**Risoul**

**Categories**

**Good For**

Beginners

Intermediates

Snowboarders

Families

Après ski

**Data**

**Beginner Runs**

64

**Intermediate Runs**

36

**Advanced Runs**

10

**Total Runs**

110

**Lifts**

51

**Chairs**

16

**Drags**

33

**Gondola Cable Cars**

2

**Parks**

1

**Pipes**

2

**Weather**

**Annual Snowfall**

1.5m (5ft).

**Overview**

Established as recently as 1970, Risoul is one of the newest resorts in France and, indeed, the whole world. By the time work began on this ‘third generation’ resort, designers had learned from decades of errors that saw swathes of unsightly concrete block buildings emerge in the Alps, and instead created visually pleasing, wood-clad, chalet-style apartment complexes lining the surrounding snowy bowl.

This village in the southern French Alps has followed a simple business plan of comfortable, affordable accommodation within a well-designed and compact resort base. This allows guests in the majority of these self-catering units easy access to the resort’s high, extensive slopes, which along with its longer-established neighbour Vars make up La Forêt Blanche (The White Forest) ski area.

Virtually all of the accommodation in Risoul is a short walk to the selection of mostly reasonably priced, yet fairly limited shopping and dining options. The skiing here is also good value given the fact that Risoul’s lift tickets are among the most affordable in the world for a ski centre of its size – typically costing 20% to 25% less than the big-name resorts in the northern French Alps.

There’s been no big attempt here to offer a wide range of additional activities or an extensive choice of dining types or retail experiences. Instead, Risoul has stuck to what it knows and does well: convenient, affordable, family-friendly ski holidays.

**Location**

Risoul is located in the Hautes-Alpes region of France, somewhat separate to most of the country’s other famous resorts, about 150km (93 miles) from the Mediterranean coast. Risoul is also at a relatively southerly latitude compared to other French Alps resorts.

**Website**

http://www.risoul.com

**Piste Map**

http://www.risoul.com/plan-des-pistes-hiver.html

**Hit The Slopes**

Despite its southerly location, and perhaps in part because of it, Risoul has a good snowfall record. Moisture from the nearby sea is deposited as snow on the resort’s largely north-facing slopes, while around a third of the key slopes have snowmaking cover to help build up the base. The resort itself is also at a very snowsure altitude of 1,850m (6,069ft), which normally ensures season-long snow cover at village level as well as on the mountain.

Beginners are well catered for with nursery slopes just a few steps from most of the accommodation, cafés and bars in the resort. Equipment rental shops are also convenient and there’s a good choice of ski schools – the competition between which helps to drive up standards.

For intermediates, Risoul and the surrounding La Forêt Blanche region is something of a paradise with wonderful wide, sunny, ‘motorway’ pistes up to 8km (5 miles) in length that connect to Vars. Additionally, the powder bowl above Risoul is itself open for multiple routes down red and blue pistes.

For experts, the ten black runs include the testing 1.3km-long (0.8-mile) Les Vautours piste, while off-piste skiing is well organised here, with the terrain divided into areas of little or no avalanche danger, areas of medium risk (with gated entry points), and areas of high danger.

Freestylers will not be disappointed as Risoul was a pioneer of terrain park design, with one of France’s best parks featuring lines for different ability levels and a popular pipe.

There is also provision for cross-country skiers, who will find 30km (19 miles) of trails in the area for all ability levels.

**Risoul**

**Resort**

1850

**Base**

1850

**Top**

2750

**General**

**Beyond The Slopes**

Risoul is primarily a ski resort and sticks to the traditional model of ‘ski, eat and sleep’ services. There is some attempt at diversification however, and a year-round toboggan run allows participants to travel downhill at speeds of up to 40kph (25mph).

In fact, most activities are outdoors, and include snowmobiling excursions (each evening between 1700 and 2100), as well as horse riding, skijoring (being towed behind a horse on skis), snowshoeing, paragliding and ice skating.

Among the indoor options is the two-screen Cinéma de Forêt Blanche, which shows some English-language films.

**Family Fun**

Risoul is a pleasant location for a simple family ski holiday. The close proximity of slopes, services and family-friendly restaurants is a major draw, while much of the self-catering accommodation is either slopeside or near to the lifts.

The wide, sunny bowl above the village provides extensive family-friendly areas. Children can learn to ski at the École du ski Français (ESF) (tel: 04 9246 1922; [www.esf-risoul.com](http://www.esf-risoul.com)), which offers young children tailored ski lessons combined with indoor or outdoor play. Children aged three and above can take lessons that follow the French national programme structure.

Childcare is available for babies aged from six months and for three- to 12 year-olds at separate locations run by Espace Enfants (tel: 04 9246 0005).

**Retail Therapy**

Shopping in Risoul is purely functional with the 20 or so shops existing to serve two basic needs: snow sports and food. There is an *épicerie* (grocery), two butchers shops and the Banette *boulangerie* (bakery) (tel: 04 9246 2553), which is the first stop for every wise Francophile each morning.

