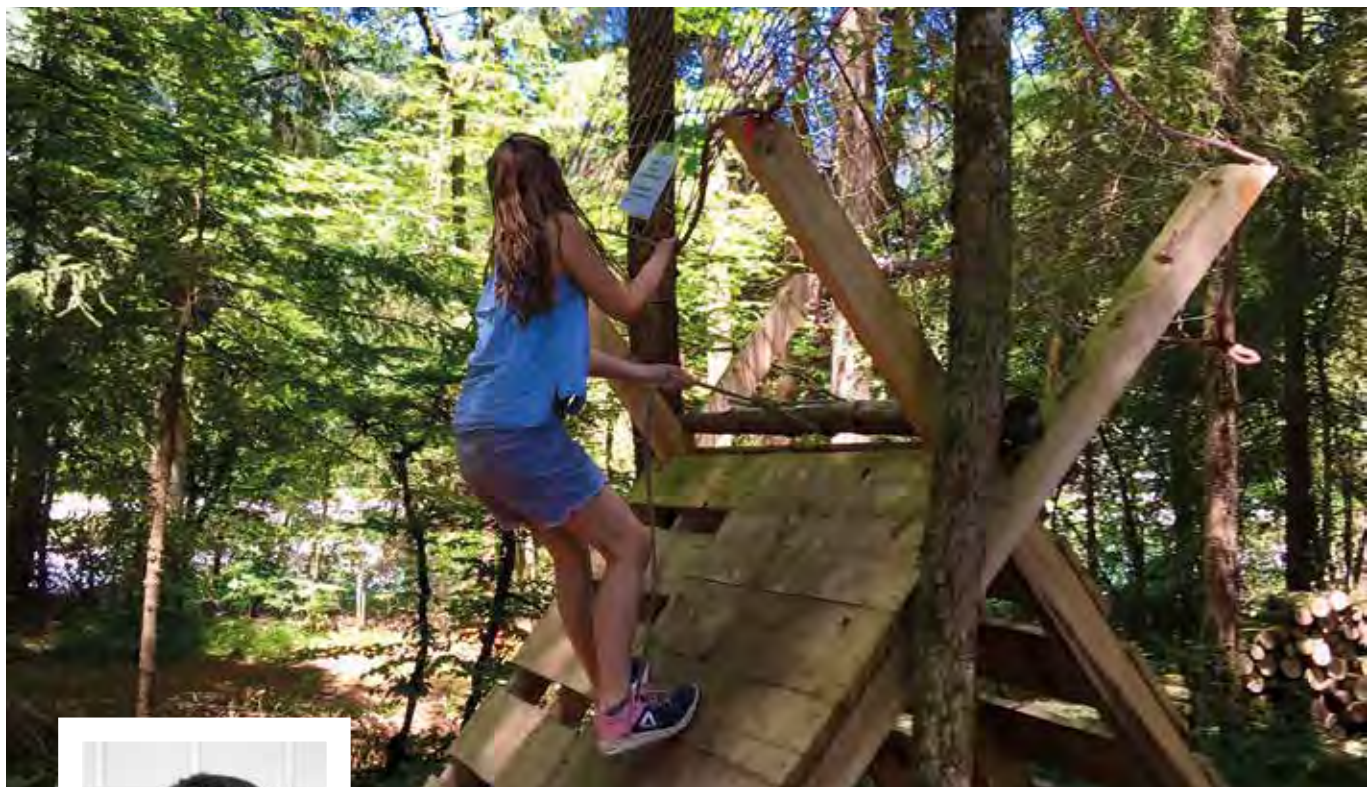
Yooner, paret, snooc... come and (re)discover some of the ancient traditions as a family (from the age of 8), for a day. In the morning, there are some introductory sessions on the slopes, to get ready for the "Challenge" in the afternoon, for the whole family. Awards for the best performances at 4pm.

### 5. NEW MODES OF TRANSPORT...

Giffre Valley can be explored on all sorts of electric contraptions. Segway, skateboard and e-Fatscoot (scooter with XXL tyres): all you need to spend your holiday roaming the footpaths along the Giffre, around Lac Bleu in Morillon or on the mountainsides of the Grand Massif for the more daring, accompanied by Julien Annequin who has just launched two new concepts called "Gyro-apéro" and "apéro-trott", which combines these activities (segway and scooter) with a tasting of some delicious local products of the valley.

**The winter version:** "fat bike & night", when the sun goes down. Once the slopes close for the night, Mountain Spirit takes adventurers and their bikes with XXL tyres along the wide slopes and snow-covered tracks, to explore Giffre Valley under the stars.





## A closer look at... the Defoul'park with Julien Annequin

**A fun obstacle course with 50 obstacles adapted for young children from the age of 3, and older family members, in the forest and at the watersports centre at Lac Bleu in Morillon: Défoul'park is without a doubt the place to be for families in the valley! We'll tell you why, with Julien Annequin, the creator of this place and sports coach.**

**You opened the Defoul'park 6 years ago now, what was the idea initially?**

"Previously I was a ski instructor, and when working with children I noticed that they were doing less and less physical activity, even though the sporting potential of children hadn't changed. As a sports coach, this made me want to get things moving, in every way. My wife and

I came up with the idea to offer an activity for the whole family to share. It's a concept that you can't find elsewhere."

