

THE HISTORY OF COURCHEVEL

Key dates



Bellecôte and Nogentil districts in 1973

1908 - 1945 THE ORIGINS

1908

Le Lac Bleu hotel bar restaurant in Saint-Bon Courchevel (today's Courchevel administrative centre) opened; **the resort's first hotel**. It only opened in summer in its first years then opened in winter from 1925.

1930

The **Saint-Bonnais ski club** was founded.

1930s

The dawn of skiing. Several hotels opened in Courchevel 1550 and Moriond. Ski jumping hills were built and competitions were organised during this period.

1935

In Moriond, the first ski school (chalets de Moriond) opened with 5 ski instructors (Jean Pachod, its founder Régis Chevallier, Eugène Chardon, Jean Sullice and Jean Blanc).

Christmas 1945

- SainteAgathe: **the first ski lift** opened in Moriond. Jean Blanc managed operations.
- Foundation of the Tourist board.



Ski instructors Jean Sallier and Camille Curtet in 1947

1946 - 1959 THE BEGINNINGS

1946, a decisive year

Savoie Council wanted to boost the area with the foundation of a ski resort.

April 13th

The Council planned the tourist facilities in the valley of Saint-Bon. The department commissioned architect Laurent Chappis with a plan for 6,000 beds on virgin territory on the Plateau des Tovets with two ski lifts, a cable car to La Saulire, a golf course and three ski jumping hills.

May 3rd

Saint-Bon Council, led by the mayor Francis-Eugène Mugnier, unanimously agreed to the project and sold them Tovets land to **build the new resort**.

From June

Construction of the **Catérail** began. The huge suspension railway project to hug all the curves of the slopes was to link up the Vallée de la Maurienne. The project was abandoned before it was even launched.

June 5th

Construction work on the road to the resort and the building of pylons, telephone lines and water conveyance began.

October

Grenoble company Pomagalski built the first ski lifts (Tovets and Loze).
Piste signage was also put in place.

November 30th

Savoie Council named the resort **Courchevel**.

The name Courchevel comes from local agricultural practices. Shepherds took care not to let calves graze in the Tovets area where the thick grass scratched their tongues. In Saint-Bon patois it was called "écortzevé" and the word became Courchevel.

December 28th 1947

The **first hotels** were founded on the Plateau des Tovets: the council 3 Vallées hotel opened after 18 months of construction. Hotel de la Loze opened the same year.

1947

Courchevel French ski school (ESF) was founded.

1950

Construction began on the 3 Vallées connection between Méribel and Courchevel via the Burgin-Saulire gondola lift from Méribel.



Courchevel Moriond in 1955

December 1952

- Launch of **La Saulire** cable car up to the resort's peak. Capacity: 30 people per car or 360 people per hour.
- Gondola lift from Le Praz to Courchevel.

1953

Hôtel des Neiges was **the first 4* hotel**.

November 1954

Emile Allais was appointed technical and sports director of Courchevel. He started by redesigning the pistes and founded the role of ski patrollers.

1959

Emile Allais bought the first snow groomer, the "Sno-cat," to carry out **mechanical snowplow** tests in the area.

1960 – 1990 BOOM AND GROWTH

From the 60s

The resort became fashionable and was frequented by **celebrities and show business stars**.

1960

Courchevel 1850 ESF expanded with **70 monitors**.

1961

Michel Ziegler founded the **Courchevel Altiport** above Courchevel in Pralong. This is the first of its kind in the world. It had extensive media coverage and Courchevel gained international recognition. Regular routes, including Paris and Geneva, were established.

1966

The downhill Courchevel Grand Prix was broadcast throughout Europe. Léo Lacroix exceeded 100km/hr on the Jean Blanc piste.

1970

The dawn of La Croisette. The meeting point for various services (ski lifts, ski schools, technical department, Tourist Information etc.) united the resort's different areas.

1971

The first 3 Vallées pass became a reality: a single pass for 250km of pistes. Before then, skiers had to buy tickets for each of the 3 resorts.

February 1975

French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing had a week-long family holiday in Courchevel. Sixty journalists documented his stay.

January 7th 1979

Courchevel hosted the **Men's Alpine Ski World Cup**.

1979

Le Chabichou was **the first Michelin starred restaurant**.

1984

The new Saulire **ultra modern cable car** opened. With a capacity of 160 people, it was the biggest cable car in the world.

October 17th 1986

The 16th Winter Olympics in 1992 was awarded to Albertville. Courchevel hosted ski jump trials and the Nordic Combined, and accommodated the International Olympic Committee.

1987

The dawn of **luxury chalets**. The first luxury chalets were marketed for sale and rent in the hamlet of Bellecôte.

From 1991

Every summer, the Olympic ski jumping hill site of Le Praz hosts the **International Ski Jump Grand Prix**.

February 12th 1992

Double French Olympic champions. Fabrice Guy was **the first French Nordic Combined Olympic Champion** on Le Praz ski jumping hill and Sylvain Guillaume came second.

1992

Eleven 4* hotels in Courchevel including 5 with a spa (pool, sauna, jacuzzi, massages etc.).

1997

Courchevel hosted its first **Tour de France** with a finish at the Altiport (the Tour went through Courchevel in 2000 and 2005).



Ski jumping competition

THE 2000s THE QUEST FOR EXCELLENCE

2001

The county founds the **Espace Emploi Formation** for season workers. Over 4,000 season workers are employed in Courchevel every winter.

2003

The dawn of 4* luxury hotels. Courchevel has 9.



Snow front of Courchevel Moriond

2006

The growth of premium chalets with hotel facilities. Courchevel has 18.

2009

New 5* hotel rating. Out of eleven 5* hotels in France, six are in Courchevel (Amanresorts Le Mélézin, Les Airelles, L'Annapurna, Cheval Blanc Courchevel, Le Kilimandjaro, Le Lana.)

December 21st 2010

Courchevel is back on the **Alpine Ski World Cup** circuit with a women's slalom trial. 20,000 spectators watched Marlies Schild win the race.

May 2011

Les Airelles and Cheval Blanc Courchevel hotels join the highly exclusive club of the new French palaces rating.

September 8th 2011

The Council changed the names of the areas in Courchevel giving up the altitude. Le Praz became Courchevel Le Praz. Courchevel 1550 became Courchevel Village. Courchevel 1650 became Courchevel Moriond. Courchevel 1850 became Courchevel.

1912 - 1929

Joseph Mugnier

1929 - 1940

Louis-François Curtet

1940 - 1944

Joseph Chardon

1944 - 1951

Francis-Eugène Mugnier

1951 - 1953

Jean-Pierre Perrot

1953 - 1954

Eugène Gormier

1954 - 1959

Emile Ancenay

1959 - 1968

Pierre de La Gontrie

1968 - 1971

Eugène Favre

1971 - 1977

Maurice Morel

1977 - 1983

Pierre Cauquoz

1983 - 1997

Michel Ziegler

From 1997

Gilbert Blanc Tailleur

The Men who made Courchevel - The Mayors of Saint-Bon Courchevel

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