There are, however, a few shops that could be described as ‘non-essential’, including the Tout En Doucers sweet shop (tel: 04 9245 1583) and Bonnaffoux (tel: 04 9246 1303), which is a newsagent and photographic store that also sells gifts and souvenirs.

**Splashing Out**

Paragliding high above the slopes is always exciting for those who enjoy being airborne. The École de Parapente du Queyras (tel: 04 9245 2643, [www.parapente05.com](http://www.parapente05.com)) offers daily first-time tandem paragliding flights with an experienced instructor or more advanced flights for those who have already experienced the thrill of soaring high up above the slopes in the thermals.

**Apres Ski**

Risoul remains a predominantly family-oriented and traditional French-dominated self-catering resort; so although British, Dutch and Scandinavian guests tend to liven-up some of the après-ski bars, this is not the best choice for those looking for hedonistic nightlife akin to the likes of Ischgl and St Anton. That said; the bars lining the base of the slopes are usually animated come the end of the ski day.

La Grotte du Yeti (Résidence Les Mélèzes; [www.lagrotteduyeti.com](http://www.lagrotteduyeti.com)) is one of the livelier options and shuts its doors at 0200 each morning, while Le Morgan nightclub (tel: 04 9246 0990) is also open every night into the early hours.

**Eating Out**

Risoul has a moderate selection of restaurants, most of which are fairly simple establishments serving what most of the resort’s family visitors require (pizza, fondue and the like), generally at lower prices than in the Northern Alps.

L'Assiette Gourmande (Rue du Bouisset; tel: 04 9246 0972) is one of the best choices for both traditional and imaginative French cuisine, while Le Chalet (Les Chalps; tel: 04 9246 1128) has an atmospheric chalet-style wooden interior and a reputation for its Gruyère fondues, local raclette ‘Guillestroise’ and rösti. For crêpes, La Crêperie (tel: Front de Neige; 04 9246 0948) is the place to go; or for pizza, try Le Cherine (Les Mélèzes; tel: 04 9246 0871).

**Transport**

**Getting There**

Nearest airport: Turin Airport (TRN); Marseille Provence Airport (MRS).

Distance to resort: 170km (105 miles); 250km (155miles).

Driving time: 2 hours 30 minutes; 3 hours.

**Getting Around**

Risoul is a relatively compact, purpose-built and largely pedestrianised resort, with all facilities accessible by-foot or ski/board – so there is little requirement for any public transport service within the village. However, a shuttle bus service does connect Risoul to neighbouring Guillestre.

**Hotels**

Almost all of the accommodation in Risoul is in the form of convenient slopeside self-catering apartment complexes. There are several small, basic hotels and a year-round camping centre in the wider region, but most are 13km to 25km (9 to 16 miles) away in the valley – therefore requiring public transport connections.

**Les Balcons de Sirius**

These comfortable 4-star graded apartments sleep three to six people. The complex has an inviting lounge with an open fireplace, a good-sized indoor pool, plus a sauna and spa facilities.

**Category**

Luxury

**Thoroughfare**

Residence Cassiopee

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Risoul

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

04 9246 2929.

**Website**

http://www.sara-residences.com

**Village Club Touristra**

This 130-room apartment complex boasts an on-site restaurant, games room and children’s club. Rooms sleep up to six and there are three apartments available that are specially equipped for disabled guests.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

L'Église

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Risoul

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

04 9246 0052.

**Website**

http://www.touristra-leo-lagrange-risoul.com

**Luxe Véga à Risoul**

One of the newest apartment complexes, Luxe Véga à Risoul is close to the luxurious Les Balcons de Sirius and is officially rated as a 3-star. Units sleep between three and seven people, with the larger units being laid out over two levels.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

Central Station

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Risoul

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

04 9246 2929.

**Website**

http://www.sara-residences.com

**Le Chardon Bleu**

One of the few hotels in Risoul actually on the slopes, Le Chardon Bleu offers 2-star accommodation with a breakfast buffet, car parking and sauna facilities.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

Secteur de Chérine

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Risoul

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

04 9246 0727.

**Website**

http://lechardonbleu.free.fr

**Les Mélèzes**

This large 2-star slopeside building has apartments available for three to six people. Les Mélèzes is in a superb location and provides on-site shops, restaurants and a mini-supermarket.

**Category**

Moderate

**Thoroughfare**

Station

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Risoul

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

04 9246 2929.

**Website**

http://www.sara-residences.com

**La Maison de Josephine**

A wonderful gîte for the health-conscious, La Maison de Josephine offers vegetarian meals and yoga classes, as well as a swimming pool and sauna. The residence is in a quiet location in the ‘old village’ area of Risoul, some distance from the slopes.

**Category**

Cheap

**Thoroughfare**

L'Église

**Neighborhood**

XXX

**Locality**

Risoul

**Sub Admin Area**

XXX

**Admin Area**

XXX

**Postcode**

XXX

**Country**

France

**Telephone**

04 9245 2801.

**Website**

http://www.maisonjosephine.com