**What is the Defoul'park?**

"It's a fun obstacle course through the forest, in the shade; an obstacle course that requires great agility and balance, along 300m with games to take part in together and to work on certain parts of the body. It's not simply a succession of structured activities. We've tried to choose activities that will help with balance and proprioception, things we tend to lose due to inactivity. Children and parents can have fun trying to get through the tunnels and over walls of tyres for example. The ramp with grooves is the final activity on the obstacle course, a bit like the ultimate challenge. Here, you manage your exertion depending on the activity, and you go at your own pace."

**A place for the whole family?**

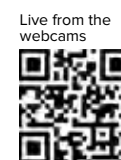
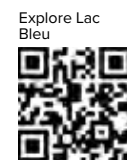
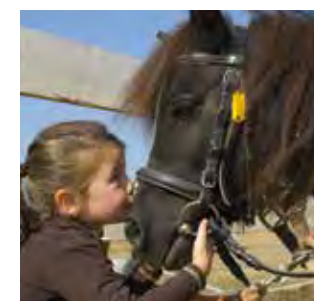
"Our idea is to provide a place for families to spend time and have fun together. At Defoul'park, we see a wide range of generations. Family members go head-to-head, even children with their grandparents. Whether you are an adult or a child, does not give you an advantage! The families coming here are looking for a challenge to share together, possible over a half-day. When we see the children and parents laughing together and giving each other a high-five when they get over an obstacle, it makes us so happy!"

*Facebook/Defoulpark*

# Top 10 activities for kids

## AT THE LAC BLEU, THE PLACE FOR FAMILIES

Just 500m from Morillon, the watersports centre offers a mountain lake, sandy beach, free swimming and all the leisure activities you could dream of. Defoul'park, stand-up paddle, kayaking, big air bag, aqua-golf, bouncy castles, horse-riding centre, treetop-climbing and zip wires over the water: this is THE favourite place for families in the valley. You can spend all day there!



## EVENT

In the summer don't miss the event **"Y'a Le Feu au Lac"**: concerts, show and fireworks display, for a superb evening on the shores of Lac Bleu, the watersports centre in Morillon.



# ZEN ZEN MONTAGNE

☯ You can do yoga  
anywhere ☯

Julia Barnes

Love was what brought Julia to Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval, and she chose to devote her time here to her passion for yoga. She shares this way of life with the other yoga enthusiasts in the valley all year round, in a naturally relaxing setting and places that provide just the right vibes: a chalet, mountainside, Alpine pastures, at candlelight or in the snow.

## Tell us about yourself and how you arrived here in the valley.

"I'm Scottish and love brought me here 11 years ago, after spending several years in the United States and then in Lyon where I opened a yoga studio. I'm now a yoga teacher here in Giffre Valley. I lead yoga vinyasa, pre and post-natal yoga sessions all year round in Morillon, Châtillon and Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval."

## Do you combine yoga and the mountains?

"The two come together very naturally. I find nature revitalising and inspiring; yoga is an opportunity to get back to basics - to focus on nature, our breathing, and the present moment. When I go hiking, I like to stop and do some yoga along the way. Fer-à-Cheval is a magical and thrilling place."

## Do you offer a yoga and hiking excursion at the Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval Festival?

"Yes, I started the yoga and hiking initiative last year, along with Agnieszka, a mountain guide in the valley. I love to share my two passions for hiking and yoga, with people from the local area and further afield. During the festival, I help the tourist office find yoga teachers every year and to organise the programme for yoga sessions."

## Do you also offer the combination of yoga and climbing?

"Yes, François Coffy and I came up with the idea. He's a former member of the French national team and a climbing instructor working here in Sixt. He used to come to my yoga sessions. Every summer, we now create these sessions together. The idea is to work on your presence, awareness of your body and movements,

opening up your hips and on your balance."

## And in the winter you also take us on a showshoe hiking expedition combined with yoga?

"In the winter, the silence and peace-and-quiet at the Cirque is magical, it's such a peaceful place. We don't do yoga on a mat here, we sit and meditate, to work on our breathing, or stand and work on our balance. Doing yoga in the snow is a fabulous experience! You can do yoga with me anywhere!"

[www.yogajulia.com](http://www.yogajulia.com)

## 'Zen' experiences in Giffre Valley



### YOGA WITH JULIA BARNES IN MORILLON

Le Badney 1881 chalet, a renovated 19th century farm, is a place where you can get back to basics and explore what is really important in life, at an easy-going pace. Julia Barnes organises yoga sessions here, for all, and all year round.



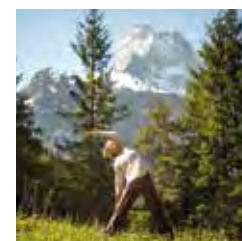
### MEDITATIVE EXPERIENCES IN SIXT-FER-À-CHEVAL

Mindfulness with your feet in the snow? That's what coach Sally-Anne offers with this 3-day mindfulness experience. On the programme: introduction to meditation, Qi Gong, skiing or snowboarding with a high-mountain guide, Chinese massage, spa... Everything you need for a revitalising getaway, staying with the coach, in her authentic and renovated Alpine farm in Sixt, dating from 1830: La Ciserie.



### AFGHAN WALKING IN VERCHAIX

Afghan walking (or walking yoga) is a form of active meditation, combining relaxation and managing your endurance. Using a method of controlled breathing, Claire, mountain guide and physical education techniques practitioner (Nature Quintessence), teaches walkers to keep the same pace, to avoid a racing heartbeat, to be able to go further and improve endurance, without being out of breath at the end. All of this while admiring a breathtaking view from the Joux Plane mountain pass, in Verchaix.



### YOGA AT THE HEART OF THE CIRQUE DU FER-À-CHEVAL

Coming to the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval is a call for relaxation. It is also the perfect venue for open-air wellness activities, and the yoga festival is organised here every year at the end of August. The mantra for the 3 days: take the time to breathe, relax, unwind, spend some quality time, while getting the very most out of this superb natural area. Julia Barnes, Simon Park and the other yoga teachers of the valley will be there.

## IN THE WINTER, "ZEN ALTITUDE" ON THE SLOPES

5 days of wellness workshops: massages, yoga, meditation, cycling... the perfect setting for a revitalising breath of fresh air, with a breathtaking view from an altitude of 2,448m (Grands Vans summit).

## IN THE SUMMER, YOGA IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS AT THE LAC BLEU (MORILLON)





# "The flying Nomad" brings the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval to life

Simon Park

New-York, Barcelona, Munich, Paris, Luxembourg, Glasgow... and Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval: Simon Park travels the globe teaching the concept of "liquid flow" yoga. He decided to take the yogi world on a relaxing retreat right here at the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval. Dubbed as "one of the most influential and gifted Yoga teachers of the next generation" by Yoga Journal, Simon Park has become an ambassador of this peaceful valley in the space of just a few years.

## Tell us about yourself Simon Park.

"I am a yoga teacher, originally from Philadelphia in the United States. Thanks to the influence from my yogi masters, Shiva Rea, Richard Freeman, Maty Ezraty, Joan White and Dharma Mittra, I created the brand "liquid flow yoga": it's a blend of classic and modern yoga, a therapeutic experience for the body and mind. I created a yoga programme for Princeton University. The earth is my home."

## Do the mountains inspire you?

"I am inspired by nature. I moved to Colorado and what I enjoy the most is doing yoga on the banks of rivers and up in the mountains: the perfect environment to let go, benefit from the pure mountain air and the vibes of these places."

## Every year, you are the star of the Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval yoga festival, how did you end up here?

"A friend of mine wanted to come here for a retreat. I came 5 years ago. Then I met Laurent Vriez, operational manager, in charge

of events at the Grand Massif Montagnes du Giffre Tourist Office. I needed wide open spaces to organise my retreats. This place is perfect: doing yoga surrounded by mountains and majestic waterfalls, in one of the most untouched natural environments in Western Europe."

## The Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval is one of your favourite spots to do yoga, why is that?

"This natural place is ideal for awakening the body and mind. And I've been doing yoga all over Europe and the United States. Here, the forests and waterfalls are the perfect reflection of my art, known as "liquid flow". The natural environment here is surprising, with the waterfalls, crystal-clear rivers, magical forests, superb birds and marmots! Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval is a charming Alpine village with authentic restaurants and beautiful chalets."

“ The inspiring natural environment and the village of Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval make this a cultural and community experience which is very important in the practice of yoga. ”

## Do you organise yoga retreats and training sessions in Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval?

"At the beginning of September 2019, I organised a one-week retreat with Calvin Corzine "Dynamic Flow and Functional Movement Training/Retreat": a blend of styles including dynamic vinyasa, functional movement, therapeutic movement, prayanama, meditation, and yoga Nidra. The participants and teachers really enjoyed this retreat. I also offer a 300-hour teacher training course here in Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval. Session 1 from the 30th May to 13th June, Session 2 from the 13th to 27th June. Australia, New-Zealand, Turkey, Africa, Sweden, Hawaii, Fiji and Canada: I bring people here from all over the world!"

[www.liquidflowyoga.com](http://www.liquidflowyoga.com)

# Where to meditate?

THE 4 BEST MEDITATING SPOTS ACCORDING TO DAVID CASARTELLI



The shores of Lac d'Anterne



Sales Valley



Pointe sans Bêt opposite the Pic de Tenneverge



Pointe de Verreu

©photos David Casartelli



# HERITAGE

Follow the guide...

## Architectural heritage sites of Morillon

with **Marie-Claude Perret**



“ The village of Morillon is nestled in the high Giffre Valley, with so many heritage treasures to discover, starting with the beautiful traditional houses, built from the 17th century up until the end of the 19th century. Residents and animals lived there, separately, their food reserves were stored in the cellars or fodder in their hay barns. The architecture was adapted to the mountain farming practices of that time, which required a specific kind of organisation due to the weather conditions, with the winter season lasting from 6 to 8 months. The spaces are evenly distributed. They are made up of:  
- a stone-built ground floor laid in lime mortar, with quoins and door and window frames made from bush-hammered

local limestone, or dressed tufa stone. Residents and animals lived separately and there were several charming, distinguishing features inside the dwelling.  
- upstairs, vertical planks with decorative and symbolic air vents, where six to eight months of fodder for the animals could be stored.  
- outdoor galleries with beautifully carved balusters, decorating the west-south-west façades, used for drying vegetables or fodder.  
- the roofing sometimes made from slate, tiles or painted sheeting. In the past the building was covered with “ancelles” (long wooden tiles). Close to the house is another rather curious building, the granary... ”  
(read p.57)

## The expertise of Les Frahans

**Land of builders and stone masons, "Les Frahans", Morillon has a rich history in construction and the creation of impressive buildings and projects. Les Frahans is a brotherhood of stone masons. They built the religious heritage sites throughout Giffre Valley.**

“ In the centre of the village of Morillon is the church devoted to Saint Christophe, built in the 15th century on the 'Crêt de Morellons', with a tufa stone clock tower. In the Neo-Gothic choir, there are alder statues of Saint Christophe and Saint François of Sales.

Miaux chapel, placed under the protection of Notre-Dame des Sept Douleurs, la Compassion, Saint-Michel and Saint-Claude, was built in the 16th century. Inside is an Alpine Baroque-style altarpiece and a pieta.

Châtelard chapel, devoted to Notre-Dames des Carmes was built in the 17th century in Côtes, then brought to Châtelard in the 18th century! At the beginning of the 19th century, it was put under the protection of Saint Symphorien, and a relic of the saint can be found here.

The Notre-Dame de Toutes Grâces Chapel in Verney, built in the 19th century, is devoted to Saint Philomène. It houses a Neo-classical altarpiece, painted in 'trompe l'oeil' and a statue of Saint Philomène. It is linked to the 15th century Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit, to beg for divine mercy against the devastating floods of the Verney torrent.

This heritage site is a masterpiece of the “kègues, frahans and bouscolins” (builders, stone masons and carpenters in a 'Mourmé' dialect), that we can trace back to

the 15th century. There were many of them in the high Giffre Valley, especially in Morillon. In 1726, two out of three men over the age of thirteen practiced these trades!

They built churches, bridges, public buildings etc. in Savoie. They were renowned professionals and were called upon by Vauban in the 17th and 18th centuries, to build the fortifications of the French kingdom (we weren't French at that time!).

Voltaire entrusted them with the construction of his château in Ferney, Napoleon the First the great canals of France, and they were involved in many other great constructions across Europe and the world. They left from Easter until Christmas in small groups, and invented their own dialect, the 'mourmé' so that nobody else would understand them on the worksites and they could keep their expertise a secret.

When they came back to spend Christmas with their families, they would offer a 15kg loaf of bread, blessed during mass the day after Christmas Day, on Saint Stephen's Day, that would then be shared with the whole congregation. This was a strong symbol of devotion and sharing. They founded the Confrérie des Quatre Couronnés (Brotherhood of the Four Crowned), Saint Symphorien, Nicostate, Castor and Claude and in the 17th century, along with others of the valley, who they would then part from in 1835, to create their own brotherhood, to ensure their trade was better organised and to create an emergency fund. The arrival of concrete and the first world war from 1914 to 1918 marked the end of the road for these honourable professionals... ”

*To find out more about the history of Morillon, come on a guided tour with a heritage guide. For more information, go to the Tourist Office.*







# Mysteries in Châtillon-sur-Cluses!

The iconic village of Châtillon-sur-Cluses is at the entrance to Giffre Valley, it is well-known for its religious heritage sites and there are some superb treasures to see there: a church and its ancient 900-year-old frescoes that were discovered in 2006, and a château with the very chapel that witnessed the wedding of Peter, Count of Savoie, known as little Charlemagne, to Angès de Faucigny in 1223...

## DID YOU KNOW?

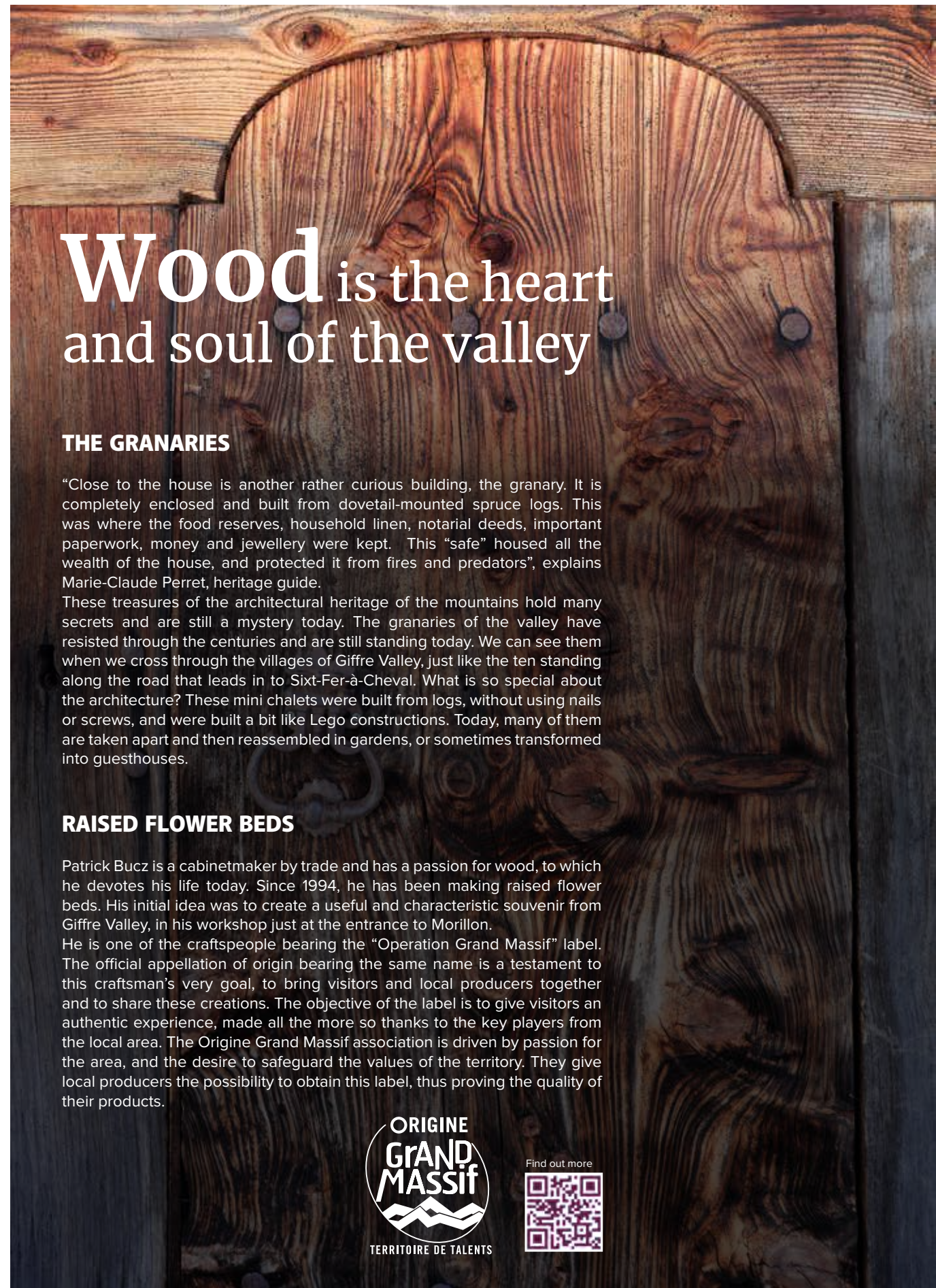
There are still some secrets well hidden inside the grounds of the château. Archaeological excavations were started here in June 2019...

## The chapels

There are 22 chapels in Giffre Valley, here are some that can be visited, accompanied by Heritage Guides.



Find out more



# Wood is the heart and soul of the valley

## THE GRANARIES

“Close to the house is another rather curious building, the granary. It is completely enclosed and built from dovetail-mounted spruce logs. This was where the food reserves, household linen, notarial deeds, important paperwork, money and jewellery were kept. This “safe” housed all the wealth of the house, and protected it from fires and predators”, explains Marie-Claude Perret, heritage guide.

These treasures of the architectural heritage of the mountains hold many secrets and are still a mystery today. The granaries of the valley have resisted through the centuries and are still standing today. We can see them when we cross through the villages of Giffre Valley, just like the ten standing along the road that leads in to Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval. What is so special about the architecture? These mini chalets were built from logs, without using nails or screws, and were built a bit like Lego constructions. Today, many of them are taken apart and then reassembled in gardens, or sometimes transformed into guesthouses.

## RAISED FLOWER BEDS

Patrick Bucz is a cabinetmaker by trade and has a passion for wood, to which he devotes his life today. Since 1994, he has been making raised flower beds. His initial idea was to create a useful and characteristic souvenir from Giffre Valley, in his workshop just at the entrance to Morillon.

He is one of the craftspeople bearing the “Operation Grand Massif” label. The official appellation of origin bearing the same name is a testament to this craftsman’s very goal, to bring visitors and local producers together and to share these creations. The objective of the label is to give visitors an authentic experience, made all the more so thanks to the key players from the local area. The Origine Grand Massif association is driven by passion for the area, and the desire to safeguard the values of the territory. They give local producers the possibility to obtain this label, thus proving the quality of their products.



Find out more







# THE TASTE OF THE VALLEY

## THE SOUP OF THE VALLEY, TO BE SAVOURED... WITH A FORK!

This is THE culinary speciality of Morillon, with a well-kept secret. Just like the fondue dish, this one was also created with the goal of avoiding waste and eating well. Because in the past, we didn't throw anything out, everything was used! 'Châtrée' soup is a tasty dish that was once known as the 'dish of the poor'. It is served to celebrate the Saint-Christophe (21st August) and is a delicious blend of toasted or stale bread, local 'tomme' cheese and onion soup. The infamous onions are baked for a long time in the oven, and this legacy is passed on from generation to generation. Then comes the step known as 'châtre' in French, meaning 'to cut', then a knob of butter is added to the soup and it is left to bake. This dish is best served with deli meats and wine, from Savoie of course! Come to one of the restaurants in the Giffre Valley to taste it; 'châtrée' soup has never left the valley, and lovers of great food enjoy coming here to try it.

## Recipe for 'châtrée' soup

### Ingredients:

500g of onions  
25cl of dry white wine  
2l of water  
750g of 'tomme' cheese from Savoie  
1 baguette

1 pinch of pepper  
30g of butter  
50g of grated 'comté' cheese  
1 tablespoon of groundnut oil

1. Prepare the onion soup. Then filter the onions. In a large soup tureen, alternate layers of bread and 'tomme' cheese. Then cover them with the onion soup. Bake in the oven for 1 hour/1 hour 30 minutes.
2. 'Châtrez' the soup! Take the soup out of the oven once it is golden brown and has dried. This stage is known as 'châtrer' in French, meaning 'to cut'. Then add the 'comté' cheese and butter on the top, before putting it back in the very hot oven to grill the cheese!

*Thanks to Alexandre Beignon, former chef of the 'Morillon'*

## A mountain of cheeses

TO LAY ON A PLATTER  
OR PUT IN YOUR BACKPACK

## 3 creamy places to go

### The Bergerie du Locket (Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval)

Come and taste the 'tomme' cheeses and yoghurts made from 'Thônes et Marthod' sheep milk (a 100% Savoyard race), or why not take some home with you. At this authentic sheep farm, come and meet Karine Richard, the passionate producer who came up with her very own cheese, named after the iconic peak of the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval: the Tenneverge.

### Gaec Les Places – Etable Boisier

#### (La Rivière-Enverse)

On this family-run farm there are 50 milking cows and 70 goats, but you won't only find cow and goat's milk cheese there, there's also the absolute authenticity of the place. Farm 'tomme' cheeses, goat's cheese 'tommes', 'chevrotin' goat's cheese and butter, that the Boisier family works 365 days a year to produce.

### La Ferme des Tines

#### (Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval)

Yann, Jérôme and Gaëlle produce cheese and deli meats in the valley and Alpine pastures. Each animal (cows, goats, pigs) is fed only grass or hay produced on the farm. Throughout the summer, they can be seen up on the Salvadon pastures (1,800m), 2.5 hour's walk from Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval, to see how what life is like on the pastures and taste the local products: goat's cheese 'tomme', fresh goat's cheese, raclette, Alpine pasture cheeses, etc. Make sure you taste the farm 'tomme' of Sixt!

Find out more!





# Sixt Organic bread, naturally soft at heart

Pascal used to be a sales rep in the toys industry and Marie a pharmaceutical sales rep, for fifteen years or so. Together, they ran a grocery store in Ardèche for 8 years. Then they decided to go for a career change: become ORGANIC bakers. Their ethos was to create good, top-quality in everything they did, and continue what they had started on this new path. So, to bring their objective closer, they followed a vocational baccalaureat course at the Ecole Internationale de Boulangerie (International Bakery School) near Sisteron. That was when they realised that the mountains were where they wanted to be! They headed to Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval and in summer 2015 they set up their laboratory. They started producing organic bread and sold it at the local markets and in the surrounding area. 2019, a new team! Pascal was joined by Sophie and Morgan, bakers experienced in sourdough and organic bread.

“Moving to Sixt and making organic bread was a real return to the roots. For us, it’s important to work with passion, to share the experience and explain how we work, with people always at the centre of the process.”  
explains Pascal

**Bio Pain** make organic bread using natural yeast and local products; seasonal bread, gluten-free bread, biscuits and sourdough brioche.

## WHERE CAN WE BUY BIOPAIN?

Biopain sales outlets (Place de la Gare, Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval)

- Fournil: Monday, Tuesday and Friday 5pm to 7pm, fresh from the oven!
- Markets: Boège (Tuesday), Samoëns (Wednesday), Chamonix (Saturday)
- Restaurants of the Grand Massif Montagnes du Giffre: 8M des Monts (Samoëns), Le Rouet (Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval), La Croix de Savoie (Les Carroz), La Table de Finine (Samoëns)
- Restaurants in the surrounding area: Les Herbes Folles (Viuz-en-Sallaz), Brasserie l’Escargot (Thyez)
- Organic food stores: Sain’Bio’Z (Morillon), Croq’Nature (Cluses), Au Nid Nature (Samoëns), Santoline (Taninges et Viuz-en-Sallaz), l’Epicerie Bio de la Vallée Verte (Boège), La Bio des Vorions (Bonne), La Vie Claire (Sallanches), l’Epicerie (Les Praz de Chamonix)



## A closer look at... Gathering plants of the mountains with Pauline Pretet

Pauline is a mountain guide, offering a medicinal and botanical experience of the mountains. What makes her tick? Showing people how to feel good in this living natural environment. In the summer, she takes nature lovers out in the mountains, along a “wellness” itinerary that is accessible to all, to explore the plants and their benefits. Participants will be able to take the relaxing effects of the Giffre Valley mountains back home with them, by making their own relaxing and beneficial herbal teas, using 100% natural invigorating ingredients. We met with her...

### What does a typical outing look like?

“The walk is not particularly sporty, it’s not a hiking expedition with steep climbs. It’s a trail through the forest and across pastures, to explore the sheer diversity of plants found in our mountains. I choose the itinerary in accordance with the weather conditions, but we always go into the valley, between Samoëns and Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval. On a half-day or full-day walk, we will pick plants along the way and then taste some herbal teas made during the outing and shared by the whole group.”

Pauline has chosen to set up shop at the foot of the greatest trails, and she takes visitors on a discovery of the treasures of Mother Nature in the Giffre Mountains. She offers wellness hiking expeditions, canyoning as a family, via ferrata, rock climbing and other guided outings in summer or winter (showshoeing). And when Pauline isn’t in Giffre Valley, she jets off to the mountains of Nepal.

### What plants can we find in the Giffre Mountains?

“Peppermint for example, which is used to make digestive herbal teas. We can also find wild baby spinach (white goosefoot) that can be fried in oil and served as a snack; this plant is often found around the mountain chalets. You can make a sweet pancake or omelette using spruce tree buds; I always have a cooking stove handy! Everyone knows that!”

### How did you become passionate about mountain plants?

“Gathering plants is an ancient practice in mountainous territory. They are very useful for culinary purposes or for medical treatment when you are in the mountains!”

[www.trekycimes.com](http://www.trekycimes.com)





# 5 VILLAGES AND THEIR CHARM

## SIXT-FER-À-CHEVAL

### The birthplace of mountaineering

At the heart of the biggest nature reserve in Haute-Savoie, Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval is the birthplace of mountaineering. It was right here in 1770, that the first ever high-mountain climb in the Alps took place: Mont Buet, also known as Mont-Blanc des Dames. The village is named after the mountain 'cirque' in the shape of a horseshoe (fer-à-cheval in French). Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval and its 24 hamlets is not a place you simply pass through, it is a place to stay. The preserved abbatial village plunges visitors into an atmosphere where you feel like you're at 'the ends of the earth', thanks to the locals, known as the 'Sizerets' and the classified natural environment. A date for the diaries - Fête de la Terre (20/08/2020): all generations of 'Sizerets' come together in the clothes of their ancestors, to pay tribute to them on this day of celebration.

*If you want to find out more, come and follow the Savoie Mont Blanc heritage guides:*

*Françoise Derouet Moccand and Suzanne Ducroz*



## VERCHAIX

### A quiet little village

Here, the 'lhottis' are proud of their hometown! Verchaix is a small village set on two levels and separated from Morillon by the Giffre, a river that takes its source from the heart of the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval. Verchaix boasts an exceptional nordic skiing area, the Joux Plane mountain pass (1,770m) and the Loex Plateau where you can catch a glimpse of the iconic bird of the mountains, the black grouse.

*If you want to find out more, come and follow the Savoie Mont Blanc heritage guide: Aurélie Veisy*

## MORILLON

### Village and resort

Morillon was actually created by a landslide at the end of the 16th century, giving this area the name 'crêt de morellon', which then led to the name of the village. Morillon still boasts the architectural authenticity of the past, as well as a popular ski resort full of activities and linked to one of the biggest ski areas in France. In the village of Morillon, there is a wide range of activities to do at Lac Bleu. And families love to head up to the Morillon 1100 Les Esserts ski resort, and ski down the slopes through the fir trees.

What are the locals called? Morillonnais

*If you want to find out more, come and follow the Savoie Mont Blanc heritage guide: Marie-Claude Perret*



## LA RIVIÈRE-ENVERSE

### An authentic land

Here, tradition is the keyword. The traditional Haute-Savoie houses, the many oratories, the local people, Nicodex Chapel, the 2 farms (GAEC Les Places and GAEC Clatvan), the caves (replica of Lourdes caves), the Baroque church with white iron clock tower built by architect from Faucigny, Pierre Cheneval and based on clover-shaped plans... Come and take a stroll around La Rivière-Enverse, whose name was adapted in 1801 from 'la Rivière-en-Verse', explore the village and meet the 462 locals, most of whom are artists and craftspeople (sculptors, potters, painters, etc.)

What are the locals called? Riverots

*If you want to find out more, come and follow the Savoie Mont Blanc heritage guide: Juliette Chatel*

## CHÂTILLON-SUR-CLUSES

### Entrance to Giffre Valley

Just like all the other 'Châtillon' in France, Châtillon-sur-Cluses owes its name to the castle which was the Sires of Faucigny's favourite place to stay. It is a remarkable place that is currently undergoing renovation work. There is also a church that houses some beautiful relics. The village is spread across two valleys. In the north it constitutes the natural entrance to Giffre Valley, the resorts and ski area.

What are the locals called? Cassandrins

*If you want to find out more, come and follow the Savoie Mont Blanc heritage guide: Juliette Chatel*







# A DAY IN SIXT-FER- À-CHEVAL

## 8am

Head to the Cirque du Fer-à-Cheval. The 'Bout du monde' (ends of the earth) walk is a voyage in itself, to discover the local fauna and flora. Before setting off on this educational expedition, you must stop by Le Pelly campsite for a cup of coffee with Anne and Jean-Pierre. From here you have a great view of the waterfalls and Tenneverge peak.

## 9:30am

Take a break at the Prazon snack bar, the ideal viewpoint for observing the hikers taking on the Pas du Boret, to climb up to the Vogealle... As for us, we carry on towards the 'Fond de la Combe', to finish our loop before midday... We pass by waterfalls on the way there and back, and we could even catch a glimpse of the chamois and Alpine ibex up in the highlands!

## 12pm

Back to the village of Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval, and to the restaurant 'le Rouet' with panoramic outdoor seating area, to taste some local delights, including a 'salade des alpages', some cheesy specialities and much more.

## 2pm

It's starting to get hot in the valley. We shelter from the heat at Sixt Abbey, to see one of the many exhibitions organised by the Haute-Savoie local council inside this historical monument!

## 3pm

We still have lots of energy left after our walk this morning, so we try our hand at white-water rafting down the river Giffre... a great experience to share as a family! So refreshing!

## 6pm

Just like every Wednesday, it's time for 'Music'O Jardin' in the centre of the village... a very popular musical event with an eclectic programme, held at a time that suits the whole family! To really enjoy this event, bring your own picnic. Another option is to order a takeaway pizza from Nuna Bar on the other side of the road, or try some of the tasty dishes on offer from the local village associations.

## 7pm

On the way back, stop by La Bergerie du Lochet sheep farm to stock up on local cheeses and yoghurts from this unique local race of sheep, the 'Thônes et Marthod'.

Find out more!



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# Haut-Giffre

## practical info



### BY TRAIN

For all the train times and availabilities:  
[www.oui.sncf.fr](http://www.oui.sncf.fr)  
From Cluses train station there are coaches available.  
These coaches do not go to Morillon 1100 Les Esserts.  
If you arrive during the cable car opening hours, you  
can use this service.

### BY CAR

**Coming from Paris:** A6 Paris – Mâcon, then A40 Mâcon – Cluses.  
Paris - Morillon is 629km and takes around 6 hours.  
**Coming from Lyon:** A43 Lyon – Annecy, then A41 and A40 towards Cha-  
monix. Lyon - Morillon is 197km and takes around 2 hours.  
**Coming from the south:** in Valence, follow signs for Grenoble, Chambéry  
then Annecy. A41 and A40 towards Chamonix. Nice - Morillon is 597km  
and takes around 6 hours.  
**Coming from the east of France:** from Alsace or Franche Comté, the  
route via Switzerland is an interesting one. Strasbourg – Morillon is  
455km and takes around 4.5 hours.  
**From Cluses to Morillon or Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval:** follow the signs for  
Samoëns. After Châtillon mountain pass, you'll start to see signs for Mo-  
rillon or Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval. It takes around 15 minutes after leaving the  
motorway.

### BY PLANE

Airports near Morillon Grand Massif.  
Geneva Cointrin airport (Switzerland, make sure you have a passport or  
identity card), 60 km away. For French arrivals at Geneva airport: call  
00.41.22.798.20.00.  
French airports with flights to Geneva:  
Bordeaux, Clermont-Ferrand, Nice, Paris, Toulouse.  
Chambery airport, 100km away.  
Lyon-Saint-Exupéry international airport, 180km away.



# to find out more

### CONTACT THE TOURIST OFFICES

**Morillon:**  
+33 (0)4 50 90 15 76  
[info@morillon.fr](mailto:info@morillon.fr)

**Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval:**  
+33 (0)4 50 34 49 36  
[ot@sixtferacheval.com](mailto:ot@sixtferacheval.com)

### THE TOURIST OFFICES ON THE WEBSITE MORILLON.FR

My holiday  
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### THE TOURIST OFFICES ON SOCIAL NETWORKS



[morillon.tourisme](https://www.facebook.com/morillon.tourisme)



[morillon\\_tourisme](https://www.instagram.com/morillon_tourisme)



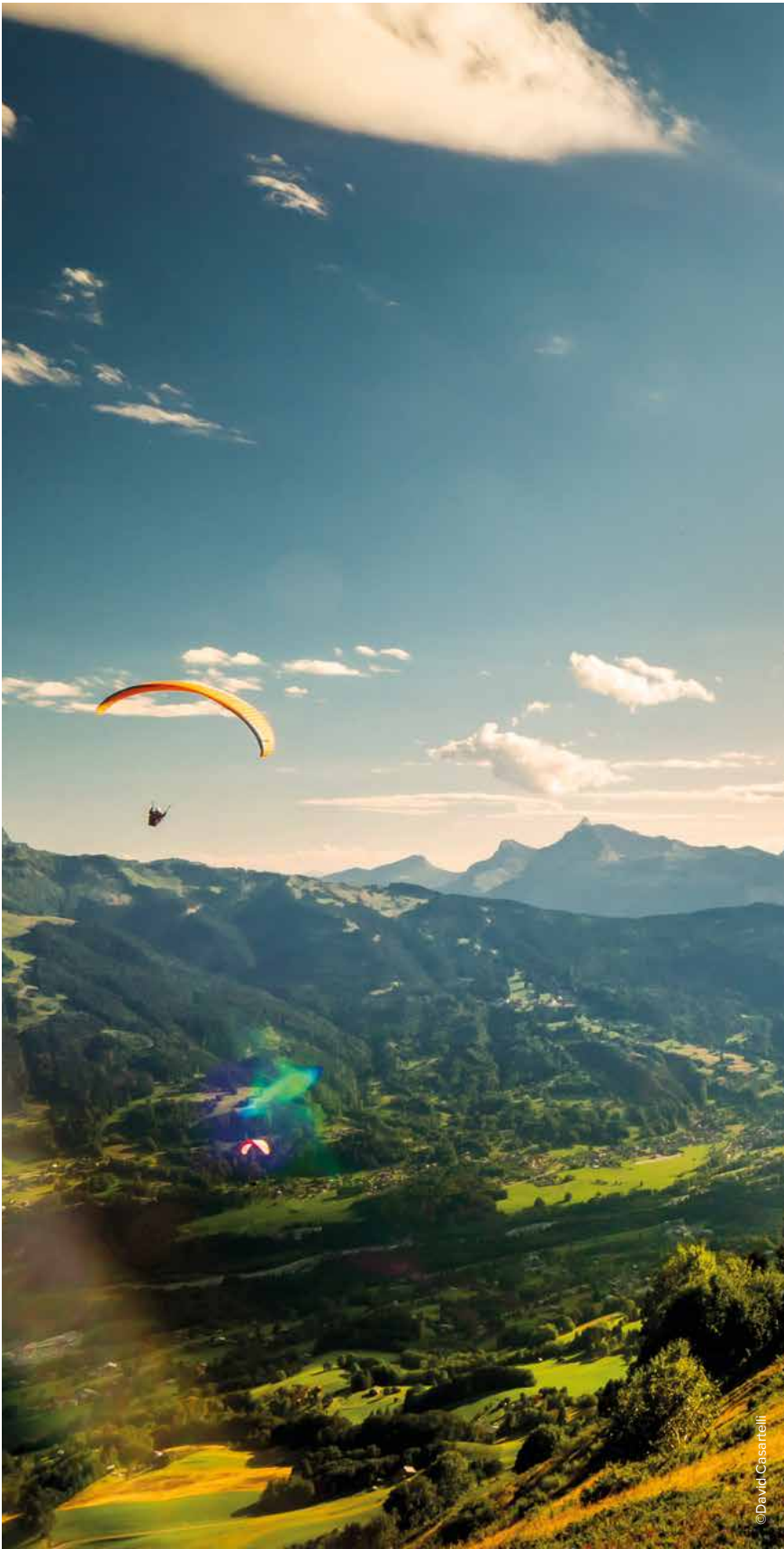
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